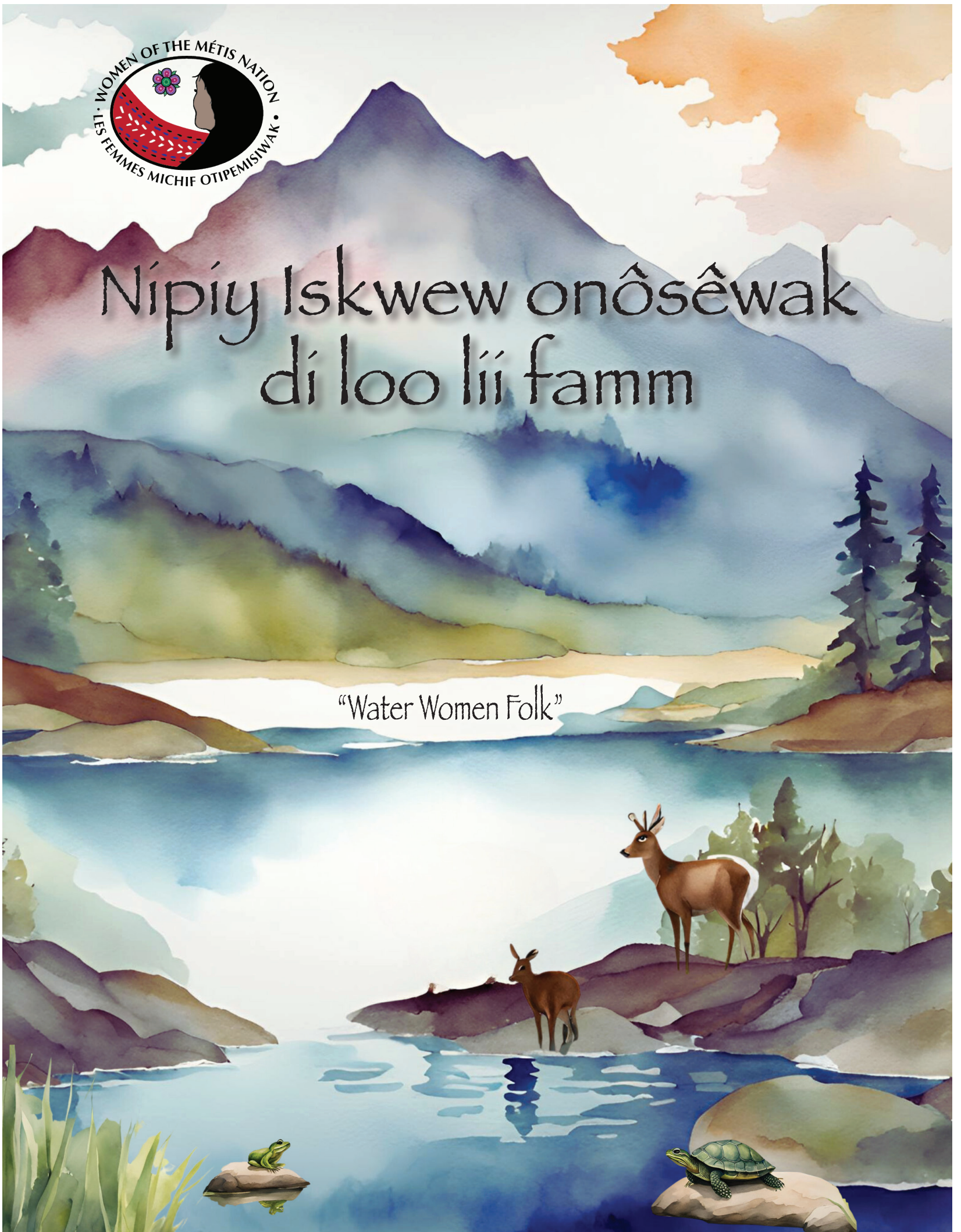




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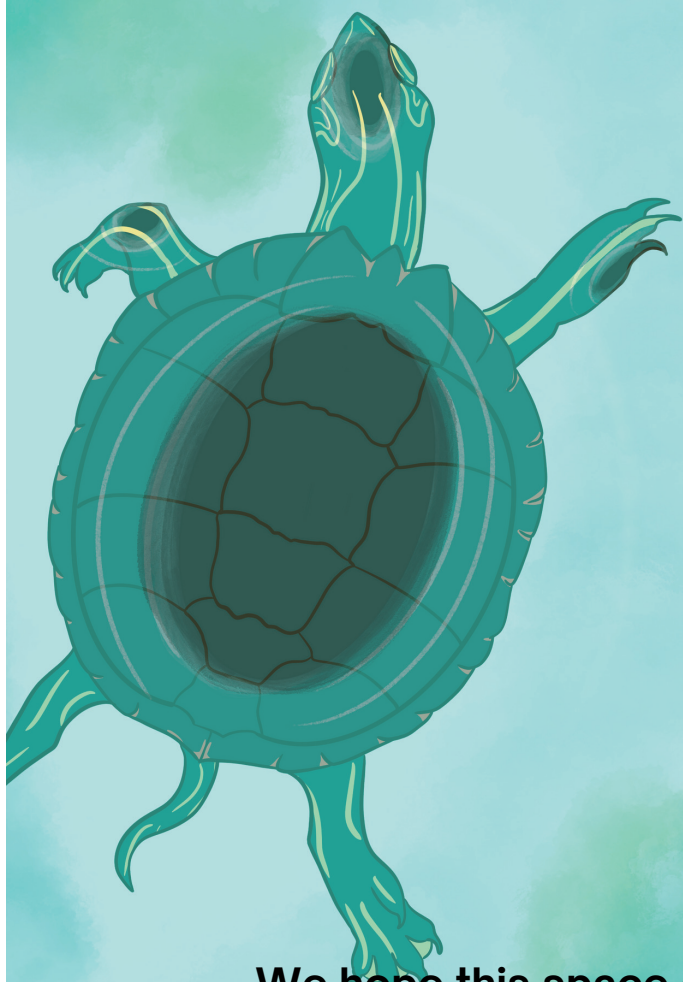
“Water Women Folk”



Welcome to the Métis Water Journal

A Journey of Connection and Reflection

Water holds a sacred place in the heart of Métis culture—it's a source of life, healing, and connection to the land and our ancestors. This journal is a space for us to explore and celebrate our relationship with water, both as individuals and as a collective.



Through these pages, we will share stories, highlight ongoing initiatives, and invite you to contribute your own reflections, art, and writing.

Whether it's through traditional knowledge, personal experiences, or creative expression, this journal is a place where our voices can flow together like the rivers and streams that have shaped our history.

We hope this space encourages thought, inspiration, and connection, while recognizing the deep significance that water holds in our past, present, and future.

Wâhkôtowin

Water is at the heart of Indigenous traditions, livelihood, culture, and diet. For the Métis people, clean and safe freshwater is not just essential for physical well-being—it carries a deeper spiritual and cultural significance. Water sustains life, connects us to the land, and nurtures our communities in countless ways.

From a Métis woman's perspective, water holds a special place in our collective memory and wisdom. By drawing on this rich contextual knowledge, we have the potential to shape new and meaningful approaches to managing and protecting this precious resource. Our traditions, our stories, and our connection to water can help build a future where water governance reflects the values and teachings of our people.

