

Research and develop an inventory of UBC's climate research partnerships with First Nations in BC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared by: Michael Monclou, UBC Sustainability Scholar, 2023

Prepared for: Lerato Chondoma, Associate Director, Indigenous Research Support Initiative

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Disclaimer

This report was produced as part of the UBC Sustainability Scholars Program, a partnership between the University of British Columbia and various local governments and organizations in support of providing graduate students with opportunities to do applied research on projects that advance sustainability across the region.

This project was conducted under the mentorship of the Indigenous Research Support Initiative (IRSI) staff. The opinions and recommendations in this report and any errors are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the IRSI or the University of British Columbia.

Acknowledgements

I currently live as an uninvited guest on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan Nation, in the city known as Kelowna. I am grateful for the opportunity to live, work and learn on these lands, and I am grateful to have the opportunity to work on this project and to learn from First Nations in BC.

I want to acknowledge the tireless advocacy and leadership of First Nations throughout the climate emergency and in addressing climate change. This study aims to be a small contribution to their dedicated efforts, and the information presented here, as well as in the database, is created to be shared with them.

I am Latino and Colombian, and a year ago, I arrived at UBC Okanagan as a PhD student. Through this journey, I have learned that the history of colonial oppression and the ongoing struggle for land connects people from different parts of the world. Only by standing together in solidarity can we find the way forward.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Lerato Chondoma, Sam Filipenko, and Karen Taylor. Your generosity, dedication, invaluable feedback, and expert guidance have been essential in bringing this project to fruition. Your support has truly made a difference, and I am sincerely thankful for the opportunity to work alongside individuals of such exceptional commitment.

On this journey, I was encouraged by the team at IRSI to complete cultural safety training and successfully completed the San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety certificate. Additionally, with the support of the Sustainability Scholars Program and the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, I had the opportunity to travel to Vancouver and participate in a training workshop provided by IRSI titled "Respect, Reciprocity, and Mutual Understanding: Fostering Relational Engagement Between Researchers and Indigenous Communities" on May 24, 2023.

As an international student, these experiences were fundamental in initiating my journey of learning and re-learning, as well as in establishing my positionality as an uninvited guest on First Nations' Lands.

Finally, I would also like to thank the interviewees who shared their experiences with me and their passion for the work they are doing to address climate change under the guidance of First Nations knowledge.

Introduction and Background

The University of British Columbia (UBC) is situated on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territories of the Musqueam Nation and the Syilx Okanagan Nation. It stands as a world-renowned center for learning, teaching, and research, hosting over 70,000 students across its two campuses in Vancouver (Musqueam) and Okanagan (Syilx Okanagan). Its dedicated staff and faculty total nearly 19,000 individuals¹.

In 2020, UBC initiated the implementation of the Indigenous Strategic Plan (ISP) with the aim of embedding its commitment to safeguarding Indigenous human rights. The ISP consists of eight goals, prioritizing truth and reconciliation processes, supporting research with Indigenous perspectives, Indigenizing UBC's curriculum, enriching Indigenous spaces and landscapes on campuses, recruiting First Nations, enhancing Indigenous research networks and spaces, and providing exceptional services to Indigenous students, staff, and communities.

The Indigenous Research Support Initiative (IRSI) is an action-focused, research support unit with a collaborative approach that offers support and services to both the university community and Indigenous communities. IRSI also works towards reshaping traditional academic practices to embed Indigenous perspectives- guiding researchers, faculty, and Indigenous partners through a research framework built on principles of engagement, data governance, and ethics².

Within ISP Goal 7, named *Providing tools for success*, exists Action 31: "Develop a research information repository and communication portal that assists students, faculty, staff, communities, and researchers at large to access resources, information, publications, and reports about Indigenous issues and knowledge"³.

This study emerged through discussions between First Nations leadership and the UBC Sustainability Hub and as a way to support ISP Goal 7, Action 31 with the help of UBC's Sustainability Scholars Program. The objective was to gather information concerning research partnerships between UBC and First Nations in British Columbia (BC) related to climate change.

The study unfolded in two stages with IRSI's constant collaboration. The first phase encompassed a literature review and the collection of information from UBC's web pages and research

¹ UBC. UBC overview and facts. <https://www.ubc.ca/about/facts.html>.

