EXPO 2025 OSAKA, JAPAN | AUGUST 4-8, 2025

Spotlighting Indigenous Women's Leadership in

Entrepreneurship, Climate Action, & Cultural Revitalization

IMPACT 2025

CANADIAN WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL NETWORK
RÉSEAU INTERNATIONAL DES FEMMES CANADIENNES

ASIA PACIFIC FOUNDATION OF CANADA
FONDATION ASIE PACIFIQUE DU CANADA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Indigenous Meeting on Pacific and Arctic Climate and Trade (IMPACT), hosted by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (APF Canada) with support from the Government of Canada through the Women's Entrepreneur Ecosystem (WES) Fund, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, the Canada Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, and private sector partners, convened Indigenous women leaders, entrepreneurs, and cultural practitioners from across the Pacific and Arctic regions for a multilateral event held during Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan.

Held across Osaka, Tokyo, and Hokkaido to coincide with Indigenous Peoples Week at Expo 2025 Osaka (August 4–10, 2025), IMPACT was the ninth mission in APF Canada's Women's Business Mission to Asia Series (2019–2026) and the first to focus explicitly on Indigenous women's leadership, design, and entrepreneurship, climate action, and cultural revitalization. The mission explored the intersection of climate, culture, and commerce, using international trade as a lever to strengthen Indigenous economic capacity, connecting Indigenous peoples across the Pacific, and promoting sustainable, inclusive growth.

Through roundtables, cultural showcases and exchanges, as well as business-to-business (B2B) meetings, IMPACT participants from Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, and Alaska shared strategies for advancing Indigenous economic capacity building while contributing to climate resilience and global innovation through knowledge sharing.

Key Takeaways

Inclusive Finance as a Foundation: Indigenous women participants identified systemic financial and procurement barriers. Expanding inclusive financing mechanisms, procurement access, and tailored capacity-building programs for directed market access is critical to unlocking their full economic potential.

Entrepreneurship as Cultural Sovereignty: Indigenous-led enterprises are advancing both economic independence and cultural revitalization. Entrepreneurship in Indigenous communities is not mere market activity, but combines innovation with cultural revitalization, acting as a vehicle for sustaining language, traditions, intergenerational strength and resilience.

Climate Action and Environmental Governance: Indigenous women leaders articulated the urgent need to integrate Indigenous ecological knowledge into climate policy and resource management. Their holistic approaches—linking land, ice, water, and life—provide models for resilience and sustainability.

Fashion as Cultural Diplomacy: Collaborations between Indigenous designers and cultural performers from Canada, Australia, and Japan in Osaka demonstrated the leading role that creative industries can serve as platforms for cross-cultural diplomacy, discussions about ethical trade, and climate-conscious innovation. Fashion at IMPACT emerged as both a market opportunity for Indigenous success and a platform for cultural expression and international diplomacy.

Women as Cultural Diplomats: Throughout the week, women's leadership was consistently recognized as central to community resilience and cross-border dialogue, not only through roundtable and panel discussions, but also through strengthening Indigenous-to-Indigenous mutual understanding through traditional crafts, performance, and intergenerational exchange, positioning them as key actors in cultural diplomacy.

Embedding Indigenous Voices in Governance: Insights from these dialogues should be integrated into APEC, CPTPP, and IPETCA frameworks, creating greater visibility and recognition for Indigenous women in regional and global trade governance.

Looking Ahead

IMPACT demonstrated how Indigenous women's entrepreneurship can simultaneously advance climate resilience, gender equality, and economic reconciliation. The dialogues in Osaka, Tokyo, and Hokkaido charted a roadmap for deeper collaboration among Pacific and Arctic Indigenous communities and their partners in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Alaska, and Japan.

Future initiatives can build on IMPACT's multilateral model and its outcomes by aligning economic, environmental, and cultural priorities through multi-year strategies, dedicated funding streams, and structured Indigenous-to-Indigenous partnerships to surface opportunities for Indigenous trade-led growth and leadership on urgent global issues.

ECONOMIC IMPACT AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

To date, it is too early to assess measurable economic impact or key performance indicators for the IMPACT initiative. Given the timing of the event and the ongoing nature of post-mission follow-up and partnership development, outcomes will become more evident over the coming months and perhaps years, as delegates and partners pursue identified opportunities.