Two-Spirit individuals have long been healers, knowledge keepers, and nurturers within Indigenous communities, embodying a fluid and expansive identity that transcends binary notions. In Métis culture, their presence has been a source of strength, wisdom, and balance, offering insights that enrich our collective well-being. Their deep connection to the fluid nature of existence—whether in terms of identity, spirit, or the natural world—has always guided and uplifted the Métis nation. Like water, they flow between roles and understandings, helping to foster a more inclusive, compassionate, and interconnected community.

Wâkôtowin means being related to everything Mother Earth has given us, creating a giant web that includes Water. It is not only a matter of connection but reciprocal responsibilities. Water is a life giver and if we take care of the Water, she will care for everything and everyone else. It's like the Blood that runs through our veins that links us to each other, to Mother Earth and our ancestors.

All people and all things are interconnected in a unique way, and that is why each voice is crucial.

Whispering Waters

Spiritual Connection

Water is the lifeblood of Indigenous traditions, nurturing communities in spirit, culture, and livelihood.

For Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, the connection to water runs deeper—it is sacred, a source of healing, and a carrier of stories. Water is not only essential for life but also woven into the spiritual fabric of Métis culture, carrying teachings that guide the stewardship of this vital resource.

Their wisdom and relationship with water offer a profound opportunity to honor and protect this gift, ensuring clean and safe freshwater for future generations, while respecting its sacred role in the wellbeing of all beings.



