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Inclusive and Participatory Policymaking at the Local Level: Problems and Possibilities

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Abstract

Municipalities are being called on to become more participatory in their approach to policy making and governing. Concurrently, they are working toward making their policies, programs, and staff complements more inclusive and equitable, and more responsive to the ongoing consequences of colonialism and other forms of systemic discrimination. These developments share common normative and theoretical foundations, but municipalities are not necessarily actively working on these changes in tandem. In response, we ask, “What are the problems and possibilities that emerge in efforts to centre Indigenous Knowledges and intersectional commitments in participatory policymaking processes at the local level?” We highlight two barriers that arise persistently in these efforts and suggest modest ways forward that will be useful for municipal public servants working on community engagement; diversity, equity, inclusion efforts; and building relationships with Indigenous residents.

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Keywords

Collaborative governance, Indigenous-settler relationships, municipal governance, participatory policy making

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Inclusive and Participatory Policymaking at the Local Level: Problems and Possibilities

Municipalities play a vital role in the governance landscape of present-day Canada. They have significant power to shape policies, programs, and services in a range of domains, albeit with variation across the country (Taylor & Dobson, 2020). Generally, their authority includes climate change planning, land use planning, economic development, infrastructure, housing-related matters, and recreation services, among other areas. Through their official community plans, municipalities dictate patterns of housing and commercial development and service delivery, investment priorities, and commitments for enhancing community liveability. Related to climate change planning, they develop and implement mitigation and adaptation strategies that shape future development priorities. As a result, while limited to powers delegated by the province, municipalities significantly shape our lives.

Over the past few decades, municipalities in Canada and elsewhere have been called on to become more participatory in their approach to policymaking and governance. This has included ubiquitous efforts to develop citizen, public, and community engagement plans and frameworks, and to a lesser extent, the development of collaborative governance mechanisms (Ansell & Gash, 2007). These arrangements, which see a shifting and more substantive role for residents in local planning and decision-making, are underpinned by participatory and deliberative democracy.

Concurrently, municipalities are working toward—to varying degrees and effect—making their policies, programs, and staff complements more inclusive and equitable (Andrew-Amofah et al., 2022; Su, 2018), and more responsive to the ongoing effects of racism, ableism, sexism, and colonialism on Indigenous people and others who have experienced—and continue to experience—deep inequities. Across many large urban areas in the country, these efforts manifest as policies, plans, strategies, and initiatives that variously respond to calls for gender equity (e.g., City for All Women Initiative, 2015), confronting anti-Black and other forms of racism (e.g., City of Toronto, 2023) and advancing reconciliation (Anderson & Flynn, 2021; City of Calgary, 2023) and the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP Task Force, 2024). They sometimes invoke intersectionality as a guiding theory and commitment (e.g., City of Toronto, 2023; City of Vancouver, 2021). They commonly highlight the importance of collaboration, and are grounded by tenets of participatory and deliberative democracy (e.g., City for All Women Initiative, 2015; Rodrigues, 2015), which are also invoked in collaborative governance literature (Ansell & Gash, 2007).

However, the extent to which municipalities' efforts to advance equity and inclusion—and participatory and deliberative democratic approaches—are countering exclusion and producing more equitable and anticolonial communities is unclear (e.g., Petite, 2021; Pin, 2021). It is also not necessarily the case that municipalities are actively working to link these concurrent shifts towards more participatory and more inclusive practices. They may be pursuing participatory policymaking and governance arrangements without considering the need to address underlying inequities; an oversight that “[can make] the public sector [look busy] addressing pressing issues and demonstrating success [through] traditional public sector measures, but [with] no effort to tackle root causes” (Cole & Hagen, 2023). It is to this question that we turn in this paper.

Because the evidence on dismantling colonial exclusions and other barriers to participation through participatory policymaking and governance is mixed, it is worth exploring how these shifts could be more explicitly underpinned by efforts to advance inclusion, anti-oppression and reconciliation, and what challenges such efforts encounter. To explore this idea, we use two studies with different scopes and aims that share an interest in more participatory and inclusive practices in municipal policymaking and governance, to consider the question, “What are the problems and possibilities that emerge in efforts to centre Indigenous Knowledges and intersectional commitments in participatory policymaking processes at the local level?” We focus on participatory policymaking, including practices of public engagement, because it is the area where the included studies most overlap, though we draw on collaborative governance theory because of its usefulness for thinking about underpinning commitments and parameters for inclusion.

We are aware of the tensions that underpin this research question. For instance, Indigenous people might not wish to have their knowledges centred by municipalities sitting on their stolen land or might not trust that this knowledge will be properly understood. Further, pursuing participatory policymaking reforms confers legitimacy on the state, which is contested (Simpson, 2017). Still, and perhaps especially in small- and medium-sized municipalities where resources and capacity are strained, since colonization in urban spaces reproduces inequities (MacKinnon & Silver, 2017), pursuing participation and inclusion commitments concurrently might be warranted. The studies we draw on took place in different contexts and adopted different methodological approaches. One focused primarily on participatory policymaking and analysis, and the other on collaborative governance and public engagement. Together, they provide an opportunity to examine persistent barriers and possibilities in terms of more collaborative and inclusive policymaking approaches, and their possibilities for contributing to more inclusive and equitable communities. The purpose of using these studies together in this way is thus neither to compare them, nor to assess specific approaches to participatory policymaking and public engagement. Instead, the purpose is to explore what might be hindering the inclusive potential of municipal efforts underpinned by participatory and deliberative democracy, and offer insights into how these hindrances could be overcome. As scholars who identify as white settlers, we recognize that in exploring this question, we are privileging a (slow) transformative approach to local governance that does not match the urgent need for anticolonial and anti-racist reforms. We hope that this analysis makes a small contribution to facilitating more sustained and rapid shifts in the future.

To answer the question guiding this paper, we begin with a brief overview of the role of municipalities in present-day Canada’s governance landscape, and of participatory democracy practices at the municipal level. Our focus is on municipalities and not Indigenous governments because the research presented in this paper focuses on municipal efforts to advance more participatory and inclusive forms of policymaking. We also consider some of the promises and challenges of more participatory approaches to policymaking and governance. Next, we discuss two important theoretical foundations guiding the included studies: collaborative governance regime (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015) viewed through an anticolonial lens (Gillis, 2023); and intersectionality, and particularly its application in public policy analysis (Crenshaw, 1989; Hankivsky et al., 2014). In our discussion about collaborative governance theory, we include a brief overview of collaborations between Indigenous and settler governments which

offer insight into how participatory approaches might generate policy outcomes that are more inclusive of Indigenous Knowledges.