² IRSI. What We Do. <https://irsi.ubc.ca/about/what-we-do>

³ UBC Indigenous Strategic Plan. (2020). Goal 7: Providing tools for success. <https://isp.ubc.ca/implementation/the-action-plan/goal-7/>

databases. In the second phase, professors, researchers, and staff members from various institutes, schools, and faculties were interviewed to share their experiences and work with First Nations in relation to climate change in the Province of British Columbia.

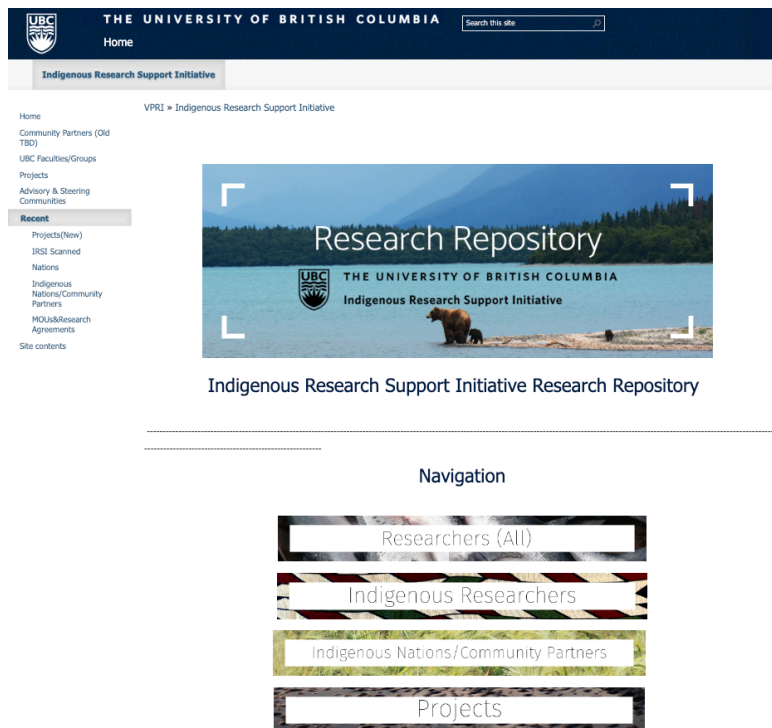
With the amassed information, a database was constructed. Its purpose is to catalog projects and partnerships between UBC and First Nations in BC in relation to climate change. The cataloged variables include project names, principal investigators, partnership initiation years, involved community organizations and First Nations, alongside an abstract summarizing project or partnership objectives.

As the database remains confidential at present, this executive summary will elucidate the database's construction, the study's work phases, and a series of recommendations for continued progress. In essence, this project can be perceived as an initial cornerstone that UBC and First Nations partners can use to further build collaborative research partnerships.

Research Approach [Methodology]

1. Desktop Research Review

In the first place, the IRSI Research Repository was consulted and filtered using keywords such as Memorandums of Understanding, MOU, partnerships, climate change, and other climate-change-related topics.



In the second place, a map was created to comprehend the Faculties, Schools, and Institutes of both UBC Vancouver and UBC Okanagan working on climate related research with First Nations. This process revealed that information on the websites is often scattered and lacks cohesion. Furthermore, grasping UBC's administrative complexity required a considerable amount of time.

Vancouver Faculties and Schools	Okanagan Faculties and Schools	Administrative & Governing Bodies
Applied Science, Faculty of	Arts and Social Sciences, Irving K. Barber Faculty of	
Architecture and Landscape Architecture, School of	Creative and Critical Studies, Faculty of	
Arts, Faculty of	Education, Okanagan School of	
Audiology and Speech Sciences, School of	Engineering, School of	
Business, Sauder School of	Health and Social Development, Faculty of	
Community and Regional Planning, School of	Management, Faculty of	
Dentistry, Faculty of	Science, Irving K. Barber Faculty of	
Education, Faculty of	Southern Medical Program, Faculty of Medicine	
Extended Learning	Graduate Studies, College of	
Forestry, Faculty of	Office of the President	Administrative & Governing Bodies
Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies	Office of the Principal and Deputy Vice-Chancellor	
Journalism, School of	NA	
Kinesiology, School of	Fipke Center for Innovative Research	
Land and Food Systems, Faculty of		
Law, Peter A. Allard School of		
Library, Archival and Information Studies, School of		
Medicine, Faculty of		
Music, School of		
Nursing, School of		
Pharmaceutical Sciences, Faculty of		
Population and Public Health, School of		
Public Policy and Global Affairs, School of		
Science, Faculty of		
Social Work, School of		
UBC Vantage College		
Vancouver School of Economics		
Board of Governors (BOG)		Administrative & Governing Bodies
Council of Senates		
President and Vice-Chancellor		
Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Principal UBC Okanagan		
Provost and Vice-President, Academic, UBC Vancouver		
Provost and Vice-President, Academic, UBC Okanagan		
Vice-President, Development and Alumni Engagement		
Vice-President, External Relations		
Vice-President, Finance & Operations		
Vice-President, Health		
Vice-President, Human Resources		
Vice-President, Research and Innovation		
Vice-President, Students		
Office of the University Counsel		
Alma Mater Society (AMS)		Student & Alumni Bodies
Graduate Student Society (GSS)		
alumni UBC		
UBC Library		