Water is life

Whispering Waters

Spiritual Connection

Policies often reduce nature to "environmental services," assigning a monetary value to what is sacred. This colonial mindset overlooks the deeper, non-monetary values that water holds for Métis people. It is our responsibility to uplift and honor these values. Water is not just a resource—it is life itself, a living being with spirit. We are called to protect it, not because of its economic worth, but because it sustains us all, embodying a sacred connection that cannot be measured in dollars.

I am Mutehekau Shipu

A River's Journey to Personhood

The story of how the people of Ekuanitshit, Quebec and the regional municipality made a joint declaration in 2021 to grant the Mutehekau Shipu, also known as the Magpie River, legal personhood status, is a true success story in Canada. The 120-mile long waterway, which is sacred to the Innu First Nation, has been threatened in recent years by hydroelectric dam projects, leading to negative social and environmental impacts. Now, the river has 9 rights, including the right to flow, maintain biodiversity and be free from pollution.

Water is sentient

[illegible]

Cascading Waters

Environmental Interconnection

When water is polluted, the land and air suffer, the food becomes contaminated, and both humans and animals fall ill. Water is interconnected with all life, so when it is harmed, the entire ecosystem feels the impact. Canada has numerous examples where the delicate balance of nature has been disrupted, in some cases bringing ecosystems to the brink of irreversible damage.

From industrial pollution to habitat destruction, many of these environmental issues have pushed natural systems to their limits, making restoration efforts increasingly difficult. However, there is a lot to be done.



Water can heal

Cascading Waters

Environmental Interconnection

Bringing the Eel River Back to Life

One positive restoration project in Canada is related to the Eel River on Chaleur Bay in northern New Brunswick. For the past decade, the Mi'gmaq First Nation of Ugpi'ganjig has focused on improving Atlantic salmon habitat in the river, which was severely impacted by the Eel River dam. Following the removal of the dam in 2011, the community committed to the restoration of the salmon population, ensuring sustainable access for future generations. The project involved habitat restoration, public education, and innovative techniques, such as installing fish egg incubators, which significantly increased salmon egg survival rates up to 90 percent. As a result, communities are seeing a boost in the Atlantic salmon population and the revitalization of the Eel River.



Water is hope

[illegible]

Eroding Waters

Environmental Racism

What is Environmental racism?

Environmental racism is a type of **systemic** and **systematic** racism that causes Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities to face greater exposure to harmful environmental conditions compared to predominantly white communities. It happens when industrial facilities, waste disposal sites, and other pollution sources are placed near these communities. This leads to health and safety risks from pollution, toxic waste, noise, and other dangerous activities that harm the environment and the people living there.

The devastating effects of environmental racism can severely harm the health of community members which includes the four dimensions of health: physical, mental, spiritual and emotional.

“Environmental racism is rooted in the policies and decisions of many political bodies and industries. It can come directly from municipal, provincial or federal decisions, or from corporate projects such as pipelines that are supported by government policy. Inaction or delay also embodies environmental racism: Significant government delays or complete refusal to support the cleanup of environmental contaminants and disasters allows environmental racism to continue, sometimes even decades after a corporate project has left a community.”

(Water Is Life, 2023)

Water is crucial

Eroding Waters Environmental Racism

Environmental racism fractures both nature and communities. It harms ecosystems and disrupts the health, safety, and cohesion of the people who live closest to environmental hazards, deepening social and environmental inequalities.

Environmental Justice Be at the Frontline of Change

In June 2024, Governor General Mary Simon signed Bill C-226 into law, marking a pivotal step towards addressing environmental justice and racism in Canada. This new law mandates the development of a **national environmental justice** strategy to tackle environmental racism—an issue where Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities face greater exposure to environmental hazards than others. This is a powerful opportunity to shape a fairer future, and your involvement is key to making this change happen.

Water needs protection

[illegible]

Turbulent Waters

Freshwater Strategy

Turbulent waters stir up a mix of elements: sediments, fluids, leaves, broken branches, and the life within—small creatures and larger animals alike—all swept along by the powerful current. But sometimes, it's important to pause, examine each piece, and understand the relationships between them to plan wisely for the future.

Effective freshwater stewardship requires robust, inclusive, and collaborative scientific efforts to inform policy and decision-making, ultimately aiming to protect Canada's freshwater resources for future generations.

