

Métis Traditional Knowledge



Métis Traditional Environmental Knowledge

A changing Earth requires an adaptation of knowledge by people over time to ensure survival.

Métis knowledge reflects the wisdom and ingenuity of a people who embody a heritage rooted in Aboriginal and European ancestries.

During the fur trade era, long before Canada became a country in 1867, Métis people developed a unique culture, language and identity. Specialized knowledge provided skills necessary for survival in an unforgiving wilderness.

Métis traditional environmental knowledge is built from community practices

which form the foundation for understanding the natural world, building skills and behaviour adaptable and applicable to other facets of Métis life, maximizing use and benefit of natural resources within community accepted ethical boundaries, and contributing to personal and community spiritual, physical, intellectual and emotional health and development. While the phrase 'traditional environmental knowledge' does not mention contemporary life, the purpose of understanding Métis traditional environmental knowledge is for adaptation and use in everyday life.

Ancestral knowledge is an integral part of traditional environmental knowledge as it influences subsequent generations in understanding and interacting with the natural world.

Métis perspectives of the environment extend beyond the content of sciences such as biology, chemistry, physics or geology into values and spiritual beliefs resulting in a unique Métis holistic worldview. (1) Like other Indigenous peoples of the world, Métis views are often marginalized or dismissed. Yet, Métis continue to believe in the values and practices they know are necessary to an enduring healthy environment.

The Métis National Council respects the traditional knowledge of Métis people and encourages wisdom and decision-making based on environmental health. Your action matters.

1. Vizina, Y. (2010) *Métis Traditional Environmental Knowledge and Science Education*. University of Saskatchewan. pp12-15

The Métis National Environment Committee

 2011

The Métis National Council convened a National Environment Committee meeting in March 2011 for the five Governing Members of the Métis Nation: Métis Nation of Ontario, Manitoba Metis Federation, Métis Nation - Saskatchewan, Métis Nation of Alberta, and the Métis Nation British Columbia to discuss a broad range of environmental issues facing the Homeland. The Committee, chaired by President Clément Chartier who is also Minister of Environment for the Métis National Council works to ensure Métis traditional environmental knowledge is part of this work.

Traditional knowledge is part of the past...and future

Métis Relationships with the Land

"For Indigenous peoples' continued existence - throughout the world - land is a prerequisite. It is essential because Indigenous peoples are inextricably related to land: it sustains our spirits and bodies; it determines how our societies develop and operate based on available environmental and natural resources; and our socialization and



governance flow from this intimate relationship. Because of that intimate relationship, the land is rendered inalienable: it is a natural right, a right essential for the continued vitality of the physical, spiritual, socio-economic and

political life and survival of the Indigenous peoples for generations to come." (2)

Over many generations, Métis have discovered innovative ways to live in their particular environment despite diminished access to land and waters.

2. Chartier, C. (1993). Métis lands and resources. In M. o. Canada, Sharing the harvest: The road to self-reliance (pp. 70-89). Ottawa: Canada Communication Group Publishing.

Sustainable Development

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) describes sustainable development as "...a very inclusive term, encompassing environmental, economic, and social themes such as poverty alleviation, peace, democracy, justice, human rights, gender equity, social equity, cultural diversity, rural and urban development, environmental protection, and natural resource management."(3) The way we live our lives,

the choices made each day and the relationships we build, or do not build, contributes to how we address sustainability.

3. Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. (2007a). Report to UNECE and UNESCO on indicators of education for sustainable development. Retrieved April 15, 2008, from UNESCO: http://www.unesco.ca/en/activity/education/documents/FINALCanadaESDReportOct2007ApprovedEN_000.pdf p. 4

Métis Holistic Perspectives

More than knowledge of plants and animals, Métis holistic perspectives require consideration of the many facets of life of a people including the traditional knowledge that has sustained them over generations. Métis understand the environment as sacred relationships linking such things as language, learning, people and social structures, traditions, land (including all parts of the Earth and atmosphere), spirituality, self development, harmonious interactions, Indigenous knowledge, health, imagination, economic conditions, balanced approaches to life, political systems, and values.

Métis National Council - Environment

The Métis National Council is the representative body of the Métis Nation in Canada. The Environment sector of the Métis Nation is working to address environmental issues from a holistic perspective. The MNC believes that the strength of the Métis people is intricately linked to the health of the environment in all settings that sustain Métis. Your stories, knowledge and actions are important and can contribute to ecosystems, wild species, and human survival in generations to come.

Contact a Métis Nation authority to discuss your ideas about the effects of environmental issues. For more information please visit: www.metisnation.ca

Culture and People

"...culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs..." (4)

The Métis have been an important part of Canadian history standing for cultural, political, religious and linguistic rights, demonstrating ingenuity creating political and social structures, technology and trade systems, as well as developing a unique presence in art, music, dance and storytelling. Today, the Métis Nation continues to press for rights as a means of preserving cultural traditions and as a means of bringing honour to past, current and future generations of those proud to call themselves Métis People.(5)

4. United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization. UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2003)

5. Vizina, Y. (2009). Métis Culture. Our Legacy. University of Saskatchewan. http://scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy/exhibit_metisculture



350 SPARKS STREET, SUITE 201
OTTAWA, ON K1R 7S8
TEL: 1-800-928-6330
E-MAIL: INFO@METISNATION.CA

National
Environment
Committee

Métis National Council
Clément Chartier
President & Minister of
Environment

Métis Nation of Ontario
Cameron Burgess
Environment

Manitoba Métis
Federation
Ken Laforte
Minister, Natural
Resources

Métis Nation -
Saskatchewan
Robert LaFontaine
Minister of Lands &
Resources

Métis Nation of Alberta
Bill Loutitt
Minister of Environment &
Resources Development

Métis Nation British
Columbia
Bob Trumbley
Minister, Natural
Resources