We proceed with an overview of the two included studies: a mixed methods study of municipal climate change planning in Ontario municipalities; and a collaborative, locally and intersectionality-informed policy analysis of municipal policy documents in a small northern municipality in British Columbia. Informing our work with these two studies allows us a better understanding of participatory policymaking across different local conditions, using different forms of qualitative data (Stake, 2006). With these data, we can see how cities across Canada with varying geographies, population sizes, and budgets, engage with, and are challenged in, their efforts to learn from Indigenous Knowledges and advance intersectional commitments in policymaking. Across these cases, we identify two common problems that are hindering municipalities' efforts in these regards: a lack of inclusive networks and relationship-building opportunities, and a lack of understanding of Indigenous Knowledges and intersectionality. We go on to offer three recommendations in response. While we draw on a relatively small number of cases, we suggest our findings are broadly applicable, and thus warrant meaningful attention for advancing local equity, inclusion, and (re)conciliation efforts.

Background

According to the 2021 census, there are nearly 3,600 municipalities in present-day Canada (Muniscope, 2017), including 632 across Ontario and British Columbia (Ibid.) where the studies that inform this paper took place. They vary in size and authority and are governed by different legislation in each province and territory. Because of their lack of constitutional status and lack of authority independent of the province or territory in which they are located (Hachard, 2020; Hoehn & Stevens, 2018) they are sometimes positioned as a lesser level of government. This does pose some challenges, especially from a fiscal perspective, since they have limited taxation authority compared to other levels of government (Taylor & Dobson, 2020). However, municipalities perform critical functions. They manage water and wastewater treatment and service, have a dramatic impact on the lives of unhoused people (Martino, 2022), inform peoples' experiences with emergency services such as policing, and more. Additionally, municipal politicians have commonly demanded and received greater legal authority and fiscal autonomy over their policies (Hachard, 2020). In sum, municipalities have significant power to regulate and shape residents' lives.

At least partially in response to legitimacy challenges, municipalities are under increasing pressure to pursue more participatory and deliberative forms of policymaking (Lafont, 2014). Another reason that Tindal et al. (2017) suggest for the growing emphasis on participation is that more engaged residents give municipalities greater authority as they seek support from other levels of government. Over the past several decades, municipal public, citizen, and community engagement frameworks and initiatives have proliferated. Many municipalities across the country have published community engagement strategies that outline their commitments to hearing from residents. Scholars outline dozens of community engagement tools and activities that municipalities use (Rowe & Frewer, 2005; Tindal et al., 2017), while others offer guidelines for designing those activities (Abelson & Gauvin, 2008; Bryson et al., 2012). International organizations such as the International Association for Public Participation have emerged to "promote and advance public participation / community engagement globally through

targeted initiatives that are guided by culturally adaptive standards of practice and core values” (International Association for Public Participation, n.d.).

These efforts are underpinned by participatory and deliberative democracy. There is disagreement about how these converge and differ, but minimally, the former emphasizes widespread participation, while the latter prioritizes the process by which participants reach decisions (i.e., deliberation) (Elstub, 2018). They are theoretical responses to empirical democratic theory, which emphasizes that citizens are neither interested nor capable of meaningfully participating in democratic decision-making (Ibid.). As such, in participatory and deliberative democracy, the public is positioned as having important insights to share, and as legitimate policy actors.

Although municipal public engagement attempts are ubiquitous, and many of these efforts have been met with success (Fitzgibbons & Mitchell, 2021; Goodman et al., 2020; Doberstein, 2020), they have also faced challenges. For instance, municipalities have been accused of using ineffective consultation methods or designs, such as townhalls or public forums (Ross, 2018), which often fail to capture a range of perspectives, including because some “attendees struggle to speak up and articulate their viewpoints due to fear of confronting outspoken and dominant individuals” (Jasim et al., 2021, p. 2). Additionally, residents’ own time restrictions often limit their ability to participate (Hallström et al., 2019). In response, Canadian municipalities have increased their digital consultation efforts through e-petitions and online platforms (Johnson, 2018; Levenda et al., 2020), which offer some flexibility, but may not actually increase opportunities for residents to be heard (Levenda et al., 2020). Moreover, participatory democracy initiatives can entrench the same sorts of exclusions that they intend to disrupt (Mohammed et al., 2017; Petite, 2021; Su, 2018), and there is limited evidence that municipalities are actively learning from the insights of equity-denied residents—including Indigenous people—about their engagement priorities (Walker, 2008). Further, questions regarding the municipal duty to consult Indigenous Peoples remain unanswered. While the province of British Columbia has adopted legislation aligned with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which includes several references to requirements for Indigenous consent (Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, 2019), and the Ipperwash Inquiry of 2007 (Linden, 2007) recommended the Province of Ontario develop policies regarding the provincial duty to consult and clarify the duty at the municipal level, courts have not yet clarified whether Canadian municipalities have a legal duty to consult (Anderson & Flynn, 2021). As a result, even though there are some examples of substantive efforts in this regard (Fraser & Viswanathan, 2013), the legal impetus for municipalities to engage remains limited and muddled (Association of Municipalities Ontario, 2019). This, combined with the Canadian government’s constitutional and financial responsibilities to Indigenous Peoples, may be giving municipalities licence to pay minimal attention to developing appropriate engagement mechanisms. Further, as noted earlier, the extent to which Indigenous people and their governments wish to engage with colonial municipalities varies. Ultimately, many voices continue to be marginalized and excluded from local political participation (Andrew-Amofah et al., 2022).

Concurrently, municipalities are undertaking myriad efforts to advance equity, inclusion, and (re)conciliation within their boundaries. These initiatives, policies, and plans exist in large urban centres across Canada (e.g., City of Calgary, 2023; City of Toronto, 2023; City of Vancouver, 2021; UNDRIP

Task Force, 2024). They attempt to tackle complex issues ranging from gender inequality to anti-Black racism and (re)conciliation. They outline commitments, goals, and objectives for advancing equity and inclusion within the municipality and offer strategies for achieving these goals. They are typically developed with guidance from residents. Albeit less commonly, some small and northern municipalities boast similar initiatives. For instance, the City of Prince George in northern British Columbia has an Equity and Inclusion Policy (2011) and a reconciliation framework (2018). These efforts often signal, at least implicitly, a commitment to more participatory forms of governance and policymaking (e.g., City for All Women Initiative, 2015).

The connection between participation and equity and inclusion priorities is theoretically appealing. One benefit of public participation is that it can reduce information deficits and asymmetries through residents bringing to light new information or goals from their own positions (Ianniello et al., 2019; Nabatchi, 2012). Another is that more innovative ideas may be generated as a result, and policies and services may better match the needs of residents (Blomkamp, 2018), ostensibly attending to their inclusion needs as well. Further, Indigenous governance literature suggests the potential for spiritual authorities to be included in learning and sharing processes which can result in a more collective or holistic community vision (Price, 2008). Finally, building the relationships required for meaningful public participation can help build broader trust between residents and the government (Blomkamp, 2018).

