

Māmawī Nistam

Ahkamîmowin Iyakohci Siwîpana



Together First

Resilience Through Seasons

Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta
Climate Risk and Vulnerability Summary Report for Policy Makers



Otipemisiwak
Métis Government

Prepared in partnership with The Resilience Institute

Pronouncing the title:

Mâdawî Nistam:
Ahkamîmowin Iyakohci Siwîpana

*Maa-ma-wi nis-tum:
Aa-ka-mee-mo-win ee-ya-ko-tsi si-wee-pa-na*



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This report provides a foundation for understanding climate change risks and vulnerabilities affecting the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta (MNA). It represents a critical first step in advancing culturally grounded adaptation planning and strengthening Métis climate leadership within the MNA homeland.

Acknowledgements

Métis art and imagery were commissioned to showcase and frame the project outputs. We are especially grateful to Mia Ohki, Avery Bowe, and Jim McVicar, for making this report beautiful and relevant. Mia is a Métis-Japanese-Canadian artist and MNA Citizen who brings her culture and heritage into her work. Your art breathed life into our report, masterfully intertwining the interconnectedness of Métis people to the land through the seasons, while exposing the realities of polluted landscapes. Avery is an artist and visual storyteller with The Resilience Institute whose original artistic expressions helped bring Métis culture to life in these pages. Jim McVicar is the creative lead at The Resilience Institute who patiently worked with the project team to create graphics and figures that complete the beautiful document you are now reading.

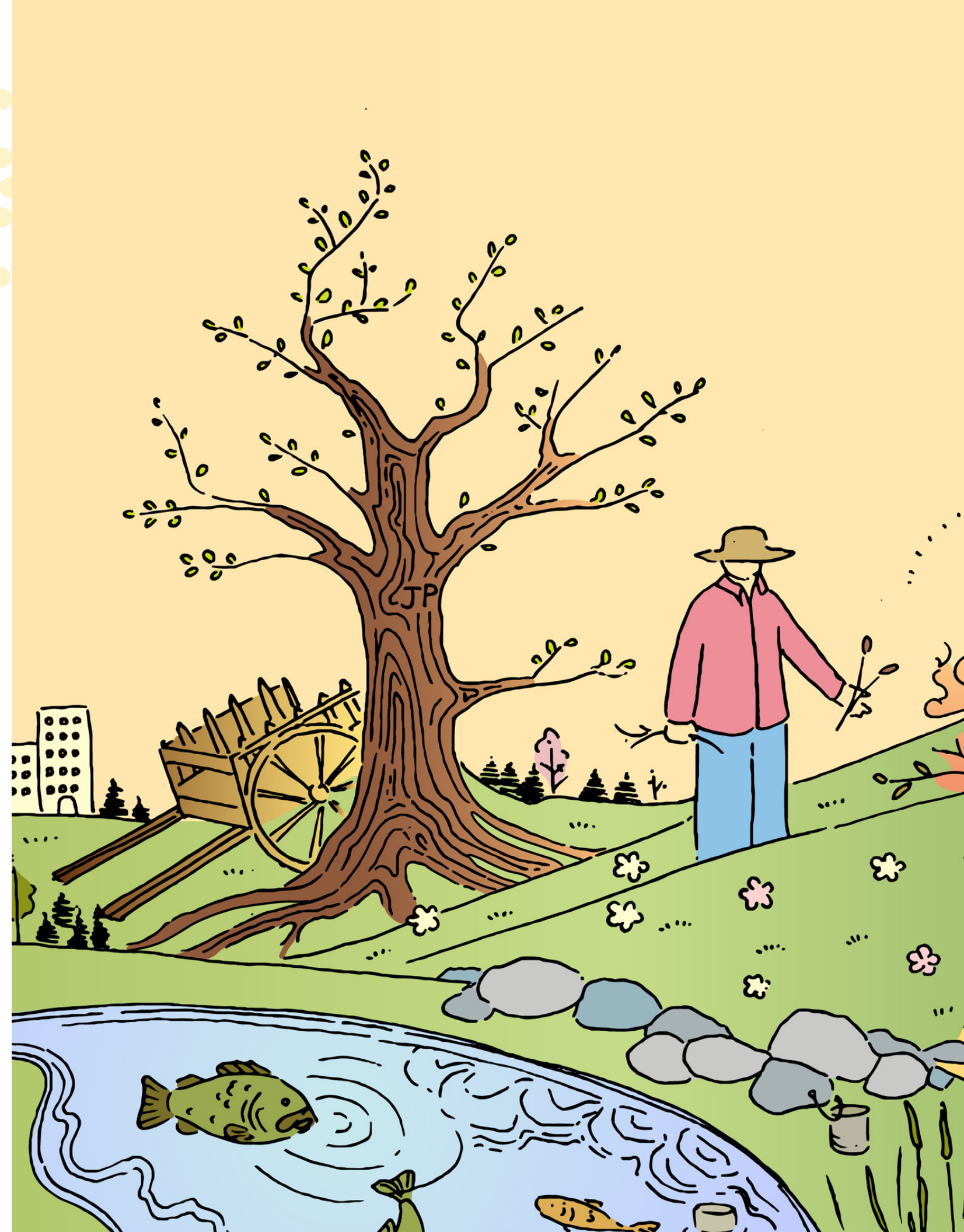
We would like to offer an uskênusk we'somitown (land acknowledgment), to recognize the traditional caretakers of Treaties 6, 7, and 8 Territories, which include the Blackfoot, Cree, Chipewyan, Dene, Sarcee, Stoney Nakota, and Métis peoples. We are committed to honouring the Treaties by working together to ensure the respectful sharing of this land and, and the diverse knowledges of those who reside here.

We are grateful to our relatives, to the crawlers, swimmers, fliers, four-leggeds, two-leggeds and our relatives with roots – we offer our sincere thanks for all that you provide, as well as to the air, earth, fire and water, those elements that comprise our bodies and sustain all life.

We also express thanks to the Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada Indigenous Climate Leadership team, for listening, and acting. Your actions deeply supported this project, empowering Métis climate leadership.

To the next generations, there is a compulsive sense of desire for a better tomorrow, to correct things now so that you may be proud of your ancestors' determination. Concern for future generations is driving change today. We hope readers will share this sense of generational responsibility and urgency to be accountable not just to ourselves for the immediate future, but to those who come long after us.

*“Being a good ancestor, I want a more livable world
and to be a good ancestor.”*



Michif Language and Orthography Use

The Otipemisiwak Métis Government's Michif Languages Team honours the many ways Michif is spoken across our Nation. In this report, we've used Southern Michif (Michif Learners' Orthography) and Northern Michif (Northern Métis Cree Orthography) in the main text. This choice reflects the history, voices, and context of the work—not a ranking of one language over another.

Michif is not just one language. It's a beautiful mix of living languages and dialects that reflect our history, culture, and way of being. Elders remind us that these aren't always meant to be divided into separate parts—our languages are rooted in relationships, not categories.

Our work is guided by community voices, speaker input, and a deep respect for all the ways Métis people carry and share their languages.

Maarsii. Ekosi. Thank you.

Project Team

This undertaking was completed with gratitude to a transdisciplinary project team with technical staff and knowledge holders from the Otipemisiwak Métis Government Environment and Climate Change (ECC) Department and The Resilience Institute. The ECC Department mission is to support community-driven environmental action and climate adaptation that honours both traditional wisdom and innovation guided by wahkômâtowin (kinship). It is the goal of the ECC Department to listen, learn, and provide accurate information (via both Métis and western science) to make informed decisions for future climate action. MNA ECC Department staff actively contributed to defining project objectives, shaping engagement strategies, and reviewing findings to ensure cultural relevance.

