

Climate Change and Its Impact on the Health of Tribal Communities

TRIBAL PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

May 7, 2026

NPAIHB- Environmental Public Health

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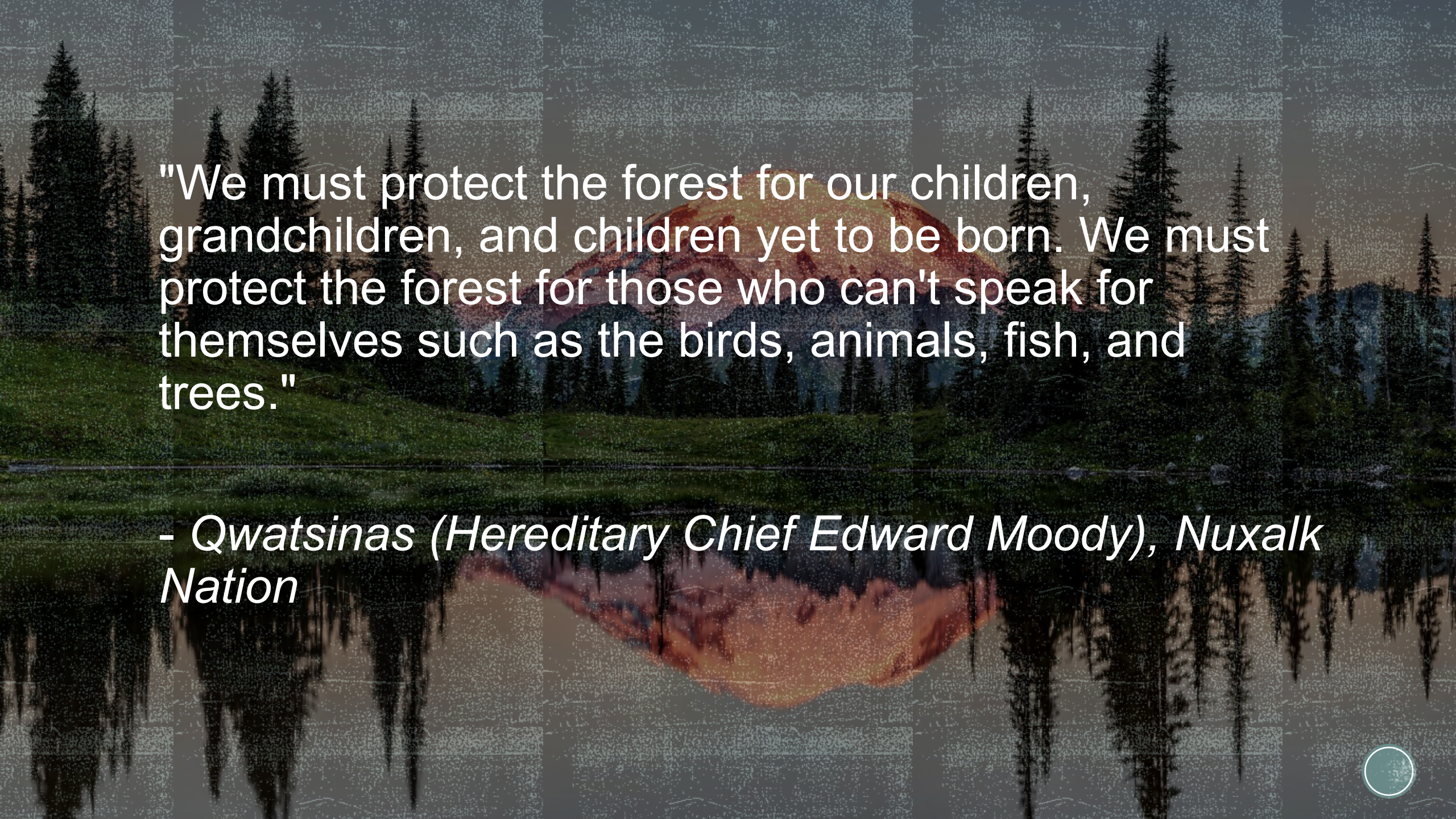


