

ATNI Tribal Climate Resilience Committee (CRC)

Strategic Development Team: Interim Meeting 1/27/2026, Zoom from 2PM - 3PM Pacific

Purpose of this meeting:

Advances the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) Climate Resilience Committee strategic development process by: **(1)** building shared understanding of the Information Sharing Network (ISN) framework and its sovereignty-first federated architecture; **(2)** engaging participants as partners in mapping the regional climate resilience ecosystem through a strategic network survey; **(3)** activating Champions who can strengthen connections between their organizations and this InterTribal initiative; and **(4)** identifying immediate next steps and supporting materials needed to ensure respectful, effective engagement across diverse organizational contexts.

Participants:

Lauren Rosenstein, Oregon DOE strategic energy

Antoinette Shirley, Tribal Forest Management Post-Doctoral Fellow through ORISE for the USDA Forest Service

Stephanie Masterman,

Alison Hirata, Tribal and Community Outreach Manager at UW Center for Environmental Health Equity

Lauren Link, State Policy Advisor (leading climate and energy work) at The Nature Conservancy

Eliza Ghitis, Climate Scientist at NWIFC

Hannah Ljunggren, Climate Resilience Program Manager at Suquamish Tribe

Laura Gephart, Deputy Watershed Manager at CRITFC

Lisa Naas Cook, Climate Program Manager at Columbia River Gorge Commission

Noelani Villa, Tribal Climate Adaptation Specialist at UW Climate Impacts Group
Jolene Estimo,

AGENDA

A. Opening and Context Setting

Opening in a good way, and then brief introductions. Participants were asked to reflect on communication and outreach with vulnerable communities during emergency

situations. An example being communicating with communities during the atmospheric river and flooding that took place last December.

Agenda Overview:

- **Understanding** the Information Sharing Network more in-depth
- **Honoring** insights from the “Making Connections” Survey

B. Information Sharing Network: Fundamental Infrastructure

Framework Status: The CRC-ICRS strategic framework received unofficial endorsement at the October 2025 Annual Convention. This is the critical decision point where the CRC will evaluate ISN proof-of-concept and **call for formal endorsement** to advance the strategy. **For Consideration:**

1. **Tiered Sovereign Data Framework: Indigenous Data Sovereignty Standard**
 - a. **Operationalizes** established Indigenous data governance principles through a four-tier classification system (T0-T3) enabling “agreement without disclosure” coordination. Designed for interoperability with:
 - i. **UNDRIP Article 31** – Right to maintain, control, and protect cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and intellectual property; requires Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for any use
 - ii. **Federal Trust Responsibility** – U.S. government obligation to protect Tribal sovereignty, assets, and self-governance, including data generated through federal programs or on Tribal lands
 - iii. **IEEE 2890-2025** – Recommended Practice for Provenance of Indigenous Peoples’ Data (published November 2025) IEEE Xplore
 - iv. **Local Contexts** – TK (Traditional Knowledge) and BC (Biocultural) Labels and Notices system
 - v. **CARE Principles** – Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, Ethics
 - vi. **OCAP®** – Ownership, Control, Access, Possession
 - b. **Encodes** tier classifications and data-access protocol(s) directly into database fields, enforces access controls at the system level, and ensures governance rules travel with the data across platforms rather than living in separate agreements that can be overlooked or renegotiated.
 - c. **Provides** interoperable, open-source, open-access infrastructure; enabling Tribes to harmonize data structures and processing methods without centralizing the data itself. **The architecture is portable, the data is not.** This allows InterTribal coordination to scale efficiently while each Nation retains local custody and control.

- d. **Governs AI/ML usage:** training and inference permitted only per explicit agreement, algorithmic processing requires specific authorization. The compliance framework(s) include **IEEE 7000-2021** (value-based engineering), **IEEE 7003-2024** (bias assessment for deficit-framing patterns), and **IEEE 7001-2021** (transparency and explainability).
- e. **Respects Tribal Sovereignty;** the standard is not required for interoperability but offers a common governance language for data sharing that respects each Nation's self-determined boundaries.