Having mapped out the Faculties, Schools, and Institutes, each website was searched with keywords such as Indigenous knowledge, First Nations, First Nations Partnerships, Climate Change and First Nations, and Indigenous Peoples, among others.

Subsequently, an information-capturing tool was designed in Excel. Initial findings prompted the creation of a new database using Excel, encompassing categories like Year of Publication, Researchers/Contact, Project Title, Type of Source, Center/Initiative, UBC Vancouver, UBC Okanagan, First Nations Partner, Non-UBC, non-Indigenous partner, Agreement/Protocol, Funding, Starting Year, Abstract, Locations, and Regions in BC.



This endeavor was then enriched by information derived from the conducted semi-structured interviews, the methodology of which will be expounded upon in the following section.

2. Semi-structured Interviews

During this phase, two instruments were designed. 1) A form of informed consent was developed, which would be read to the interviewees, outlining that their personal and contact information would be kept confidential. 2) An information-capturing tool was created, incorporating both open-ended and multiple-choice questions. The objective was to discern the nature of partnerships that interviewees knew of or held with First Nations, the duration of these partnerships, and the primary objectives of these partnerships.

The next step involved reaching out to researchers, faculty, and staff who possessed expertise or familiarity in collaborating with First Nations in relation to climate change. Sixteen individuals, representing diverse faculties, and including three Indigenous scholars, were interviewed. The support of IRSI played a pivotal role in establishing contact with these individuals and coordinating their availability. Moreover, these interviews were conducted via Zoom, recording with both audio and video to ensure accuracy of transcriptions.

Excerpt from the semi-structured interview

<p> THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA Indigenous Research Support Initiative</p> <p>Participants:</p> <p>The participants in the virtual semi-structured interviews will be academics, professors, and people with knowledge and expertise from UBC (Vancouver and Okanagan) who have worked or are currently working closely with First Nations in British Columbia. The interviews conducted for this project will be treated as confidential, and no personal names or identifying information will be included in the final report of results. The anonymity of the participants will be strictly maintained to ensure their privacy and confidentiality throughout the research process.</p> <p>The final report will be shared with the study participants.</p> <p>Informed Consent Procedure:</p> <p>Among the estimated one (1) hour of interview, ten (10) minutes are allocated for collecting informed consent from the participant. The participant will be asked to go over the Informed Consent form with Michael Monclou, Sustainability Scholar at IRSI, and be made aware of the right to leave the project at any time. Then the participant will be asked to sign an Informed Consent before any recording devices are turned on to ensure the participant agrees to the scope of the project and the voluntary participation.</p> <p>Verbal confirmation that <u>sound</u> recording equipment is turned on: Identify the date, location, time, and the participants active in the interview. Confirm on the recording that informed consent has been received.</p> <p>Purpose of Interview:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To gain insight into the partnerships between UBC and First Nations relating to climate change research.2. To understand the perceptions of the interviewees regarding the scope, achievements, and limitations of these partnerships.3. To explore the development of trust, good engagement, and working relationships between UBC and First Nations in the context of climate change research.4. To explore the ways in which UBC can strengthen its participation in partnerships with First Nations leadership in relation to climate change research.5. To identify the ways that UBC can better support First Nations-led research on climate change.	<p> THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA Indigenous Research Support Initiative</p> <p>Semi-structured interview</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introduction and Background Information:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Can you please introduce yourself and your role at UBC?b. How long have you been involved in partnerships between UBC and First Nations in British Columbia?2. Understanding the Partnerships:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. With First Nations partners, what specific areas of research are you doing that relate to climate change?b. Can you describe your research partnerships with First Nations?c. What are the main objectives or goals of these partnerships?3. Do you formalize protocols or guidelines to maintain respectful relationships? Have these been formally signed by an institutional office (e.g., University-Industry Liaison Office) or at a faculty or school level?4. Cultural Safety and Respect, and Training:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. What is your understanding of how UBC engages and collaborates with First Nations in British Columbia?b. Are there specific initiatives or programs that promote ethical and culturally safe collaboration and engagement between UBC and First Nations?
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Summary