Strategic Recommendations for Future Direction

To sustain momentum and embed Indigenous leadership in regional frameworks, participants proposed:

- Expanding inclusive financing and procurement access for Indigenous women-led enterprises.
- Integrating Indigenous knowledge in environmental and trade policy frameworks at all levels.
- Institutionalizing cross-border platforms for mentorship, cultural exchange, and trade promotion.
- Formalizing protections for Indigenous intellectual and cultural property in trade and investment agreements.
- Embedding Indigenous women's participation within APEC, CPTPP, and IPETCA mechanisms to shape inclusive governance.

SESSION SUMMARIES

The following session summaries provide a record of discussions held under the Chatham House Rule, capturing the key themes, insights, and perspectives shared by participants. These summaries are not attributed to individual speakers but reflect the collective dialogue that emerged across panels and exchanges during the IMPACT program.

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Date: *August 4, 2025*

Location: *Embassy of Canada to Japan*

Participants: *HIH Princess Takamado, Yoko Kamikawa, Christine Nakamura, A.W. Lee, Dawn Madahbee Leach, Amanda Healy, Patuk Naomi Glenn, Bobbie-Jo Lee Racette, Jennifer Lynn Harper, Gina Nagano, Trisha Pitura, April Blondine Allen, Victoria Kakuktinniq, Ayumi Yamada, Kiyo Weiss, Mio Kawada, Kisaburo Iwamoto, Kosuke Tsumura, and Kayo Ito.*

SESSION 1

Challenges of Indigenous Women Entrepreneurs

Key Issues

BALANCING MULTIPLE ROLES AND CULTURAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Participants emphasized that Indigenous women entrepreneurs frequently navigate overlapping responsibilities as family caretakers, community members, and business owners. This constant negotiation creates pressures not adequately recognized in mainstream economic frameworks. For Indigenous women, entrepreneurship is not only an economic activity but also a means of sustaining cultural practices and fulfilling community obligations. Yet these social and cultural dimensions are often overlooked in policy design and support systems, leaving Indigenous women without structures that reflect the realities of their entrepreneurial roles.

SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Despite their significant contributions, Indigenous women remain marginalized within broader economic development initiatives. Persistent financing barriers, limited access to procurement opportunities, and biases tied to both gender and Indigenous identity continue to restrict growth potential. Discussants noted that these structural inequities reinforce cycles of exclusion and limit participation in high-value supply chains, preventing Indigenous women from fully benefiting from national and international opportunities.

ACCESS TO CAPITAL AND GLOBAL MARKETS

Access to affordable financing and international trade networks remains one of the most pressing challenges for Indigenous women-led enterprises. Conventional financing mechanisms often fail to account for community-based ownership structures or non-traditional forms of collateral, leaving many unable to secure needed resources. Without reforms that integrate inclusive financial instruments and targeted procurement pathways, Indigenous women entrepreneurs will remain constrained in scaling their businesses and competing in global markets.

Recommendations:

Expand Access to Capital and Procurement: Develop inclusive financing mechanisms and integrate Indigenous women into procurement frameworks at national and international levels.

Embed Cultural and Social Dimensions into Policy: Strengthen support systems by explicitly recognizing the cultural and community responsibilities that shape Indigenous women's entrepreneurship.

Strengthen Capacity Building: Create mentorship programs, incubators, and accelerators tailored to Indigenous women entrepreneurs to enhance business skills and market readiness.

Date: *August 4, 2025*

Location: *Hotel New Otani Tokyo*

Lead Discussants: *April Allen, Victoria Kakuktinniq, Kosuke Tsumura, Kisaburo Iwamoto, Amanda Healy*

Moderated by: *Christine Nakamura*

SESSION 2

Opportunities for Indigenous–Japanese Collaboration in Fashion and Sustainability

Key Issues

BALANCING CULTURAL AUTHENTICITY AND MARKET EXPANSION

Indigenous women entrepreneurs stressed the importance of prioritizing cultural value and craftsmanship over mass production. The key challenge is to expand into international markets while safeguarding authenticity, a concern closely tied to protecting Indigenous intellectual and cultural property.

SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE-DRIVEN SHIFTS IN CONSUMER DEMAND

Climate change is reshaping consumer preferences, driving demand for sustainable and ethically produced goods. Both Indigenous and Japanese participants highlighted opportunities to co-develop eco-friendly textiles and responsible production practices, aligning with evolving global expectations.

CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATION IN DESIGN AND INNOVATION

The dialogue underscored the transformative potential of combining Indigenous and Japanese traditional design elements. These collaborations not only diversify global fashion markets but also act as cultural diplomacy, amplifying Indigenous entrepreneurship and advancing sustainable practices on an international stage.

SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO INTERNATIONALIZATION

Despite these opportunities, Indigenous women entrepreneurs continue to face limited access to financing, procurement, and cross-border trade networks. Without targeted support, they remain constrained in their ability to scale globally while maintaining cultural integrity.

FASHION AS A PLATFORM FOR CROSS-BORDER INDIGENOUS COLLABORATION

In Osaka, Indigenous designers from Canada, Japan, and Australia gathered for the first time to present their work at the Festival Station Fashion Show of Expo 2025. The event blended diverse Indigenous design elements into a unified showcase, using fashion as a medium to communicate cultural creativity and diversity to a global audience. Accompanied by striking visual and sound effects, the fashion show went beyond aesthetics, symbolizing new possibilities for cross-border Indigenous collaboration, strengthening cultural diplomacy, and inspiring innovative reinterpretations of tradition.

Recommendations:

Develop joint programs for eco-friendly textile innovation, integrating Indigenous knowledge and Japanese sustainable design.

Formalize protections for Indigenous intellectual and cultural property within bilateral and multilateral trade frameworks.

Establish trade promotion platforms to connect Indigenous entrepreneurs with buyers, fashion houses, and sustainability-focused investors.

Date: *August 5 & 6, 2025*

Location: *Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park & Sapporo Pirka Kotan*

Participants: *Canadian Delegates and Ainu Representatives*

SESSION 3

Indigenous-to-Indigenous Cultural Exchange in Hokkaido

Key Issues

CULTURAL EXCHANGE AS A PATHWAY TO MUTUAL LEARNING

The Hokkaido program emphasized peer-to-peer learning between Ainu hosts and Canadian Indigenous delegates. Guided tours of the Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, as well as the Sapporo Pirka Kotan Ainu Culture Promotion Center, provided deeper insights into Ainu history and resilience. Interactive workshops in embroidery and woodcarving, and garden walks, encouraged active participation, fostering recognition of shared struggles in preserving cultural identity while adapting to modern contexts.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

The luncheon hosted by the Ainu Women's Association's Menoko Mosmos underscored the central role of Indigenous women in sustaining traditions and facilitating dialogue. Music and dance performances created a welcoming atmosphere for personal connections. Women were highlighted as cultural diplomats, bridging communities through hospitality, performance, and storytelling.

DIALOGUE ON CULTURAL PRESERVATION AND CONTINUITY

Roundtable discussions addressed how Indigenous handicrafts can circulate more effectively in wider markets while retaining cultural value and community meaning. Both sides affirmed the importance of Indigenous-led initiatives that center cultural continuity while navigating contemporary pressures.

Recommendations:

Establish structured exchange programs between Ainu and Canadian Indigenous communities, focusing on crafts, arts, and intergenerational learning.

Support women-led cultural diplomacy initiatives to reinforce Indigenous leadership in cross-border collaboration.

Promote joint research and capacity-building on Indigenous approaches to cultural revitalization and continuity.

SESSION 4

Indigenous Industry Opportunities in Kansai Region

Key Issues

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN INDIGENOUS AND KANSAI WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Participants emphasized strong complementarities in sustainability, traditional crafts, circular economy models, and women-led innovation. Kansai's strengths in manufacturing, design, and traditional cultural industries align with Indigenous priorities in ethical production, cultural expression, and community-centred business models.

