



**KAUFFMAN**  
AND ASSOCIATES INCORPORATED



# Phase II Tribal Engagement

Final Report



## Executive Summary

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Between July 2025 and March 2026, the City of Spokane advanced Phase II Climate Planning for the 2025–2027 biennium as part of the PlanSpokane 2046. Led by BERK Consulting in coordination with City staff and Kauffman and Associates, Inc. (KAI), the team developed draft climate resilience and greenhouse gas goals and policies for integration into the City’s Comprehensive Plan. This work included internal coordination, multicriteria prioritization analysis (MCPA), environmental justice review, and structured Tribal engagement workgroup (TEW) consultation.

The Phase II TEW met four times between October 2025 and January 2026 to provide direct feedback on draft policies, evaluation criteria, implementation concepts, and prioritization outcomes. The TEW included representatives from regional Tribal Nations, Native-led organizations, City staff, and consulting partners.

Through this process, TEW members emphasized:

- Clear recognition of Tribal sovereignty and government-to-government relationships
- Use of “Tribal rights” rather than “Tribal treaty rights” to include non-treaty Tribes
- Avoiding characterization of Tribes as “vulnerable communities”
- Inclusion of Indigenous-defined indicators, including cultural, spiritual, and relational wellbeing
- Elevation of Native-led resilience hubs, Indigenous food systems, youth engagement, and land back/co-management opportunities
- Strengthening tribal-specific emergency management policies
- Strong implementation feasibility, accountability mechanisms, and long-term monitoring

TEW input informed the structure and refinement of the multicriteria prioritization framework, including elevation of co-benefits and emphasis on feasibility considerations. By January 2026, TEW members confirmed that revised policies accurately reflect their input, and expressed broad support for advancing the policies to the next phase.

Policies shaped through TEW engagement performed strongly in the City’s multicriteria prioritization framework, demonstrating alignment between Tribal priorities and broader climate resilience, GHG reduction, and environmental justice objectives.

The TEW process ensured that climate goals and policies are technically robust and aligned for Comprehensive Plan integration, while reflecting Tribal sovereignty, government-to-government engagement, and commitment to ongoing partnership.

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## Purpose and Background

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In early 2025, the City of Spokane initiated Phase II of its Climate Impact and Resiliency Planning process as part of the PlanSpokane 2046. Building on the Phase I Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, this phase focused on developing draft climate resilience and greenhouse gas (GHG) goals and policies for integration into the City's 2026 Comprehensive Plan update in alignment with House Bill 1181 and the Growth Management Act.

To ensure meaningful Tribal participation, the City convened a tribal engagement workgroup (TEW) to inform policy development and prioritization. This effort reflects the City's recognition that Indigenous perspectives, sovereignty, and government-to-government relationships must be central to climate planning.

Kauffman and Associates, Inc. (KAI), a Native-owned consulting firm, facilitated the TEW process through a culturally grounded and relational engagement approach. KAI coordinated meetings, documented feedback and synthesized Tribal input into guidance that shaped draft policies, prioritization criteria, and implementation considerations for the Comprehensive Plan.

## Tribal Engagement Process Overview

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The TEW convened four times between October 2025 and January 2026 as part of the City of Spokane's climate planning process. Each session brought together representatives from regional Tribal Nations and urban Native organizations, alongside City staff and consulting partners. Meetings were designed to foster trust, deepen mutual understanding, and center Tribal perspectives in the development of climate resilience and greenhouse gas policies. Discussions included structured policy review, open dialogue, and culturally responsive facilitation to create space for reflection, honest feedback, and shared problem-solving.

The engagement process prioritized relationship-building and recognition of Tribal sovereignty. Participants were invited to help shape draft policies, evaluation criteria, and implementation strategies before advancement to City boards and commissions. Between sessions, KAI facilitated ongoing communication, gathered input, and responded to the needs and concerns of the TEW members. Policy language and prioritization approaches were presented by BERK, refined based on discussion, and brought back for confirmation to ensure transparency and responsiveness.

