

Climate Change in Yukon:

Impacts on People

The population of Yukon is approximately 25% First Nations and 75% non First Nations. While all Yukon residents will be impacted by climate change, First Nations people will likely be more impacted because they generally live closer to the land.

Traditional Activities and Culture

Fishers and hunters are noticing changes in the distribution and abundance of fish and wildlife.

New species will move into the region, while others will decline in health and abundance. These changes will force people to alter their usual fishing and hunting practices, which will interrupt the cycle of passing on traditional knowledge. Hunter safety is a growing concern, as snow, ice and weather conditions are becoming less predictable.



Infrastructure

Infrastructure includes buildings, roads, pipelines, airports, mines, power lines, and water supply and disposal systems. More snow, stronger

winds, and melting permafrost can damage all of these. As new infrastructure is designed and built, the impacts of climate change must be taken into account. Also, Emergency Response Plans need to be rewritten to address emergencies caused by climate change impacts.



Cumulative Impacts

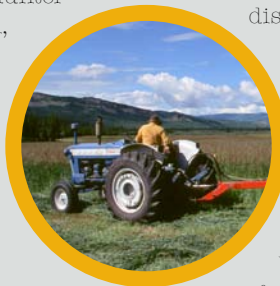
Climate change is already affecting seasonal weather, wildlife behaviour, and entire ecosystems. These changes are affecting local economies and community well being. These and other impacts accumulate, resulting in even greater stress on people, regions, and governments. Solutions will only be successful if they address the impacts as a whole, and involve and have the support of the local people.

Health

Climate change affects the availability of and access to country foods and, ultimately, affects people's health. Other health risks include increased ultraviolet radiation exposure and the spread of insect-borne disease. Regions may not be resilient to potential outbreaks, as new pests and diseases migrate north.

Opportunities

In some instances, a changing climate may create new opportunities. As winters warm and shorten, tourists might arrive earlier or stay later in the year. Farmers may enjoy a longer growing season.



Industry

Oil and gas, mining, forestry, tourism and agriculture will all be affected in both positive and negative ways. It is important that climate change now be taken into consideration for development and land use planning for all activities. For example, in southwest Yukon, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations have released a new forestry management plan that hinges entirely on the rapid changes to their forests due to spruce bark beetle kill. Industry will have to consider the rapidly changing climate of the North when building ice roads, pipelines, and other industrial infrastructure.