However, as noted above, participatory practices have not always met their inclusive aspirations and can in fact confer unmerited legitimacy on deeply inequitable policy processes and outcomes. Accordingly, municipalities have become increasingly creative with, and attentive to, engaging with residents in policymaking processes, including the extent to which these efforts can simultaneously address problems of structural marginalization that erase some people as policy actors (Johnson et al., 2020; Ross, 2018). These developments are supported by calls from critical policy scholars who emphasize the “nothing about us without us” mantra popularized by critical disability activists (Charlton, 1998), and now used widely as a reminder that historically marginalized communities ought to be involved in shaping decisions that affect them (Jackson et al., 2018; Clark, 2018), and that cities must actively challenge and respond to systems of oppression that uphold social inequities.

Within this milieu, some municipalities have been especially focused on engaging with Indigenous residents. For instance, Heritz (2016; 2021) has examined several municipalities to consider their efforts to engage with Indigenous residents. Others have looked at specific cases where municipal staff tried to develop stronger relationships with First Nations, such as in Hamilton, Ontario during the Red Hill Valley Parkway Project, despite lack of clear guidance on how to do so (Fraser and Viswanathan 2013). More generally, Borrows (2005) suggests that collaborative environmental policymaking in particular may create space for transformative reconciliation, which seeks to return power to Indigenous residents. It requires us to reconcile unsustainable relationships between Indigenous people and settlers as well as our unsustainable relationships with the Earth through sharing and learning from Indigenous Knowledges and Western knowledges (Tully, 2018).

Others have focused on collaborations between local and Indigenous governments. Although not the focus of this paper, some findings from this body of literature are informative to the results of the

research presented here. For instance, Alcantara and Nelles' (2016) extensive study on partnerships between Indigenous and local governments in Canada finds that while formal agreements are most commonly service agreements, those related to relationship building and decolonization have become more common across the country (Alcantara and Nelles, 2016). Further, some agreements focus on "capacity building," where municipalities support capacity development within neighbouring nations, although the reverse is not true. The authors suggest this could reflect the lack of acknowledgement that settler governments lack capacity when it comes to Indigenous Knowledges (Ibid., pp. 23-24), a point to which we return in our recommendations. Despite these efforts, municipalities continue to face challenges when it comes to changing participation (and power) dynamics through their participatory policymaking efforts. Although some efforts to merge commitments to collaboration and inclusion exist, there is not widespread evidence of which we are aware of municipalities pursuing these priorities as mutually constituting. This paper helps respond to this gap.

Theoretical and Methodological Foundations

The studies we draw on in this paper, and our broader thinking about this topic, are guided by two theoretical and conceptual foundations: collaborative governance regimes (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015) viewed through an anticolonial lens (Gillis, 2023), and intersectionality. Together, they offer insights for how collaborative policymaking and governance can happen, where to look for barriers to their success, and how to pursue them with attention to facilitating inclusion. As noted earlier, we also draw on insights from literature focused on Canadian municipalities' engagement with Indigenous residents and, to a lesser extent, research about Indigenous-municipal government partnerships in Canada.

Collaborative governance is discussed in both western and Indigenous scholarship. Indigenous forms of governance often emphasize relationality and interdependence, which highlights "the profound and dynamic relationships within human communities and between humans and the more-than-human" (Williams et al., 2020, p. 6). Focused on colonial governments, Ansell and Gash (2007) define collaborative governance as "a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy" (p. 544). Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) build on this definition by defining a collaborative governance regime as "a type of public governance system in which cross-boundary collaboration represents the predominant mode for conduct, decision making, and activity between autonomous participants who have come together to achieve some collective purpose" (p. 18). The collaborative governance regime aligns with the values of participatory democracy in that it requires the engagement of multiple, independent actors contributing to the development of public policy and public services (Bianchi et al., 2021). To view this framework—which imagines an interplay between collaboration dynamics and the system context in which the collaboration takes place—through an anticolonial lens, Gillis proposed several adjustments. Specifically, policy problems considered through a collaborative governance regime should consider the impacts on earth and its systems rather than taking an extractive view of humans' relationship with the planet, be more explicit about learning from Indigenous Knowledges, and be more forthcoming about the interdependence of history and unequal power relations in shaping current governing structures. Ultimately, each system context variable acts as a driver or barrier to the development of collaborative

governance regimes between settler colonial governments and Indigenous Peoples. Further, and as a useful bridge between our theoretical and practical orientations, Ansell et al. (2020) propose that to better understand effective inclusion in collaborative governance, it is important to consider factors that affect peoples' motivations to participate, and procedural factors that help sustain inclusion. They include trust, incentives, mutual interdependence, and the purpose of collaboration in the former category, and facilitated leadership, relationship building, informational work, and strategic inclusion in the latter (Ibid.). Their model, which considers how to foster inclusion in participatory forms of policymaking, can be further informed by intersectionality.

Intersectionality is both theory and practice and an important critical framework for guiding public policy development and analysis (Hankivsky et al., 2014). According to Hancock (2016), the term intersectionality emerged “nearly simultaneously in legal studies and sociology” (p. 29) in the work of Black feminist scholars Patricia Hill Collins and Kimberlé Crenshaw, who were using very similar ideas to articulate Black feminist thought (Collins, 1990) and explain Black women's experiences of workplace discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). These works are foundational to the term's widespread use and build on ideas that Hancock (2016) traces back to the first part of the 19th century. As a critical theoretical idea, intersectionality aims to redress inequalities by exposing and disrupting the differentiated impacts of systems of power (racism, sexism, ableism, capitalism, etc.) on peoples' lives. Intersectionality assumes that social and political systems deeply affect peoples' experiences and opportunities in the world (Hancock, 2007), and that there is heterogeneity within groups of people who share common identities, as well as between them and those with different identities. Intersectional scholarship interrogates inequality, relationality, power, social context, complexity, and social justice (Collins & Bilge, 2016). It shares with other critical theoretical ideas—including various feminist traditions—a commitment to revealing and dismantling oppressive power structures.

Hankivsky and Jordan-Zachary (2019) cite Tiffany Manuel's work as “one of the earliest articles looking at the relationship between intersectionality and public policy” (p. 6). Since then, its application to public policy has expanded considerably. Intersectionality-based policy analysis aims to reveal the uneven impacts of policies on different groups of people, and to make equity-related contributions to policy knowledge (Hankivsky et al., 2014). It responds to the fact that dominant approaches to public policy continue to overlook how “policy analysis [is] complicit in perpetuating privilege and disadvantage and advancing a particular view of the world” (Tedds, 2023, p. 3). One important feature of applying intersectionality in public policy is recognizing that the multi-level type of analysis it requires depends on “the voices of those affected by problems and policy to be meaningfully engaged with developing responses and effective solutions” (Hankivsky & Jordan-Zachary, 2019, p. 7). In this paper, intersectionality is usefully complemented by Indigenous feminism, which “draws on core elements of Indigenous cultures . . . [centres identity, which] connects people to a particular territory . . . [and is] inextricably bound to the experiences of Indigenous Peoples with colonialism” (Green, 2017, pp. 4-5). As Green (Ibid.) notes, “Indigenous feminism is similar to other feminist positions . . . in its recognition of the gendered and raced nature of social experiences . . . [and distinct] in its fundamental familiarity with the oppressions enacted through colonialism” (p. 5). As such, we are especially attentive to gendered colonial dynamics as part of our application of intersectionality.

