

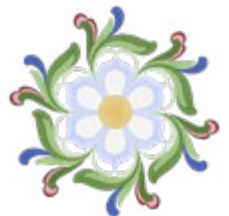


Métis Nation British Columbia

Nature Priority Paper

2026

Ministry of Environment
and Climate Change



MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA





Front Cover:
Wondering Through the Garden (Heart Berry)
by Madi Perreault

Acknowledgements

Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) recognizes that First Nations hold Aboriginal title to these lands colonially known as British Columbia (B.C.). MNBC is committed to acknowledging, upholding, and respecting First Nations' inherent rights that have existed since time immemorial, and to their constitutionally protected treaty rights.

This report would not be possible without the contribution of MNBC Citizens, who lean on the teachings of their ancestors to guide nature work in a good way. We acknowledge and honour the time and knowledge given by Métis Citizens. Maarsii (thank you)!

To honour and uplift Métis teachings, we have highlighted artwork from Métis youth artists throughout the report to evoke an emotional and personal connection to the environment and serve as a spiritual guide to bring people back to being caretakers of nature. All youth art is designated in the report with the title and artist name beside it. You can find the artists' statements in [Appendix E](#) of the paper. Maarsii to the artists who contributed to this report and provide hope for a better future.

We also acknowledge the wisdom provided by British Columbia Métis Assembly of Natural Resources (BCMANR) Captains of the Hunt:

“It is through our kinship with nature where Métis find strength; therefore, it is our cultural responsibility to care for all our relations. By doing so, we create a world where all may thrive.”

– MNBC MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE, SUSIE HOOPER

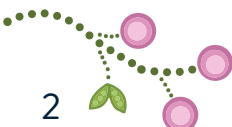
Mark Carlson, Curt Smecher, Holly Tennant, Marlene Beattie, Gary Ducommun, Rene Lucier, Vic Lavallee, and all Captains who came before. It is the Knowledge Carriers and Elders who keep culture alive, reminding us of the importance of how the land takes care of us when we take care of it. We celebrate you and honour the 25th anniversary of BCMANR.

We also acknowledge the good work that has been accomplished in partnership with Canada-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) as we continue to work together in Indigenous Climate Leadership. This paper and many of the actions in it would not be possible without their support. It is through respectful collaboration that we can continue to mend our relationship with the land and all our relations.



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List of Abbreviations

B.C.
British Columbia

BCMANR.....
British Columbia Métis Assembly of Natural Resources

CIRNAC.....
Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

CoCoRaHS
Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network

CORE.....
Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Education

CWS.....
Canadian Wildlife Service

ECCC
Environment Climate Change Canada

ILABC
Indigenous-led Area-Based Conservation

MNBC
Métis Nation British Columbia

MNC.....
Métis National Council

MNCCS
Métis Nation Climate Change Strategy

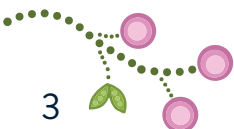
MN-S.....
Métis Nation Saskatchewan

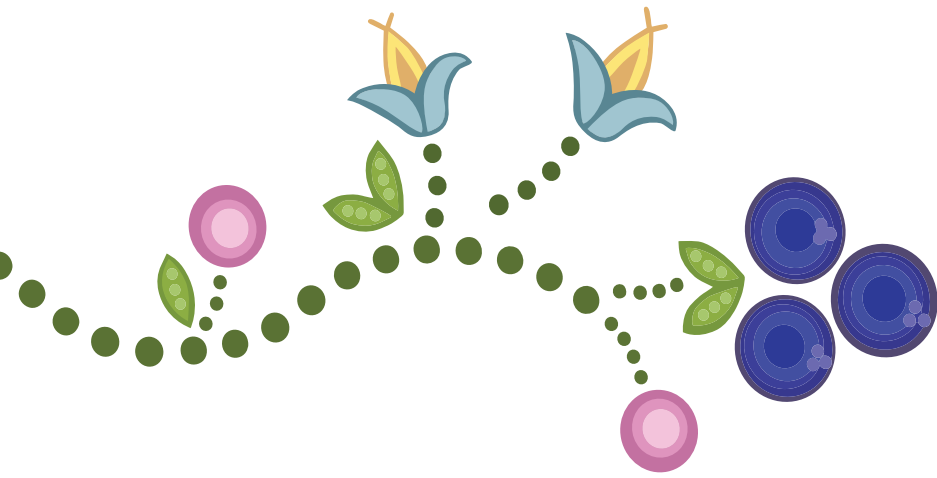
NRCan.....
Natural Resources Canada

PAL
Possession and Acquisition License

STEPS.....
Skills Training, Employment & Post Secondary

UNDA
United Nations Declaration Act





Introduction

WHO WE ARE

Métis Nation British Columbia represents the section 35 rights of approximately 30,000 Métis Citizens who are registered with MNBC and advocates for the over 113,000 self-identified Métis in British Columbia. MNBC represents thirty-nine (39) Métis Chartered Communities in British Columbia. MNBC's mandate is to develop and enhance opportunities for Métis communities by implementing culturally relevant social and economic programs and services. MNBC is recognized by the Government of British Columbia, and the Government of Canada. MNBC is the government for Métis in B.C.

MNBC's Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (hereafter referred to as "the Ministry") uplifts Métis cultural revitalization by creating opportunities for Métis to connect to community, culture, and nature. The Ministry also engages in activities at international, federal, provincial, regional, and local levels to support Métis environmental and climate change needs and concerns.

The Ministry is mandated to advance research, advocacy, and programs to help connect Métis Citizens to the natural environment in British Columbia. This is done through centering and empowering Métis voices and values in

WHO ARE THE MÉTIS?

The Métis emerged through the fur trade during the 1600s to 1700s, predating Canada. Indigenous women and European fur traders created distinct kinship connections along the fur-trading routes, and over time, mixed Indigenous people would intermarry, forming a distinct culture and the establishment of a new Nation. The kinship networks along fur-trade routes would eventually make up the Métis Nation Homeland.ⁱ

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights states that, "In 1982, the Métis were legally recognized as one of Canada's three Aboriginal peoples, along with the First Nations and Inuit."ⁱⁱ In 2002, the "National Definition" for "Métis," adopted by the Métis National Council General Assembly, means "a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation."ⁱⁱⁱ

matters related to climate change, conservation, and food security. These efforts honour the connections between Métis Citizens and all our relations so we may strive for a healthy and thriving planet for current and future generations. Regardless of where Métis live,





Cameron Lakes: A Métis Homeland by Shayne Turner

they desire to be in good relations with the land. In addition, the Ministry endeavors to embody and exemplify the vision, mission, and cultural values of Métis Nation British Columbia (see [Appendix A](#)).

The Ministry works intimately with the British Columbia Métis Assembly of Natural Resources (BCMNR), a non-political committee under MNBC's [Natural Resources Act](#) and a separate society affiliated with MNBC. Composed of Captains of the Hunt, the Ministry relies on the wisdom of BCMNR to guide and connect Métis with nature, teaching traditional ways of living (e.g., trapping, hunting, gathering). It is with their knowledge that the Ministry can move forward this work in a good way.

MÉTIS AND NATURE

Métis have always understood how caring for the land meant caring for their people. “Kaa miikooshiyaak (What’s given to us)”¹ describes how the natural world is a gift tied with responsibility. “Kâkî isi mîkawisit (as they were provided)”² describes how Creator provides for all living beings through the plants, animals, air, waters, etc. Métis centre these values of responsibility and connection, caring for the land and all their relations no matter where they reside.

An early historical example demonstrating this responsibility was through the Buffalo Hunt.³ This activity, which provides insight

¹ Southern Michif translation by Elder Norman Fleury of St. Lazare, Manitoba: <https://ameliadouglasinstitute.ca/phrase/all/190>. More translations including Southern Michif, Northern Michif, and French Michif can be found on the Amelia Douglas Institute website: <https://ameliadouglasinstitute.ca/michif-language>

² Northern Michif translation by Standing White Buffalo/Elder Tom McCallum of Île-à-la-Croix, Saskatchewan: <https://ameliadouglasinstitute.ca/phrase/all/190>.

³ Although called Buffalo Hunts, Métis hunted bison. Bison and buffalo are different species, though the terms are used interchangeably in historical and present-day contexts. Any mentions of buffalo in this paper refer to bison.



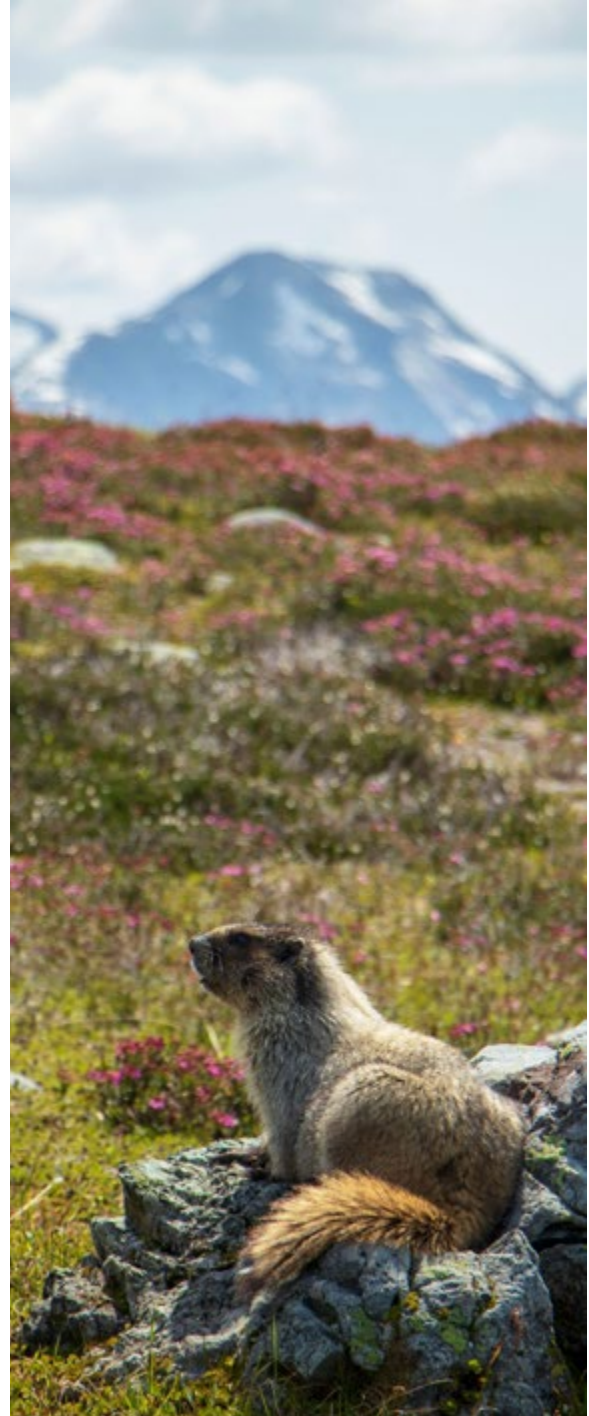
into the democratic governance structure of the Métis, was guided by the Laws of the Hunt and enforced by Métis Captains of the Hunt.⁴ When Métis families came together for these hunts, the heads of each family came together and elected an assembly, called the Buffalo Assembly. The assembly would establish the laws of the hunt which were specific to the hunt and the community needs at that time. These laws were guided by principles of sustenance, kinship, and protection of the community.^{iv}

When buffalo were hunted, “toot li bufloo kii aapachihaywuk itaa kaa wikichik (the whole buffalo was used where they lived).”⁵ This meant that all parts of the buffalo would be used by the community, everything would be shared, and nothing would go to waste. After a hunt, the harvested goods were distributed among the community, “particularly the aged and the sick.”^v The Buffalo Hunt and the Laws enabled Métis Captains of the Hunt “to oversee the stewardship of the land and resources derived from it.”^{vi}

There are similar protocols for relationships with all living things, including water, land, air and non-human kin. For many Indigenous

“We lived off the land – moose, deer, and whatever else we could get. That’s all it was.”