Environmental
Public Health
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Building an Emergency Go Bag Activity

- 15 mins
- Purpose: What items belong in an emergency go-bag for disasters?
- Break into groups
- 60 seconds to pick 10 items for your bag
- Remember:
 - Keep lightweight
 - Update supplies every 6 months
 - Customize for family needs
 - Store where easy to grab
 - Traditional foods if shelf stable
 - Cultural comfort items for children





"We must protect the forest for our children, grandchildren, and children yet to be born. We must protect the forest for those who can't speak for themselves such as the birds, animals, fish, and trees."

- *Qwatsinas (Hereditary Chief Edward Moody), Nuxalk Nation*





Pressure on Medical Systems

- Medical facilities overwhelmed, equipment and supplies shortages
- Emergency response stretched thin
- Public health systems under strain

Temps, Wildfires, Drought, Flooding

- Rising Temperatures
- Wildfires & Smoke
- Drought & Water Shortages
- Flooding and Server Storms



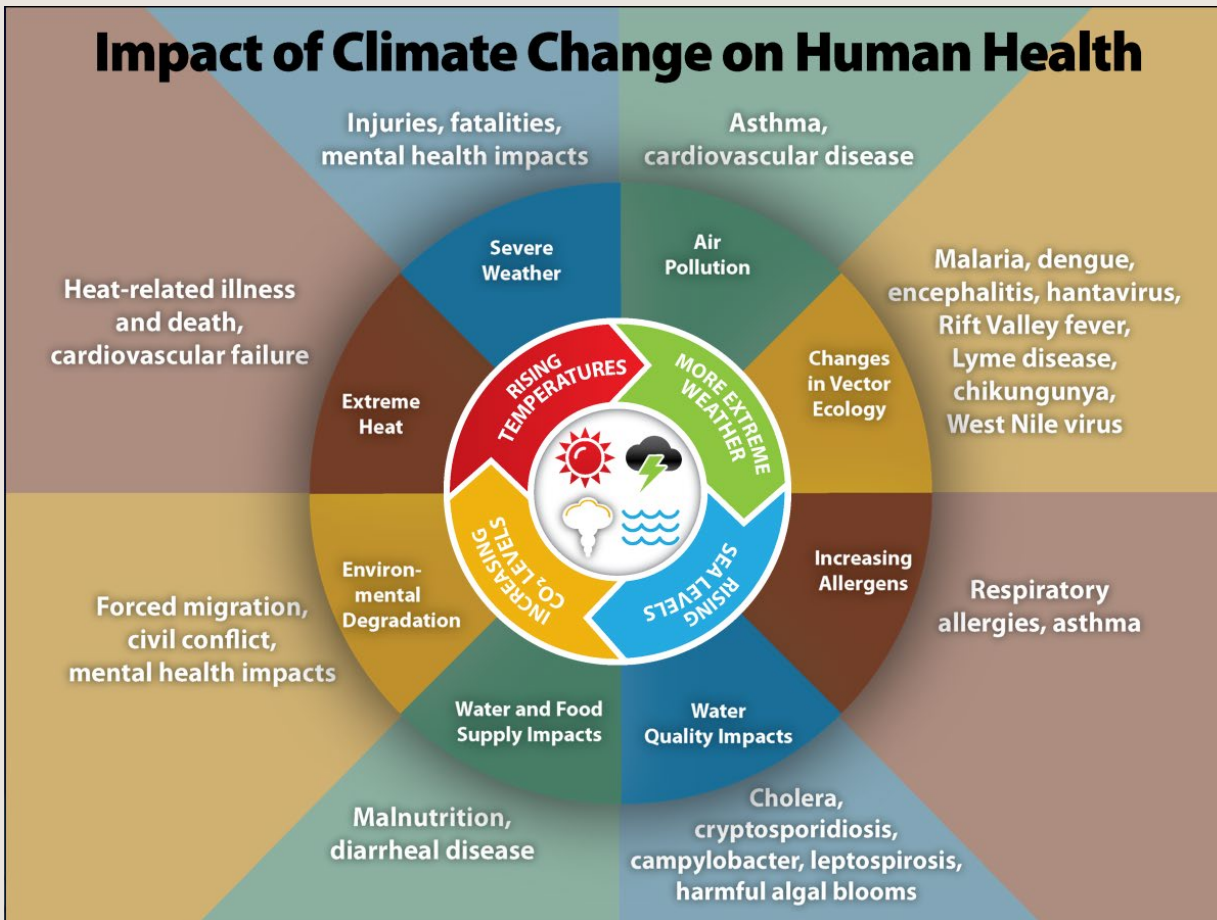
Climate Change & Health Impacts

Climate change affects people's health in two main ways:

By changing the **seriousness or frequency** of health problems that people already face.

By creating **new or unanticipated** health problems in people or places where they have not been before.

Those who are most impacted by climate change are vulnerable populations and communities, where there may be a lack of resources.