Informing Studies

Study 1: Collaborative Local Policy Analysis

One study we draw on is a collaborative, locally and intersectionality-informed policy analysis, focused on advancing equity, inclusion, and reconciliation, and anchored by a community-engaged research collaboration in the District of Kitimat (Kitimat). Kitimat is a small municipality in northwestern British Columbia. It is roughly 1,200 km north of Vancouver at the mouth of the Douglas channel, on unceded *x̄á'isla* territory. Kitimaat Village, governed by the Haisla Nation Band Council, is home to approximately 636 of the Haisla Nation's 1911 people (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Project Team, 2023). Kitimat is home to approximately 8,200 residents, though this number fluctuates because of the presence of significant resource extraction and related activity, including a workforce of 7,500 people (anticipated by the middle of 2023) associated with an approximately \$18B liquified natural gas terminal under construction (Bennett, 2022). In 2021, alongside other initiatives aimed at advancing equity and inclusion in the town, and encouraged by one of the town's councillors, Kitimat initiated a collaboration with our community engaged research team, comprised of members of a local women-serving organization, members of the Haisla Nation, and university-based researchers including one of this paper's authors (Levac). The purpose was to respond to two objectives that Kitimat staff and councillors had identified, including: develop a better understanding of equity and inclusion-related strengths and gaps across program and policy areas; and create a knowledge and learning culture related to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

As noted in the introduction, the effort to consider and respond concurrently to broad equity, diversity, and inclusion challenges, and to the ongoing consequences of colonization, was not without challenges. Even deciding how to talk about these combined commitments was challenging. As a project initiated by a settler government, and focused explicitly on policies of the municipality, we were concerned that using the term decolonization would appear disingenuous. Humbly, we decided on "reconciliation," even though some *x̄á'isla* people with whom we spoke disliked it, questioned its meaning and integrity, or asserted that it should be used only as a call for non-Indigenous people and institutions to come to terms with colonization. Throughout the research and writing process, to contend with these challenges, we took guidance from *x̄á'isla* colleagues, and tried to put forward an analysis and associated recommendations that did not collapse the experiences of *x̄á'isla* people with other equity-denied communities, and that recognized the distinct rights of Indigenous people beyond their residency in what is now recognized as Kitimat.

With ongoing guidance from the Chief Administrative Officer and Director of Human Resources of Kitimat, we developed a plan to undertake a collaborative, locally and intersectionality-informed analysis of four key municipal policy documents, including the Official Community Plan, 2008 and related Strategic Plan, 2018–2022; the Leisure Services Master Plan, 2019–2029; and the Financial Plan, 2021–2025. To undertake our analysis, we created a resident advisory committee who worked with us over approximately 16 months. They were involved in all stages of the process including identifying the included policy documents; developing the policy analysis framework we used, which built on previous work on intersectionality-based policy analysis (Hankivsky et al., 2014); and analyzing the policy

documents through a series of collaborative analysis sessions. Advisory committee members were treated as collaborators and not research participants; they contributed throughout the research. Invitations to apply to become a member of the advisory committee were issued through both regular recruitment channels used by Kitimat, and targeted outreach by several community organizations to intentionally diversify the prospective applicants. We selected members with a strong emphasis on ensuring a diversity of lived expertise to keep with our intersectional commitments; members included *x̄á'isla* people, people with disabilities, racialized people, and people with different gender identities. We attended to inclusive procedural practices—especially related to information work and facilitative leadership (Ansell et al., 2020)—throughout the project. The policy analysis framework we developed included 13 questions, most of which were accompanied by prompts intended to facilitate our collaborative analysis process. Following the framework put forward by Hankivsky et al. (2014), our framework included both descriptive and transformative questions, which we thought about as focusing respectively on understanding and responding to the problem.

Our analysis was also informed through a content analysis of the policies in question, which we coded using our policy analysis framework, feedback from approximately 30 residents gathered through public community meetings and interviews, and 12 key informant interviews with Kitimat staff members from across departments. This participatory approach helped ensure our analysis was informed by affected residents and is consistent with the idea that accountability to community actors is a relevant indicator of research rigor (Warren et al., 2018). This project received REB approval from the University of Guelph (REB 21-09-023) and the university of a collaborating colleague (REB #7137). It included careful consideration of how Kitimat staff and residents would be invited to participate. Staff were offered confidentiality, though most chose to be identified in the final report. Residents attended public meetings and so were known to others, but aggregated results from resident input was not directly attributed in the final report. A more fulsome account of the research and analysis process we undertook is outlined in the final report our team prepared for Kitimat (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Project Team, 2023).

Study 2: Local Climate Change Planning

The other study we draw on is a mixed methods analysis of climate change planning in municipalities across Ontario, undertaken by this paper's other author (Gillis). This research explored the state of climate change planning across Ontario municipalities, and the extent to which municipalities are engaging with Indigenous residents and/or collaborating with First Nations as part of these efforts (Gillis, 2023). In this paper, we focus on the dimensions of the study about municipal efforts to engage with Indigenous residents of those municipalities or proximate reserves, again while acknowledging that Indigenous rights expand beyond residency status in colonial settler municipalities.

While historically climate change planning occurred in the international realm, cities have increasingly been constructed as having both a responsibility and the capacity to address climate change (Johnson, 2018; Mi et al., 2019), and have become leaders in doing so. In addition to this shift towards local action, learning from Indigenous Knowledges has increasingly been identified as important. Climate change impacts are understood as especially affecting Indigenous Peoples because of the intimate relationship many have with the Earth (Durkalec et al., 2015; Whyte, 2018). Despite this, Indigenous Peoples have

not been passive victims of climate change. Rather, they have mitigated and adapted to environmental shifts and practiced sustainable living for millennia (Findlay, 2000; Pierotti & Wildcat, 2000; Wildcat, 2009), and possess knowledges that ground sustainable ways of living and being (McGregor, 2004). Informing climate change strategies with this experience and knowledge has the potential to augment and strengthen climate action in settler colonial structures such as municipalities (Bacon 2018; Beckford et al., 2010; Irlbacher-Fox & MacNeill, 2020; Whyte, 2018). Further, it offers the opportunity for municipalities to honour Indigenous Peoples' sovereignty and adhere to the rights-based justice movements that seek the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' inherent rights to land, which exist at the international, domestic, and local levels of government in Canada (Brugnach et al., 2014; Ramos-Castillo et al., 2017; Whitney et al., 2020). Gillis' research occurred within this context, specifically within the province of Ontario. Ontario is Canada's most populous province and has the highest population of Indigenous Peoples, who account for 2.9% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2022), and who increasingly live in or adjacent to urban areas (Ibid.). Ontario is home to 444 municipalities, all of which have the power to pass by-laws regarding the "economic, social, and environmental well-being of the municipality, including respecting climate change" (Municipal Act, 2001). As a result, Ontario municipalities ought to seek out opportunities to learn from Indigenous Peoples in the creation and implementation of climate change strategies.

