# LFMO YOUTH SUMMIT

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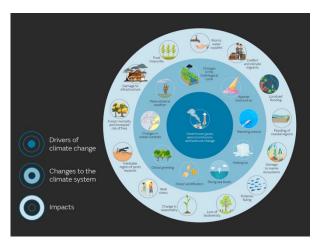
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# Introduction

On Wednesday, September 6<sup>th,</sup> 2023, in the framework of the Youth Summit held by Les Femme Michif Otipemisiwak/Women of the Métis Nation (LFMO) and with the presence of forty young women from across Métis Motherland, we discussed Métis women's perspectives on climate change impacts. The Environment and Climate change representatives (Mariana Liberman and Sharon Morin) shared a presentation and developed an interactive session to better understand how recent and permanent impacts are affecting our Métis communities and, from a gendered perspective, their concerns and struggles.

#### **Activities & Outcomes**

After a brief presentation of who we are and what we do at LFMO Environment & Climate Change and the project "Mothers of the Land, Water and Sky," we called the participants to share one or two words expressing what they felt or perceived as the most significant impacts of climate change. We used the following image<sup>1</sup> to generate discussions. This diagram that shows the drivers and effects of climate change in a clear way however, it does not include other elements that are fundamental in Métis lives and perspectives, such as cultural loss, emotional impacts such as loss and grief, and intergenerational trauma, Cultural revitalization, among others.



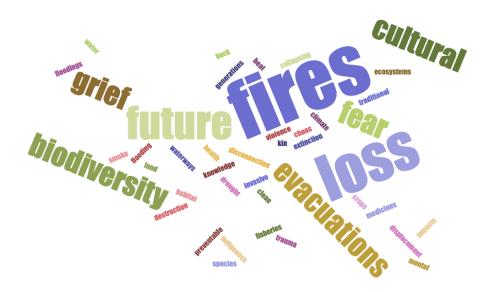
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Source: https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/climate-change/effects-of-climate-change

The following are concepts that we collected from the participants during the discussion. We grouped these according to the characteristic of the impact.

Human Environment	Physical Environment
Cultural disconnection	Fires and resulting smoke
Cultural loss	Destruction of habitat
Concern about next 7 generations/ Fear for the future kin	Loss of biodiversity
Learning Indigenous processing methods	Invasive species
Climate trauma	Disasters
Displacement and evacuation	Flooding
Fear for the future	Impacts to waterways
Mental health impacts	Collapsing ecosystems
Land back	Fisheries
Preventable violence	Heat
Loss	Drought – loss of crops
Chaos	Biodiversity extinction
Loss of traditional medicines and harvesting	Clean drinking water in Indigenous communities

As we can see, there is an equal weight for the "usual" physical impacts on the environment and how women perceive the impact on their culture, traditions, and mental and emotional health.

We also used the words to create a cloud<sup>2</sup> considering their frequency, and the visual effect is striking, showing how the 2022-2023 fires have impacted this group, followed by the feelings of "loss". The loss is related to biodiversity, land, clean water, crops as well as culture, community connections and future generations.



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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Tool: <a href="https://www.jasondavies.com/wordcloud/">https://www.jasondavies.com/wordcloud/</a>

# Environmental Analysis Methodology

During the presentation, we proposed a general workflow that shows the evolution from raw data to actions.



Data are facts gathered systematically for a purpose (examples are water temperature, soil salinity, etc). Information results from data processing. For example, by measuring water temperature in the ocean surface, year after year, science has seen an increase in ocean water temperature linked to global warming. However, how do we build knowledge? Is it only information coming from data?

Métis people and culture merge the traditional knowledge with the knowledge obtained by standardized methods brought by what we know as "western science". Once we merge both into one unique knowledge, we can identify the problem through the lens of Indigenous perspectives.

Using the previous example, the rise in the temperature if the ocean surface is affecting ocean biodiversity and ocean currents patterns which will cause a worse and unknown yet effect on climate change impacts, changing agriculture development and jeopardizing food systems. Consequently, traditional practices of gathering food and medicines, community networks due to involuntary displacement because of fires, or voluntary relocation with the aim to search better jobs and living conditions are examples of these impacts.

Once the potential or real problems are identified we are in the capacity of developing policies, plans and programs that allow us to take action. Certainly, in this process we develop indicators to measure the actions effectiveness and according to them the cycle is closed, starting again with the analysis of the results.

In this cycle, Métis women's role is vital to develop effective and concrete policies, programs, and plans. We used the following question to open a general discussion:

- 1. Where do you see the greatest gaps, barriers, and failures? Why?
- 2. From the youth perspective, how do you envision your participation? How can your voice be heard?
- 3. How can we guarantee and enhance your engagement in environmental plans, projects, and programs?