National Freshwater Science Agenda

The National Freshwater Science Agenda initiative is drawing a 10-year plan designed to bring together scientists, governments, Indigenous communities, and other key partners. Together, we'll shape how we manage and protect our freshwater.

The Agenda is being led by **Environment and Climate Change Canada's Science and Technology Branch** (ECCC-STB) and will weave western science and Indigenous science and knowledge systems, and ensure it considers different science needs and perspectives in order to be useful to partners and stakeholders across the country.

Water is energy

Turbulent Waters

Freshwater Strategy Agenda

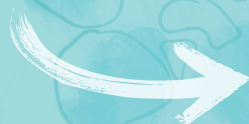
Why a common and co-developed agenda is it important?

There is a history of disproportionate negative consequences to Métis people from the impacts of climate change. The urgent need for adaptive management strategies to address the impacts to freshwater systems, including alterations in water availability, quality, and ecosystem health are of grave importance.

Key themes include

1. **Indigenous Co-development:** the Agenda emphasizes the importance of integrating Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in freshwater science and management.
2. **Interdisciplinary Approach:** advocating for a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to research, particularly in assessing the cumulative effects of multiple stressors on freshwater ecosystems.
3. **Knowledge Gaps:** identifies significant gaps in understanding water quality, especially in northern ecosystems, and the need for improved monitoring and assessment methods.
4. **Collaborative Research:** promotes partnerships with local communities, particularly Indigenous groups, to enhance the scope and effectiveness of freshwater research.
5. **Foundational Needs:** the five key elements required for action include
 - national science coordination
 - user-driven science
 - knowledge mobilization
 - innovative infrastructure
 - the integration of Indigenous science

Additional information
can be found here



[illegible]

Calm Waters

Wetlands and Ramsar

Calm waters, often found in wetlands, not only symbolize peace and reflection but are also vital ecosystems supporting biodiversity and maintaining ecological balance. These environments are essential for spirituality and tranquility, as they are spaces for meditation and connection with nature. Wetlands are natural filters, improving water quality and regulating water flow. By conserving wetlands, we also protect their rich biodiversity.

Additional information about
Ramsar can be found here



Water is wisdom

Calm Waters

Wetlands and Ramsar

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

The Ramsar Convention on wetlands is an international agreement that strives to protect wetlands, such as marshes and swamps. These water bodies are vital for local communities and wildlife. Canada has 25 percent of the planet's wetlands and almost 14 percent of the country is covered by these habitats.

The Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan is the key document that guides the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands. Currently, the Strategic Plan Working Group is in the process of drafting the wording for the 5th Strategic Plan. The Plan aims to take into account the needs and aspirations of current and future generations, and considers the role of wetland conservation in promoting sustainable development and addressing global environmental challenges.

The Strategic Plan is significant for Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals, as wetlands hold cultural, spiritual and economic value for them. In honouring Indigenous knowledge and rights, while recognizing their deep connection to these lands, it is important to ensure that we have a voice during the drafting process of the 5th Strategic Plan.

Water needs protection

[illegible]

Mighty Waters

Canada Water Act Review and Engagement

What is the Canada Water Agency? The **Canada Water Agency (CWA)** is the federal agency that manages freshwater resources in Canada. Its main goal is to work together with provinces, territories, and Indigenous peoples to tackle water-related issues. Even CWA has been part of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) since it started, it hasn't fulfilled its goal of keeping Canada's waters safe, clean, and well-managed. Many Indigenous communities still struggle to access clean and safe water. In 2023, the federal government introduced Bill C-59 to make the CWA an independent agency, separate from ECCC.

The government is also reviewing the Canada Water Act to update it and make sure that Indigenous peoples' needs and the effects of climate change are prioritized. This review will happen in two steps: first, gathering input on how to engage people, and then discussing goals and possible improvements.

The review aims to find ways to make the Act more effective, respect Indigenous rights, and improve cooperation among everyone involved. It will also look at how to include Indigenous knowledge and strengthen efforts to adapt to climate change in water management.

Water is community

Mighty Waters

Canada Water Act Review and Engagement

It is essential to recognize that regulations, laws, and policies are not static; they can and must evolve to meet the needs of all communities, especially those historically marginalized. Active participation from everyone is vital in this process, particularly for Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals, who have unique perspectives and experiences that can illuminate the path toward equity and justice. By engaging in these discussions, we can help amplify the voices of the voiceless and advocate for meaningful change.