The Resilience Institute (TRI) is a national charity based in Canada that works locally and globally with diverse partners to strengthen resilience to climate impacts. Weaving local and Indigenous ways of knowing with science and technology is a cornerstone of their work, and our collective journey was made possible thanks to the open engagement and generous guidance of numerous MNA Citizens across Alberta.

Together, we set out to answer the question of what climate change means for the MNA and our 72,000+ strong community. Given the ongoing and projected future impacts of the changing climate on MNA Citizens, this project is a critical steppingstone toward our sovereignty and resilient futures.



Approach

Geographically, this report spans the five Territories of the Métis Nation within Alberta, as defined by the Otipemisiwak Métis Government Constitution, while also considering the climate exposure and ecological dynamics across of Alberta’s six ecoregions: the Boreal Forest, Parkland, Foothills, Rocky Mountains, Grasslands, and Canadian Shield. Climate data and impact analysis are organized to reflect how these ecological regions intersect with Métis settlement and land-use patterns, highlighting regional differences in kâ siwe’pâhk kêsikâw kuspînewin (climate risk) and sêpihkisôwin (resilience).

Through a systematic review and synthesis of existing data and original research, the project team examined how climate change has impacted—and is projected to impact—Métis people within Alberta and the Otipemisiwak Métis Government. The review integrates previous scientific climate projections and historical climate data, observed environmental changes, and the lived experiences and knowledge shared by Métis citizens within Alberta. **Focus areas of our review included health and well-being, harvesting, housing, emergency management, and cultural continuity, with particular attention to social and geographic vulnerabilities.**

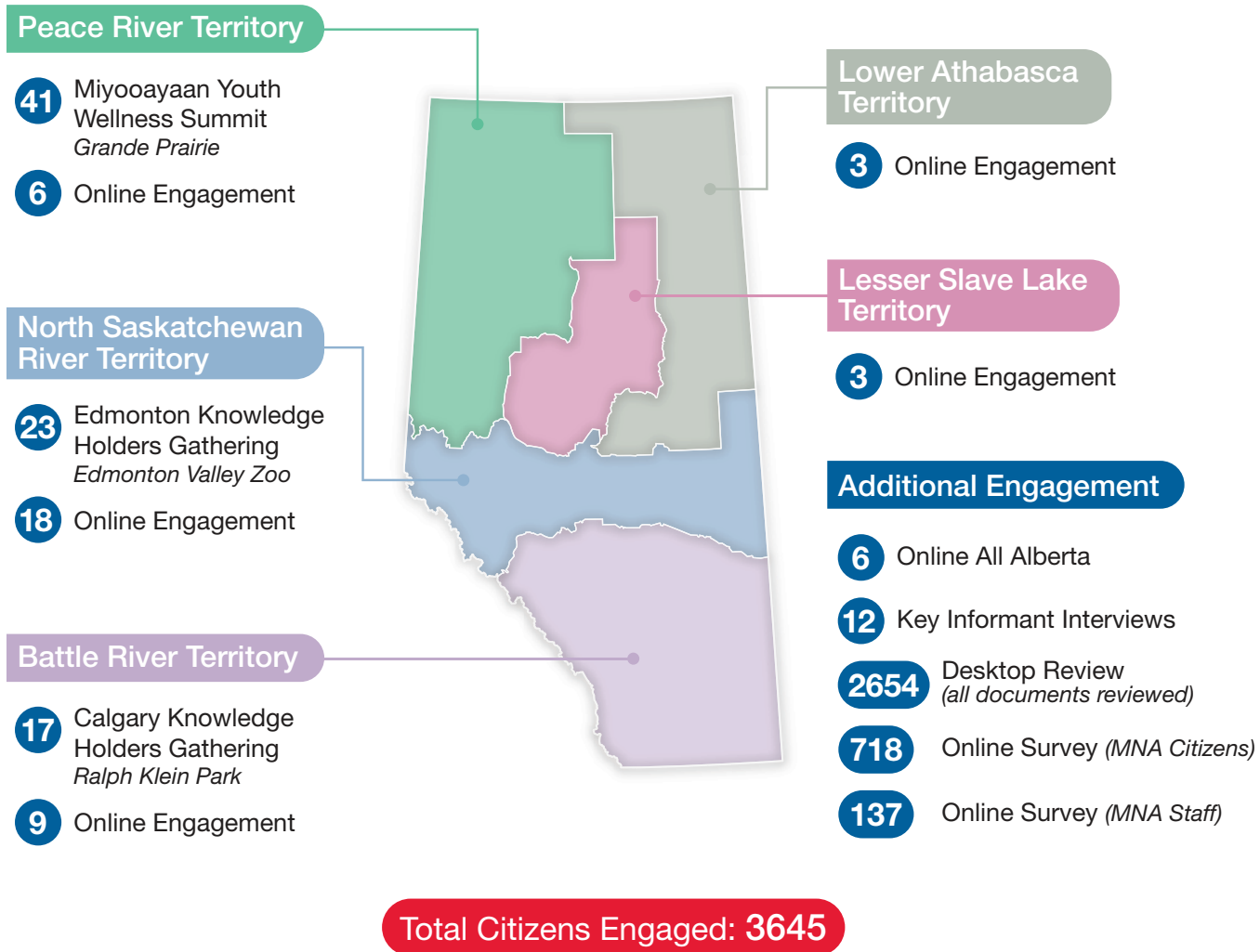


Traditional climate risk assessment processes typically detail the interface between climate change and the built environment- quantifying exposure of buildings and bridges. We instead sought to understand the connection between climate change and MNA Citizens livelihoods- for the Elders who live in the buildings, for the fish that sustain families swimming under the bridges, and for the children whose faces are sticky from eating saskatoon berries, we want to ensure the next generation can grow up in a way that is connected to the land.

MNA Citizen Engagements

Throughout the journey, MNA Citizens – whether they were Elders, youth, harvesters, knowledge holders, or held another role in the community – guided and grounded the project. Their lived experiences and deep understanding of place shaped how climate risks were identified, understood, and interpreted.

The continuation and revitalization of Métis culture and practices is of paramount importance to the MNA. Consequently, the team prioritized Métis ways of knowing throughout every stage – including planning, data collection, analysis, and reporting. **Community engagement methods, including storytelling and community gatherings, were designed to uphold Métis oral traditions and knowledge-sharing practices.** Community events were enriched by Métis cultural elements such as communal food, welcoming prayers, and smudge ceremonies.



The project team followed the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and the CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance – ensuring that community voices led the way, and that trust, autonomy, and transparency remained central.

Final deliverables included six distinct but connected outputs:

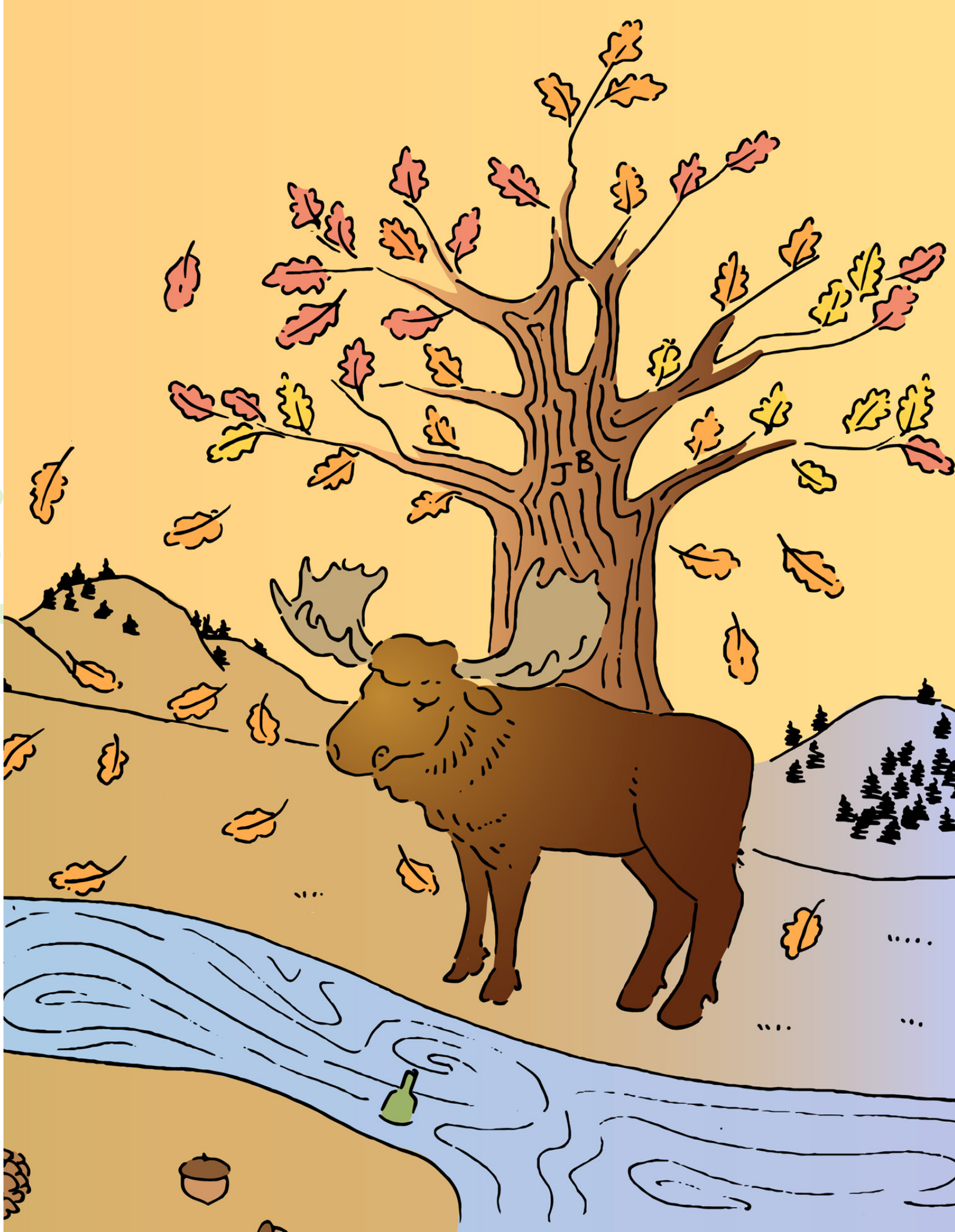
1. Climate Risk and Vulnerability Technical Report
2. Evaluation of Economic Impacts of Climate Change on Metis Nation of Alberta: Health, Workers and Home Energy Bills
3. Climate Projections for the Métis Nation within Alberta Report by Climalogik Inc: Analyses, Results, and Interpretation for Relevant Climate Indices
4. Summary for Policymakers
5. ArcGIS-based Citizen StoryMap
6. ArcGIS-based Technical ClimateMap

Key Messages

The ways in which climate change affects Métis cultural practices, land use, and livelihoods, and Métis-specific perspectives on adaptation and resilience, are critical to ensuring cultural continuity is prioritized in climate action planning. **As long-standing relationships with land are tested by shifting climate patterns, communities have found that traditions – when nurtured and allowed to evolve – can be a powerful source of ipi shawnzhee (adaptation).** Outcomes of this journey will help to guide collaborative planning, prioritize adaptation actions, and inform policy and funding that is critical to fostering cultural continuity and climate resilience.

Other key points include:

- Losses linked to premature mortality and declining well-being due to climate change are projected to rise sharply, reaching \$551 million annually by 2085.
- Economic resilience emerged as an important layer of adaptation. Some pointed to simple cost-saving practices as climate actions in themselves.
- Land-based programming and food sovereignty emerged as important adaptation strategies – especially for supporting vulnerable groups within the MNA and restoring cultural connection amid environmental change.
- Without adaptation action, the costs – to lives, livelihoods, and long-term well-being – will continue to grow. Resilience will demand a commitment to adaptation, collective action, and bold policies aligned with community realities.



Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples

For Indigenous Peoples, climate change can be viewed as yet another challenge arising from colonization, from the imposition of a worldview and value system guided by financial profit, rather than natawêhowin sayawin (reciprocity), which is based on accountability to our relatives, the kisciġânisa (plants), paġwâciya pisiskôwak (animals), askî (land), nipî (water), yôtin (wind/air) and iskotêw (fire). Notably, Indigenous Peoples are among those who have contributed least to rising levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide that are driving climate change, yet are often most impacted by these changes. This is due, in part, to social and economic marginalization arising from colonization – we did not participate in the Industrial Revolution, nor did we engage in high carbon-emitting activities, until recently – but also from the values and natural laws of respect and humility that guide our actions and ways of being.

Indigenous Peoples are often on the front lines of climate change, given the deep connections to land and place and inherent and constitutionally protected rights. As a self-governing body, the Otipemisiwak Metis Government of the Metis Nation within Alberta is shaping our future as a distinct Indigenous Nation. Indeed, our government's name, Otipemisiwak, means “the people who own themselves.” As the government of the Métis Nation within Alberta, we are continually taking steps towards implementing our Citizen's vision of self-determination – advancing sêpihkisôwin (resilience) to current and projected climate impacts is a crucial contribution to this vision.

Just as MNA Citizens have survived and are healing from the colonial traumas of the past, including the dispossession of land and the disruption of language, cultural practices, and knowledge systems, we shall survive climate change as well. **As neighbors and partners to Canadian society, the capacity for the MNA and its Citizens to adapt to our changing climate can only benefit the health and wellness of Canada at large.**