Gaps, barriers, and failures in the environmental work

The delegates provided rich feedback about the barriers, gaps, and failures that prevent the effectiveness of climate change actions. We organized the transcript prepared by Raincoast Ventures (the note-takers for the event) into specific categories.

#### **Environment and economy**

- The finances that surround everything, people who make and lose money from it (i.e. climate actions).
- Modern farming practices, like synthetic fertilizers (toxic nitrogen), pesticides, and herbicides, lead to nutrient disruption of lands.
- Global capitalist systems work against environmental policies.
- Colonial/settler greed and entitlement.
- Taking resources for granted.
- Capitalism.

#### **Environmental Failures**

- Large corporations that produce waste dumping without control.
- (Poor) quality of water and air.
- "Busing what we have and not replacing what we take/not utilizing the whole.

# **Environment and PPP development**

- Need for policies and plans:
  - o E.g.: Single-use plastic is about to be banned in Saskatchewan
  - The big companies and businesses producing harm to our environment should be more accountable.
- Any solution that individualizes the problem is doomed to fail:
  - o It passes the responsibility to individuals rather than corporations.
  - Millions of dollars are spent on campaigns to tell us to take shorter showers, but you drive past a golf course or winery, and they are lush."
- Need to implement recommendations.
  - There is a lot of data collection and consultation, and it is time to implement recommendations.
  - In significant initiatives like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, with over 100 Calls to Action, it can be challenging for policy people to translate that into action.
  - There is a disconnection from policy to action.
- Conflict of interests in policy making.
  - A legal system that favours corporations.
- Accessibility, whether financial, physical, or language, being part of the process.

• Exclusion of 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in the discussion.

#### **Environment and Indigenous rights**

- Denial of Indigenous sovereignty.
- Historical and future displacement.
- Gaps in data consideration for Indigenous people who live off the land:
  - There was an instance where an individual used the land in different seasons; when they
    returned, green energy infrastructure was built in that location; while this seems good,
    Indigenous people were unable to access that land for the purpose they were using it for.
- Indigenous science is disregarded as hearsay, especially regarding our more colonized white science; a good example is found in the book "Braiding Sweetgrass".
- Issue of language barrier when recording data, information, and knowledge because people disregard Indigenous terminology.

# Métis youth perspective in environmental engagement

#### Inequalities and how to tackle them

- When discussing the topic of Indigenous communities and their relationship with the
  environment, it is important to recognize that many individuals may not have had the
  opportunity to complete their education or pursue higher learning due to systemic barriers
  such as being in care.
  - Accessible information and education on environmental issues.
  - Promote leadership and positive impact by empowering individuals with knowledge and resources.
- Funding allocation for youth advisors (prioritizing women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks), youth events and existing youth organizations actively engaged in environmental work.

#### **Building and maintaining networks**

- High school environment
  - Promote and join clubs, including those that group black, Indigenous, and other people of colour communities.
  - o Indigenous communities offer opportunities for group gatherings and summits that foster a love of the environment and build connections within the community.
- Enhancement of social media networking
  - Implementing a subscription-based system for various ministries based on one's interests.
  - o Individuals can more effectively target their desired audience by subscribing to topics that align with their interests.

- Youth events, guided by Elder's input are the most loving and meaningful; consult with Elders to create memorable events for young people.
- Collaborating with established youth organizations and engaging with various institutions, including prisons and classrooms, ensures that family members are noticed, included in discussions, and given the opportunity to provide input.
- Include Two-Spirit individuals in conversations and ensure their specific needs are addressed; they are often overlooked and not considered enough in discussions.
- Speak in classes, institutions (hospitals, jails), and communities.

# Conclusions

From the feedback, we obtained an urgent demand for fast and just policies encompassing intersectionality of gender, sexual identity, age, socio-economic status, level of education, disabilities, etc. Policies need to encompass the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual impact of climate change considering past, present and future generations as intergenerational trauma has caused feelings of loss, disconnection with the community and Métis culture, evacuations and displacement with a direct impact in mental and physical health.

Environment and land are indivisible, and Métis rights to land are still pending. Consequently, traditional knowledge, which is intertwined with nature, is directly threatened by climate change, as well as language, traditional medicines, and ceremonies. When a part of the ecosystem is lost, a portion of the universal knowledge and, with it, life meaning is lost for many. Participants expressed this feeling in a firm and loud way in terms of loss and grief.

We need to strengthen community networking processes by connecting youth, elders, organizations, and governments in an effective way. Social media can be a fantastic tool, but it should be seen as exactly that, a media, not a goal. Our goal is to bring Métis women's voices to the environmental discussion and actions and for that we need policy and economic support to develop the right plans and programs.

Colonial practices are predatory practices for humans and nature, and Métis history and culture show us how we can be one with nature and thrive.

"If you care for the land, the land will take care of you."

Indigenous Traditional Knowledge

This report was completed on February  $4^{th}$  2024 in the unceded and unsurrendered territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin People known as Ottawa.