– CAPTAIN OF THE HUNT, RENE LUCIER,
REGION 6



⁴ To read more about the Laws of the Hunt, MNBC’s Harvester Card, and Annual Survey, please see: <https://www.mnbc.ca/media/1606>

⁵ Southern Michif phrase as translated by Elder Norman Fleury of St. Lazare, Manitoba: <https://ameliadouglasinstitute.ca/phrase/all/429>.



communities around the globe, this is known as Natural Law or First Law, and in a First Nations context is described as “the body of laws responsible for maintaining respectful and reciprocal relations between and within First Nations and between the human and non-human family”.^{vi} One way of describing this relationship is referred to as *wahkootowin*⁶ (Cree) or *etoline* (Dene), a worldview to which some Métis ascribe.^{viii, ix} Passed onto some Métis families by their Cree and Dene ancestors, this worldview “privilege[s] relatedness to land, people (living, ancestral, and those to come), the spirit world, and creatures inhabiting the space,” or “a broadly conceived sense of relatedness with all beings, human and non-human, living and dead, physical and spiritual.”^x Although not specifically defined as *wahkootowin*, an interview with Elder Norman Fleury shown in the text box on the right panel describes another way of understanding this relationship.

However, this relationship with nature was disturbed by colonization, through the creation of a land distribution system known as ‘scrip’, military actions with the goal of assimilation and elimination, and the ongoing settler encroachment.^{xi, xii} The simultaneous, near extinction of buffalo in the Prairies made it difficult for Métis to maintain important cultural practices. For many Métis, these events played a role in forcing them to move away from lands they and their ancestors had known and cared for. But as they moved, they carried their ways of being with them.

ELDER NORMAN FLEURY TALKS ABOUT MICHIF RELATIONSHIP WITH LAND⁷

SOUTHERN MICHIF: giishkishin noohkoom-ipan, mooshoom-ipan wiiyawow aen kii taashihtaakik kayaash wiishtawow kaa kii pay ishi oohpikichik. Aykaa naandow chi pahpihaat awiyuk, aykaa chi panaachihtayen kaykway. Aykaa chi pahpiwayen, li rispay chi ayaayen. Kwaayesh chi pimaatishiiyaahk, chi pimitshaahamaahk lii lway di la tayr, lii lway miina lii zaanimoo, lii zwayzoo, aykaa kaykway chi paanachihtayaahk. Aykwaa aykaa kaykway chi nipahatayaahk, kiishpin ‘moo kataat chi nipahtayen kaykway. Aykwanima, la “conservation” kaa itaahkik. Niiyanaan gii shoohkishinaan. Kaahkiyow gii pimaatishimakan...

Gishkishin maana noohkoom kaa kii itwayt: “Kaaya chi doo noochihayaakohk kaykway lii shoovreu, wii ochiwaashimishiwuk wiiput”...

Kaahkiyow aykwanihin lii lway gii pimitshaahaynaan, niikinaahk miina daan la mayzoon. Aykaa awiyuk chi – chi kitimahaat awiyuk...

Aykwaa kiiyaapich anoosh kaa pimitshaahamaahk aahtit aykooshi kaa shoohkishiyaahk anoosh.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: I remember my late grandma, my late grandfather, talking about how they too came to be raised a long time ago. Not to make fun of someone, not to ruin something. Not to make fun of people, to have respect, to live a good life, to follow the laws of nature, the laws and the animals too, the birds, to not ruin anything. And for us not to kill something if it’s not necessary for you to kill something. That, they talk about “conservation.” We were grounded. Everything was alive....

I remember my grandma would always say: “Don’t go hunting for deer, they’re going to give birth soon”....

All of these laws we lived also at our home, in the house...

And by still following some of these things, that’s how we’ll remain grounded today.

⁶ The spelling for *wahkootowin* varies. Here we use the Cree spelling from Brenda Macdougall’s book *One of the Family* as we reference their definition, describing the northwest and Sakitawak Métis style of life and cultural identity.

⁷ Norman Fleury, “Elder Norman Talks about Michif Relationship with the Land,” video, 2:29, posted by Amelia Douglas Institute, March 3, 2023, <https://ameliadouglasinstitute.ca/videos/norman-story-telling>.



“The traditional Métis worldview [in the Métis Aboriginal spiritual system] promoted living with the land, not exploiting it. The use of the land and its resources was that of a collective stewardship between a responsible community of resource users. In [some] Indigenous languages, there is no such thing as inanimate objects – all things have spirits. Indeed, flora, fauna, and humans were provided with spirits, emotions, minds, and bodies, which made them equals and therefore worthy of respect.”^{xiii}

– DARREN R. PRÉFONTAINE, TODD PAQUIN
AND PATRICK YOUNG
IN “MÉTIS SPIRITUALISM”

Today, many Métis call for a return and strengthening of kinship with their non-human relatives, knowing that caring for the land means a return to culture and ways of being. Métis values centre connection, reciprocity, and respect for all living and non-living beings. This care of nature extends beyond the historic Métis Homeland, with Métis in B.C. deeply considerate of the lands they reside on. The health of the land affects Métis physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and cultural wellness.

The interconnectedness and respect for relationships between humans and non-humans are common groundings for many Métis. Some Métis Citizens have shared with us feelings of disconnection from the land and are actively looking for ways to continue to be in relation with the natural world and exercise Métis culture and way of life.

“Culture wellness is a sense of belonging and pride we feel when we are connected to our Métis families, communities, traditions, and the land.”^{xiv}

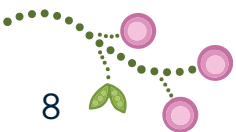
– KAA-WIICHIHITOYAAHK: MÉTIS PERSPECTIVES
ON CULTURAL WELLNESS

HARVESTING

Historical examples demonstrate how Métis practiced hunting, trapping, and gathering for their survival and well-being. Colonialism and assimilation efforts attempted to eradicate Métis harvesting practices, with one significant event being the decimation of the buffalo population in the prairies. Buffalo were not only an important source of food for Métis families, but also a commercial activity for them and the decline of buffalo had devastating impacts on Métis communities.^{xv}

As buffalo became scarce from the impacts of colonization, including ecosystem changes and capitalistic resource extraction,^{xvi} Métis were forced to travel farther to hunt and find new ways to support their families.

Concerns related to food security have persisted as a long-term priority for Métis communities as many Métis households today experience food insecurity just as their ancestors experienced when the buffalo declined. With shifts in weather patterns, wildlife migration routes, ecosystem dynamics, and increased urbanization, many Métis harvesters face unprecedented challenges to their hunting and gathering practices. Cultural practices are being altered, and economic implications impact Métis harvesters as hunting and fishing become more resource intensive due to costs associated with purchasing hunting licenses, increased travel costs, among many others. Harvested species





are also facing declines in quality and quantity in B.C., including threats from diseases (e.g., chronic wasting disease confirmed in deer in the Kootenay region),^{xvii} and the expansion of energy projects (e.g., dams, oil and gas extraction) in the province.

In addition to these challenges, changes in local climate regimes have impacted the environment in dramatic ways. Métis in B.C. are paying close attention to these changes and are adapting their harvesting, stewardship, and conservation activities in response. One B.C. Captain of the Hunt, Curt Smecher, details his experience of trapping on Vancouver Island (see [textbox on next page](#)).

Curt's experience speaks to various obstacles that prevent him from harvesting and connecting to his Métis culture. In addition,

Métis do not have recognized harvesting rights in the province and must follow regional, provincial, and federal regulations. This poses a barrier for many harvesters who rely on hunting to sustain their families as many culturally important species have highly restrictive regulations. For example, to hunt certain species a hunter must apply for a Limited Entry Hunting tag. These tags are distributed through a lottery system, where it is increasingly rare to win a hunting tag. Métis who are unsuccessful in the lottery are then prevented from harvesting culturally significant species. As the representative for B.C. Métis harvesters, BCMANR oversees harvesting matters and concerns on their behalf, advocating for the recognition of Métis harvesters and the connection it has with Métis culture and community.



“TRAPPING AND CLIMATE CHANGE” BY CAPTAIN OF THE HUNT, CURT SMECHER, REGION 1⁸

I am a Métis Trapper. I trap on the West Coast of Vancouver Island. I'd like to speak to the effects of Climate Change on me, my trapline (the local ecosystem) and my access to my trapline.

Climate change has been characterized as “Global Weirding” of weather, referring to the local consequences of climate change showing unstable weather patterns, extremes of weather and extreme swings in weather.

From my point of view, as a trapper, this “Weirding” makes my access and time on the trapline more difficult. One year I see heavy snowfall, making it difficult for backcountry travel in an area that rarely sees heavy snowfall, and certainly does not justify an investment in Snow Machines or a change in equipment, when the next year, we see no snow, but heavy rain and high winds, resulting in washouts and blowdowns again limiting access by the usual means.

It means a higher risk of getting stuck in the back country, higher risk to my transportation, to my cabins and the need for emergency satellite communications in areas not previously needing such precautions. It means needing to bring more tools for backcountry travel and safety.

For my trapline, the changes have a dramatic effect on furbearer populations and behavior. Shorter, milder cold seasons lessen the value of the fur. Rougher conditions increase the wear and tear on the guard hairs, again lessening the value of the fur.

During extreme weather, the animals “hunker-down” for a bit, waiting out the winter storms, probably a higher winter mortality and a lower sustainable harvest. Certainly, less animal movement results in lower yields.

We are also seeing drying of the summer weather, with more wildfires, forests that are dryer and less productive, affecting animal reproductive rates,



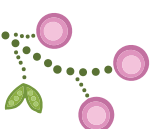
juvenile survival and peak populations. Habitat is both being lost and changing. What appears to us to be subtle changes in habitat can have profound effects on furbearer populations with changing patterns of habitation and movement.

I primarily trap Marten. Marten eat birds, squirrels and other rodents, so any local changes that affect the food supply will also affect the population size and distribution of Marten. Access to water, seeds and suitable habitats for the Marten and its prey are all affected by climate change.

It is the difference between the peak population and the winter carrying capacity that determines the sustainable fur harvest. With these weather changes, the populations are smaller, and the sustainable harvest is less.

In brief, the “weirding” of the weather makes my access more difficult, affects the populations and distributions of furbearers, and has a negative effect on a sustainable, eco-friendly industry with deep historic roots in my Métis culture.

⁸ Curt's story will be featured in NRCan's upcoming National Assessment series.



CONSERVATION & STEWARDSHIP

Terms such as conservation are steeped in colonial history, an echo of ideas like the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*. Conservation was asserted as a means to control the land. Protected areas created by colonial governments have been used to alter land-use rights, control resources, restrict access, and criminalize Indigenous Peoples for their land-use practices.^{xviii} In North America, Indigenous Peoples were often displaced through the creation of National Parks and forced into reserves/reservations.⁹ These areas were then restricted for use by tourists, recreational hunters, or leased to private companies. This resulted in the loss of Indigenous livelihoods, culture, spiritual sites, and traditional activities.^{xix} Although there are efforts to reconnect Indigenous Nations with previously created parks (e.g., partnership between BC Parks, Lílwat Nation and N'Quatqua for Pipi7íyekw/Joffre Lakes Park in southern B.C.),^{xx} there is much work to be done.