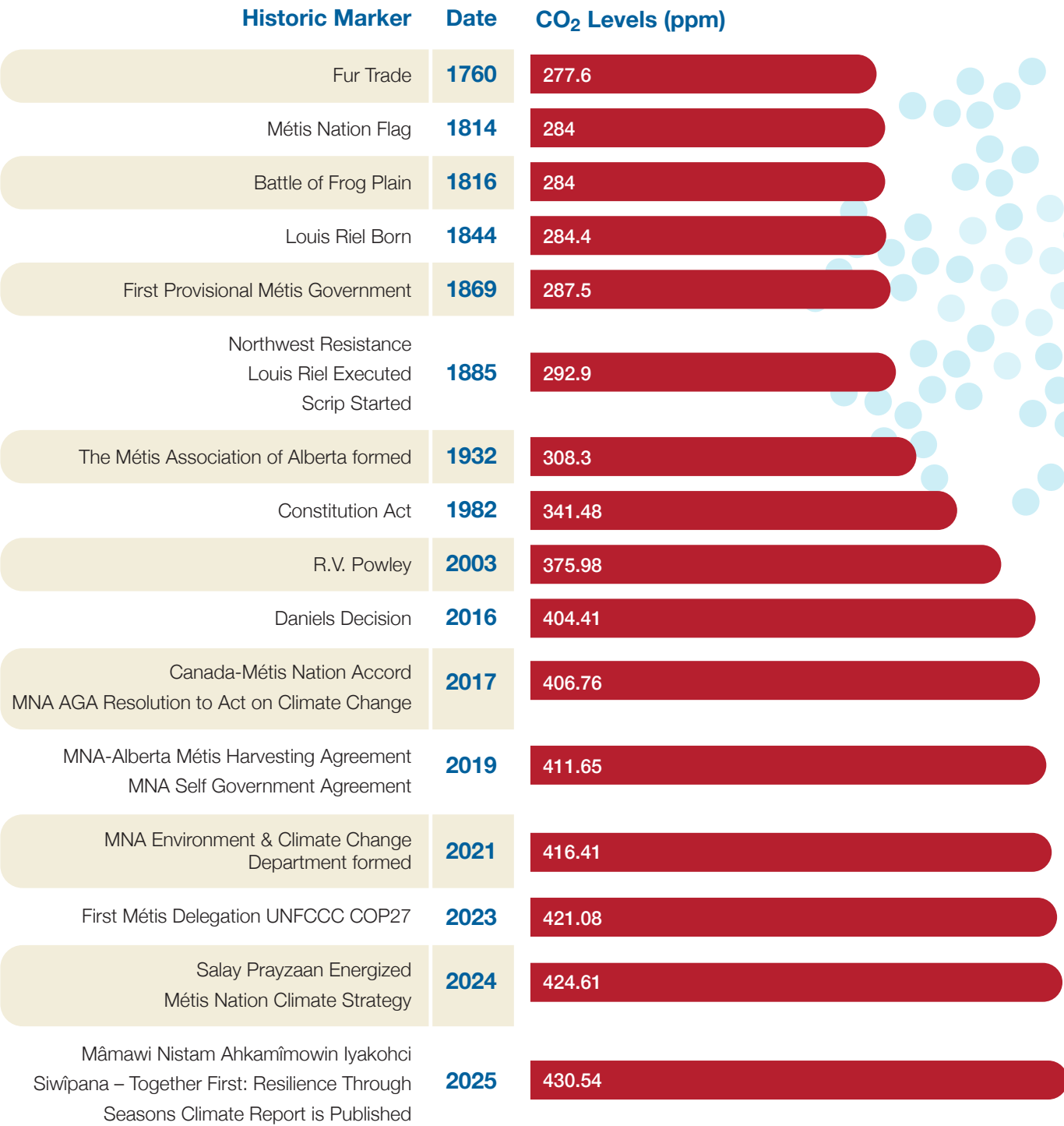
As a people deeply connected to the land, waters, and skies, **climate change is impacting MNA Citizens' ability to practice traditional activities such as gathering, hunting, trapping and fishing; limiting access to healthy traditional foods and thus impacting health.** Climate-induced changes can also impact crucial modes of transportation, limiting access to important health and education services, and even access to clean drinking water. **Crucially, climate change is also impacting our Citizen's capacity to transmit our knowledge and practices to future generations.**

Climate Risks and Impacts on MNA Citizens



Word cloud generated from MNA Citizens' voices gathered through this journey

The increase of CO₂ in the atmosphere via anthropogenic sources is the most significant driver of climate change impacts. **The following timeline provides some of the significant dates in Métis history and the corresponding increase of CO₂ in the atmosphere.**



Sources: NASA, Climate, 2025, <https://sealevel.info>; Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) levels, 1800 - present. All CO₂ figures are global annual averages, using Ice Core measurements 1800-1957 and Mauna Loa Observatory measurements from 1958 to 2024. * 1760 and June 2025 values taken from <https://www.co2levels.org>

Climate Change is Impacting MNA Citizens

As ecosystems shift and animal migration and plant distribution patterns change, so too must our knowledge of the land. With fewer Elders and Knowledge Holders to learn from, adapting to climate change and ensuring access to reliable transportation becomes more crucial, especially with knowledge sharing events being postponed or cancelled due to increasing numbers of wildfires, flooding, storms and extreme weather events.

Data analyzed from the Desktop Review and Climate Projections for this project echo what we heard during our engagements with Citizens. **Across every MNA Territory, extreme events such as droughts, heatwaves, wildfires, and flooding are becoming more frequent and severe; seasonal patterns are shifting toward warmer winters, early thaws, and longer, hotter summers. The number of very hot days per year is rising, and wildland fire conditions are intensifying.** These are all examples of trends that are projected to worsen as warming continues. There are also significant economic dimensions of climate change hidden in plain sight—embedded in the daily lives, livelihoods, and well-being of communities. Understanding these dimensions requires an exploration of how climate impacts intersect with the land, economic systems, place-based realities, and socio-demographic factors.

We had heard many anecdotes from Citizens about experiences with climate change, from evacuations, ecological anxiety and cost of living. However, one particular story from the 2022 MNC Health and Climate Change gathering prompted the trajectory of this inquiry.

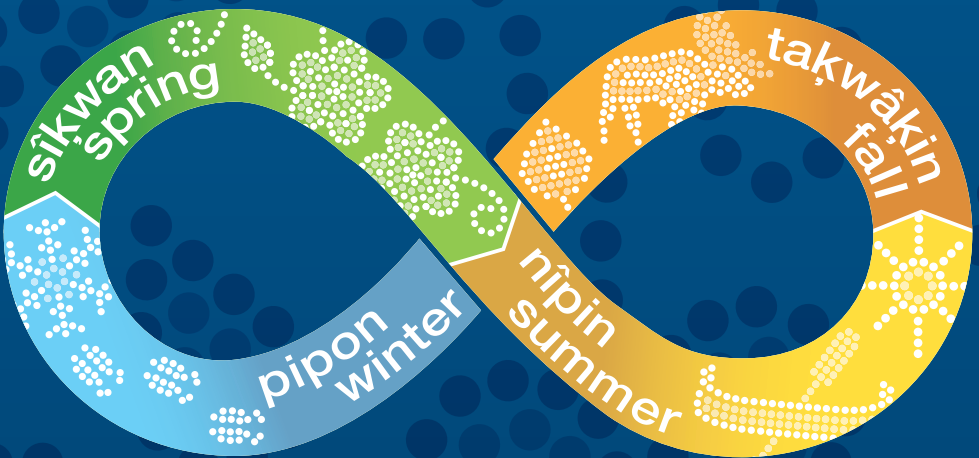
“A young Métis woman passionately shared how she went through the process of receiving her harvesting card for the purpose of connecting to her culture and learning how to harvest from her older relative. However, as they went out on the land to the harvesting area they were permitted to hunt the trips continued to be unsuccessful. She was eager to learn how to process a moose, fill her freezer and her families with its bounty, learn to respect its sacrifice and honour its life by utilizing every element and hearing other sacred teachings. But they didn’t find the moose. Her Uncle sighed and said “its getting too hot, the moose have gone North.” They don’t have harvesting rights further North though, this is the place where they have an ancestral connection and due to colonial practices and regulations, their rights don’t extend to other areas which means entering the lottery and purchasing tags, expending more resources and travelling further in hopes of having this pivotal experience.”

Elders, seniors, and youth were consistently identified by MNA Citizens as being especially vulnerable. Elders and seniors often face compounded health impacts from smoke, heat, and poor air quality, and may have reduced mobility during emergencies.

In a thriving community, strong relationships support everything. For Métis communities, those relationships sustain the health and wellness of our people, the fertility of the land, and the practices that sustain culture and livelihood. Climate change is straining these relationships in many ways — sometimes slowly and sometimes rapidly.



The following section shares The Resilience Institute’s approach to categorizing climate risks and impacts under the four classical elements: Fire, Water, Air, and Land. This approach is woven with the Métis infinity symbol, which represents the coming together of two ancestral lines (Indigenous and European) and symbolizes the immortality of the Métis Nation, and the four seasons, to meaningfully and visually highlight some of these consequences.



By categorizing examples of prominent climate risks and impacts under the four classical elements, TRI and the MNA invite a more intuitive and experiential way for understanding the consequences of climate change. Our experience of climate impacts is through the air we breathe, the land that sustains us, fire that is both destructive and rejuvenating, and our relationship with water in its many forms.

Note: the risks and impacts outlined in the following sections are not exhaustive of the full scope of challenges climate change poses to MNA Citizens, these examples showcase the most common ones.