Participants expressed appreciation for the structure and tone of the process, noting that it reflected a meaningful commitment to government-to-government engagement and respect for Tribal governance. The TEW meetings ensured that Tribal input directly informed draft policy language, multicriteria prioritization outcomes, and implementation considerations as the City advanced climate goals toward its Comprehensive Plan integration.

## Participating Tribes and Urban Native Organizations

The Phase II TEW engaged regional Tribal Nations and Native-led organizations whose leadership and expertise are central to climate resilience in the Spokane region. Participation varied across sessions, with several organizations attending one or more of the four meetings.

### Spokane Tribes of Indians

Representatives from the Spokane Tribe of Indians participated in Phase II TEW meetings, bringing knowledge grounded in traditional ecological practices and decades of environmental stewardship. The Tribe, whose ancestral homelands encompass the Spokane River and surrounding lands, continues to lead in fisheries restoration, water protection, and cultural education. Their participation provided essential insight into watershed health, land stewardship, and long-term ecological resilience.

### Kalispel Tribe of Indians

The Kalispel Tribe of Indians participated in the TEW and contributed expertise in natural resource management, habitat restoration, climate adaptation, and energy efficiency. Located along the Pend Oreille River, the Tribe's systems-based approach to watershed health and species recovery informed discussions on integrated land stewardship and community well-being.

### Coeur d'Alene Tribe

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe participated in Phase II engagement sessions, offering perspective shaped by strong ancestral and environmental ties to the Spokane region. The Tribe is nationally recognized for leadership in water quality protection and aquatic ecosystem restoration within the Coeur d'Alene Basin. Their involvement reinforced the importance of inter-jurisdictional coordination and consideration of downstream climate impacts.

### Upper Columbia United Tribes

Upper Columbia United Tribes participated in the TEW process, bringing a regional and cross-boundary perspective to climate resilience planning. As a coalition of Tribes working collaboratively to protect natural resources and uphold Tribal sovereignty, UCUT strengthened discussions around watershed-wide coordination and large-scale resilience strategies.

### Spokane Tribal Network

The Spokane Tribal Network participated in Phase II sessions and contributed expertise in social justice, cultural revitalization, youth engagement, and Indigenous food sovereignty. As a Native-led nonprofit serving the Spokane region, the organization reinforced the intersection of climate resilience, community empowerment, and culturally grounded infrastructure development.

### American Indian Community Center

The AICC was invited to participate in the Phase II TEW but did not attend. AICC remains an important Native-serving organization in the Spokane region, providing workforce development, elder services, and cultural programming that support intergenerational connections and urban Native families.

## The Native Project

The Native Project was also invited to participate in Phase II engagement but did not attend. As a nonprofit health and wellness organization serving Native individuals and families throughout the Spokane region, The Native Project plays an important role in environmental health, emergency preparedness, and culturally responsive service delivery.

# Summary of Key Outcomes from Each Session

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## Tribal Engagement Workgroup 1—October 20, 2025

The first Phase II session focused on reviewing Phase I recommendations and introducing draft climate policies and established the foundation for precise sovereignty language and implementation clarity. TEW members reinforced priority areas including Native-led resilience hubs, Indigenous food systems, youth engagement, and cultural infrastructure such as community gardens and gathering spaces. Tribal representatives emphasized the need to avoid framing Tribes as “vulnerable communities” and instead reflect sovereignty and government-to-government relationships. Emergency management policies were strengthened to address transportation barriers, language accessibility, multigenerational households, and communication challenges during wildfire smoke and extreme weather events.

## Tribal Engagement Workgroup 2—November 17, 2025

The second session reviewed revised draft policies and explored implementation concepts. Emergency management language was refined to include a Tribal-specific evacuation planning policy (Option 1), which TEW members strongly supported. Health and Well-Being policy options were merged to ensure inclusion of both Tribal governments and Native-led organizations, emphasizing multigenerational knowledge-sharing and community vitality.

Cultural resource policies were enhanced to explicitly include Indigenous food sovereignty, culturally specific growing practices, and use of “Tribal Rights” terminology.