This mixed-methods study consisted of an e-survey and interviews and was reviewed by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board (REB 19-06-004). Participants could complete the survey anonymously and were offered confidentiality if they chose to participate in an interview. The qualitative data derived from the survey provided insight into municipal climate action and the presence of collaborative policymaking and governance approaches, while the interviews provided an in-depth understanding of the reasons for municipal engagement (or lack thereof) with Indigenous Peoples and Nations. As already noted, in this paper we focus on the portions of the study that considered municipalities' engagement with Indigenous residents. Interviewees and survey respondents came from municipalities in different regions of the province, with different population sizes and different legislative structures (single tier versus upper tier). The findings are based on 160 survey responses and 25 semi-structured interviews.¹ Data collection targeted municipal staff instead of politicians or residents to capture the policy development and technical expertise of staff.

The survey asked about climate action the municipality was undertaking, and the types of instruments being developed; which groups and residents the municipality was engaging and to what extent; and what types of information they were seeking from these actors. Survey data were used to generate descriptive statistics that provided a broad understanding of Ontario municipalities' climate actions, and the extent of their engagement with non-governmental groups and actors. The interviews provided in-depth information about municipalities' efforts regarding climate change planning, and their corresponding collaborative policymaking and governance efforts. Interview data were analyzed using both inductive and deductive approaches (Nowell et al., 2017). The survey and interview guide are included in Appendices A and B, respectively.

¹ Characteristics of participants' municipalities are provided in Appendix C. Responses to the survey and interview questions did not vary significantly regardless of municipality's size or location.

Findings

Across the studies, two common problems emerged regarding attempts to centre Indigenous Knowledges and intersectional commitments in participatory policymaking. The first was a lack of networks and relationship building opportunities. While this manifested primarily as a lack of opportunities for Indigenous-settler networks and relationship building, it also came up as a challenge facing other equity-denied groups. The second was a lack of understanding Indigenous Knowledges and intersectionality. Below, we address these in turn before offering three recommendations for working towards their resolution. Our recommendations are intended for municipalities and their staff working on community engagement, diversity, equity, inclusion efforts, and building relationships with Indigenous residents, both within and beyond the context of climate change planning.

Lack of Inclusive Networks and Relationship Building Opportunities

In Gillis' study of local climate change planning in Ontario municipalities, several key informants described their municipalities' lack of relationships with equity-denied groups, including Indigenous Peoples, and the challenges of remedying this lack. One key informant from a large municipality noted, "I feel like . . . the buzz term of the day, of diversity, equity, and inclusion, is not well understood in sort of a climate action aspect. It's not well understood at the municipal level in general and there's a lot of work needed." Ultimately, this lack of understanding serves as a significant inhibitor to public engagement. Past research highlights that the position of the public engagement designer has a substantial impact on the inclusivity of engagements at the local level (Clark, 2018). If municipal staff who create public engagement processes do not recognize participation inequities and/or are uncertain of how to successfully ensure all residents can engage in ways that are meaningful to them, it is unlikely that inclusive policymaking practices will follow.

The challenges of relationship building with Indigenous Peoples were discussed widely. A staff member of a small (up to 50,000 residents) municipality captured this sentiment, shared by other respondents as well, when they note: "there isn't really a strong relationship, I would say, with the municipalities [and local Indigenous residents or organizations]. I [tried to find] you know . . . a community centre or something like that . . . but there wasn't that in [the municipality], so I wasn't too sure how to connect with that group." While this staff member faced a practical challenge, any municipality in Ontario could identify the territory where the municipality resides as a starting point for identifying appropriate contacts and could minimally seek guidance from one of many provincial Indigenous organizations or regional governments. A staff member from a mid-sized municipality (50,001–100,000 residents) linked this lack of relationships to the well-documented concern about tokenism. They explained that "[relationship building is a] challenge around here as well, kind of going back to there not being a lot of organized groups. So, to find good representation without tokenizing [and to find people] who would like to contribute and have the capacity to contribute as well. So, that certainly is an ongoing struggle, not just for us in the climate project but really, I find anyways, through a lot of areas in [the municipality]." In the survey results from Gillis' study, the two groups with which municipalities were least engaged in their climate change planning efforts were "Indigenous communities or governments" and "Indigenous Peoples" respectively (Gillis, 2023), suggesting the widespread nature of relationship building challenges.

As others have noted, the token inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Knowledges in local environmental policymaking is a problem in present-day Canada (Nejad et al., 2020; Ross, 2018; Sandlos & Keeling, 2016). Beyond this though, respondents from more than one municipality included within this explanation the lack of Indigenous people with whom to engage. One participant described seeking out opportunities for engaging with Indigenous residents only to be told by their senior colleague that there were no Indigenous people in the community. Given the municipality's efforts to engage with external collaborators otherwise, this seems more likely based on a dismissive attitude towards the value of fostering meaningful relationships with Indigenous people than on an actual absence of Indigenous people within the municipality. In turn, it could be that collaborations are not occurring due to settler evasions of responsibility (McCreary & Milligan, 2021), which ultimately halt potential for relationship building.

Interview participants also described challenges engaging with other equity-denied groups. One participant from a mid-sized municipality (100,001 – 250,000) explained that “those populations that are probably impacted the most by climate change, so more vulnerable populations, probably are the least engaged with traditional consultation methods. So, when you're talking about a public open house or an online comment form, like the traditional aspects of public consultation, I don't think they do a great job at reaching those target populations that we really need to hear from.” This key informant, whose opinion was shared by other interviewees, further explained that lack of understanding the consultation process as well as the challenges of competing priorities limit some peoples' opportunities to participate. They suggested that “a lot of people . . . don't have that working knowledge of how a municipality runs to really affect change within their municipality . . . you know, applying to delegate or showing up at 7 PM on a weeknight when some people are working and have a shift or they're just getting home and have to have dinner with their family and get the kids to bed. So, are you really drawing a good array of the population? And that's why we typically see retired individuals that are maybe higher than average wealth attending . . . I think across the board in [our region], that's what you typically see.”