Iskotêw Fire

Risk

- Wildfires start earlier

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

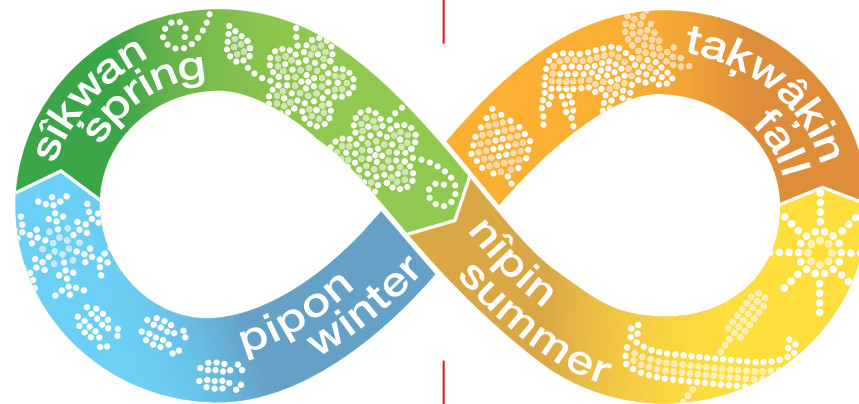
- Evacuations/displacement
- Loss of income and culture
- Loss of nature
- Loss of lives

Risk

- Wildfires last longer

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

- Evacuations/displacement
- Loss of income and culture
- Loss of nature
- Loss of lives



Risk

- Holdover fires

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

- Loss of traplines
- Financial burden, unable to harvest

Risk

- More extreme and frequent

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

- Strain on mental health
- Evacuations/displacement
- Loss of income and culture
- Loss of infrastructure
- Loss of lives

“It was heartbreaking to be trapped in an area being destroyed by wildfires. We had to evacuate three times.”



“The berries actually had a smoky taste to them. I’ve been picking berries my whole life; I’ve never tasted berries like this.”

Wildfires have increased in both frequency and severity. The 2019 and 2023 fire seasons were among the most destructive on record in Canada, resulting in large-scale evacuations, property loss, and ecological damage. The Métis National Council’s 2020 Climate Change and Health Vulnerability Assessment outlined some of the impacts on Citizens such as air quality, visibility, physical and psychological health, including triggering historic trauma associated with forced relocations. Livelihoods and cultural practices are extremely disrupted during and post-wildfire events with human and animal displacement, and cultural sites being destroyed. Notably, in a survey conducted for this report, **95% of MNA Citizens responded that they had been impacted by wildfires and/or wildfire smoke.**

Resilience to the increasing risk of wildfires is possible and Métis people across Alberta have identified several ideas that could be supported. For example, **the reintroduction of kâ sehkasik’ahtew (cultural burning) practices that aim to restore balance by managing fuel loads, protecting biodiversity, and creating fire-resilient landscapes rooted in Indigenous governance,** and culturally relevant FireSmarting support.

We Are Resilient:

Following the Slave Lake fire, Rupertsland Institute staff-initiated relief efforts and later formalized a trained emergency response team and local MNA Government teams supported wildfire relief efforts in Fort McMurray and Jasper, coordinated Citizen support from the Nation office in Edmonton, and made emergency resources available through public websites and social media channels.

Risk

- Lack of snow and rain

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

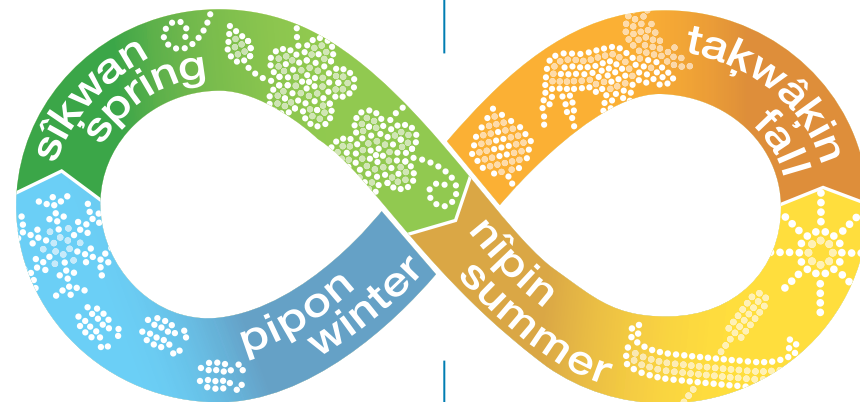
- Drought conditions impact agriculture and food security
- Mental strain of coming wildfire season

Risk

- Changes to seasonal precipitation patterns

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

- Decreased availability of reliable water impacting health and culture
- Mental strain, ecological grief



Risk

- Lack of snow and ice

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

- Changes in access to cultural sites such as trap lines
- Leads to decreased berry health and abundance

Risk

- Larger hail
- Deluge-style rain

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

- Property damage from hail
- Flash flooding causing immediate and long-term impacts to health. For example, from mold
- Travel restrictions to cultural sites and events

“Harvesting, that’s where I see it in daily life the most. Actively watching changes in wildlife and the harvest. Last few years have not been great harvesting seasons for lots of people often due to later snowfall.”



“The loss of water and land will impact how I garden, grow food, and live with my family.”

Precipitation (e.g., rain, snow, ice) patterns are shifting, with more rain falling between summer and winter and a higher frequency of intense storm events. Changes to how and when precipitation occurs have already caused disastrous flooding, while also contributing to droughts. Métis Citizens have also observed significant changes in water availability, particularly in lakes, rivers, and wetlands that once provided drinking water, fish stocks, and irrigation for gardens and farms. Fish populations have been affected by die-offs due to decreases in water quantity and quality. This leads to degraded habitats and declining harvest yields, which has direct implications for both food security and the cultural relationship between Métis communities and the land and waters they steward.

Water management is highly important to MNA Citizens due to their experiences of drought, flooding, watershed degradation, seasonal unpredictability, and concerns about declining freshwater availability, as shared in both interviews and survey responses. **43% of MNA Citizens surveyed reported having experienced flooding.**

But already Citizens are taking actions. For example, household practices like rainwater collection, garden irrigation, and support for native plant restoration are being utilized. Future adaptation actions could include strategies to help Citizens adopt household- and community-level water management practices (e.g., rain gardens, rain barrels, swales and berms, drought-tolerant plants/native species), and steps towards watershed-level planning and stewardship that improves regional water retention and health.

We Are Resilient:

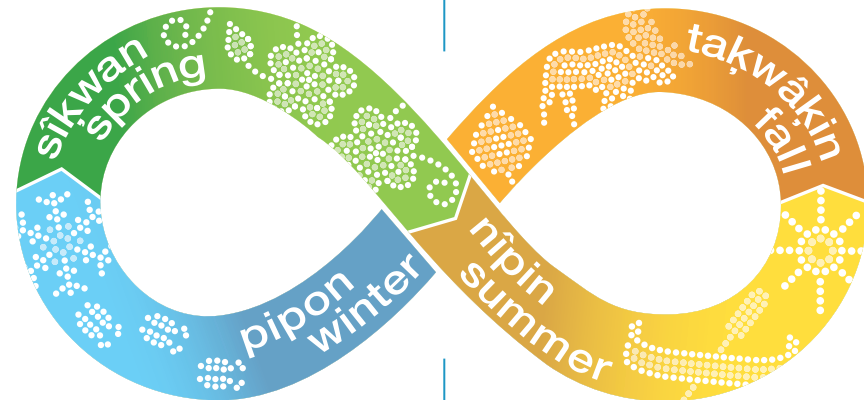
We conserved a lot of water that way just by setting up a couple totes outside to catch the rain water that came off the roof and that was just something small that we did so it’s I don’t know maybe a program that was available where people could pick up a water tote like we had to find our own clean it out that sort of thing to have access to something where at a reduced rate where people could get water totes and it doesn’t take much to tie them in but it is a few parts that you know if that’s supplied here’s your water supply kit you get a tote it comes with an attachment that goes to most eaves troughs you put it in there now you can fill it water all your plants that sort of thing it’s something small It’s water harvesting, but also its rain water management, or storm water management, which is a really big deal.