Time has shown that settler conservation organizations have failed to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and other environmental harms, and many organizations are turning toward Indigenous Peoples for environmental leadership.^{xxi} Agencies are increasingly recognizing Indigenous People's leadership in conservation efforts. For example, the government of Canada has recognized Indigenous-Led Area-Based Conservation (ILABC) as a method to meet Canada's goals of conserving 30% of land and inland waters by 2030.^{xxii} ILABCs are

led by Indigenous Peoples and are long term conservation efforts that centres the culture and language of the nation.^{xxiii}

With the return to Indigenous leadership in conservation efforts, Métis in B.C. have a growing interest in supporting conservation efforts across the province while also (re)connecting with Métis culture and language through the lands they live on. Stewardship is the responsibility that all people share and, when acted upon, positively impacts all of life. This includes but is not limited to climate resilience, food security, and wholistic well-being (physical, mental, emotional, social, cultural, and spiritual). Being good stewards of the land is intrinsically interwoven into Métis values and practices.



⁹ Reserve is the terminology used in Canada whereas reservation is commonly used in the United States.





The Ministry attempts to work beyond settler applications of conservation, understanding Métis live as part of nature, not apart from or above nature. Métis wish to improve and restore nature rather than preserve and maintain it; to nurture abundance in the environment rather than preserve an environment's baseline survivability. By applying Indigenous worldviews of nature, the Ministry works not only to improve ecosystems, but nurture spaces where Métis in B.C. can enjoy nature and empower them to create positive change wherever they live. An improvement to nature also means an improvement to the health and well-being of Métis.¹⁰

As a reflection of these values, the Ministry has created this priority paper – to serve as a living, guiding document for the Ministry as it relates to nature-based activities and commitments. It also serves as a tool of accountability and advocacy, to ensure that the Ministry continues to honour the needs and cultural values of Métis. The Ministry recognizes that Métis know what is best for their local and unique communities. It is with this knowledge that the Ministry strives to connect Métis in B.C. to culture, community, and nature through learning opportunities, knowledge sharing, programs, and more.

¹⁰ Throughout this paper, any mentions of conservation or stewardship will refer to Métis/Indigenous understandings rather than settler definitions.



What Informs This Paper?

This paper compliments and supports MNBC's 2025 *Climate Change Priority Paper*, which describes Nature Stewardship as one of five priorities, alongside renewable energy, emergency management, health and food, and sustainable jobs and prosperity. Informed by Métis in B.C., the Climate Change Priority Paper includes an overview of the current and aspirational actions of the Ministry within nature stewardship. This paper will provide a more in-depth description of nature-centred work.

Métis National Council's (MNC) *Nature Strategy: Restoring Relationships with All Our Relations* (2025) provides a national overview of Nature priorities, focusing on healing and respecting ecosystem relationships, thereby healing communities, Citizens, and all our relations. This strategy does not supersede regional priorities such as this priority paper but provides a tool of advocacy at national and international levels.

Nature Stewardship is also a priority within *The Métis Nation Climate Change Strategy* (MNCCS, 2024), which was developed with input from MNBC leadership, staff, and community on the key issues regarding a changing climate and its effect on Métis in British Columbia. Nature Stewardship focuses on community stewardship, Métis protection of ecosystems, and restoring Métis connection to the land. It involves taking care of the land and waters for future generations through conservation, monitoring, ecological restoration, and more. Through these efforts, one goal is to create equitable access to nature for Métis living in urban, rural, and remote areas. The MNCCS advocates for long-term and sustainable funding to advance Métis-led climate solutions, emphasizing the important role of federal agencies in this work.

Through the federal Indigenous Climate Leadership initiative, the Ministry has worked closely with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) to transform environment priorities related to climate, and therefore related to nature priorities, through a Nation-to-Nation, and government-to-government partnership as stated in *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan* (UNDA Action Plan) Environment priority area (article 29) (see *Appendix C*).

With these important reports in mind, the foundation of this paper is focused on Métis perspectives and input that have been provided to the Ministry over the last twelve years. Métis experiences and advice will be seen throughout the entirety of the paper; from the work The Ministry has completed to where it intends to go. Through engagements, community events, surveys, and workshops, the Ministry strives to promote wholistic nature programming and advocacy that connects Métis to both community, culture, and nature.



Why Nature and Conservation?

The Ministry has continuously heard from Métis how important connecting to and caring for nature is for fostering healing between Métis and the land. Conservation and stewardship activities through a Métis cultural lens centres a whole ecosystem approach, improving not only the ecosystem but also human health. These activities are similar to *nature-based solutions* which are recognized as effective and adaptable strategies that work with the natural environment to fulfill similar goals. As compounding climate events increasingly affect Métis culture, livelihoods, health and well-being, they demonstrate a greater need for Indigenous-led environmental stewardship. Below are some examples of how repairing and connecting with nature leads to a return to stability in a changing climate:

- ∞ Stó:lō Elder *Eddie Gardner* from Sqwá (Skwah) First Nation is a long term environmental and salmon advocate. In 2024, Eddie and Xwchíyò:m (Cheam) First Nation were saddened to see thousands of fish die from *a toxic spill at Hope Slough*, a side channel of the Fraser River and salmon-bearing waterway. That same year, Pelólxw Tribe, which includes Xwchíyò:m First Nation and Sqwá First Nation, started working on a *youth-led riparian restoration project* to restore salmon populations and other wildlife, while teaching cultural values such as their responsibility to protect water.
- ∞ The *Campbell River Estuary* located in Campbell, B.C., on the unceded traditional territories of the K'ómoks, Homalco, Wei Wai Kai, Wei Wai Kum, and Kwiakah First Nations, has been partially transformed from an area of heavy industrialism to a

nature reserve. The replanting of native vegetation and restoration of riverbanks and marsh shorelines brought back healthy fish-bearing streams, local birds, and bears. The public can now enjoy hiking areas, clearer waterways, and fresh air because of this transformation.

- ∞ The *Kootenay River Ranch Conservation Area* provides protection of grasslands, forests, small wetlands and lakes. It also acts as a wildlife corridor for migrating animals and species at risk between the Rocky Mountains and Purcell Mountains. Located on the unceded traditional territories of Íyǎhé Nakón məkóce (Stoney) and Ktunaxa First Nations, conservation efforts of the area include thinning the forest to allow for natural grasslands, an endangered ecosystem in Canada, to flourish. There are also efforts to work with local ranchers to bring cattle onto the property to sustainably manage grazing – this is a beneficial relationship as the cattle have food and fertilize the ground in return.

These strengths-based, collaborative examples demonstrate the benefits of nature activities. These projects are often mutually beneficial; when we take care of all our relations there are positive impacts to the health and wellbeing of all. They can also serve as mitigation measures for extreme climate events such as wildfires and floods.

“Without the land, we have nothing.”

– *'LIFESTYLE AS MEDICINE' REPORT*





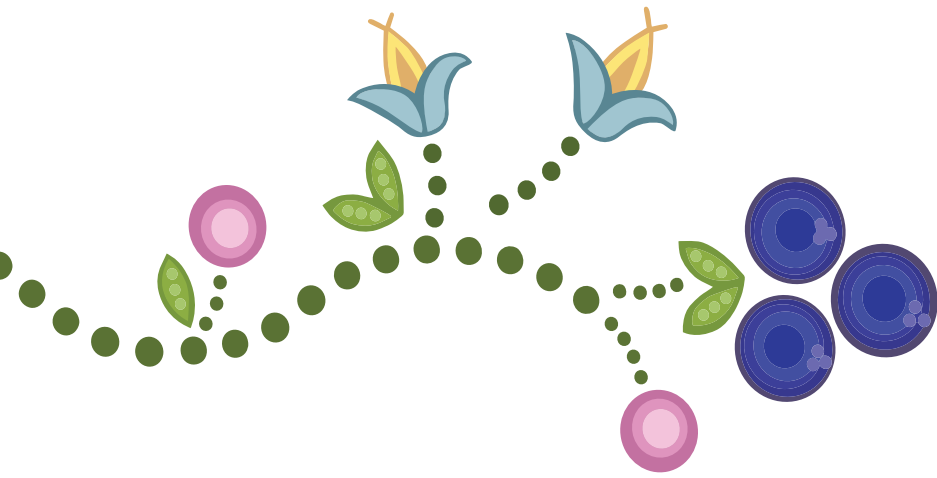
Métis citizens highlight the interconnected relationship between nature and the human experience – the health of the Earth is directly connected to our health and wellbeing. Academic scholars have thoroughly documented the benefits of nature on human health, especially as humans congregate in more urban areas.^{xxiv} Reduced stress, physical benefits, and connection are only a small number of the benefits of spending time in nature.

Métis in B.C. want to be more involved in conservation and stewardship practices, caring for the lands they reside on. To do so, the Ministry is focused on creating opportunities to connect Métis to nature and conservation activities by advocating for long-term funding and building collaborative relationships with First Nations, federal, provincial and municipal

governments, and other agencies. The Ministry is using the valuable insights given by MNBC Citizens to set goals aimed at providing tangible solutions that align with the needs and concerns of community members, including addressing the diverse needs of youth, Elders, people with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQIA+.

By building MNBC's capacity, the Ministry works towards inspiring and empowering Métis Citizens to care for the places and spaces they live in, for a healthier future for Métis and all our relations in B.C. As such, this paper shows a pathway forward for working together in supporting Canada's international and federal commitments on nature and biodiversity while finding new opportunities for sustainable growth and opportunity for Métis in B.C.





Working Together

It is recognized that the health of ecosystems can affect all aspects of life, therefore it is paramount that MNBC works together with all levels of governments, to respond effectively. The rising concern of climate change and the need for stronger conservation efforts has influenced international, national, provincial, regional, and Indigenous governments to work urgently. As a result, Canada and British Columbia have created policies and programs that attempt to prepare, mitigate, respond, recover, and adapt to a shifting climate.

Federally, Canada developed the [*National Adaptation Strategy*](#) (2023) and the [*2030 Nature Strategy: Halting and Reversing Biodiversity Loss in Canada*](#) (2024). The National Adaptation Strategy details how Canada can become more climate resilient through various measures, including improving biodiversity and protecting the natural environment. The 2030 Nature Strategy sets a path to implement the 23 targets in the [*Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*](#). These actions also involve uplifting Indigenous communities, including the Métis Nation, and working closely together to improve biodiversity and ecosystem health. The [*Species at Risk Act*](#) (2002) also aims to protect and recover wildlife and habitats in Canada, while the

[*Canada Water Act*](#) (1985) manages water resources through research, development, and conservation efforts. Most recently, Canada is seeking public input on the [*draft 2026-2029 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy*](#) where Goal 3.3 aims to “Protect and restore Canada’s ecosystems and biodiversity.”

The Ministry strives to continue good relationships with federal partners including Environment Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC), Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), and Parks Canada.

Following the standards set by the federal government, the government of British Columbia developed the [*Together for Wildlife Strategy*](#) (2020), the [*Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy*](#) (2022), the [*draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework*](#) (2023), the [*B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy*](#) (2024), and finalized the [*Conservation Lands Program Strategic Plan*](#) (2025).

These strategies emulate federal goals of supporting biodiversity, protecting habitats, recovering species at risk, and building climate resilient communities. At this point in time, the Ministry does not receive funding from the province for its nature stewardship





Hot Day by Emma Funke

work. However, the Ministry continues to work in good faith and develop good working relationships with ministries within the provincial government.