It is important to acknowledge that the author's perspective has been inclined toward Western knowledge. This signifies that both the work methodology and the database, even this report, are formulated according to Western academic and research standards. The Scholar recognizes that in addition to the limited time and scope of the project, his conscious and unconscious biases mean that he may have overlooked equally relevant Indigenous approaches, such as Two-Eyed Seeing⁴, which could contribute significantly to this study.

- 1) It's worth noting that the database only reflects the partnerships identified online and through interviews. However, it doesn't aim to represent the entirety of partnerships between UBC and First Nations in BC in relation to climate change. Instead, it's conceived as an initial working input to further the collaborative efforts between UBC, IRSI, and First Nations.
- 2) The database documented 55 partnerships between UBC and First Nations in relation to Climate Change. These encompassed MoUs, case studies, projects, literature reviews, digital platforms, community practices, information repositories, mapping tools, research projects, toolkits, student-led projects, funding applications, policy projects, workshops, and more. For a more detailed explanation of the database, please refer to the appendix at the end of the document.
- 3) The database encompasses information from 13 faculties, schools, and institutes at UBC Vancouver, and 4 faculties, schools, and institutes at UBC Okanagan.
- 4) Indeed, the establishment of personal relationships between researchers and First Nations has proven to be more pivotal in forming partnerships than the signing of institutional agreements and MoUs. This is a milestone that UBC should consider in its ongoing efforts to enhance its collaboration with First Nations.
- 5) Certain partnerships identified through interviews are either very recent or still under development, making it challenging to include them in the database due to insufficient information.

⁴ Reid, A. J., Eckert, L. E., Lane, J-F., et al. (2021). "Two-Eyed Seeing": An Indigenous framework to transform fisheries research and management. *Fish & Fisheries*, 22, 243-261. <https://doi.org/10.1111/faf.12516>.

- 6) When the semi-structured interview guide was created, the Scholar's interest lay in understanding the degree and scope of collaboration between UBC and First Nations. This encompassed gauging UBC's engagement level and whether researchers felt adequately supported. However, throughout the interviews, the Scholar realized that, particularly in this initial study phase, it might be more significant to comprehend the types of partnerships in existence and their distribution across faculties, schools, or institutes. Hence, special emphasis was placed on the interview questions directed toward this aspect.
- 7) One of the key findings of the interviews is the occurrence of a snowball effect. In cases where interviewees lacked certain information, they often referred the Scholar to someone who possessed it. Social networks appear pivotal both within UBC and in collaborations with First Nations.
- 8) The semi-structured interviews were not always administered in their entirety. For example, there were instances where individuals were familiar with specific information but preferred to direct attention to official or publicly accessible content on websites. In other cases, due to time constraints, certain questions were prioritized over others. Particularly, those questions related to partnerships and their work objectives took precedence, while queries about perceptions of UBC's work and project funding were set aside.
- 9) Research agreements and partnerships with First Nations are not always documented in writing. This means they don't always conform to the Western administrative conditions of the university. However, this doesn't imply the absence of formalized partnerships. These have developed over the years, fostered through personal relationships among professors, researchers, staff, chiefs, community members, and students. Therefore, reducing the scope of partnerships solely to the quantity of MoUs or formal agreements would be an inaccurate representation.

Recommendations [Next Steps]

Most of the recommendations were shared and suggested by the interviewees, to whom I extend my gratitude for their generosity and kindness.