Risk

- Wildfire smoke

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

- Damage to lungs/increased asthma
- Limited safe access to land



Risk

- Less cold winters

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

- Safety concerns for ice fishing and ice roads
- Proliferation of vector borne diseases

Risk

- Wildfire smoke

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

- Damage to lungs/increased asthma
- Limited safe access to land

Risk

- Wildfire Smoke
- Heat

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

- Damage to lungs/increased asthma
- Heatstroke
- Travel restrictions to cultural sites and knowledge sharing events
- Limited safe access to land
- Mental strain of ecological grief

“Makes me think of the elderly woman sleeping in her building’s hallway because it was the only place with AC in a heatwave, or the woman who tried to put in a kiddie pool in her living room and flooded her apartment, I think of stories like these a lot.”



“Summer travel is what my family lives for. So much smoke and dryness means we can’t cook and tell stories around the campfire. You also can’t get to the destination you plan for earlier in the year due to wildfire season.”

Wildfire smoke exposure and extreme heat have become recurring health concerns, particularly for those with chronic conditions. **A very high majority of Métis Citizens reported being affected by wildfire smoke, citing major health impacts such as asthma flare-ups, respiratory illnesses, mental health struggles, and hospitalizations.** The burden of wildfire smoke extends beyond physical health, affecting mobility, work, and cultural land use – many respondents noted that smoke limits their ability to exercise, gather traditional foods, and even leave their homes safely. Several Citizens expressed concern about long-term effects on children, with one noting that both of their children developed breathing problems after two years of intense wildfire smoke.

Resilience to air quality and heat exposure was expressed and identified as a need in the context of addressing excessive heat, minimizing the risk of wildfires and advancing smoke exposure protocols. **95% of survey respondents reported being impacted by extreme heat.**

We Are Resilient:

Infrastructure upgrades are already focused on improving health and indoor air quality through the modernization of HVAC systems and the installation of CO₂-responsive ventilation controls—particularly relevant during events such as wildfire smoke and extreme heat. For example, key informant interviews referenced upgrades at the MNA facilities, where automatic ventilation systems were planned to adjust airflow in response to high indoor CO₂ levels.

Askî Land

Risk

- Drought

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

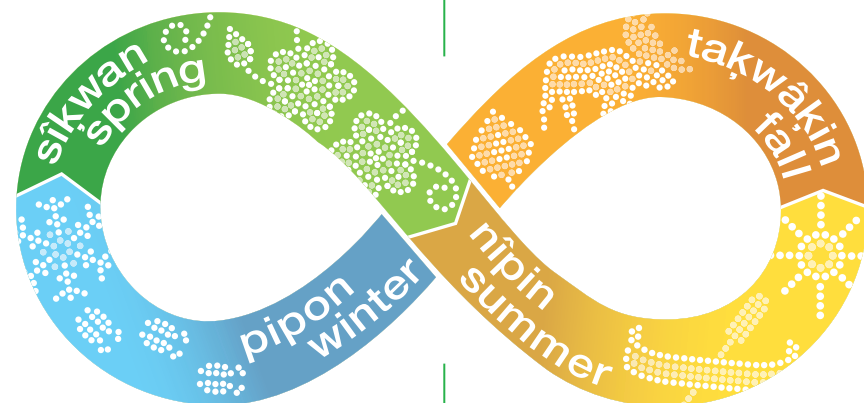
- Poor growing conditions
- Mental strain of ecological grief

Risk

- Changing season pattern

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

- Loss of traditional knowledge transfer
- Less predictable harvests



Risk

- Lack of snow and ice

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

- Access to ice roads / cultural sites inhibited
- Leads to decreased berry health and abundance

Risk

- Extreme heat

Impacts on Métis Livelihoods

- Loss of Métis food and cultural systems
- Exacerbated health concerns for Elders



“Drought wears on my mind very heavily... Watching our land dry up, our animals struggle, and knowing that every year it just seems to get worse – it’s exhausting.”

The data analyzed for this report shows the loss of access to and/or use of kâ mōnahîka tiḡwaw kistiḡana (traditional harvesting) areas, making traditional land-based practices more difficult. These impacts are cumulative and are being felt most acutely by those who rely on the land for food, medicine, and cultural continuity. Of particular concern, and reported in multiple MNA documents, are the effects on mînisak (berries) and muskêhkêya (medicinal plants) – essential to many Métis food systems, ceremonies, and land-based practices. The compounding climate hazards, ongoing urban and rural development, and ecoregion shifts are presenting as clear changes to biodiversity. Nature’s bounty has been significantly threatened, and is being depleted in numerous ways. This loss is being felt by MNA Citizens, manifesting as different forms of ecological grief. **53% of Citizens surveyed have observed changes in plant and animal ranges.** This grief encompasses not only the sadness attached to ecological loss, but also a weakening of the cultural threads that connect people to place.

The uncertainty of the climate crisis has real consequences for Métis people, who have constitutional rights to access land for harvesting and other cultural practices. Harvesting plants and animals commands a deep respect and understanding of the land, and in turn, provides harvesters the gift of food. Sharing a moose roast and bannock brings people together, and provides knowledge sharing opportunities for families and relatives. Unfortunately, these experiences are becoming more infrequent due to seasonal unpredictability, animals becoming sickly or more sparse, lakes becoming too warm, and plants disappearing. Métis families often have to spend more time, energy and resources to practice their constitutional right to harvest, and with less reward.

“We don’t eat berries and moose meat like we used to...everything’s dry. We don’t know where to find the good plants anymore.”

We Are Resilient:

Métis Crossing is a great source of pride within the Nation, weaving Indigenous tourism with land based learning, it showcases the past and present as well as welcoming the future of Métis heritage. Situated in MNA District 12, the site hosts gathering spaces for the community, bison grazing on regenerative grasslands, sustainably designed buildings, permaculture installations, conservation areas, a solar farm and much more. Indigenous and non-Indigenous folks alike are welcomed through the doors to learn about the Nation, participate in seasonal activities and eat delicious food from the land. Métis ways of knowing and being are at the heart of Métis Crossing, celebrating the community, stewarding the land, and sharing knowledge to promote ongoing sustainability.

Impacts on land due to climate change for MNA Citizens are exacerbated by the fact that the Nation does not have a land base in the same way that First Nations do; as one MNA Director put it, **“Métis people don’t have a reservation, they have the Métis people.”** The MNA has responded to this reality by creating a province-wide Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA) Network, acquiring land to provide opportunities for its Citizens to connect with nature, practice their culture, and conserve land for future generations.

Our discussions with MNA Citizens revealed how climate change is impacting Métis cultural practices – especially those rooted in land-based activities such as *kâ mōnahika tiḡwaw kistiḡâna* (medicine/berry picking), *kwâskwe’pichikewin* (fishing), and *mâcêwin* (hunting). At the same time, Métis *nistum pimachihowin* (Métis culture) was identified as a powerful source of resilience and adaptation to an uncertain future in the face of climate change impacts.

Métis people in Alberta have many ideas for adaptation strategies that relate to *askî sêpikhisôwin* (land resilience). For example, regenerative agriculture, native plant restoration, *kâ sehkasik’ahtew* (cultural burning), developing regional trade networks and advancing regionally specific community education and training programs that support youth and Elders in adapting land use to seasonal shifts. Continued communication about climate change and emergency preparedness from trusted sources, such as the MNA, consistently emerged as a resiliency measure.