C. The Path Ahead: Insights from the “Making Connections” Survey (survey still open) <https://forms.gle/rJAKGhZiy42QWMHU9>

Responses represent a balanced cross-section of the Tribal climate resilience landscape, representing: one-third Tribes, one-third universities or research partners, one-sixth state agencies, and one-sixth InterTribal organizations.

Top identified services include: **(1)** Climate Adaptation and Strategic Planning, **(2)** Research and Technical Assistance, and **(3)** Emergency Management and Hazard Mitigation; secondary services also include: policy development and grant-making. These findings suggest the initial pilot development of a *Research, Sciences, and Technical Assistance (RSTA)* Strategic Working Group, with Cascades ecoregional focus is a good first-step. The governance-adjacent priorities identified by Tribal, state, and InterTribal respondents suggest *Governance, Advocacy, and Policy (GAP)* as the next logical area for SWG development. Together, these two domains would establish the foundation for increased Tribal engagement across the network, and ensure that the fundamental knowledges regarding climate risks, impacts, and vulnerabilities (RIVs) as well as policy landscapes offer clear and feasible actions for Tribal leaders.

What Makes Partnerships Effective

The responses that describe “what makes an effective partnership?” overwhelmingly identified establishing trust and relationships built in earnest; long-term presence, proven reliability, and respect for Tribal sovereignty. Three interconnected themes emerged as absolutely critical for establishing meaningful partnerships.

Established Trust and Relationships with Tribes stands as the primary determinant of partnership success. This means long-term presence in communities, proven reliability over time, and genuine respect for Tribal sovereignty. Relationships are not built through single engagements or transactional exchanges; they develop through grounded relationality.

Demonstrated Cultural Respect and Humility Effective partners understand Tribal protocols, respectfully honor Traditional Ecological Knowledge and

Indigenous ways of knowing, and engage in decolonizing practices. This is not performative acknowledgment but rather a fundamental orientation toward learning from and centering Tribal leadership beyond political governance.

Non-Extractive Approaches complete the foundation. Partnerships succeed when they follow Tribal leadership rather than imposing external agendas, when they give back more than they take, and when reciprocity guides every interaction. Furthermore, cocreative and convergent methods are fundamental to appropriate “ethical space” engagement required.

These findings make unmistakably clear that only approaching Tribes through conferences, convening, or even through established institutional channels pales in comparison to on-site, in person, relationship-centered engagement; responses indicate that email may be a more effective engagement method! Even when funding opportunities, technical expertise, or innovation are offered; “no one cares what you know until they know that you care... relationships are built at the speed of trust.”

Relationships matter. Presence matters. Specific Insights on Partnership Success

Trust and Relationship Building: Partnerships succeed when they honor moving at the speed of trust, which is directly related to an individual's long-term presence and commitment to the community. Conversely, relationships fail when this trust is not honored.

Early and Meaningful Tribal Involvement: Tribes must be involved in all planning decisions and consultation early in the process, not after the fact. This is not a procedural checkbox but a fundamental requirement for success.

Understanding and Respecting Protocols: Understanding and observing Tribal protocols is a significant factor in successful partnerships. Making assumptions or adhering to different protocols creates negative perceptions and harms relationships.

Adaptable and Respectful Engagement: Being open to learning different ways of knowing, practicing humility and respect, and bringing on staff to meet with Tribes in person on Tribal land at times that work for them improves partnerships. State government shifts such as compensating Tribes for time and expertise and coordinating outreach topics have also proven helpful.

Avoiding Precarious Collaborations: Collaborations based on a relationship with only one person at a Tribe or organization are precarious. These “holographic collaborations” may fail entirely if that person leaves. Sustainable partnerships must be institutionalized across multiple relationships.