Date: *August 7, 2025*

Location: *Canada Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka (Roundtable Co-host)*

Participants: *April Allen, Mitsuki Bun, Kayoko Fujimoto, Naomi Harada, Jenn Harper, Hazumi Hidani, Amanda Healy, Kaoru Isobe, Victoria Kakuktinniq, A.W. Lee, Dawn Madahbee Leach, Gina Nagano, Christine Nakamura, Kumiko Obino, Ito Peng, David Perdue, Laurie Peters, Trisha Pitura, Bobbie Racette, Yoko Sakaguchi, Yukiyo Shintani, Kanako Suzuka, Setsu Suzuki, Rie Takeda, Yuko Takahashi, Tomoko Tanabe, Yumiko Terada, Aya Wada, Howard Wang, Ayumi Yamada, Chloe Yeung.*

EXPORT, MARKET ENTRY, AND STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

Canadian Indigenous entrepreneurs reflected on challenges around export readiness, financing, intellectual property protection, and navigating foreign regulatory environments. Japanese participants noted similar barriers for women-led SMEs in Japan, including limited DEI frameworks, gender gaps in leadership, and constraints in internationalization.

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

The roundtable highlighted the value of Indigenous-to-Japanese people-to-people exchange, with Japanese participants expressing admiration for the confidence, resilience, and global reach of Indigenous women leaders. Participants agreed that Expo 2025 provides an unprecedented platform for cultural diplomacy grounded in sustainability and women's leadership.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AS ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Several Kansai participants spoke candidly about Japan's gender gap, noting that expanded women's leadership, diversity in decision-making, and cross-cultural learning are essential to Japan's economic renewal. Engagement with Indigenous women entrepreneurs was described as both inspiring and instructive.

Recommendations

Strengthen trade facilitation channels (through TCS, JETRO, and sector associations) to support Indigenous and women-led SMEs entering Japan.

Develop collaborative sustainability initiatives—including circular economy projects, eco-materials, and ethical craft production—linking Indigenous and Kansai innovators.

Create platforms for ongoing women-led cultural diplomacy, including speaker series, craft exchanges, and mentorship programs.

Advance inclusive procurement and supplier diversity practices within Japanese and Canadian value chains, drawing on Canadian models.

Explore partnerships with Kansai-based institutions (traditional crafts schools, manufacturing SMEs, innovation hubs) to co-develop training, apprenticeships, and cultural exchange programs.

Date: *August 8, 2025*

Location: *Festival Station, Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan*

Lead Discussants: *Amanda Healy, Gina Nagano, Miyuki Itankituy Muraki, Patuk Glenn, Tina Porou*

Moderated by: *Dawn Madahbee Leach*

SESSION 5

Indigenous Women's Leadership in Entrepreneurship, Climate Action, and Cultural Revitalization

Key Issues

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Climate change is a defining challenge for Indigenous peoples, particularly where livelihoods remain closely tied to ecosystems. Northern, Arctic, and island-based communities are already experiencing rising sea levels, biodiversity loss, and pressures on food and water systems. Indigenous women leaders stressed that these frontline realities make Indigenous perspectives indispensable to shaping climate adaptation and governance. Mainstream strategies often fragment environmental issues into separate silos. Indigenous approaches, by contrast, are holistic, recognizing the inseparability of land, water, and

life. This supports integrated, ecosystem-based solutions that ensure both immediate resilience and intergenerational sustainability.

CULTURAL REVITALIZATION AND GENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION

Cultural revitalization emerged as both an urgent priority and a source of resilience. Reviving language, ceremonies, and ecological knowledge repairs the fractures of colonization while grounding younger generations in identity and confidence. Participants noted that revitalization must be forward-looking, ensuring cultural continuity through education, mentorship, and creative adaptation. Concerns around appropriation and commodification were raised, with calls to ensure external collaborations are guided by respect, humility, and Indigenous authority.

Recommendations:

Expand tailored financing and market tools for Indigenous women-owned enterprises, including protections for intellectual and cultural property.

Establish community-led climate resilience initiatives with long-term, multi-year funding.

Integrate Indigenous knowledge into environmental policy frameworks at all levels.

Invest in intergenerational programs—such as language, mentorship, and apprenticeship—that connect youth with elders.

Adopt community-defined indicators to track cultural continuity, environmental health, and inclusive benefits.