Participants were asked to identify priority demonstration concepts. Youth engagement and climate education, Native-led resilience hubs, Indigenous food systems, and cultural burning were identified as near-term implementation priorities. However, TEW members emphasized that land back and co-management are cross-cutting strategies that apply across all categories and should not be interpreted as lower priority. Rather, participants described land back and co-management as foundational approaches that influence and strengthen all other climate actions.

## Tribal Engagement Workgroup 3—December 15, 2025

The December session confirmed that prior revisions reflected TEW feedback. Food systems policies were reviewed in detail and framed as both health and sovereignty issues. Participants emphasized

feasibility, permitting, zoning considerations, and phased implementation. The group highlighted the importance of explicit acknowledgment of Tribal input as policies advance through the climate resilience and sustainability board, planning commission, and city council.

Monitoring and accountability emerged as central themes. Participants stressed that trust depends on follow-through and long-term engagement beyond policy adoption.

## Tribal Engagement Workgroup 4—January 21, 2026

The final TEW meeting focused on reviewing the Multi-Criteria Prioritization Analysis (MCPA) and confirming final policy alignment. The evaluation framework included themes such as resilience, GHG reduction, impacts on overburdened communities, logistics/feasibility, co-benefits, and degree of certainty.

TEW members expressed support for the framework and confirmed that policies shaped by Tribal input performed strongly in the initial scoring. No additional revisions were requested. Participants emphasized:

- The importance of pilot projects before scaling
- Continued clarity on implementation monitoring
- Ongoing milestone-based updates rather than continuous meeting cadence

The session concluded with confirmation that revisions accurately reflected Tribal feedback and that policies were ready to advance.

## Shared Priorities from Tribal Engagement

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Across all Phase II TEW sessions, participants identified a set of shared priorities that shaped how climate resilience and greenhouse gas policies should be drafted, evaluated, and implemented. These priorities reflect consistent themes expressed throughout policy review discussions, prioritization framework conversations, and implementation planning dialogue.

### Sovereignty and Language Precision

Participants emphasized the importance of clearly distinguishing sovereign Tribal Nations from other communities within policy language and evaluation frameworks. TEW members reinforced the need for government-to-government framing and requested the use of “Tribal Rights” terminology rather than narrower references to treaty rights, ensuring inclusion of non-treaty Tribes. Language precision was viewed as foundational—not symbolic—to accurately reflect Tribal governance authority, jurisdictional considerations, and long-standing relationships to land and water.

### Implementation Feasibility

TEW members consistently stressed that policies must move beyond aspirational statements and be structured for practical application. Logistics, administrative capacity, permitting realities, and funding

pathways were identified as essential components of credible climate policy. Participants noted that feasibility should be weighed strongly in prioritization frameworks, and that phased, practical implementation builds trust and long-term effectiveness.

## Co-Benefits and Multisector Integration

Climate policies were viewed as most effective when designed to advance multiple goals simultaneously. Participants highlighted that food systems intersect with health outcomes, greenhouse gas reduction, housing stability, cultural revitalization, and economic opportunity. Land back and co-management were identified as cross-sector priorities influencing governance coordination, natural resource stewardship, and community resilience. Integrated policy design was seen as vital to maximizing impact and aligning Tribal and City objectives.

## Accountability and Monitoring

Transparency and follow-through emerged as central to maintaining trust. Participants emphasized the importance of visibly acknowledging Tribal contributions in final policy documents and requested notification of any material policy changes as drafts advanced to boards and commissions. The City shared amended policies ahead of the Civilian Review and Standards Board (CRSB) hearing in mid-February, providing Tribal representatives and partners with an opportunity to review the updates in advance. Long-term relationship building was described as an indicator of success, with monitoring and implementation tracking serving as mechanisms to ensure engagement commitments translate into action.

Together, these shared priorities informed refinements to draft climate resilience and GHG policies and influenced the City's multicriteria prioritization framework. They reinforce that effective climate planning requires not only technical rigor but also clarity in governance relationships, realistic implementation pathways, integrated policy design, and sustained accountability.