How It Affects the Health within Tribal Communities

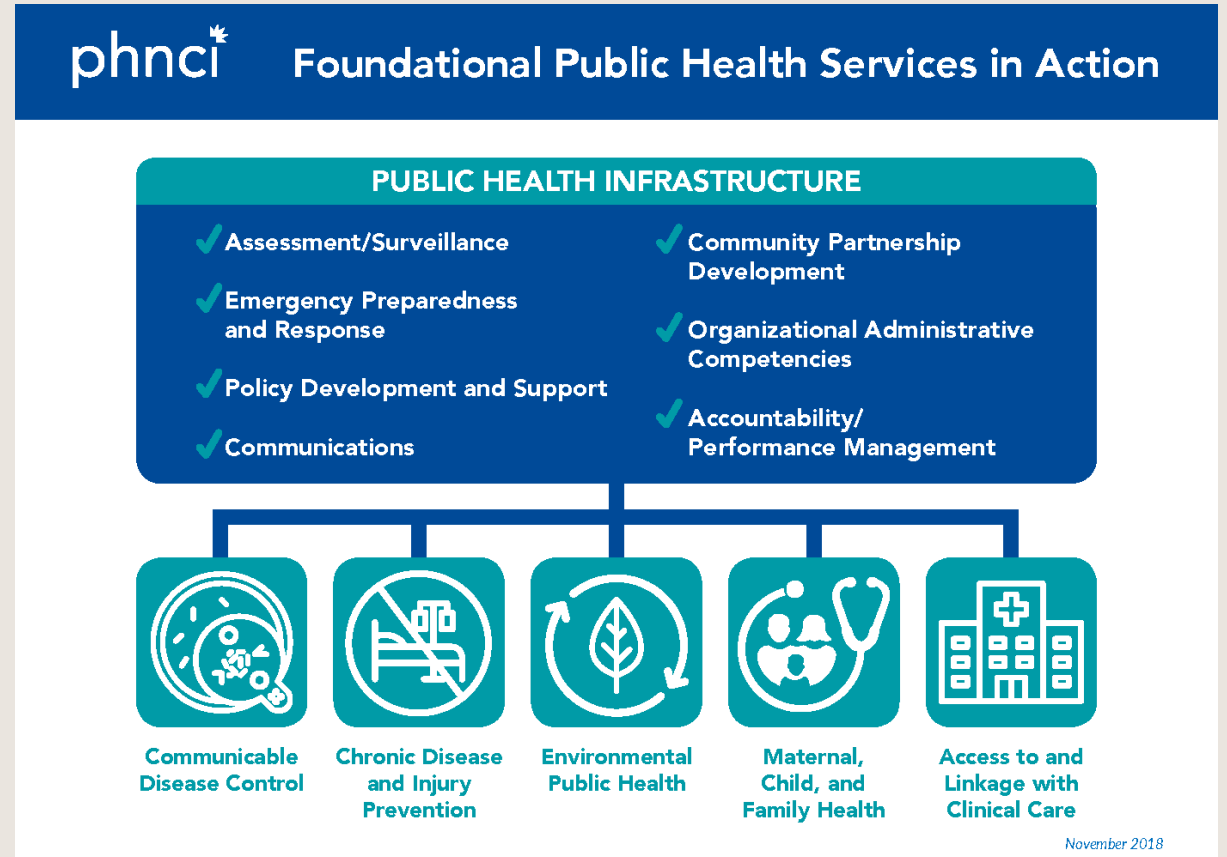
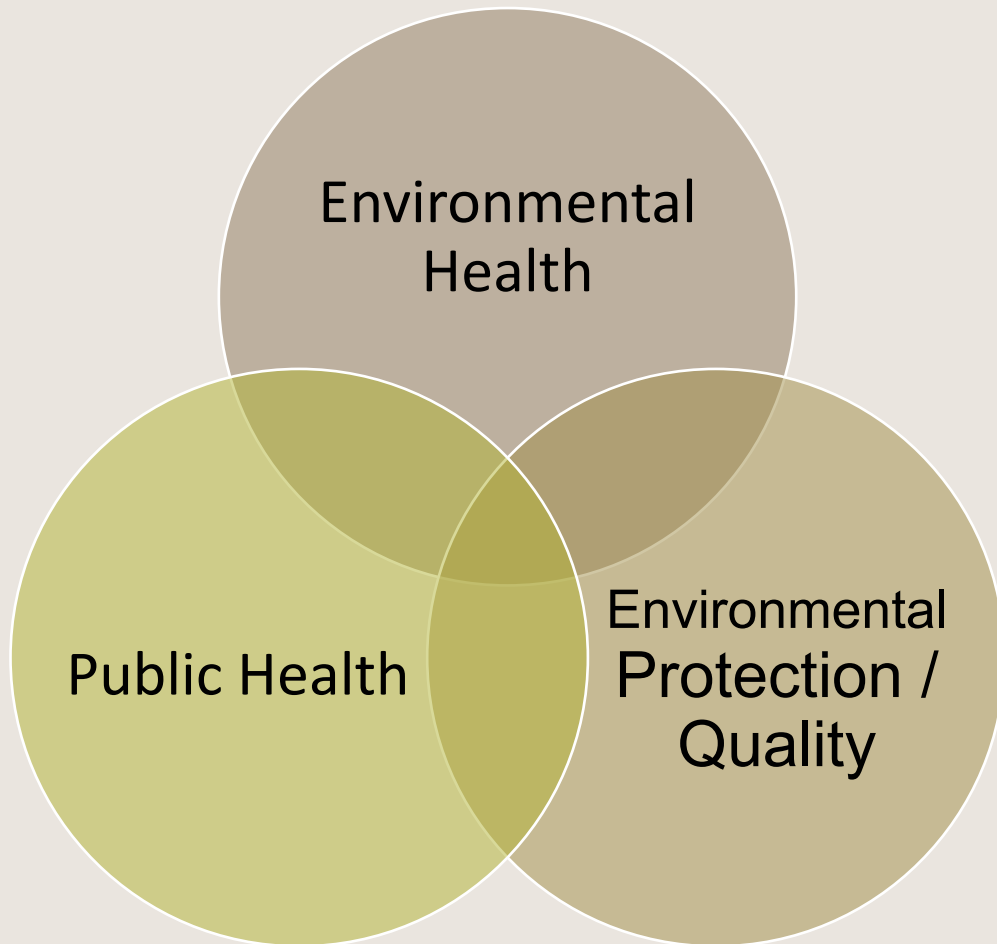
- Poor Air Quality
- Heat
- Water Issues
- Natural Disaster
- Rural – 30%
- Limited funding and resources
- Existing health disparities
- Protecting culture, land, traditional practices & food

Climate Change Lives Differently in Different Places

- **Pacific Northwest & Great Lakes tribes:** fish, food, and forests
- **Alaska Coastal Tribes:** thawing, erosion and hunting
- **Navajo:** heat and water insecurity
- **Mojave:** shrinking river (spirituality)
- **Seminole Tribe of Florida:** hurricanes and sea-level rise
- **Lakota (South Dakota):** Bomb cyclone and flooding



What is Environmental Health?