The Gift of the Red Willow

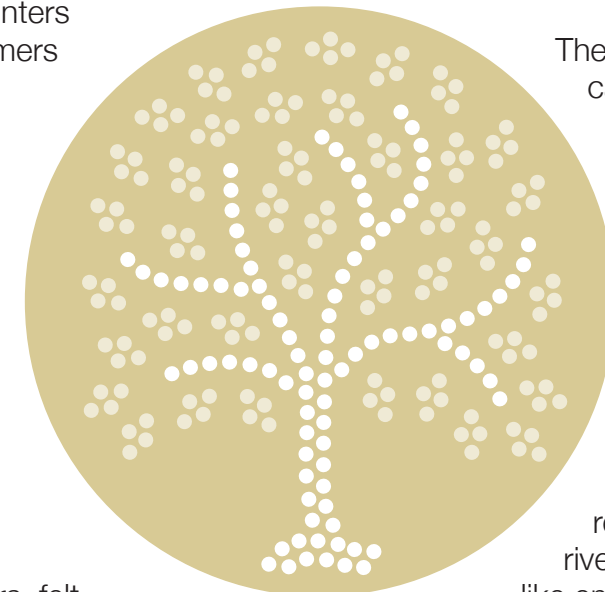
The cold bit through Josèphète's moccasins as she trudged along the frozen riverbank, her breath curling like smoke into the dim winter air. The landscape was bare, the willows sparse, their once-vibrant red stems dulled by the harsh season. But Josèphète – Josey to those closest to her – saw more than scarcity. She saw the stories of her Métis ancestors woven into the land, the river's flow echoing with the songs of her kokums.

The Elders had warned them. The weather was shifting – winters colder and harsher, summers dry and relentless. The land struggled under the weight of climate change. Animals that once thrived on the plains were scarce, and the wild medicines had become unpredictable, their cycles disrupted. It was as if the land was grieving.

Josèphète, a Two Spirit woman who carried the teachings of her ancestors, felt the responsibility deeply. Her kokum's voice rang in her ears as she gathered what little red willow she could find: "The land is alive, my girl. She's our relative. When she suffers, we must listen."

One night, after a long day of foraging and tending to her community's shared garden, Josey sat by the fire with her partner, Dani. They talked about their responsibilities – to their people, to the land, to each other. "What if it's too late?" Dani asked, staring into the flames. Josey held a red willow twig in her hand, its smooth bark cool against her fingers. "It's never too late to care for what we love," she said. "The land has always given us what we need. Now it's our turn to give back."

Inspired by their conversation, Josèphète decided to act. She gathered the youth from the community and shared the teachings she carried. Together, they began planting – red willow, sage, sweetgrass. They built raised beds to protect seedlings from flooding and collected water during the rare summer rains. They started storytelling circles, where young and old came together to share knowledge about the plants and animals, to honour all they had lost and nurture what could still be saved.



The work wasn't easy. Droughts came, winds raged, and the soil sometimes refused to yield. But Josèphète refused to give up. Her spirit carried the resilience of her Métis ancestors, who had survived displacement and erasure by holding fast to their kinship with the land and each other.

Years passed, and the red willow returned to the riverbanks. The stems glowed like embers in the sunrise, a symbol of renewal and hope. The land began to heal – not all at once, but in small, precious ways. The beavers returned to the river, building dams that slowed the water and nurtured new life. Birds nested in the willows, their songs once again filling the air.

As Josey stood by the river, now surrounded by the youth she had mentored, she felt the land's gratitude in the wind that danced around her. The land wasn't just healing; it was remembering. "We are the land," Josèphète said softly, her voice carrying like a prayer. "And she is us."

Story gifted by MNA Citizen Sadie Thompson

Adaptive Actions – Views of MNA Citizens

Citizen perspectives offer important insight into which adaptation and other resilience-strengthening actions are seen as meaningful, accessible, and effective. As noted by an MNA Citizen at an in-person gathering for this project, adaptation is nothing new for Métis people. In fact, it is essential to our very existence:

“My favorite part about being Métis, when I look back at my history and my culture, is how Metis people appeared from the merging of two cultures. We were born of adaptation; our culture was created from needing to adapt. First you had fur traders and Indigenous women, and then there were babies, and where did they fit? When you don’t fit somewhere, you have to make your own home, your own space ... Merging them to what makes sense but doing it in a good way for our community. Métis life is a way of learning and adaptation...we came to a place of respect between both groups, as navigators, as people who spoke both languages, who lived in both worlds. Our origin is adaptation. Most of our traditions came from that need to adapt and change.”

The adaptive nature of Métis people was reflected throughout our engagements with MNA Citizens. The survey data on the next page captures how Métis Citizens within Alberta ranked the importance of different potential actions to increase resilience. These responses provide a window into the values and priorities shaping potential climate actions.

“Floods, fire, drought—it’s all connected. You don’t plan anything without wondering what might go wrong now.”

Potential Actions	Importance			
	High	Medium	Low	Not Sure
Water management (rainwater harvesting, irrigation, planting native plants, watershed management)	77%	18%	2%	4%
Emergency preparedness (emergency kits, evacuation plans, protecting buildings and homes)	73%	22%	3%	3%
Community food programs (shared gardens, harvesting, hunting, orchards, food sharing)	69%	23%	4%	4%
Land stewardship (manage invasive species, forest management, conserve land)	70%	22%	3%	5%
Individual Actions (promote saving energy, being less wasteful etc.)	66%	25%	6%	3%
Agricultural practices (range management, crop selection)	62%	26%	5%	7%
Energy security (more renewable energy development, off grid solutions)	60%	28%	6%	6%
Community gathering (to share knowledge, celebrate, connect, learn, educate and advocate)	57%	33%	5%	4%
Community events on the land (fostering connections, learning about land and connection)	54%	35%	6%	5%
Financial tools (community reserve funding, conscious investing, green investments)	54%	34%	8%	6%
Transportation (encouraging taking public transit, walking or biking)	35%	38%	21%	5%

The project team also had opportunities to share space with MNA Citizens and knowledge holders to discuss Métis-led climate action, and while there was significant overlap with the survey results, a few other ideas emerged. Most notably, the **need for trusted information about climate change and risks**, as well as communication throughout climate events, was consistently expressed. Ensuring the MNA is taking care of our most vulnerable was also repeatedly mentioned. This includes the sharing of traditional foods and providing cooling options for Elders, creating opportunities for knowledge transfer to Youth, especially in utilizing cultural teachings and medicines to increase resilience to climate change and ecological grief. Ensuring that Métis people living in remote areas have services in the case of emergencies was also expressed.

While hosting in-person knowledge holder gatherings, the gracious sentiment around being together was palpable, and a fervent reminder that the **Métis community is exceptionally willing to rise to challenges when provided space to connect, and resources to dream of a better tomorrow. This is evident in the Nation’s success in achieving self-determination, and continued perseverance in advocating for Métis people to be heard in decision making spaces.**

Next Steps Toward Sêpihkisôwin

It is important that actions going forward should be shaped by lived experience and guided by longstanding relationships with nature and community. During the project, **the link between economic self-sufficiency and sêpihkisôwin (resilience) was repeatedly emphasized as a foundational principle.**

To meaningfully address the impacts of climate change, **adaptation planning for the Métis Nation within Alberta must be heart-led and rooted in Métis traditions while taking a comprehensive approach built upon systems thinking—one that strengthens collective resilience by aligning local actions with the broader understanding of risk.**