SESSION 6

Networking Opportunities for Indigenous Women Leaders

This closing reception brought together Canadian Indigenous delegates, thought leaders, regional Indigenous stakeholders (Ainu, Alaska, Australia), and high-profile guests from Japan and the Kansai region, including Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado, Yokoyama Hideyuki, the Mayor of Osaka, Dr. Atsushi Sunami, the President of Sasakawa Peace Foundation, and Commissioner General of Canada, Laurie Peters, representing the co-host of the event, the Canada Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka.

As a networking-focused gathering, the session offered an opportunity for delegates to deepen relationships formed throughout the week and to engage directly with senior Japanese leaders supportive of Indigenous collaboration. Remarks emphasized shared values across cultures—particularly respect for land, sustainability, and intergenerational responsibility—while celebrating the mission's achievements in cultural diplomacy, trade, and climate dialogue.

The evening concluded with a performance by Jeremy Dutcher, a classically trained Canadian Indigenous musician and celebrated Polaris Music Prize and Juno Award winner.

Date: *August 8, 2025*

Location: *Canada Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka*

Speakers: *Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado, Christine Nakamura, Vice-President, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, Laurie Peters, Commissioner General of Canada, Expo 2025 Osaka, Dr. Atsushi Sunami, President, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, and Mayor Hideyuki Yokoyama*

Musical Performance: *Jeremy Dutcher*

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS:

A Roadmap for Strategic Partnership

Key Themes

Interconnected Leadership and Knowledge Systems: Indigenous women's leadership in entrepreneurship, climate action, and cultural revitalization is inseparable from broader systems of knowledge and community resilience. Revitalization and adaptation strategies rooted in Indigenous knowledge strengthen identity, cultural sovereignty, and sustainability.

Cross-Cultural Collaboration and Cultural Diplomacy: Partnerships between Indigenous and Japanese designers, as well as Indigenous-to-Indigenous exchanges, illustrate how cultural collaboration can reshape markets and elevate international awareness while prioritizing authenticity and reciprocity.

Systemic Challenges and Structural Reforms: Persistent inequities in finance, procurement, and representation continue to limit Indigenous women's full participation. Addressing these requires embedding cultural and social dimensions within trade, development, and governance frameworks.

Next Steps

Develop Multi-Year Roadmaps: Align efforts across entrepreneurship, climate resilience, and cultural revitalization through long-term, actionable strategies that drive sustainable growth.

Institutionalize Cross-Border Platforms: Establish structured mechanisms for exchange, mentorship, and trade promotion, with a particular focus on fashion, cultural enterprises, and Indigenous-to-Indigenous learning.

Expand Inclusive Finance and Policy Frameworks: Ensure that financing tools, procurement systems, and trade agreements explicitly recognize Indigenous women as central actors in sustainable economic development.

Embed Indigenous Knowledge in Global Governance: Integrate Indigenous ecological knowledge, cultural protocols, and data sovereignty into local, national, and multilateral policy frameworks.

Invest in Generational Leadership: Support mentorship, scholarships, and cultural initiatives that cultivate Indigenous women leaders across business, governance, and cultural sectors.

Closing Perspectives

Looking ahead, collaboration must be firmly anchored in regional and multilateral frameworks that can sustain and scale the momentum generated through initiatives like IMPACT. The Indigenous Peoples Economic and Trade Cooperation Arrangement (IPETCA) provides a dedicated platform to institutionalize Indigenous-to-Indigenous trade and knowledge exchange, and promote culturally grounded business models across member economies. Canada and its partners should continue to champion IPETCA's implementation by supporting capacity-building programs, expanding participation of Indigenous women entrepreneurs, and embedding gender responsive approaches in its work plans.

In parallel for trade opportunities, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) offers opportunities to operationalize inclusive trade principles through targeted procurement pathways and preferential access for Indigenous companies, expanding market access for more Canadians and diversifying away from traditional major trading partners. Member economies should explore mechanisms to integrate Indigenous participation within procurement policies, supply chain diversification efforts, and sustainability frameworks.

Finally, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum presents an immediate venue to advance Indigenous women's leadership across its agendas on inclusive trade, women's economic empowerment, and sustainable development. Embedding Indigenous women's perspectives across these multilateral frameworks—through consultative representation, policy alignment, and knowledge partnerships—will help ensure greater visibility, equitable access to multilateral fora, and meaningful participation in regional and global trade governance.

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