1. It is essential for UBC Vancouver and UBC Okanagan to engage with each other in more frequent and connected dialogue, enabling the sharing of information, networks, relationships, discoveries, and common areas of work.
2. Research timelines and the timelines for working with First Nations do not always align. Several interviews highlighted that while First Nations prioritize mutual recognition and

relationship-building, UBC's administrative considerations tend to prioritize work efficiency. Finding common ground where UBC's administrative requirements align with the work cycles of First Nations is important.

3. It is recommended to establish better communication channels between Indigenous communities and the university. As many relationships are often personal, which is positive, there can be challenges when individuals transition. Exploring institutional open channels that facilitate effective communication for both Indigenous communities and UBC is essential.
4. IRSI can become the main bridge of communication between First Nations and UBC. Its expertise and sensitivity are crucial to support work processes, research, and community building. This does not diminish the interpersonal relationships that exist between researchers or staff, but it could provide them with a more institutional and lasting scope.
6. Similarly, IRSI's strong reputation has enabled researchers to reach numerous First Nations not only in BC but across Canada. IRSI could potentially become the focal point for fostering relationships and partnerships in the near future. Naturally, this endeavor should be matched with increased resources and support to enhance IRSI's work.
7. Implement a sabbatical program for First Nation leaders paid by UBC, allowing them to engage with students while primarily focusing on research and reflection during a 3–6-month sabbatical. According to the findings from the interviews, First Nations leaders often find themselves overwhelmed with tasks and administrative duties, leaving little time for contemplation and reflection on solutions to the challenges posed by climate change.
8. Since several partnerships are temporary and often tied to project funding, creating funding opportunities for long-term projects is advisable. This would prevent the disruption of projects that have taken considerable time to build.
9. To continue the decolonization of academia and the institution should serve as a guiding principle for ongoing intellectual, practical, and relational work within and beyond UBC.
10. Many interviewees stressed the need to reevaluate UBC's relationship with the land and its location. The university could pioneer reparations and recognition of global Indigenous land rights if committed to doing so.
11. Enhance collaborative efforts, such as co-creating projects between UBC and First Nations. This could involve work labs, academic and experiential exchanges, and more, fostering a "third collaborative space" built, not imposed by UBC.
12. The IRSI repository must continue to be in development and be consistently nourished. For this purpose, a consistent and dedicated allocation of resources is required to ensure that the IRSI repository continues to grow in a coherent and timely manner, supported by faculties, schools, and departments.

13. UBC must continue building trust with First Nations. UBC, as an institution, is a logical connector for First Nations collaboration and finding solutions beneficial to both UBC's community and First Nations, especially considering the challenges posed by climate change.
14. UBC should further empower interdisciplinary work focused on climate change. Indigenous knowledge is crucial for addressing the ongoing crisis. This should translate into hiring more Indigenous-focused personnel, offering more opportunities for First Nations staff, and securing funding from UBC, provincial, and federal sources to explore experimental, community-driven solutions.
15. Prioritize youth engagement through students and the wider community. Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth are leading efforts to address climate change challenges through resistance and change processes.
16. Report the findings of this project back to appropriate First Nations partners for transparency and to continue IRSI's mission of improving research partnerships.

References

IRSI. What We Do. Retrieved from <https://irsi.ubc.ca/about/what-we-do>. Accessed on August 14th, 2023.

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UBC. UBC overview and facts. Retrieved from <https://www.ubc.ca/about/facts.html>. Accessed on August 13th, 2023.

Appendix

The database comprises 16 categories distributed as follows:

1. Year of publication of partnership, memo, agreement, project, etc.
2. Researcher or contact person in charge.
3. Project Title
4. Type of Source: For example, whether it's a MoU, Research Project, Action Plan Draft, Report, Literature Review, Proposal, Policy, Workshop, among others.
5. Center/Initiative: Whether it was supported or led by a UBC institute, typically associated with a School, Faculty, or directly with UBC's administrative bodies. Examples include Sustainability Hub, IRSI, Beaty Biodiversity Museum, Sustainability Scholars Program, UBC Botanical Garden, projects affiliated with specific schools or faculties, among others.
6. UBC Vancouver: We included a list of schools or faculties or administrative entities where projects or partnerships were identified. Projects were found in the following: Faculty of Applied Science, Faculty of Architecture and Landscape, Faculty of Arts, School of Audiology and Speech Sciences, Sauder School of Business, Faculty of Forestry, Faculty of Land and Food Systems, President and Vice-Chancellor's Office, Vice-President of Research and Innovation, School of Public Policy and Global Affairs, Faculty of Science, UBC Library.
7. UBC Okanagan: Projects were found in the Irvin K. Barber Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, School of Engineering, Fipke Center for Innovative Research, and the Office of the President.
8. First Nation's Partner (leadership circle, association, community): Projects, partnerships, or UBC's work that mentioned different communities. It's important to note that a single project could involve several communities, as reflected in the database. However, refinement might be needed since projects refer to the same communities differently.
 - 1) Aboriginal Housing Management Association
 - 2) Binche Whut' First Nation
 - 3) British Columbia Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN)
 - 4) Coastal First Nations
 - 5) Coastal Salish First Nations