In the spirit of advancing Métis environment and climate needs at a national level, the 2024 *Métis Nation Climate Change Strategy* was formed as “an urgent roadmap and call to action” with MNBC contributing as writers and editors of the strategy, ensuring that voices and concerns from Métis in B.C. were reflected throughout the document. The actions of the strategy align with national and international commitments to nature and biodiversity such as the 2022 *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*, the *Convention on Biological Diversity*¹¹, and the *Intergovernmental*

Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

CO-DEVELOPMENT WITH CANADA AND MÉTIS NATION

From 2017-2024, the Ministry worked together with MNC and the Governing Members to advance Métis nature and climate priorities at federal tables. MNBC participated in the Métis Nation – Canada Strawberry Moon Table on nature related issues. This table was co-developed between the federal government, MNC and the Governing Members¹² to discuss barriers and ways to work together on shared

¹¹ Ministry staff had the privilege of attending two Biodiversity Conference of the Parties (COP), which brings international governments, industry, and Indigenous Peoples together to discuss work related to biodiversity and climate change. Ministry staff attended COP15 in Montreal, and COP16 in Colombia.

¹² MNBC left the Métis National Council in 2024. Prior to withdrawing, MNBC participated in two Strawberry Moon Table meetings. MNBC remains committed to continuing working with federal and provincial government agencies to advance Métis nature priorities.

nature priorities. This included advocating for long-term sustainable funding for nature programs so Métis governments could have more autonomy to develop Métis-specific programs rather than applying for funding on a project-by-project basis. A set of Co-Development Principles were introduced in the MNCCS (see [Appendix D](#)) and further defined in a MNC [document](#) in 2025.

The Ministry works to ensure that the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) and the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) are followed by all levels of government. The Ministry continues to meaningfully cooperate, collaborate, and co-develop with CIRNAC and ECCC to advance the Indigenous Climate Leadership work, as well as continuing the partnership with NRCan, and honour UNDA's distinctions-based solutions. The Ministry acknowledges that this work cannot be done through silos, but through an intersectional and wholistic approach with partners.

REGIONAL AND INTERNAL PARTNERS

Provincially, the Ministry is working to establish better relationships with the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food, B.C. Ministry of Forests, and other nature-related ministries. Due to the publication of the [B.C. Distinctions-Based Approach Primer](#) in 2023, relations with the province are currently being redefined.

In April 2025, MNBC signed a [cooperation agreement](#) with Métis Nation Saskatchewan (MN-S) which means, “both MN-S and MNBC have agreed to work in a government-to-government relationship to promote the respect and observance of all Métis

rights, including joint advocacy with the Government of Canada, where it is identified as mutually beneficial.” The Ministry has a good working relationship with the MN-S Environment team and currently meets monthly with federal government partners like ECCC to move forward the shared nature and climate priorities of Métis across the two provinces.

Within MNBC, the Ministry works in partnership with many other ministries, including but not limited to Health and Wellness, Housing and Homelessness; Economic Development, Partnerships and Tourism; Finance; Skills, Training, Education, and Post-Secondary (STEPS); Youth; and Sport and Active Living. The Ministry is actively creating relationships so that the work at MNBC is not redundant and encompasses Métis wholistic wellness.

Nature work requires the reciprocal relationship between all partners, respecting a distinctions-based approach, and respect for nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationships based on the Métis Co-Development Principles (see [Appendix D](#)). The current environmental legislative and regulatory landscape of in Canada and British Columbia are comprehensive, most taking Indigenous rights and responsibilities into consideration.

The following sections highlight the environmental work of the Ministry, including the prominent partnership held between the Ministry and BCMANR, as well as ongoing initiatives and aspirations.



BCMANR

Vital to this work is the partnership that the Ministry shares with the *British Columbia Métis Assembly of Natural Resources* (BCMANR). BCMANR is a non-political committee and a separate society affiliated with MNBC. It's made up of eight volunteers, called regional Captains of the Hunt (hereafter referred to as “the Captains”). Collectively, they manage natural resources on behalf of MNBC under MNBC’s *Natural Resources Act*.

BCMANR is, in principle, based on a historical governance structure of the Métis in the 1700-1800s used for buffalo hunts. During these hunts, the Buffalo Assembly, made up of elected community members, would establish the Laws of the Hunt (also referred to as the Laws of the Prairies), which, in turn, were influenced by what was best for the community. These consensus structures and communal commitments ensured the survival of the Métis during tough times as the health and prosperity of the community was prioritized over individual preferences. Métis were, and remain, resilient because of the collective mindset that communities held.

These historical cultural practices are honoured today in B.C. through BCMANR and the Captains. Beginning in 2001, BCMANR began as a group of Métis interested in forming a Natural Resource Committee to share their passion for harvesting, and their commitment to ensuring a healthy environment for future generations. Eventually

this committee evolved to adopt historical Métis cultural systems of decision-making.^{xxv} Today, Métis interested in being a Captain apply to BCMANR and are then selected through a Captain Review Panel. All eight Captains, representing the seven regions of B.C. (Region 7 is split into 7a and 7b), complete the Captains Assembly. Duties of the Captains include, but are not limited to, monitoring natural resource activities in their respective regions, present issues and concerns to the Captains Assembly, and present solutions and recommendations to MNBC and external partners on natural resource matters.^{xxvi}



From her Teachings to Mine, Art by Jos Stevens



“BCMANR tries to get information out there about what the issues are around harvesting, and part of what that leads to is for us to start putting pressure on governments to say, ‘listen, we’ve spoken to our people, we’ve spoken to our youth, and we have a pretty good idea on where we want to go.’ ”

– CAPTAIN OF THE HUNT, GARY
DUCOMMUM, REGION 5

This year, BCMANR celebrates its 25th anniversary. The Ministry has a long history of engagement and collaboration with BCMANR, relying on their expertise to create nature programming and inform environment related policies. BCMANR enriches Ministry programs by uplifting Métis cultural values and traditional harvesting knowledge. The following section highlights BCMANR’s main accomplishments since its inception as well as recent events.

A Glimpse: What They’ve Done

While BCMANR has provided years of service and programs to Métis in B.C., the following information provides insight into a few milestones and events over the past 25 years. We also acknowledge the guidance and service of former Captains, who have helped shape BCMANR into what it is today.

The Captains supported the creation of MNBC’s first *Natural Resources Act* and *Consultation Guidelines*. These documents outline how MNBC must work in partnership with BCMANR on

environmental related topics. BCMANR is essential to guiding MNBC’s efforts in conservation practices, protecting Métis cultural and sustenance needs, and engaging with external agencies by providing Métis Traditional Knowledge and making recommendations.

They also helped create the *First Edition BCMANR Laws of the Hunt* booklet to guide and provide resources to Métis harvesters in BC. It also guides Métis on how to obtain an MNBC Harvester Card and provides information on provincial and federal harvesting regulations. MNBC Harvester Cards were created by BCMANR approximately 20 years ago. To obtain a Harvester Card, Métis in B.C. are required to fill out an annual survey to support species monitoring and better understand Métis harvesting patterns. Since then, the Captains have championed MNBC Harvester Cards and the survey, helping the Ministry’s outreach efforts across the province. More information on the survey and cards is found in the harvesting section below.

As well as advising MNBC on harvesting matters, the Captains have held positions at various MNBC leadership tables to advise on Métis rights. Although many of these tables no longer exist, the Captains continue to advocate for harvesting rights and recognition of Métis within B.C. Today, the Captains maintain a seat at MNBC’s Environmental Advisory Committee. Aptly stated by Chairperson and Region 4 Captain, Mark Carlson, “BCMANR tries not to be political. That’s why we need MNBC, their politicians, to push forward for our inherent rights. That’s their job. Our job is to keep steering them in the right direction.”



In conjunction with advocating for Métis harvesting rights, the Captains champion and promote respectful harvesting in B.C. by helping Métis become certified in various outdoor training programs. The Captains have hosted and taught numerous Possession and Acquisition License (PAL) sessions and Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Education (CORE) programs throughout the province over the years, including youth (ages 10-17) specific courses. These certifications are steps to help Métis harvest within B.C., ensuring Citizens comply with federal and provincial laws. The Captains enhance these trainings by providing Métis Traditional Knowledge to participants.

“I grew up with my grandparents, and my grandfather had a small ranch, so we learned how to live off the land and how to respect the land, the animals, and use what was needed. What my grandfather instilled was, ‘if you’re going to do something, do it right or don’t do it at all because all you might have is your name.’ ”

*– FORMER CAPTAIN OF THE HUNT,
LEONARD LABOUCAN, REGION 2*

In efforts to connect with Métis youth and facilitate knowledge transfer, in 2015, the Captains hosted a Métis youth harvesting camp at Canoe Creek on the traditional territory of the Stswecemc Xgat'tem First Nation. The youth participants were provided a unique opportunity to learn



about hunting, tracking, Indigenous history, basic survival skills, among many other topics from experienced Métis and First Nations harvesters.^{xxvii} Activities also included harvesting a deer and creating fire from materials found on the land. This comprehensive, five-day camp fostered traditional knowledge transfer and fostering a sense of kinship with all relations.

In the summers of 2024 and 2025, the Captains spent time sharing traditional knowledge with youth at MNBC's



Youth Eco-Collective camp. The 2025 camp hosted at Manning Park on the unceded territories of the Syilx First Nation, Nlaka'pamux First Nation, and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, included taking youth on plant walks and storytelling around the campfire.

In addition to youth camps, the Captains co-lead and participate in various harvesting courses. In 2025, Métis and Indigenous youth were given the opportunity to take a BC Trappers Association certified trapping course, sponsored by BCMANR and the *Huu-ay-ahht Nation*. During the 5-day course, youth were taught about different traps, the best way to use different trapped species, skinning and preparing furs, and observing a trap-line. Participants were taught by an instructor from the BC Trappers Association and needed to pass an exam at the end of the course. Passing the exam gave the participants the ability to apply for their Provincial Trappers License.

“With access and the ability to harvest comes the responsibility of stewardship. Teaching those attitudes and teaching the awareness is extremely important, so that we are a community and as a people address conservation, address natural stewardship, as something that is ingrained in us and important in everything that we do outdoors.”

– CAPTAIN OF THE HUNT, CURT SMECHER,
REGION 1

The knowledge provided by Captains through these courses and camps is meant to teach Métis harvesting through connection with culture. In order to preserve their teachings, the Ministry recorded interviews with the Captains from 2023 to 2025, documenting the importance of BCMANR as an organization, some of the traditional knowledge held by the Captains, and personal stories of being on the land.^{xxviii} At MNBC's Annual General Meeting in September 2025, the Captains presented a video featuring some of these interviews and engaged with Métis Citizens on harvesting cards and natural resource concerns.

Over the years, the Captains have attended various in-person events and workshops such as MNBC Annual General Meetings, regional gatherings such as Indigenous Peoples Day and the Vancouver Island Métis Rendezvous, and national events such as the annual Back to Batoche gathering in Saskatchewan. The Captains also attended and provided opening prayers for the Ministry's Emergency Preparedness Webinar Series, the Home Garden Program webinars, MNBC's Eco-Collective sessions, and countless other engagements. Their presence and good words ground presenters and attendees in Métis cultural teachings.

It is through these various initiatives that the Captains engage with Métis and promote traditional knowledge. The text boxes in the sections that follow outline the ongoing initiatives and aspirations of BCMANR and the Ministry.¹³

¹³ All ongoing initiatives and aspirations throughout the paper align with MNBC's strategic goals (see [Appendix A](#)).