The results from the locally and intersectionality-informed policy analysis in Kitimat highlighted a somewhat similar problem, albeit differently manifested. One of the main findings from Study 1 was about the importance of relationship building with the Haisla Nation. *x̄á'isla* and non-Indigenous residents noted some progress towards better relations between Kitimat, *x̄á'isla* people living in Kitimat and in Kitamaat Village, and the Haisla Nation over the past few years. Some examples included the raising of a friendship totem, the creation of a new joint community economic development initiative (CEDI), and the addition of a land acknowledgement to the email signature of Kitimat staff members. However, several *x̄á'isla* people insisted that meaningful relationship-building and cultural understanding are essential for realizing any equity and inclusion efforts moving forward, and that these are so far insufficient. They pointed out the need for the municipality to invest time and other resources into relationship building, not only through formal initiatives and mechanisms but also through broader

community-building efforts, and into better understanding the past and ongoing effects of colonialism, including the presence of Kitimat on unceded $\bar{x}\acute{a}'isla$ territory.²

Our analysis of the Official Community Plan, 2008 and related Strategic Plan, 2018-2022 revealed a loud silence when it comes to $\bar{x}\acute{a}'isla$ people who are residents in Kitimat, which is a significant problem when considering resident inclusion. We note that “virtually all references to the Haisla Nation in the Official Community Plan allude broadly to $\bar{x}\acute{a}'isla$ culture, or to relations between the Haisla Nation Council and the District of Kitimat, as opposed to the experiences of $\bar{x}\acute{a}'isla$ (or other Indigenous) people themselves” (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Project Team, 2023, p. 151). This is a shortcoming because Kitimat should be building government to government relationships with the Haisla Nation while also attending to the inclusion of $\bar{x}\acute{a}'isla$ people residing in Kitimat. Our analysis also noted a problematic reference to the relationship with the Haisla Nation in the Strategic Plan: “there are several instances where $\bar{x}\acute{a}'isla$ are absented, such as in descriptions of land that imply the presence of Indigenous territories in Kitimat boundaries (as opposed to the opposite), in cases where $\bar{x}\acute{a}'isla$ (or other First Nations) are identified as one possible partner, and thus equated with ‘industry’ (p. 61), or in cases where there are specific opportunities for engagement (such as via representation on the Official Community Plan development committee)” (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Project Team, 2023). Treating the Haisla Nation Council as one of many stakeholder groups severely overlooks their political status, and raises other issues, including that there are documented differences in planning priorities between First Nation governments and settler governments (Kobzik & Krawchenko, 2023). Other groups, including people with disabilities (or caregivers of children with disabilities) and people who are religious minorities in the community also identified a lack of networks and opportunities for relationship building as barriers to equity and inclusion. For instance, the lack of non-Christian places of worship in Kitimat complicates the efforts of religious minority groups to gather in worship, and people with disabilities and/or their caregivers discussed the need for full inclusion in recreation and leisure programming in order to have more opportunity to connect with others and build relationships.

Lack of Understanding Indigenous Knowledges and Intersectionality

A second common problem that emerged across the included studies was the lack of respect for, and understanding of, Indigenous Knowledges. This was coupled with a lack of understanding of intersectionality, particularly in terms of its application in public policy. In Study 1, there was a dearth of attention paid to how $\bar{x}\acute{a}'isla$ knowledge could help advance Kitimat’s goals. For example, neither the “protect the natural environment” section of the Official Community Plan nor the related section in Kitimat’s more recent Strategic Plan included any attention to the possibility of learning from, or cooperating with, the Haisla Nation or $\bar{x}\acute{a}'isla$ residents to achieve the goals of protecting environmental resources, protecting environmentally sensitive areas, mitigating fire risks, or pursuing sustainability measures. $\bar{x}\acute{a}'isla$ understandings of recreation and leisure were also not meaningfully taken up in the Leisure Services Master Plan. The Official Community Plan and Strategic Plan similarly failed to

² A recent decision by the Kitimat Mayor and Council to reject a request from the Haisla Nation to re-name two streets in Kitimat bearing the names of missionaries involved with residential schools (Bender, 2024) will undermine these tentative advances.

consider economic development and growth outside of a colonial perspective. As a result, both plans failed to consider how the benefits of local growth could be equitably distributed, especially among constituencies historically excluded from employment associated with industrial development, such as *x̄á'isla* people, women, and people with disabilities. One interview participant noted “I guess a challenge to [achieving equity and inclusion through economic development] is lingering colonial systemic beliefs about economics and how people can provide opportunity for themselves.” Thus, in addition to existing economic policies failing to consider structural barriers to obtaining and retaining employment, these policies could further harm relationships between the municipality and equity-denied groups by failing to take up conceptions of wellbeing that are decoupled from assumptions of constant economic growth. There was also uneven consideration of how peoples’ experiences with local policies were structured by broader systems—such colonialism, sexism, racism and ableism—and the interactions between them. For instance, we found no references to the distinct experiences of *x̄á'isla* women, girls, and Two-Spirit folks, even though they confront unique barriers and safety concerns.

Gillis’ study also found that several Ontario municipalities had trouble learning from Indigenous Knowledges. Some key informants suggested that this was because the technical expertise required for mitigation-focused climate change strategies existed outside of the scope of most peoples’ knowledge, including the knowledge of Indigenous people. There is plenty of evidence to dispute this claim. For example, Indigenous Peoples have implemented biodiversification, soil management and rainwater collection, and other strategies for promoting climate resilient farming for centuries (Altieri & Nicholls, 2017). Indigenous Nations have also developed formal Indigenous knowledge-informed mitigation strategies in the Canadian context (Mohawk Council of Akwesasne 2016). Other participants suggested that Ontario municipalities do not have the necessary expertise to learn respectfully and meaningfully from Indigenous Knowledges, placing the problem instead at the feet of municipalities.

One key informant from a large (100,001 – 250,000 residents) municipality explained that their previous experience as a provincial public servant had given them some capacity in this regard, but that the ability to engage with Indigenous Knowledges was not necessarily a widespread skillset of municipal staff. This disconnect has been documented elsewhere. For instance, as Anishinaabe scholar Deborah McGregor (2021) explains, “these processes are still not designed with the intent of establishing mutually beneficial partnerships with Indigenous peoples on a nation-to-nation basis. Instead, they are still very much ensnared in the idea of “extracting” those “bits” of Indigenous Knowledges that western systems and decision-makers find palatable ... when [Indigenous Knowledges] are considered at all” (p. 8). In trying to understand this problem further, Gillis points out that the collaborative governance framework advocates for learning from Indigenous Peoples, but then frames Indigenous Knowledge as anecdotal, perpetuating the false narrative that Western knowledge is inherently superior (Bacon, 2018; Simpson, 2017). Using Indigenous Knowledges to complement information or fill gaps left by data and methods grounded in Western knowledges or disciplines is prevalent in climate change planning and serves to delegitimize Indigenous Knowledges (Alexander et al., 2011; Bohensky & Maru, 2011; Latulippe & Klenk, 2020).