All participants noted that appropriate engagement and partnership foundations begin with a simple introductory meeting: no agenda, no asks, no set outcomes, no commitments except to learn from one another.

This first step cannot be skipped or abbreviated. Recent Department of the Interior (DOI) directives for the BIA-TCR explicitly prioritize one-on-one Tribal engagement; ATNI Climate and Energy have been advocating for on-site direct engagement, and this only strengthens the resolve for this path forward.

Making Agreements

Following this critical first step of building meaningful relationships and established trust, then a structured presentation to leadership becomes key. This again highlights the importance of direct engagement, on Tribal grounds, on Tribal terms, with humility and respect. Strategic development team meetings also serve as good spaces for potential partners to come and learn, again with no commitments or expectations, and always with opportunity for Tribes to express what is important to them.

Only after trust has been truly established do the formal aspects become appropriate: formal letters, ATNI resolutions, and continued informal engagement. These formalities must address several essential elements.

Data and Sovereignty: Partnerships must address Tribal sovereignty and data sharing agreements at the outset, with explicit protocols for data security and control by the Tribe(s). This may be a point of resistance with some university departments, but it is non-negotiable.

Formal Agreements: A Memorandum of Understanding is necessary, and sometimes required by universities, to formalize the partnership.

Commitment Details: Clarity is required regarding the scope of work, timeline, process, and the specific time and resource commitments involved in the partnership.

Key Considerations for Strategy Advancement

As we continue advancing this strategy, several realities must be incorporated throughout our work:

Capacity and Funding Constraints: Lack of funding is the biggest obstacle, and limited capacity prevents Tribes from maintaining communication momentum and acting on climate needs and opportunities.

Value of the Network: The Information Sharing Network (ISN) is seen as a valuable way for climate action initiatives to connect and discuss natural climate solutions led by Tribes. Respondents hope it will not become overly bureaucratic.

Need for Better Organization: It is difficult to know which organizations and people offer technical assistance in the Tribal space. Better communication channels and a way to capture the network would be very helpful.

Time Constraints: There is simply not enough time in the day to attend every meeting. This reality must inform how we structure engagement opportunities.

Key Insight

This survey reinforces what many in the Tribal climate adaptation space have long understood: effective partnerships are built on relationships, not transactions. Technical expertise and funding matter, but they are not sufficient. The path forward requires patience, humility, long-term presence, and a genuine commitment to following Tribal leadership. For institutions seeking to engage, the message is clear: begin with learning, honor the speed of trust, and recognize that relationships are the foundation upon which all effective climate adaptation work must be built.

E. Action Items & Commitments

Establishing clear expectations and follow-through mechanisms to

1. **Additional Feedback:** (i) survey remains open, (ii) Champion identification and acknowledgement pending consent
2. **Preparation for 2026 ATNI Winter Convention:** (iii) ISN proof-of-concept including TSDF presentation, (iv) January 2026 Strategic Development Team meeting, (v) ATNI-CRC Committee Meeting: needs for discussion, materials, or other updates?

Discussion

One question regarded what the end product may look like for users. The user end of the Github would remove the need to understand software. The data is not public, only the backend shared in the Github backend is included here. Another question asked whether or not the process of assigning tiers in the framework would require staff to approve. The framework for the tiers was noted as being particularly helpful and the integration of sovereignty is novel.

One important caveat, this framework is NOT to replace the current database and infrastructure that folks are using, but to develop an Information Sharing Network for climate adaptation and

rapid-response scenarios. The goal of ATNI is to adopt the standard, while allowing Tribes to each determine whether or not they would like to use it.

Are the tiers able to be changed in the future? Yes, it is easier to make it more secure than less because of the certification and permissions that would need to take place to reduce it. Everything added initially may begin at a T3 to prevent information from temporarily being available publicly at any point without clear consent.

The next meeting will take place in person during the ATNI Winter Convention being held February 1 - 5, 2026 in Portland, OR.