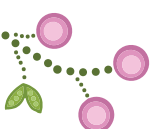


Ongoing Initiatives

- ∞ Educating Métis communities on BCMANR and harvesting initiatives
- ∞ Provides advice to MNBC and MNBC's Ministry of Environment and Climate Change on various natural resource issues
- ∞ Provides advice to MNBC's Ministry of Food Security on sustainable harvesting practices
- ∞ Promotion of MNBC's Harvester Cards and the Annual Harvester Survey
- ∞ Engage with youth on natural resource management, teaching Métis cultural values and restoring Métis pride
- ∞ Sharing and archiving Métis Traditional Knowledge
- ∞ Provide feedback to MNBC and external agencies, including federal and provincial governments, on natural resource issues, and proposed legislation, policies, and programs
- ∞ Supporting MNBC projects and programs that enhances and ensures long-term sustainability of natural ecosystems
- ∞ Attendance at MNBC events such as the Annual General Meeting

Aspirations

- ∞ Increase traditional knowledge transfer between BCMANR and Métis communities, particularly youth
- ∞ Create transition planning for Captains of the Hunt, ensuring traditional knowledge and governance is honoured by future Captains. Examples include:
 - Build a program for Métis Citizens to shadow the Captains
 - Incorporate and include various Métis groups within BCMANR's council process (e.g., youth, women, and 2SLGBTQIA+)
 - Create induction packages for new Captains
- ∞ Host regular gatherings with Métis focused on traditional harvesting practices, conservation, and land-based activities
- ∞ Increase participation at MNBC and external tables that focus on natural resources and harvesting
- ∞ MNBC to support and advocate for BCMANR Captains' participation at various federal, provincial and, other tables related to natural resources and harvesting





Harvesting

The Captains are well versed in the needs and concerns of their respective regions. The diversity of Métis community needs, including the ecosystems surrounding communities, compels the Ministry to develop local solutions and programming that is adaptable and sustainable.

One of the Captains' main concerns lies with harvesting. Harvesting practices are vehicles through which traditional knowledge is shared within communities, ensuring that plants, animals and other non-human relatives are harvested in a sustainable and ethical way. As Métis were displaced from their communities, Métis continued to harvest for foods and medicines for the survival of their families wherever they could, relying on the natural ecosystem around them to sustain themselves. Through time, between colonial policies and animal population loss, more Métis turned to the wage economy for survival. In B.C. today, some Métis continue to respectfully harvest through activities such as hunting, fishing, and gathering, following provincial and federal laws. Their harvests provide food in an economy where food prices, especially in rural and remote areas, continue to soar.

As Métis continue to hunt, fish, trap, gather plants, prospect, and recreate throughout B.C., they help MNBC monitor the health of

the land and ensure traditional ways of living are preserved for many generations to come. The Ministry continues to support harvesters through various programming and advocacy.

What We've Done

Programs focused on harvesting have tremendous benefits to community connection to the land, to culture, and to one another. The following programs and initiatives aim to increase visibility of Métis harvesting practices and advocate for Métis harvesters as well as promote cultural well-being.

The Ministry's main harvesting initiative includes offering MNBC Citizens the chance to apply for an MNBC Harvester Card. MNBC Citizens must provide documentation to ensure they are in compliance with provincial and federal laws.¹⁴ Once the Citizen receives their card, they are required to participate in the Annual Harvester Survey. The Harvester Survey (referred to as "the Survey") is a yearly survey administered to all B.C. Métis Harvesters. The Survey was first administered over 16 years ago¹⁵ and supports active Métis harvesters in species monitoring and management in British

¹⁴ More information about MNBC's Harvester Card requirements and Annual Survey can be found here: <https://www.mnbc.ca/harvester-card>

¹⁵ Paper surveys were distributed before 2010. The survey became available online in 2014.





Columbia by asking harvesters to report hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, observations, and other recreational and cultural land uses. For example, it asks harvesters to report observations on migratory birds and species at risk. As of December 2025, MNBC had 1,499 Citizens registered as active harvesters.

As proponents of MNBC's Harvester Cards and the Survey, BCMANR Captains assist in reaching out to harvesters to fill out the survey each year. The Survey helps BCMANR advocate for recognition of Métis as land users in B.C.

“[The harvester survey] shows that Métis still use the land. We are out there; we have a footprint. That’s the biggest thing is that, yes, we are still using the land and will continue to do so.”

– CAPTAIN OF THE HUNT, MARK CARLSON,
REGION 4

From 2016-2020, the Ministry created a Métis Land Use and Occupancy Mapping (UOM) project based on in-depth interviews with Métis harvesters.^{xxix} These maps include contemporary sites Métis use for hunting, fishing, plant gathering, overnight stays, and other cultural uses. They show that Métis continue to be in relationship with the land throughout B.C. These maps can also be overlaid with publicly available datasets such as areas impacted by wildfires, flooding, or drought, allowing the Ministry to identify potential impacts on Métis harvesting sites. With this information, the Ministry strives to protect land-use areas and prioritize mitigation and restoration measures when land is impacted.

In 2021, as an effort to provide Métis with food security, the Ministry created the Home Garden Program with funds provided for the COVID-19 pandemic response. In its original form, the program provided vegetables, fruits and flower seeds, as well as a small grant to Métis households for



the purchase of gardening equipment such as soil and planters. Since then, the program has evolved to include a focus on building skills and knowledge for Métis households to improve their food security. In December 2025, over 770 Métis applicants were accepted to participate in the 2026 growing season. It is a popular program and continues to be oversubscribed because of limited funding, highlighting the need for long-term funding. Prioritizing food security for Métis in B.C. will have lasting effects in areas of environmental protection, emergency preparedness, cultural connection, physical and mental health, and more.

Along with the Home Garden Program, during the COVID-19 pandemic and in 2025 MNBC was able to support harvesters by offering small grants to cover the cost of fuel, equipment, and other items, to reduce some of these financial burdens associated with harvesting. The Ministry continues to engage with and uplift Métis harvesters as Knowledge Carriers who understand the intimate impacts of climate change on the land and Métis culture.

The Canadian Wildlife Services (CWS) has provided funding to support the Harvester Survey and Harvester Cards. Another funding partner for the Survey is Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). The funding provided through ECCC's Métis Guardian's program has supported several programs relating to monitoring, stewardship, conservation, BCMANR activities, community workshops, and the Youth Eco Collective and Allowance. More information regarding these various programs is in subsequent sections.

Food security programming has been provided through various partnerships, including the New Relationship Trust (NRT). NRT provides grants to Indigenous organizations pursuing food security and food sovereignty, along with various other programs. While funding for food security is volatile and in high demand, MNBC will continue to seek long-term, sustainable funding to ensure programs such as the Home Garden Program grow as demand increases.

The Ministry will continue to develop partnerships with organizations working on harvesting and food security, focusing on priorities informed by Métis harvesters and communities.

Our Partners

To uplift Métis harvesters and provide more food security to Métis families, the Ministry partners with various organizations. The main partner in this work is BCMANR as they are Knowledge Carriers of Métis harvesting practices. They also continually advocate for harvesters at provincial and federal levels of government.

"I enjoy the outdoors; the fishing, the hunting. The wildlife country nourishes and grounds me. I hope to see more Métis connecting with nature and practicing culture."

– CAPTAIN OF THE HUNT, VIC LAVALLEE,
REGION 7A



Ongoing Initiatives

- ∞ Conducting the Harvester Survey annually for documenting Métis harvesting and monitoring harvested species
- ∞ Building data sovereignty mechanisms to ensure protection and responsible use of Métis harvester data
- ∞ Managing and processing Harvester Cards
- ∞ Educating Métis in B.C. on the importance of the Harvester Survey and MNBC Harvester Cards
- ∞ Continue partnering with BCMANR and MNBC's Department of Intergovernmental Affairs to develop and restore respect relationships with governments of every level, including First Nations, federal and provincial governments



Kindred Souls by Payton Maffioli

Aspirations

- ∞ Educational courses held by Métis Knowledge Carriers and BCMANR to transfer traditional harvesting knowledge to Métis in B.C.
- ∞ Increase Métis involvement in land-based practices and support skill transfer
- ∞ Workshops for BCMANR and harvesters to connect, share and preserve knowledge
- ∞ Micro-grants for certification programs in B.C., such as CORE and PAL, to supplement BCMANR efforts and to comply with provincial and federal harvesting regulations
- ∞ Build relationship between BCMANR and other MNBC ministries
- ∞ Expand and continue documenting Métis land-use through the Métis Land Use and Occupancy Maps for Harvester Card holders
- ∞ Increase accessibility for the annual Harvester Survey and related engagements
- ∞ Share summarized observations of harvesting practices of Métis in B.C. with BCMANR's guidance
- ∞ Improve accessibility for and knowledge of Harvester Card applications through 'Harvester Drives' where Ministry staff travel to various Métis Chartered Communities
- ∞ Support harvesters through improved programming and financial supports





Conservation

Conservation and harvesting work hand in hand at maintaining the balance of the land, water, and environment. The relationship between Métis people and the natural world is built on respect and reciprocity. It is part of Métis culture and the Métis way of life.

This section highlights the team's current actions and vision to increase Métis connection to the natural environment in British Columbia. Building on feedback we received over the years, these goals and actions aim to support Citizen's ongoing desire to learn more about the environments they are in and wishes to be more connected with nature. They also aim to support Canada in achieving global diversity targets through Indigenous-Led Area-Based Conservation (ILABC) or Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs).

“The biggest priority when it comes to conservation, to me, is the water: the health of the water, the levels of the water, where the people are gathered and what they are taking from the water. This is what I see all the time, and I think about my kids and future generations, and if the water is going to be able to be clean and clear enough not just for humans but for the plants and the animal relations.”

– CAPTAIN OF THE HUNT, HOLLY TENNANT,
REGION 2

What We've Done

The Ministry works to empower Métis to be involved in their local environments from formalized engagements with environmental agencies to local invasive species removal projects. Below are some programs that speak to these efforts.

In 2010, the Ministry engaged with Métis Knowledge Carriers on the boreal caribou population in northeast B.C. as part of a CWS project.^{xxx} Knowledge Carriers noted the decrease in caribou population, an increase in predator species, and impact of human encroachment on caribou habitat.

In 2022, the Ministry offered a Wilderness Awareness Training program to Métis Citizens and MNBC staff members in partnership with WildSafeBC. This included ways to reduce conflict with wildlife, keeping animals and people safe. The program was successful based on the high number of participants, approximately 500 people, and the overall positive feedback post-program.

The Ministry has held ongoing engagements exploring ILABC within B.C. led by Métis. From 2023-2025, under the tutelage of the IISAAK OLAM Foundation and Vancouver Island University, three Ministry staff members completed the Indigenous Protected and Conserved

INDIGENOUS-LED AREA-BASED CONSERVATION (ILABC)

Indigenous-Led Area-Based Conservation, or sometimes known as Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs), recognizes and uplifts Indigenous Peoples as caretakers of the lands and waters.

Overview of the program from Environment and Climate Change Canada: “Indigenous Peoples have a deep knowledge and understanding of land management and we are working together to protect more nature, conserve biodiversity, and combat the effects of climate change. This program acknowledges the importance of culture, language, socio-economic factors, and traditional land use as part of conservation efforts.

Indigenous-Led Area-Based Conservation (ILABC) provides funding to Indigenous Peoples to lead or co-lead the establishment and recognition of protected areas or other effective area-based conservation mechanisms (OECMs) across Canada. In this way, ILABC will contribute to Canada’s goal of conserving 25% of land and inland waters by 2025, and 30% of each by 2030.” ^{xxxi}

Our Ministry aims to conduct this work in a good way, respecting the traditional stewards in so-called British Columbia.

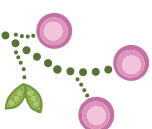


Areas Planning Advanced Certificate program. The program focused on ILABC planning, implementation, and management. Based on Métis community feedback, any Métis-led ILABC in BC would need to be done in partnership with First Nations, be accessible, and reconnect Métis to cultural activities and the land. The Ministry continues to explore the feasibility of an ILABC in B.C. and has been preparing a recommendation document for MNBC based on learnings from the

program.