As we confront the pressing issues surrounding water management, it is crucial that we come together to ensure that the modernization of the Canada Water Act reflects the realities and rights of Indigenous peoples, prioritizing their needs and addressing the challenges posed by climate change. Your voices and experiences are vital in shaping policies that affect our water and environment. Together, we can advocate for the changes needed to protect our water for future generations.

Additional information about
The Canada Water Act can be
found here



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Surging Waters

Youth Action

Métis youth play a crucial role in the fight for environmental justice and the protection of our natural resources. Their fresh perspectives and innovative ideas are essential in addressing contemporary challenges. By learning from Elders, they can gain invaluable wisdom and traditional knowledge, which they can then share with their peers and communities. This passing down of knowledge is vital for preserving the unique cultural heritage of the Métis people, ensuring that it continues to thrive for future generations. Embracing new voices and communication methods empowers youth to advocate for their rights and the environment effectively, fostering a more sustainable and culturally rich future.



Water is renewal

Surging Waters Youth Action

Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G) Indigenous Youth-Led Organizing at the Grassroots Level

Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G) is an Indigenous youth-led organization based in Unceded Algonquin Territory. It focuses on supporting Indigenous youth and creating opportunities for their communities. The organization has been operating as a non-profit since 2015 and supports the Indigenous youth community through a grassroots way of being.

The organization has compiled numerous resources, including a webinar series for Indigenous youth and community to learn from, and engage with, Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers about the connection to the land and water.

Learn more about The
Assembly of Seven
Generations here



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Be the stone that starts the ripple

Uplifting the Water

Uplifting water means honoring its sacredness, respecting its role in our lives, and taking active steps to protect it for both present and future generations. Here are many ways we can uplift water, especially from the perspective of Métis and Indigenous traditions:

1. Recognize Water as a Living Being

Acknowledge that water is not just a resource, but a living entity with spirit. Many Indigenous cultures, including the Métis, see water as a relative, not an object to be owned or exploited. By shifting our mindset, we can foster deeper respect and responsibility toward it.

2. Incorporate Traditional Knowledge

Elevate the voices of Métis women, Elders, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people who carry generations of wisdom about water. Their insights into the spiritual and cultural significance of water can guide more holistic, sustainable water governance.

3. Restore and Protect Waterways

Actively engage in conservation and restoration efforts for lakes, rivers, and other bodies of water. This can include cleaning up polluted areas, advocating for stricter protections, and supporting Indigenous-led environmental initiatives.

Be the stone that starts the ripple Uplifting the Water

4. Advocate for Water Sovereignty

Support Indigenous rights to control and protect their water resources. Ensuring that Indigenous communities have autonomy over their lands and waters is a crucial step toward uplifting water.

5. Rituals and Ceremonies

Engage in or support water ceremonies that honor its sacred role. Many Indigenous cultures hold rituals where water is blessed, thanked, and honored for its life-giving properties. These spiritual practices help maintain a strong connection with water.

6. Education and Awareness

Spread awareness about the non-monetary value of water. Teach others about water's spiritual significance and its importance beyond its practical uses. This includes challenging policies that commodify water and advocating for laws that recognize its sacredness.

7. Build Relationships with Water

Develop personal or community relationships with local water sources. This could involve regularly visiting and caring for nearby lakes or rivers, listening to the stories they carry, and understanding their role in the ecosystem.

By taking these actions, we can uplift water as something that nurtures life, heals, and connects us all in ways that go far beyond its physical properties.