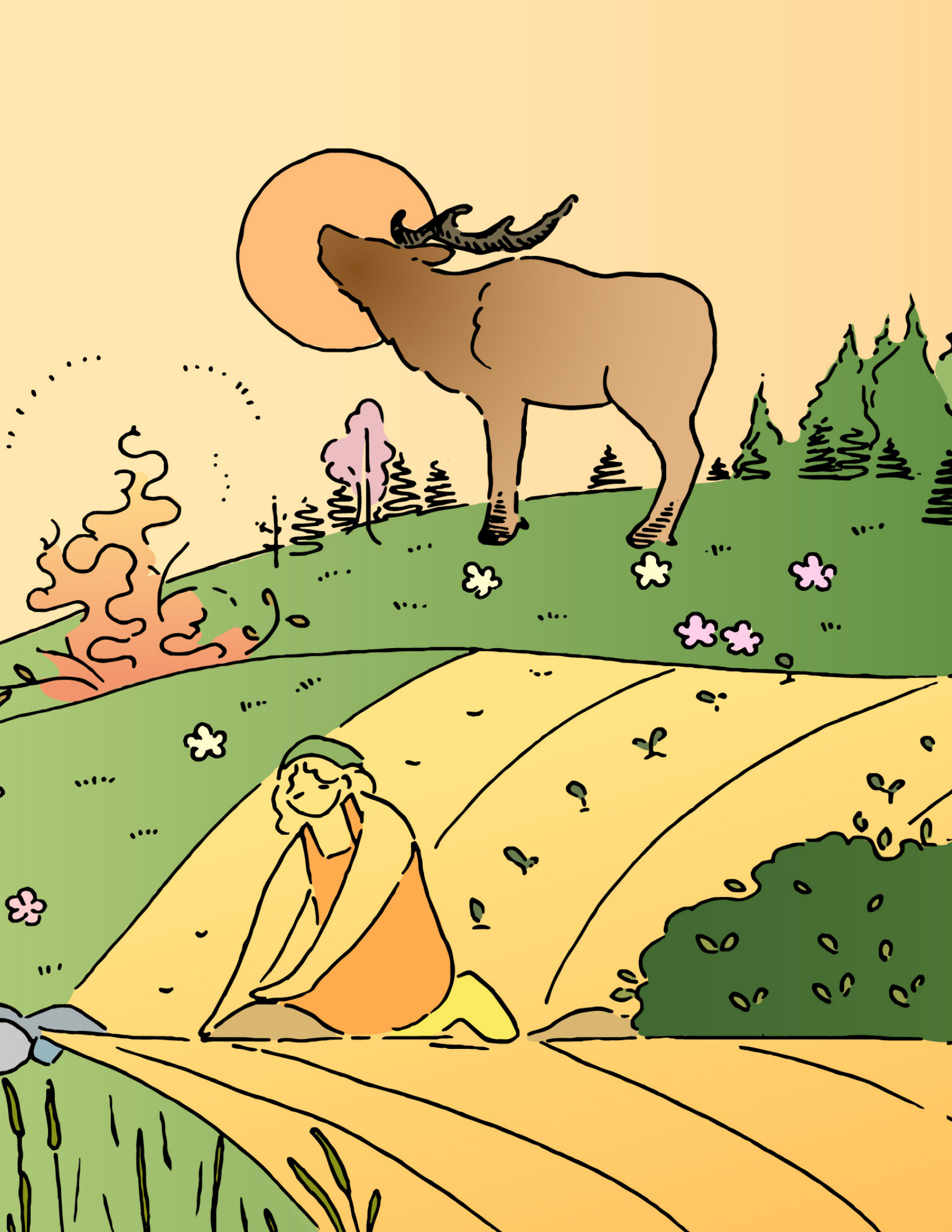
Other examples of tangible steps that could be taken include:

- Design adaptation measures that address existing inequities, prioritize vulnerable community members and reflect traditional knowledge
 - Immediate relief solutions include providing cooling options for MNA Elders and supplying emergency kits for those in high-risk areas.
- Develop culturally safe wildfire and flood evacuation and response plans that reflect Métis values, Elders' needs, and household realities.
- Consistent communication with Citizens to help combat misinformation about climate change, providing spaces to connect with each other around these topics.
- Promote cultural continuity through land-based education, storytelling, and traditional practices, investing in intergenerational knowledge transfer and climate-informed cultural programming.

“We used to brag about how we didn’t need air conditioning in Alberta. You could just open the window at night. The heat dome showed us that’s not true anymore.”

- Strengthen food sovereignty actions through community gardens, education, food sharing networks and expanding Métis harvesting areas to include southern Alberta
- Address Métis Citizen’s calling for more native plants, healthy water bodies, and urban forested spaces.
- Include Citizens from planning to action to help ensure the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of resilience-building actions.
- Continue acquiring Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) to strengthen the network of Métis led conservation areas.
- Ongoing greenhouse gas mitigation action, celebrating the success of Salay Prayzaan (A Gift from the Sun), a solar farm at Métis Crossing, and reducing the Nation’s carbon footprint by retrofitting buildings for Citizen health and climate resilience.
- Building and maintaining relationships with funders to secure long-term sustainable funding to support climate adaptation and resilience.
- Relentless advocacy for MNA Citizens in policy spaces regarding Métis self-determination, upholding UNDRIP and the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action as integral facets to implementing ethical climate action.



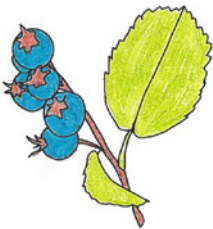


No Forgotten People in Emergency Management

“Fire took my home, damaged the soil, it took the trees.”

Our review revealed that many **Citizens expressed concern over Federal, Provincial and Municipal emergency plans that failed to account for Métis Elders, community structures, pets, and culturally significant sites**, and that existing plans were often not reviewed regularly or did not include Métis perspectives—highlighting the importance of localized, culturally aligned emergency protocols. Citizens stressed that preparedness must be designed for everyone, regardless of where they live or who they are. The following actions are noteworthy:

- Expand emergency preparedness measures (e.g., emergency kits, smoke exposure protocols, evacuation planning, and shelters, prioritizing rural and vulnerable populations.
- The need for inclusive emergency planning—especially for Elders, people with disabilities, pets, and other household needs.
- Establish climate-resilient community shelters as safe, hubs during extreme weather events. Noting that energy efficiency / security was also a consideration.
- Share knowledge and assist with investments for backup energy systems such as wood-burning fireplaces and battery banks to manage power outages and reduce reliance on centralized energy grids.
- Coordinate with other levels of government, industry and NGOs to create partnerships that support collaborative emergency relief efforts.
- Secure emergency relief funding to immediately support Citizens during evacuation events.



Call to Action

The outcomes of this work are the foundation for establishing a holistic, risk-informed approach to climate change adaptation—one that aligns with global good practices while remaining grounded in Métis knowledge, leadership, and values.

As the climate continues to change, it will be these relationships—between people, land, and systems (e.g., ecological, economic, social, cultural, etc.) —that define a flourishing and resilient future. Ensuring that Métis people have the tools, strategies, and cultural grounding to navigate future climate challenges is paramount to their social, physical, mental, and economic wellbeing.

This journey began like a seed planted in spring—a commitment to understanding the impacts of climate change on Métis lives, lands, and livelihoods. As the work unfolded through each season and phase, that seed took root. Guided by community knowledge holders, supported by scientific analysis, and nourished by shared stories, it grew into something deeper: a forest of understanding, connection, and direction.

This is the heart of sêpihkisôwin (resilience): not just understanding change, but meeting it together — with knowledge, courage, and care. The forest grows stronger when tended by many hands.

The knowledge gleaned through this journey is a stepping stone. Resilience can only be achieved if the loop from identifying risks, to adaptation planning and implementation is closed. **The delays between planning and action on climate put Métis Citizens, Métis rights, and our way of life increasingly at risk.** As a federally recognized, self-governing, Indigenous Nation, the MNA must be enabled to chart its own course to resilience, which can be achieved by removing barriers to funding from federal and provincial governments.

We must be intentional in bringing Métis values and ways of knowing into climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. Actions must be rooted in the idea of natawêhowin sayawin (reciprocity) – with each other and with nature. **We call to all humans to think in a way that does not only view nature as a resource to be utilized for our benefit, but also as a relative and a teacher, it is a relationship that must be nurtured with respect.** Only with a shift in our mindset will we be able to truly build a flourishing, resilient world for all.





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