The Ministry has also engaged with Métis Citizens to gather feedback on Métis views for federal Ecological Corridors and Urban Parks programs. Ministry staff have shared information and volunteer opportunities with Métis on Parks Canada’s Urban Parks and Ecological Corridors programs.

MNBC has partnered with Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) and secured funding through Canada’s 2 Billion Trees



Program Indigenous funding stream. Through MNBC's Millions of Trees project, MNBC proposes to plant up to three million trees by 2031. The project intends to provide training and employment opportunities for Métis Citizens and involve Citizens in community planting projects. These activities will sequester carbon, restore habitats, enhance biodiversity, and promote human well-being for all people in B.C. Although Canada has recently decided to end the 2 Billion Trees program, the Ministry aims to promote best practices for forest stewardship and continue reforestation efforts to fulfill our existing program goals until 2031.

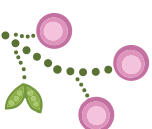
The Ministry continues to receive feedback from Citizens that they want to learn more about the environment. Throughout the years, the Ministry has hosted several webinars, including topics on invasive species (in partnership with the Invasive Species Council of BC), mason bees, and pollinator species. To share species at risk knowledge, the Ministry has sent 57 pollinator kits containing books, identification guides, and activity kits to Citizens. Based on Citizen's interest for a physical outdoor guide, the Ministry created a species booklet, offering a fun way to learn about different species in B.C. and where they can be found. These knowledge sharing activities support Métis individual roles in improving and sustaining biodiversity in B.C.

Métis also want to participate in positive and meaningful actions. The Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network

(CoCoRaHS) was introduced in 2024 for Citizens to participate in citizen science by monitoring precipitation levels at home. Another initiative promoted by the Ministry is enrolling Métis in an observation-focused application called *iNaturalist*. This application allows people to identify plants and animals in their vicinity, becoming citizen scientists, which generates data that can be used for conservation means. Throughout 2025, the Ministry offered webinars about how to use the app, and took Citizens out on several guided species-identification walks using the app, including Manning Park and Derby Reach Regional Park.¹⁶ The Ministry plans to host more guided walks, to encourage observation of the natural world in people's daily lives and connecting Métis to Knowledge Carriers. Through the iNaturalist program, the Ministry offers Métis Citizens without Harvester Cards a way to participate in species monitoring efforts.

The Ministry works closely with MNBC's Ministry of Youth. The main focus stemming from this partnership is the *Eco Collective*, which is a space for Métis youth who are passionate about environmental protection to connect with and learn from Métis Elders and Knowledge Carriers. Every year a Youth Camp takes place and invites BCMANR Captains to share environmental teachings. Members from the Eco Collective were able to apply for an 'Eco Allowance' to support their own environmental initiatives. Another

¹⁶ Métis in BC can join MNBC's iNaturalist citizen science project here: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/metis-nation-bc-citizen-science-project>





milestone for this partnership was the 2025 Nature Speaks art contest, where Métis youth were encouraged to submit their art exploring their connection to nature. Artworks from this contest were published into a [booklet](#), and seven pieces are featured in this report.

Risk projects. CIRNAC supports projects through the Indigenous-Community-Based Climate Monitoring program. NRCan, The National Tree Seed Centre, B.C.'s Ministry of Forests, and [veritree](#) support the Ministry's Millions of Trees Program. We hope to extend our relationships with these partners in the upcoming years.

Our Partners

Our internal partners include the Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Sport, and Ministry of Skills, Training, Employment, and Post-Secondary (STEPS). We wish to continue our partnership and collaboration with other MNBC Ministries to promote environmental stewardship among Citizens.

Our external partners are Parks Canada, ECCC, CIRNAC, NRCan, The National Tree Seed Centre, B.C.'s Ministry of Forests, and [veritree](#). Parks Canada supports programs on Urban Parks development, and Ecological Corridors. ECCC supports work on ILABC, Terrestrial Cumulative Effects, Guardians, and Species at

“My hopes for future generations are that they continue to stay connected to the land. I’d like to see us have gathering places on the land that we can use for our communities, for social gatherings, for teaching, for healing, for all of the things that the land brings to us.”

– CAPTAIN OF THE HUNT, CURT SMECHER,
REGION 1



“The land is our life. Without the land, we can’t survive. It’s as simple as that.”

– GEORGE SMITH,
MÉTIS TRAPPER



Where the Ocean Meets the Earth by Nicolaus Waddell

Ongoing Initiatives

- ∞ Continued promotion of citizen science opportunities in current MNBC-led initiatives, including the iNaturalist program and the annual Harvester Survey
- ∞ Working with federal and provincial governments to advocate for the inclusion of Métis perspectives on legislation, policy, and regulation relating to the environment
- ∞ Restoring wildfire impacted areas, involve Citizens in community planting initiatives, and enhance Citizens’ knowledge in sustainable forestry practices through the Millions of Trees project
- ∞ Creating a cohort training program for Citizens on tree planting and monitoring in partnership with MNBC’s Ministry of Skills, Training, Employment, and Post-Secondary through the Millions of Trees project
- ∞ Continue to advocate for more sustainable, long-term funding to support existing programs, such as the Guardians Program, Migratory Birds monitoring program, and various Species at Risk programs. These programs help Métis Citizens connect to the natural environment as well as adapt and respond to climate change in B.C.
- ∞ Continue partnering with BCMANR, local Chartered Communities, Knowledge Carriers, and MNBC’s Ministry of Culture, Heritage, and Language to include Métis cultural teachings in programming and ensure protection and prosperity of Métis knowledge in environmental work and stewardship
- ∞ Continue partnering with BCMANR and MNBC’s Department of Intergovernmental Affairs to develop and restore respectful relationships with governments of every level, including First Nations, federal and provincial governments



Aspirations

For ease, these aspirations have been grouped under different themes, however we acknowledge that there is overlap between them.

∞ TRAINING AND CAREERS

- Promote environmentally related training and careers for Citizens in partnership with BCMANR and Ministry of Skills, Training, Employment, and Post-Secondary
- Building internal capacity to support land-based activities and program development

∞ EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- Increase education, outreach materials, and events for Citizens to support the recovery and conservation of culturally relevant species, ecosystems, and species at risk in B.C.
- Increase education, outreach materials, and events to increase Métis connection to nature and culture
- Secure long-term funding to continue the Youth Eco Collective program
- Acquire reliable access to land to host land-based events
- Facilitate regular in-person multi-day culture camps in partnership with BCMANR

∞ CITIZEN ACTION

- Empower Citizens to participate in conservation locally through activities such as local invasive species removals, or planting native species in their own gardens

- Expansion of existing MNBC-led monitoring programs for B.C. fauna, flora, water, air, and soil, such as the iNaturalist program, the annual Harvester Survey, and the CoCoRaHS program

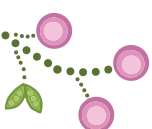
- Enhance citizen science opportunities for monitoring changes on the land, culturally relevant species, and species at risk through activities such as promoting bio blitz events and nature walks

∞ RELATIONSHIPS

- Work with First Nations to foster relationships and co-existence in shared spaces, furthering community-based stewardship practices and programs
- Continue relationship building with CIRNAC, NRCan, ECCC, Parks Canada and other external partners to support Métis-specific nature programs

∞ DATA AND ENGAGEMENT

- Enhance existing data collection programs and sharing with Citizens what we have learned through the citizen science initiatives
- Develop a Métis-specific app for Citizens to learn about culturally significant species and habitats throughout B.C.
- Host regular engagement sessions with Citizens to gather feedback on environmental views and concerns
- Develop a definition for conservation through a Métis lens with input from BCMANR, Elders and Knowledge Carriers



Consultation

The Ministry works to bring a collective Métis voice on environmental issues in B.C., working with BCMANR and local Métis Chartered Communities to ensure Métis Citizens' concerns are understood. The Ministry has provided feedback to various organizations on energy and natural resource projects, including the Canada Energy Regulator (CER), the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC), Clean BC, BC Hydro, and Fortis BC. Ministry staff are also engaging with federal departments such as ECCC to ensure that legislation such as the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* (CEPA), *Coal Mining Effluent Regulations* (CMERs), and related policies protects Métis interests in the environment. With

the recent creation of the federal Major Project Office (MPO), along with Calls for Power from BC Hydro, B.C. is expected to see an increase in natural resource projects. These types of initiatives have the potential to negatively impact not only the environment, but also Métis cultural practices and well-being. Métis care deeply about nature and the human relationship to the natural world. It is becoming increasingly important that MNBC continue engaging with all levels of government and other external organizations and agencies to ensure Métis perspectives are considered and the appropriate mitigations are proposed to address impacts to Métis interests and the environment.

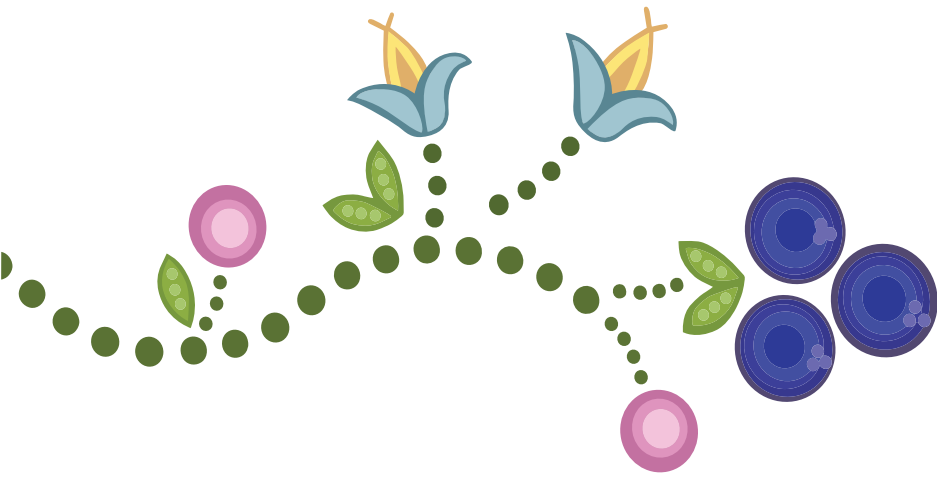
“If we don’t care for our natural resources, there isn’t going to be anything left for our children, never mind our grandchildren.”

– CAPTAIN OF THE HUNT,
MARLENE BEATTIE, REGION 3



Where Did It Go? Art by Alex Macaulay





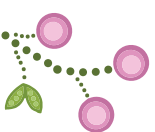
Conclusion

Métis communities are at the heart of the Ministry's work, where community, culture, and connection to nature are uplifted. As Métis lean on their culture and ancestral teachings to inform a good path forward, the Ministry listens, learns, and empowers them. We are guided by the past and plan with future generations in mind, for those not yet born.

The Ministry envisions a world where Métis and the environment thrive as one, where human and ecological systems are healthy and self-reliant. We imagine Métis as self-governing people; as people who draw upon Métis ways of knowing and being to contribute to local environments and food systems. We want Métis to feel prepared to help themselves, their families and communities. The Ministry strives to protect and restore the environment by enabling Métis in B.C. to participate in conservation, sustainability, biodiversity, food security, and emergency preparedness. Caring for nature, for all our relations, will provide a sustainable future for not just Métis people in B.C., but for all Canadians. It is this vision that drives the work of the Ministry and we are committed to collaborating with partners to achieve and build a future full of abundance for all.

"...that [the land] is still there to be used. That we have left enough behind for future generations. We're just borrowing this; it's not ours, it's there for all of us to use. If it wasn't there, life would not be very much fun at all."