Discussion: Ways Forward

In response to these shared challenges, and to the question guiding this paper, we offer three modest recommendations for how settler municipalities can better learn from Indigenous Knowledges and intersectional commitments in participatory policymaking processes. Concurrently, we offer some considerations for more consistently linking efforts to advance community engagement; equity, diversity, and inclusion, and relationship building with Indigenous residents, a practice we see as both challenging and warranted. At the centre of this is the need to learn from and be led by people whose knowledges and experiences have been structurally excluded from public policymaking. As such, the recommendations are tentative in the sense that local populations—including Indigenous residents and other historically marginalized groups—must help inform their implementation with relevant contextual information. Bringing together collaborative governance viewed through an anticolonial lens (Gillis, 2023), and intersectionality—especially its application in public policy, is useful for considering not only how collaborative and participatory practices can be more inclusive, but also how this depends on recognizing the heterogeneity of the public and their diverse experiences with systems of oppression. We recognize that colonialism, racism, and other systems that structure unequal relationships contribute to the complex problems identified through our analyses, and that as such our responses—which cannot ameliorate these significant historical and contemporary problems—are incomplete. Nevertheless, we think they offer useful ways forward.

Recommendation 1: Centre Acknowledgement in Relationship Building

Our first recommendation is for municipalities to deepen and expand their efforts to understand the history and ongoing effects of colonization on Indigenous residents. This recommendation is summarized as centring acknowledgement in Indigenous-settler relationship-building efforts, and is informed especially by Study 1, where *x̄á'isla* people insisted on the importance of creating more widespread understanding and awareness of the effects of colonization, the historical and contemporary relationships between the Haisla Nation and industry, and the ways in which Kitimat continues to benefit from the dispossession of *x̄á'isla* people from their land, including through property tax revenues, especially from heavy industry (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Project Team, 2023).

This recommendation also builds on existing literature. Historically and contemporarily, policymaking in Canada, including at the municipal level, has been complicit in colonization. Cities and their policies have played key roles in the attempted erasure of Indigenous Peoples. This has included literal removal and forced relocation, denial of Indigenous Peoples' sovereignty over stolen lands, rendering invisible the histories of Indigenous cities, and ignoring Indigenous planning practices and Indigenous Knowledges (Howard-Wagner, 2020; Tomiak, 2016; Walker, 2008). We concur with Dobbin and Lubell (2021) who note that for Indigenous Peoples to be meaningfully engaged in collaborative governance regimes, intentional efforts must be made to secure reciprocal relationships between them and other partners. Supporting literature in the Canadian context (e.g., Walker, 2008) suggests a similar need when it comes to community engagement and collaborative policymaking processes focused on engaging with Indigenous residents. A lack of genuine relationships and failure to understand the effects of colonization can easily reinforce, rather than remedy, the exclusion of residents from these processes.

Our emphasis in this recommendation is for these relationship-building efforts to not only be accompanied by acknowledgement, but also to transcend institutionalized relationships, which was persistently noted as important to ǎ́'isla people and settler residents in Study 1. Municipalities' place-making and community-building efforts need to carefully consider how status quo practices could be perpetuating harm and failing to acknowledge the effects of colonization. To achieve this, municipalities need to be led by local Indigenous populations who can decide on appropriate strategies for undertaking this work. More formal efforts in this regard could be part of developing an urban Indigenous strategy/working group/initiative as some larger municipalities have done (e.g., Hamilton, ON; Calgary, AB; Prince George, BC). They could also initially be more narrowly focused on something such as developing a shared understanding of the strengths, limits, and meaning of the Calls for Justice and Calls to Action from the final reports of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission respectively. The UNDRIP Action Plan produced by the UNDRIP Task Force Intergovernmental Table to the City of Vancouver's Mayor & Council (2024) could be instructive here. In any case, establishing formal mechanisms depends not only on supporting and strengthening relationships with Nations on whose land the municipality rests, but also on relationship building with urban Indigenous people.

Recommendation 2: Expand Inclusion through Intersectionality

Our second recommendation is for municipalities to foster more inclusive networks and practices to inform their future community engagement, and collaborative policymaking and governance efforts. This builds on the requisite acknowledgement of colonization and its effects noted above, to include recognizing other systems of oppression (e.g., ableism, heterosexism, racism) that structure the experiences of historically marginalized residents. Collaborative governance theory recognizes that the characteristics of available networks can hinder or enable collaboration efforts (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). Further, Ansell et al. (2020) identify factors that shape participants' motivations to engage (trust, incentives, mutual interdependence, the purpose of collaboration) and factors that help sustain inclusion (facilitated leadership, relationship building, informational work, and strategic inclusion). These, however, seem to assume a relatively homogenous public. To expand inclusion through intersectionality, municipalities should consider how participants' motivations, and factors that help sustain their inclusion, might vary for differently situated groups of people based on their past experiences with the municipality and governments more generally. Appropriate incentives, the desired purpose of the collaboration, the appropriate approach to facilitated leadership, and other important factors noted by Ansell et al. (2020), are likely influenced by how people have faced and navigated structural inequities in the past. Since these inequities can be perpetuated by public policies (Hankivsky et al., 2014; Tedds, 2023), and in keeping with the commitments of undertaking intersectionality-based policy analysis, ameliorating them depends on meaningfully engaging with those most affected (Hankivsky & Jordan-Zachary, 2019). Being led by people who have experienced various forms of exclusion is critical for resolving the disconnect, discussed in the introduction, between municipalities' participatory and inclusive practices.

The collaborative policy analysis approach we took in Study 1 is an example of what implementing this recommendation could look like. Its two key features—being informed by a diverse resident advisory

group and applying a policy analysis framework informed by intersectionality and developed with residents—were helpful for advancing inclusive networks and practices. The advisory group helped to inform the purpose and desired outcomes of the collaboration, while the practice of the project coordinator carefully attended to the inclusion needs of advisory group members. The questions in the framework, including “What are the inclusion needs and exclusion experiences of diverse community members living in small, northern communities related to each policy document being analyzed?”, “Are some people invisible (intersections of identity) in the policy documents? Who and how?” and “Where and how can interventions be prioritized to . . . eliminate or reduce inequities?”³ reflect resident priorities, attention to context, and a commitment to attending explicitly to the structural inequities that can be reproduced through public policies. Albeit time and resource intensive, municipalities will need to consider more intensive participation efforts if they are also committed to advancing inclusion.

Recommendation 3: Emphasize Critical Self-Reflection and Ongoing Learning

Our final recommendation is for municipalities to build self-reflection practices into their monitoring, evaluation, and learning efforts. In a literature synthesis focused on advancing equity and inclusion in workplaces, Beijbom (2022) identifies the development of self-awareness, self-reflection, and critical consciousness as vital objectives of training in organizations that wish to advance inclusion. She summarizes that “critical self-reflection is [essential for developing] “critical consciousness”, an ongoing practice in which individuals work to understand how identities . . . and their intersections, play a meaningful role in how individuals experience and navigate interpersonal dynamics, policies, practices” (p. 17). Incorporating self-reflection practices in a municipalities’ monitoring, evaluation, and learning efforts would have implications for staff training programs and expectations, the customer service/service delivery assessments, and more.