# Alignment with Multicriteria Prioritization Framework

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The multicriteria prioritization framework incorporated and reflected TEW input throughout its design and application.

**Comprehensive Evaluation Themes:** The framework evaluated draft policies across climate resilience, GHG reduction, impacts on overburdened communities, logistics and feasibility, co-benefits, and degree of certainty. These categories provided a structured method for assessing both climate outcomes and implementation practicality.

**Elevation of Co-Benefits:** In response to TEW feedback, co-benefits were emphasized as a distinct and meaningful evaluation category. This allowed policies related to food systems, health, cultural

infrastructure, and community well-being to be recognized for advancing multiple objectives simultaneously.

**Feasibility and Logistics Considerations:** TEW members underscored the importance of realistic implementation pathways. As a result, feasibility, administrative capacity, and logistical considerations were weighed as essential components of policy evaluation rather than secondary factors.

**Recognition of Indigenous-Defined Outcomes:** The framework incorporated consideration of outcomes beyond traditional quantitative indicators, acknowledging Indigenous perspectives on resilience, cultural continuity, and relational well-being.

**Sovereignty and Governance Clarity:** TEW feedback reinforced the need for policy framing that clearly distinguishes Tribal sovereignty and government-to-government relationships. This clarity informed both policy language and the evaluation context applied during scoring.

Policies shaped through TEW engagement performed strongly in the initial prioritization results, demonstrating alignment between Tribal priorities and the City's broader climate resilience, GHG reduction, and environmental justice objectives.

## Recommendations Moving Forward

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Based on TEW dialogue across all four sessions, the following actions are recommended to ensure meaningful implementation and sustained government-to-government engagement.

**Advance Pilot and Demonstration Projects:** Initiate near-term pilot projects aligned with TEW-identified priorities to test feasibility, build momentum, and demonstrate tangible progress. Priority areas include:

- Native-led resilience hubs and emergency coordination sites
- Indigenous food systems and culturally specific urban agriculture initiatives
- Youth climate education and intergenerational knowledge-sharing programs
- Pilot efforts should include defined scopes, clear roles, and identified funding pathways

**Establish Clear Implementation and Accountability Structures:** Develop a transparent monitoring framework tied to implementation milestones. This should:

- Define measurable indicators (including Indigenous-defined outcomes where appropriate)
- Identify responsible City departments and partners
- Establish reporting intervals
- Clarify how progress will be publicly communicated

**Maintain Ongoing Government-to-Government Engagement:** Ensure continued Tribal engagement beyond policy adoption through:

- Milestone-based engagement updates during Comprehensive Plan integration
- Early notification of material policy language changes
- Opportunities for review prior to final adoption actions
- Structured check-ins during implementation phases

**Strengthen Urban–Tribal Coordination Mechanisms:** Continue refining coordination structures to support sustained collaboration, including:

- Clarification of Tribal liaison roles
- Evaluation of advisory or working group models
- Defined communication pathways between Tribal Nations, Native-led organizations, and City departments

**Integrate Monitoring Framework Development with Policy Rollout:** As climate elements are integrated into the Comprehensive Plan, develop clarity around:

- How policies translate into implementation actions
- How feasibility considerations are addressed over time
- How evaluation criteria and prioritization decisions are revisited as needed

## Conclusion

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The Phase II TEW process successfully translated Tribal priorities into refined climate resilience, and GHG policies aligned with the City’s Comprehensive Plan update.

Through four TEW sessions, Tribal representatives strengthened sovereignty language, influenced prioritization outcomes, elevated Indigenous food systems and youth initiatives, and reinforced the importance of feasibility and accountability. The workgroup also established a durable foundation for continued government-to-government engagement in municipal climate planning.

The City now advances climate policies that are technically robust, strategically prioritized, and shaped through meaningful Tribal consultation—positioning Spokane to lead with integrity in climate resilience and partnership-based governance.