– CAPTAIN OF THE HUNT,
MARK CARLSON, REGION 4



Appendix A: MNBC Foundations

MNBC Vision

Métis Nation British Columbia envisions a future where Métis people, communities and children thrive. We are connected to our rich Métis culture, heritage and languages; we achieve strong socio-economic outcomes; and our Métis rights as an Indigenous people are recognized.

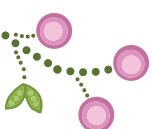
MNBC Mission

As the Métis government in British Columbia, we represent Métis citizens and promote the rights, recognition, priorities and interests of all Métis in BC. We create opportunities for our people, communities, and children to flourish, and work to ensure access to a range of programs and services to bridge socioeconomic gaps and increase overall well-being for Métis in B.C.

MNBC's Strategic Plan

Find Métis Nation British Columbia's 2023/24-2026/27 Strategic Plan, titled KÂ ISI NÂTAMA ÔTA ATI NÎKÂN (Our Way Forward), [here](#). The Ministry aligns all activities with the goals set out in the strategic plan:

- ∞ **Goal 3: Pursue Socio-Economic Reconciliation**, including supporting “initiatives that address the social determinants of health and promote holistic well-being for Métis individuals and communities.”
 - “Promote and support food sovereignty.”
- ∞ **Goal 4: Support Métis Chartered Communities**, empowering and engaging Métis Chartered Communities by strengthening agreements, increasing governance capacity, and providing greater opportunities through better communication, strategic partnerships, programs, and services.
 - “Continue to develop and implement programs and initiatives to address the unique needs and aspirations of Métis communities in British Columbia.”
 - “Continue to advocate and support greater emergency preparedness for communities with increasing impacts of climate change.”
- ∞ **Goal 5: Generate core capacity**, infrastructure and economic development. This includes the priority “to pursuing ‘green’ options to safeguard the environment.”
- ∞ **Goal 6: Develop and restore respectful relationships and partnerships**. Beyond establishing relationships with First Nations, governments, non-profits, etc., the Ministry understands that a respectful relationship needs to be nurtured between Métis and the environment.



MNBC Cultural Values



Kwayes'kwât'sowin - Integrity: We hold integrity as a core value. We are honest with ourselves, our colleagues, our communities and our partners. We are reliable and follow through on our word.



Tâpahtiyim'sowin - Humility: We show and practice cultural humility and cultural agility. We are open to new ideas and recognize the wisdom that surrounds us from others who carry experiences different than ours.



Kisîwât'sowin (Kindness): We show and practice lateral kindness in our organization and to everyone with whom we interact on behalf of MNBC. We practice *kaa-wiichihitoyaahk*: we take care of each other.



Sîpikisôwin - Resilience: We are resilient and do not fear challenges or setbacks but remain courageous and learn from each step of the journey. We channel the courage of our Métis ancestors who faced adversity and remained resilient.



Ahtisihcikêwin - Innovation: We draw on the spirit of Métis innovation and bring forward our curiosity and creativity to problem solve and develop new solutions for our people.



Atoskâtowin - Teamwork: We work together and actively seek opportunities to share information, collaborate on initiatives, and practice reciprocity for stronger outcomes. We embrace teamwork to achieve greater potential for success.



Manâcihitowin - Respect: we respect ourselves, others, and all Creation.



Appendix B: Aspirations

British Columbia Métis Assembly of Natural Resources Aspirations

- ∞ Increase traditional knowledge transfer between BCMANR and Métis communities, particularly youth
- ∞ Create transition planning for Captains of the Hunt, ensuring traditional knowledge and governance is honoured by future Captains. Examples include:
 - Build a program for Métis Citizens to shadow the Captains
 - Incorporate and include various Métis groups within BCMANR's council process (e.g., youth, women, and 2SLGBTQQA+)
 - Create induction packages for new Captains
- ∞ Host regular gatherings with Métis focused on traditional harvesting practices, conservation, and land-based activities
- ∞ Increase participation at MNBC and external tables that focus on natural resources and harvesting
- ∞ MNBC to support and advocate for BCMANR Captains' participation at various federal, provincial and other tables related to natural resources and harvesting

Harvesting Aspirations

- ∞ Educational courses held by Métis Knowledge Carriers and BCMANR to transfer traditional harvesting knowledge to Métis in B.C.
- ∞ Increase Métis involvement in land-based practices and support skill transfer
- ∞ Workshops for BCMANR and harvesters to connect, share and preserve knowledge
- ∞ Micro-grants for certification programs in B.C., such as CORE and PAL, to supplement BCMANR efforts and to comply with provincial and federal harvesting regulations
- ∞ Build relationship between BCMANR and other MNBC ministries
- ∞ Expand and continue documenting Métis land-use through the Métis Land Use and Occupancy Maps for Harvester Card holders
- ∞ Increase accessibility for the annual Harvester Survey and related engagements
- ∞ Share summarized observations of harvesting practices of Métis in B.C. with BCMANR's guidance
- ∞ Improve accessibility for and knowledge of Harvester Card applications through 'Harvester Drives' where Ministry staff travel to various Métis Chartered Communities
- ∞ Support harvesters through improved programming and financial supports



Conservation Aspirations

∞ TRAINING AND CAREERS

- Promote environmentally related training and careers for Citizens in partnership with BCMANR and Ministry of Skills, Training, Employment, and Post-Secondary
- Building internal capacity to support land-based activities and program development

∞ EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- Increase education, outreach materials, and events for Citizens to support the recovery and conservation of culturally relevant species, ecosystems, and species at risk in B.C.
- Increase education, outreach materials, and events to increase Métis connection to nature and culture
- Secure long-term funding to continue the Youth Eco Collective program
- Acquire reliable access to land to host land-based events
- Facilitate regular in-person multi-day culture camps in partnership with BCMANR

∞ CITIZEN ACTION

- Empower Citizens to participate in conservation locally through activities such as local invasive species removals, or planting native species in their own gardens

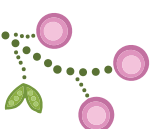
- Expansion of existing MNBC-led monitoring programs for B.C. fauna, flora, water, air, and soil, such as the iNaturalist program, the annual Harvester Survey, and the CoCoRaHS program
- Enhance citizen science opportunities for monitoring changes on the land, culturally relevant species, and species at risk through activities such as promoting bio blitz events and nature walks

∞ RELATIONSHIPS

- Work with First Nations to foster relationships and co-existence in shared spaces, furthering community-based stewardship practices and programs
- Continue relationship building with CIRNAC, NRCAN, ECCC, Parks Canada and other external partners to support Métis-specific nature programs

∞ DATA AND ENGAGEMENT

- Enhance existing data collection programs and sharing with Citizens what we have learned through the citizen science initiatives
- Develop a Métis-specific app for Citizens to learn about culturally significant species and habitats throughout B.C.
- Host regular engagement sessions with Citizens to gather feedback on environmental views and concerns
- Develop a definition for conservation through a Métis lens with input from BCMANR, Elders and Knowledge Carriers



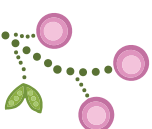
Appendix C: UNDA Actions

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan (UNDA Action Plan) Actions that pertain to environmental priorities (article 29):

Action 46. Together with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, advance an Indigenous Climate Leadership Agenda, including distinctions-based strategies, that vests the resources and authorities necessary for Indigenous peoples to fully exercise their right to self-determination on climate. This includes ensuring that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples have stable, long-term financing to implement their climate actions, make climate related decisions with the Government of Canada, and that systemic barriers to Indigenous climate leadership are addressed. (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada)

Action 47. Continue to support Indigenous leadership in conservation through initiatives such as Indigenous Guardians, Indigenous Partnerships Initiative and Indigenous-Led Area Based Conservation that will provide capacity support until 2026, as well as the Project Finance for Permanence (Environment and Climate Change Canada).

Action 48. Build on important work that has already occurred, to recognize, elevate, and incorporate Indigenous science into Environment and Climate Change Canada scientific inquiry by continuing to stand up the new Indigenous Science Division, established in 2022, to bridge, braid, and weave Indigenous science with western science to inform Environment and Climate Change Canada's science, policy, and program decision making climate leadership are addressed. (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada).



Action 49. Create a Canada Water Agency and advance the modernization of the Canada Water Act to reflect Canada's freshwater reality, including climate change and Indigenous rights. (Environment and Climate Change Canada)

Action 50. Monitor the implementation of the 2022-26 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and in developing a new strategy for 2026, through their engagement in the Minister's Sustainable Development Advisory Council as well as other consultative methods. Involvement of Indigenous peoples is a core principle of the Federal Sustainable Development Act. The 2022-2026 Federal Sustainability Development Strategy includes perspectives from members of National Indigenous Organizations, a commitment to report on the implementation of the UN Declaration Act, and to take a wide range of actions in support of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. (Environment and Climate Change Canada)



Action 51. The Impact Assessment Agency will implement the Impact Assessment Act (IAA) in a way that aligns with the objectives and spirit of the UN Declaration. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Carrying out impact assessments in a manner that emphasizes the need to seek free, prior, and informed consent
- Maximizing Indigenous collaboration and partnership, including the advancement of regulations to enable agreements under p.114(1)(d) and (e) of the IAA
- Early, consistent, and meaningful engagement and participation through all phases of impact assessment
- Respect for Indigenous rights, culture and jurisdiction
- Mandatory consideration of Indigenous Knowledge in impact assessment
- Continually building Crown-Indigenous relations
- Supporting Indigenous capacity in impact assessment
- Consideration of health, social and economic factors, including impacts to women, youth and Elders
- Consideration of any cumulative effects that are likely to result from a designated project in combination with other physical activities that have been or will be carried out. (Impact Assessment Agency of Canada)

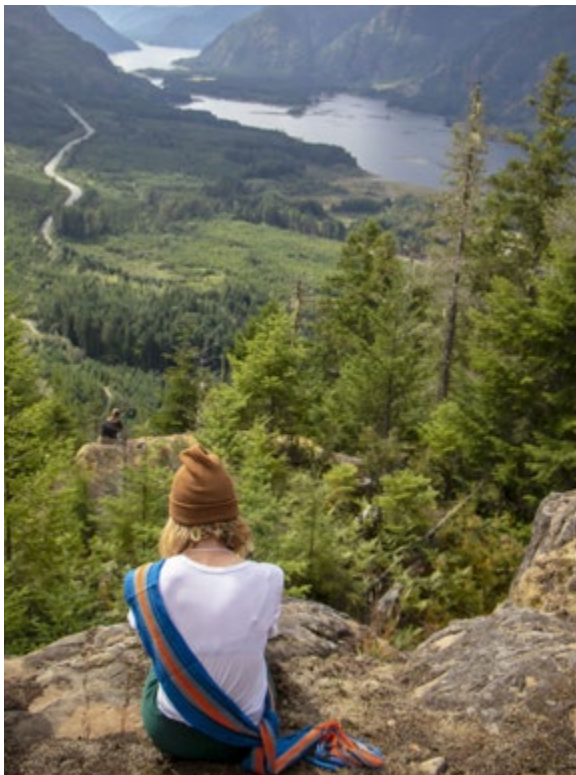


Appendix D: Co-Development Principles

The *Métis Nation Climate Change Strategy* (2024, pg. 20) describes how governments can work collaboratively with Métis governments. The text that follows is taken directly from the strategy.

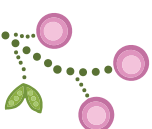
To advance the Nation-to-Nation, Government-to-Government relationship based on the respect and recognition of rights, the Principles of Co-Development work to redress the legacy of colonialism and racism experienced by Métis, whether present in legislation, policy, or practices.