T R A D I T I O N A L
E C O L O G I C A L
K N O W L E D G E

Modernization
Economics
Describing how things used to be
Anxiety/Fear/Concern
Human caused
Conflict
Anger
Language describing climate change
Indigenous science
Health effects
Changing weather
Politics
Disruption to ecosystems
Water
Effects of climate change
Food
Policy
Causes of natural disaster or climate change
Emotions

Descriptions of climate change and natural disaster

Quotes
Plants
Natural cause
Resources
More Indian involvement in solutions
Grief
Greed
Land management
Loss
Fires
Spirituality
Animals
Restoration
Solutions
Education and training
Connection to the land
Denial and Ignoring science

Tribal Roles In Emergencies

- **Preparing for disasters**
 - Planning, immediate response, and long-term recovery
 - Tribal Office Emergency Management Departments.
 - FEMA & DHS federal funding
- **Responding during events**
- **Supporting recovery**

Community Strengths

- Traditional Knowledge
- Cultural Practices
- Community Resilience
- Shared Responsibility

Working Together

- Environmental Health and Emergency Management
- Public Health and Tribal Leadership
- Community Voices and Safe Spaces



Real World Examples

December 2025

- Severe storms, straight-line winds, flooding, landslides and mudslides in WA
- Impacted numerous tribal communities



Things to Think About



- **What challenges does your community face?**
- **What are your priorities?**
- **What support is needed?**
- What is in place
- What works
- What is needed
- What needs improvement
- Planning ahead
- Community education
- Emergency Coordination
- Protecting Vulnerable Populations

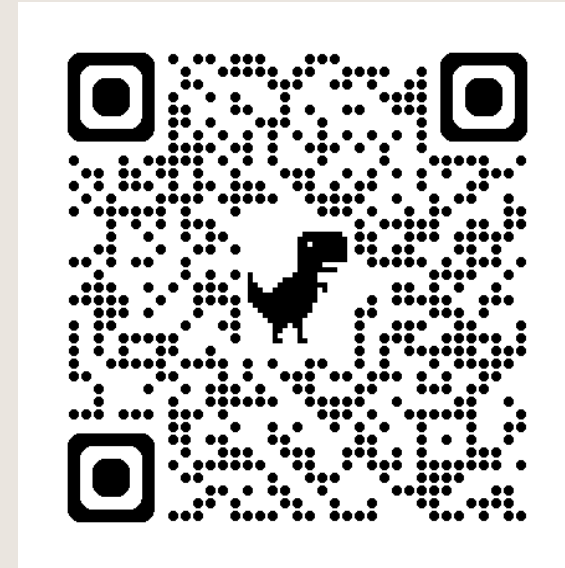


Tools & Strategies

- Emergency Plans
- Risk Assessments
- Communication systems
- Partnerships
 - Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) & Understanding (MOUs)
- Climate Change Adaptation Plans

Tribal Climate Health Project

- Partnership with the Pala Band of Mission Indians & Prosper Sustainably
- Originated from EPA funds
- Trainings, webinars, templates, resources, and tools



Climate Change & Health Capacity Building

- Develop a how-to-guide to implement public health indicators into climate change planning and activities.
- Develop and disseminate training and outreach materials for tribes
- Support tribes with the development of climate change adaptation plans
- Provide tribes ongoing support in planning, implementation, and evaluation phases of climate change and capacity building



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Q U E S T I O N S ?



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