

4.7. Community and Culture

The observations and impacts associated with climate change for this theme overlap with many of the observations and impacts described in the previous themes. This redundancy is intentional to show how interrelated the impacts caused by climate change to our community are with the other themes. The observations and impacts described in this theme specifically summarize how our community and culture are being directly and indirectly impacted by climate change. Direct impacts are primarily those associated with extreme and unpredictable weather events/changes. Indirect impacts are mainly associated with environmental changes caused by climate change, such as changes to ice conditions, wildlife, plants, etc.

Generally, climate change is contributing to the erosion of our cultural values and activities, as people are unable to go out on the land as much. This also means that there are fewer opportunities to pass on TK, particularly TK transmitted through teaching younger generations to speak Slavey, especially in relation to the environment and climate.

“...when I started working on that traditional knowledge study I was having a lot of problems, and then that’s when I learned that there are three levels to the language, and I was only operating at the community level, and there is more depth to the language when you talk to the land users and Elders. And so that’s where I was having problems - communicating to the land users and Elders, and that’s when I was told that I was only operating in the elementary.” (*Margaret Ireland, September 2010*).

The health of our community, its members, and our culture is based on our Dene perception of health, which is based on the body being in balance physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. Dene also extend this perspective to the environment and the world as a whole. So when things are out of balance, such as climate, this translates as being unhealthy; and since everything is interconnected climate change has, and will continue to have, far ranging negative health impacts to ecosystems and the biodiversity of species, including people, who inhabit these ecosystems (JMRFN, 2005; and see also Parlee et al., 2007). For instance, as a result of fewer opportunities for our people to practice TLU activities, more people in our community are experiencing more accidents, more injuries, and are at a greater risk of exposure to extreme weather. Other climate change observations and impacts related to the community and culture of JMR are listed in Table 6.

Through analysis and discussion of the above themes our community was able to identify and prioritize vulnerabilities to climate change (see next section), which led to initial discussions about what and how to explore adaptation strategies to increase the resiliency of JMR and its members to these vulnerabilities in a proactive and, when possible, a positive and beneficial manner.

Table 6: Climate Change Observations and Health Related Impacts in Relation to the Community and Culture of Jean Marie River

Theme	Observations	Impacts	Relation to Health	Vulnerability Ranking	Magnitude	Duration	Ability to Adjust
Community and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional land use and cultural practices are more difficult and dangerous to do, especially trapping, during most times in the year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TLU activities require more preparation, maintenance, resources, time, and energy Not as many people practicing TLU activities There is an emphasis on teaching younger generations how to read ice conditions when travelling Less opportunities to organize culture camps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in injuries and deaths caused from travel accidents while out on the land 	Medium	Medium	Intermediate	Moderate
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on youth learning survival skills on how to travel safely on the land, such as determining ice conditions and safe places to set up camp 	High	Medium	Long	Easy
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less opportunities to practice and pass on traditional knowledge and cultural practices 	Medium	Strong	Intermediate	Moderate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People spend less time on the land and not as many younger people are learning how to speak Slavey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The changing climate has compounded this by limiting the number opportunities to do TLU activities and pass on TK because weather and/or travel conditions are too unpredictable or unsafe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural disconnect between people, the land, and animals 	High	Strong	Long	Moderate
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People eating less country and locally grown foods 	Low	Strong	Intermediate	Easy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weather changes are too fast now to predict the weather based on traditional observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harvesters cannot predict the weather when out on the land, putting them at higher risk of being exposed to extreme weather events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases in injuries and deaths associated with exposure to extreme weather events when out on the land 	High	Medium	Long	Medium
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children get colds and the flu more often 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may be linked to climate change with more unpredictable changes in the weather, or related to allergies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are getting sick more frequently, increasing need for medicine and medical treatment 	Low	Medium	Intermediate	Easy