The Co-Development Principles formalize a co-development process between Métis Governments and Canada for legislative, regulatory, and administrative matters. These Principles provide clarity on the operational elements needed to ensure full and effective Métis participation.



Areas addressed:

- The co-development of legislative or administrative measures that may affect Métis.
- The importance of Nation-to-Nation, Government-to-Government processes with the Métis Governments.
- The respect for self-government and Métis governments' decision-making and approval processes and timelines.
- The notion of co-development being included in the substantive and procedural aspects of the traditional legislation and policy development cycle.
- Co-development processes and their accommodation of constitutional imperatives, such as parliamentary privilege and cabinet confidence, in a way that does not generally, disproportionately, or unduly limit Indigenous partnership.
- The importance of distinctions-based approaches to co-development processes.
- The resourcing of co-development processes to ensure the capacity of Métis Governments and their ability to appropriately represent their citizens.



Appendix E: Artist Statements

Maarsii (thank you) to the artists who contributed their artwork for this report. Below you will find each artists' statements¹⁷ about their respective works, found in chronological order within the paper.

Wondering Through the Garden (Heart Berry) by Madi Perreault

Wondering the Garden captures a childhood memory of exploring my grandmother's lush backyard where clusters of plants and berries grew in every corner. I chose the heart berry, as my central motif because it symbolizes both sweetness and resilience. That's why they surround the pink flower.

Working in a mixture of cartoon and dot art I layered hundreds of small circles to build texture and depth across the canvas. My purpose is to invite viewers into that sense of wonder and discovery. As you follow the playful cartoon outlines and intricate dot patterns your eye uncovers hidden details just as I once did among leaves and blossoms. This piece honors traditional Métis dot art practice¹⁸ while reflecting my personal journey of reconnecting with family, memory and the living world.

Cameron Lakes: A Métis Homeland by Shayne Turner

My photography project explores the deep connections between my Métis and Cree ancestors and the land they made home in northern British Columbia, known to us as "Cameron Lakes." Historically, my family, the Camerons, journeyed from the Michel Band Reserve and the Lac Ste. Anne and Kelly Lake Métis settlements to settle at the lakes

later named for them. Their homestead and cabins were built on what was then called Long Lake by the West Moberly First Nation. My ancestors and parents migration reflects cultural resilience, shaped by necessity and the desire to live independently on the land and water.

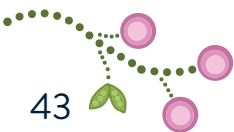
I focus on natural elements, especially the lakes, as reflections of our family's ties to the land. These waters offered nourishment, travel, and belonging, while the surrounding landscape provided food, medicine, and spiritual grounding. The lakes served as a home base from which they travelled to guide hunters and provide medicine. For Métis people like my great-grandmother, a medicine woman who often travelled, the land was a sanctuary that provided safety and healing when few other places could. Nearby at Moberly Lake lies our connection to the Catholic Church, where many of my ancestors are buried at Indigenous burial sites. This region still resonates with the complex identity of the Métis people, juxtaposed between Church, First Nations and contested land ownership.

My artistic process involves careful observation and patience to find where they settled, built their winter home and also their summer cabin across the lake. Like my ancestors, I was looking for their home. This photograph is part of an ongoing dialogue with them, acknowledging their wisdom, resilience, and the ways they lived in relationship with the land that sustained them. I want that to remain integral to my identity.

Through my work, I invite viewers to recognize the importance of preserving natural spaces that hold cultural significance for Indigenous communities. I want people

¹⁷ Artist statements have not been modified from the version sent in by the artists. Note that all references to Metis in these statements are equivalent to Métis.

¹⁸ While Métis dot art is not considered a traditional practice, it is inspired by the Métis heritage art of beadwork.



to see this photo and understand that this land carries my history and continues to shape my future. My goal is to honour the spirit of my ancestors, especially my kokums, by affirming our lasting connection to Cameron Lakes and the kinship we share with the West Moberly and Sauteau First Nations. The lakes represent a refuge, a home, and a reminder that the land welcomed my family when the world around them often did not. It offered a place to build a life.

I included the moccasins made by my great-grandmother, and the ribbon skirt my mom made for me, set against the forest and cabin by the lake. These pieces carry the love and knowledge of the women in my family. I also included our family burial site, at the Catholic graveyard in Moberly Lake. Though overgrown and unmarked, their graves still hold presence for my six ancestors buried there. It is a sacred place, if also strangely sad. By returning, my family remembers, honours, and reaffirms our lasting connection to both our heritage and the land itself.¹⁹

Hot Day by Emma Funke

My digital illustration “Hot Day” depicts a scene I saw while paddleboarding on Okanagan Lake last summer: a wild horse just done quenching its thirst, with blackbirds seeking refuge in a dead willow tree which has fallen into the lake. The dead willow caught my interest as it reminded me of a giant bird cage that was broken and tossed aside, with the birds perched victoriously on top. Part of nature is the renewal process, life coming from death. The skeleton of the tree still serves as a valuable perch and a shady spot for a drink of water. It was a scorching hot day, so I felt for all the critters trying in vain to escape the intense heat while I was having fun on the water.

Growing up I spent every summer at the head of Okanagan Lake where I’d spend my days in

the water, quietly observing the abundance of nature around me. The wild, untouched desert scrubland on the reserve is a biome completely unique to the Okanagan, one that I feel is rarely depicted in the romantic, Western light that I see it in, with the wild horses that roam the rangelands as iconic a symbol of the Okanagan to me as the Ogoopogo. Even wildfire season has its own dangerous, ominous beauty in the colours it casts across the sky, which inspired the colour palette. The minimal palette is meant to depict the hazy, dreamy pinks and smoky reds of a smoky summer sky. I used a video I took of the scene as reference material for my illustration, then worked in Clip Studio Paint to complete the drawing.

From Her Teachings to Mine by Jos Stevens

My drawing is of the Wild Rose that blooms within “British Columbia” every spring. This flower is especially important as it has ties with my grandmother, who we call grammy. When I was young, my grammy would take my sister and I out for walks outside our old farm house and would point out plants and animals that would be around us and teach us about them. I loved learning about plants like the pussy willow, the castilleja (paintbrush flower), and particularly the wild rose bush that grew right at the end of our driveway. I remember being so in awe of this flower because it was so irresistibly pink, and I loved pink as a little girl. I asked my grammy what kind of flower it was, and she said it was a wild rose, and was also edible! I remember going up to the plant, picking a flower, plucking a petal and eating it all with her beside me. She told me you could eat it when you have tummy issues, and I was so surprised that a little flower could do something like that for humans.

¹⁹ Due to the art contest photo submission limit, only one photo from this collection was selected for the contest.



Years later, this teaching continues to follow me in my career path with my current education at university. My studies have opened my eyes to so many teachings, knowledges and ways of life for not only other Indigenous communities, but my own Métis heritage. It also had me come to the realization that my grammy was passing down a teaching without me realizing it at the time, being that I was disconnected from my heritage. I also believe my minor in resource and environmentalism, while also just having a big interest in plants and nature, has added another important layer in how I see the world and also how I create my art. Learning about environmental systems, land-use, and Indigenous-led stewardship has deepened my understanding of our role as humans that we play and our responsibilities to the land and our non-human relatives. Its helped me see how our relationships to plants, animals and ecosystems are interconnected. All these teachings have helped shape how I express myself in my artistic journey, having personal connections while also creating a twist on modern scientific plant identification cards. The wild rose in my drawing represents memory, teachings, and responsibility and relationship with the environment. I hope to reflect the importance of remembering and sustaining the connections we have with the land, while also how these connections can guide our learning and our art.

Kindred Souls
by Payton Maffioli

Taanishi, I have learned much from interacting with the wild side of nature, and how to keep my distance and respect their presence. Wildlife photography unleashes a different kind of feeling, one where you feel more connected to mother earth. Each soul I encounter is unique and full of personality, and I have the honour to capture that in still time. Each animal, each individual photo

represents a teaching I have learned in life. Kindred souls is the reflection of every being I have crossed paths with during my time on Turtle Island. The way I find them, or the way they've found me, is a sign of something I may be missing and they are the reminder I need to continue my work. The purpose of my photography is to raise awareness around the conservation of wildlife and ecosystems through art that you can feel within yourself, and see yourself in their eyes. To consider yourself one with nature, and to be a guardian of the land and sea, is a great privilege. As a Metis woman it is my duty to carry the teachings and the spirit of the ancestors on my shoulders and be a beacon of their light in every step I take.

Where the Ocean Meets the Earth
by Nicolaus Waddell

My chosen subject is of "Where the Ocean Meets the Earth," in Pachena Bay, Bamfield, the traditional unceded lands of the Huu-ay-aht Peoples. I have specifically chosen to photograph the shoreline from a bird's eye perspective using a drone with the camera pointed at nadir point (directly at the ground) to highlight the colours, patterns, and textures created through interactions between the two elements of water and earth. In a way, this produces an abstract painting like effect that inspires me to explore different viewpoints when approaching all areas of life. The purpose of this artwork is born of that same idea combined with having more appreciation for the natural wonders of our world that are often abused or taken for granted.

Living on Vancouver Island in the heart of a temperate rainforest has greatly influenced my work as an artist. I am naturally drawn to the lush greenery and crystal-clear bodies of water which has inspired me to create art that embodies the vibrant and saturated colours of the foliage mixed with the crystalline, light reflecting qualities of



the water – both of which are demonstrated in the submitted artwork. Culturally, you can find these qualities in the floral beadwork (the beads specifically) that the Metis people are known for and I believe this also demonstrates an appreciation for the natural world.

My personal background combined of experiences exploring, cultivating, and admiring the natural world and my teachings from several different Metis Elders and Knowledge Keepers have led me to utilize the natural world as mental health support, creative inspiration, and spiritual wisdom.

I have learned through teachings of Elder's and Knowledge Keepers that the natural world is alive and closely integrated with our spiritual bodies. We can draw on it for strength, support, and wisdom as long as we know how to listen and receive it. I feel this is the essence of the theme "Nature Speaks," and so I've provided an artistic view a place in the world that speaks the loudest to me.

Where Did It Go?

By Alex Macaulay

For the last 10 years I have lived in an area called "River District". This area has been in development for around 20 years now, although when I arrived, they had just built the first town houses on the east side of Kerr (where my family and I moved to). There were already demolished areas, but the land was still covered in trees you could run through, and you were able to fish in the Fraser River well being able to catch and release something. There were way more birds and wildlife roaming and you could not count them all except the two bald eagles who never left the area. I remember coming home one day from school and being able to see the Fraser River in a way I should not have, from the marine drive road in my car, at least 2km away from it. My heart sank

seeing the "New Sports field this year!" sign in the place of at least 50 trees. They have yet to finish and actually use this large patch of land to this day, 7 years later. Yet in this time, they were able to demolish more trees, and build over 5 new apartment buildings, promising lower cost housing but most of which are just investment properties renting at unaffordable prices. Watching this neighbourhood change, good or bad, has brought my soul a lot of pain. I'm watching the river get sicker, the birds leaving to find a safer home and new people coming in not knowing the beauty that was destroyed so they can exist here. This is why I created a crochet mural to depict parts of the change. I made 4 trees that if you look closely are coming apart with the string attached to the fence going into the apartment building behind it, showing where all the trees were cut, and in the river. To have the trees stand up I used discarded wood I found around the neighborhood left by construction. In between the trees I have a river with two salmon looking sickly, with no other fish but themselves. My hope is that when people see this work, they can look at the land around them and question how they feel about it, and if they are comfortable with what had to happen for them to be there.



Endnotes

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