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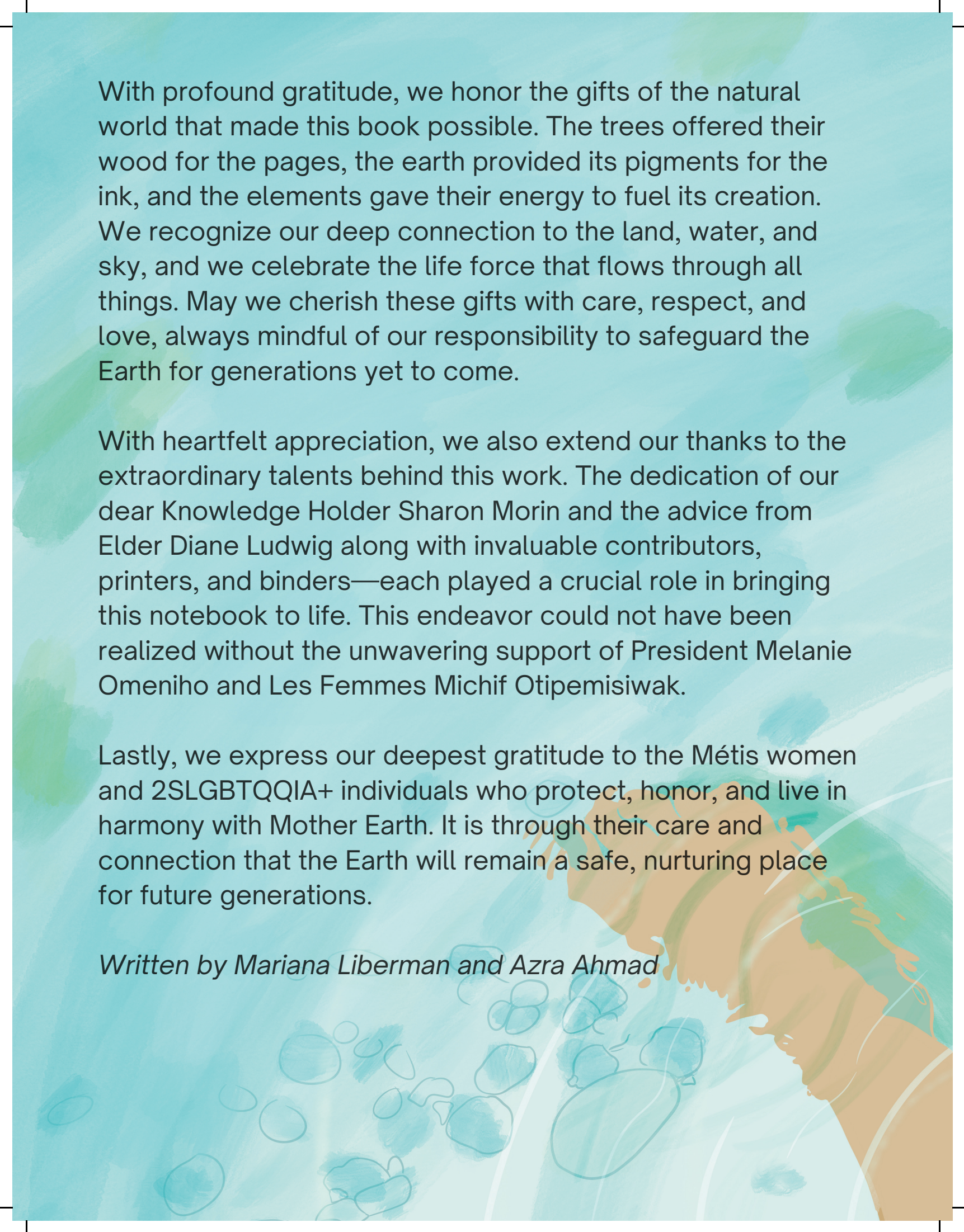
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The background of the page features a soft, painterly illustration. On the right side, a person is depicted from the chest up, wearing a traditional Indigenous garment with a wide, feathered collar. They are looking down at a globe that is partially visible. The globe shows green landmasses and blue oceans. The overall color palette is light and airy, with soft blues, greens, and a hint of orange from the person's clothing. The text is overlaid on the left side of the page.

With profound gratitude, we honor the gifts of the natural world that made this book possible. The trees offered their wood for the pages, the earth provided its pigments for the ink, and the elements gave their energy to fuel its creation. We recognize our deep connection to the land, water, and sky, and we celebrate the life force that flows through all things. May we cherish these gifts with care, respect, and love, always mindful of our responsibility to safeguard the Earth for generations yet to come.

With heartfelt appreciation, we also extend our thanks to the extraordinary talents behind this work. The dedication of our dear Knowledge Holder Sharon Morin and the advice from Elder Diane Ludwig along with invaluable contributors, printers, and binders—each played a crucial role in bringing this notebook to life. This endeavor could not have been realized without the unwavering support of President Melanie Omeniho and Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak.

Lastly, we express our deepest gratitude to the Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals who protect, honor, and live in harmony with Mother Earth. It is through their care and connection that the Earth will remain a safe, nurturing place for future generations.

Written by Mariana Liberman and Azra Ahmad