The need for this was evident across both studies. In Study 2, there was a lack of understanding amongst some public servants of the role that Indigenous Knowledges could play in climate change mitigation. Self-reflection amongst municipal public servants could help create critical consciousness regarding the value of learning from Indigenous Knowledges. But as Indigenous scholars have noted, learning from Indigenous Knowledges will need to come from a place of understanding, partnership, and respect (McGregor, 2018; Whyte, 2012; Wildcat, 2009), which will not be possible without intensive efforts, especially by settlers, to “learn from and across Indigenous and Western knowledge systems, without privileging Western knowledge or appropriating Indigenous Knowledge” (Levac et al., 2018, p. vii). In Study 1, there was a similar lack of recognition of how Indigenous Knowledges might shape public policy. For instance, “western approaches to leisure [as in the Leisure Services Master Plan] can fail to acknowledge and meaningfully interact with *ḡá’isla* practices of leisure . . . [or recognize the] symbiotic relationship in *ḡá’isla* culture between leisure, cultural viability, and self-determination” (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Project Team, 2023). Here again, an ongoing commitment to self-reflection could help reveal how different knowledges and experiences are reflected (or not) in public policies.

³ For a full list of the questions that comprised our analytical framework, see Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Project Team (2023).

Conclusion

As municipalities contend with concurrent and urgent pressures to be more collaborative and inclusive in their policymaking approaches, more attentive to the experiences of residents who have often been rendered invisible and/or hyper-visible by municipal (and other) government policies and governing structures (Andrew-Amofah et al., 2022; Chu & Cannon, 2021; Fitzgibbons & Mitchell, 2021), and more active in responding to climate change, they need new tools and knowledges to support their work. We draw on two studies—an examination of Indigenous engagement in municipal climate change planning in Ontario (Gillis) and a locally-developed intersectionality-informed policy analysis of core municipal policy documents in a northern municipality in British Columbia (Levac)—to argue that a lack of inclusive relationships and networks, and a lack of understanding of Indigenous Knowledges and intersectionality, are hindering municipalities' efforts. We also make three practical recommendations for ameliorating these challenges, noting that these will need to be adjusted to account for relevant contextual factors and underpinned by a “nothing about us without us” commitment. Future research will need to contend not only with the variability across present-day Canada's 3,500+ municipalities, but also with how they can be more meaningfully supported by other levels of government with the financial and other resources required to take on the formidable challenges they face. What seems clear is that minimally, relationship-building, fostering more inclusive networks from which to draw collaborative governance partners, and developing stronger self-reflection practices of municipal staff, especially in terms of understanding Indigenous Knowledges and intersectionality, will be necessary parts of the future of all municipalities, regardless of their size and geography.

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APPENDIX A: RELEVANT PORTIONS OF STUDY 2 SURVEY

Q1: Letter of information and consent to participate. Respondents had to 'consent' to move to the next question.

Note: All questions offered a 'decline to answer' option.

Q2: If you are comfortable, can you please share the name of your municipality?

- [Text box available]
- Decline to answer

Q3: Approximately what is the population size of your municipality? (6 options from 'fewer than 10,000' to '1,000,001 or more').

Q4: Please select your municipality type:

- Lower tier municipality
- Upper tier municipality
- Single tier municipality
- Decline to answer

Q5: In what region does your municipality reside? (this question was accompanied by a map outlining five distinct regions from which respondents could choose)

Q6: How many employees does your municipality have? (12 options from '1-10' to '2,501 or more').

Q7: Does your municipality have a climate change strategy?

- Yes, the municipality has a climate change strategy.
- No, but the municipality is in the process of making a climate change strategy.
- No, the municipality does not intend to make one. (this response ended the survey).

Q8 - Q11: Not included here because these questions were more focused on the design of the plan rather than related engagement efforts.

Q12: Has your municipality conducted any monitoring or evaluation of its climate change strategy, such as tracking implementation activities, measuring the plan's success, creating timelines for follow-up, etc.?

- Yes

- No
- Decline to answer
- Not applicable

Q13: Recognizing that individuals could fall into more than one of the below groups, please think about specific groups that you targeted for participation when answering the next two questions. Who was involved in the development your current climate change strategy? (Please select all which may apply)

- Representatives from local businesses
- Indigenous Peoples living in the municipality
- Neighbouring Indigenous governments/communities
- Nearby Indigenous organizations
- Non-governmental organizations
- Municipal councillors
- Municipal staff (please state from which departments) [text box to enter information]
- Other municipalities
- Other _____ [text box to enter question]

Q14: What kind of information did you gather from the groups your municipality engaged with? (this question was presented as a matrix where a respondent could choose any of the following for any of the groups identified)

- opinions on what the priorities of the municipality's climate change strategy should be
- local experiences of climate change
- ideas on how to improve the city's resilience to climate change
- ideas on how the city could best reduce carbon emissions
- ideas on how to best communicate the importance of climate change in the city to residents
- expert knowledge related to climate change adaptation and its effects
- expert knowledge related to climate change mitigation and its effects

- specific priorities of the group
- we did not explicitly engage with this group

Q15: Many municipalities have adopted the International Association for Public Participation's five-point IAP spectrum to describe levels of engagement with various community groups. The IAP2 spectrum is defined as follows (*description of engagement from 'inform' to 'empower' was provided*):

Using the IAP2 scale, how would you describe your municipality's level of engagement with the following groups in the development of your climate change strategy: (*this question was presented as a matrix where a respondent could choose a level of engagement for each of the same groups listed in Q13*)

Q16: Can you give me an example of something specific that you did during the development of your climate change strategy to make sure that everyone participating felt comfortable sharing their ideas?

APPENDIX B: STUDY 2 INTERVIEW GUIDE

- Can you please tell me briefly about your role with the municipality?
- How were you involved in the creation of the climate change strategy?
- Did your strategy focus on mitigation or adaptation? Why was that the focus?
- What initiated the creation of your municipality's climate change strategy?
- Why do you personally feel collaboration would be important for a climate change strategy?
- What stakeholders did your municipality consult with?
- Why do you think those stakeholders were chosen?
- What aspects of working together were positive for you?
- How did working together benefit the strategy?
- Were there any difficulties related to working with external groups?
- Did you have any difficulty reaching a particular group of stakeholders or getting them to join?
- Did your municipality engage with Indigenous peoples or governments?
- What kind of impacts did the collaboration have?
- Looking back on the collaboration, is there anything you wish your municipality had done differently?
- In closing, is there anything you thought we talked about but we didn't?

APPENDIX C: STUDY 2 PARTICIPANTS*Characteristics of Municipalities of Survey and Interview Respondents*

Tier	Survey (N=160)	Interview (N=23)
Single	37	9
Lower	98	8
Upper	23	6
Decline to answer	2	n/a
Region	Survey (N=160)	Interview (N=23)
North	31	5
West	62	8
Central West	23	5
East	37	3
Central East	7	2
Population Size	Survey (N=160)	Interview (N=23)
< 10,000	59	2
10,001 - 50,000	46	4
50,001 - 100,000	27	7
100,001 - 250,000	15	5
250,001 - 1,000,000	12	4
1,000,001 +	1	1