- 6) Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw First Nations
- 7) Haida Gwaii First Nation
- 8) Heiltsuk First Nation
- 9) Huu-ay-aht First Nations
- 10) Katzie First Nation
- 11) Kitselas First Nation
- 12) Kwantlen First Nation
- 13) Kwikwetlem First Nation
- 14) Lil'wat First Nation
- 15) Musqueam First Nation
- 16) Nisga'a First Nation
- 17) Nuxulk First Nation
- 18) Qayqayt First Nation
- 19) Quw'utsun First Nation
- 20) Semiahmoo First Nation
- 21) Squamish First Nation
- 22) Syilx Okanagan Nation
- 23) Tsawwassen First Nation
- 24) T̓silhqot'ín Nation
- 25) Tulalip Tribes
- 26) Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC)
- 27) Upper Nicola Band
- 28) West Moberly First Nations
- 29) W̓SÁNEĆ First Nations

9. Non-UBC, non-indigenous partner (Industry/Government): Sponsorships, partnerships, or support from entities such as:

- 1) BC Housing
- 2) BC Hydro
- 3) BC Knowledge Development Fund
- 4) BC Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation
- 5) Canada Foundation for Innovation
- 6) Clean BC Remote Community Energy Strategy (RCES)
- 7) Coast Opportunity Funds
- 8) Coastal Douglas-Fir & Associated Ecosystems Conservation Partnership
- 9) Fraser Estuary Research Collaborative (FERC)
- 10) Great Bear Initiative
- 11) Gwaii Trust Society
- 12) Mitacs Accelerate Program
- 13) Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions
- 14) Quesnel Dalelh Education Employment Society (QDEES)
- 15) Resilient Waters Project (Solutions for Flood, Fish, and Farms for the Lower Fraser)
- 16) Sierra Club of British Columbia Foundation
- 17) Simon Fraser University
- 18) Sitka Foundation
- 19) The Energy and Environmental Sustainability (Lower Mainland Health).
- 20) The Fraser Basin Council
- 21) WWF Canada

10. Agreement/Protocol: Different types of partnerships were classified. Complete information regarding the type of agreement was not always available. In many cases, "Yes" was indicated when a partnership existed, but the exact nature wasn't clear (26 out of 55). Additionally, four (4) MoUs, two (2) Memorandums of Affiliation, and two (2) protocols for specific projects were identified. Five (5) partnerships didn't necessarily have a protocol but had developed over time between the community and researchers.

One (1) relationship was currently under development. The "NA" variable was used (11 cases) when projects were designed for First Nations but their involvement as partners wasn't found. These cases were documented for their relevance. Four cases had no information (No info) where there seemed to be a partnership, but the type wasn't clear.

11. Funding: Resources used for project financing couldn't be found. Therefore, the funding entity was provided. Only one case was found where the project was funded for eight million dollars.
12. Starting Year: If available, the year the project began, which might differ from the publication or delivery year.
13. Abstract: A summary of the project's objective.
14. Keywords: Terms such as climate change, natural resources, indigenous knowledge, ecosystem, and governance, among others.
15. Location: If available, the precise project location.
16. BC region of the project. Eight district regions were identified: Cariboo, Mainland/Southwest, Nechako, North Coast, Northeast, Provincewide, Thompson-Okanagan, Vancouver Island/Coast. Project partnerships were distributed as follows:
 - Cariboo: 2 projects
 - Mainland/Southwest: 3 projects
 - Nechako: 1 project
 - North Coast: 10 projects
 - Northeast: 1 project
 - Provincewide: 21 projects
 - Thompson-Okanagan: 5 projects
 - Vancouver Island/Coast: 12 projects