



# MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL NATURE STRATEGY

*Restoring Relationships with All Our Relations*

2025

*Sasha Colman*



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**Cover art by Solène Callioux,  
Winner of the Métis National Council's Youth Cover Page Art Contest**

**Please see full essay submission from the artist at the end of the Strategy.**

*Remember Our Kinship* by Solène Callioux is a tribute to the sacred and enduring relationship between the Métis people and the bison, portraying both historical truth and living memory. Through the image of a young Métis girl calmly meeting the gaze of a bison, the painting evokes recognition, resilience, and cultural continuity, set against a dreamlike palette that blends nostalgia with spirituality. It reflects on reciprocity, survival, and kinship with the land while also acknowledging colonial violence and the attempted erasure of culture through the near extinction of the bison. At the same time, it offers hope: the girl embodies resilience and renewal, symbolizing cultural resurgence and a living connection to ancestors and traditions. For the artist, this work is a personal journey of reconnection and resistance—an invitation for viewers to reflect on Indigenous knowledge, balance with the natural world, and the responsibilities owed to both past and future generations.



**Illustrations by Halie Finney: Artist Statement**

*This image is representative of the younger generation. I drew inspiration from new beginnings and hope. The baby birds are a fresh and new generation; they sit within a braided nest. The braids reference both the braids in our hair and braided sweetgrass. In the sky the sun is rising, it's the beginning of a new day, and a butterfly flies by signalling the spring season. Both the butterfly and the birds remind us to think about flighted animals in our environment. Around them are wild roses, a symbol of resilience for Métis people that often shows up in our beadwork as the five-petaled flower. Since it's spring, these wild roses are just buds, getting ready to bloom. Alongside the flowers are Métis sashes, which are a well-known Métis garment and symbol.*



*To represent the middle generation, I chose to draw beavers. Beavers are animals known for their hard work, determination, and their care for their communities and even other animals. Beavers also make big impacts on the environment around them, just like us. This beaver has its kit alongside, busy teaching them their ways as they swim in reflection of the midday sun, if you look at the ripples, you'll see that there are Infinity symbols from our Métis flag. The wild roses along the bottom are now in full bloom, showing us that it's now summer. On the top of the image are strawberries, also known as heart berries, and regarded as leader of the berries since they are the first fruit of the summer to ripen.*



*I've been told that spiders are our grandmothers, so I chose to use a spider to represent the older generation. The spider weaves a Red River Cart wheel in its web, a nod to Métis craftsmanship, our ingenuity, adaptability, and freedom. High in the sky is the moon. It's the end of the day, time to quiet down and to listen to our Elders. Framing the images are the wild roses, now rosehips. Rosehips are the final form of the wild rose and are the fruit of the plant. They are valuable and nutritious and are eaten raw, made into tea, or turned into jam. Beside them are beaded flowers. Métis beadwork is known for its bright colours and depictions of the plants and flowers that surround us. This image is a reminder to keep those smaller and quieter worlds of the bugs and plants in our environment in mind.*

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# STRATEGY AT A GLANCE



## A CALL TO HEALING

*The land speaks: "Will you continue to listen to us?"*

*Will you teach your children to care for us?"*

*The water flows: "We are life. We will nourish you if you protect us."*

*The air whispers: "Breathe deeply. We carry your stories and your ancestors' voices."*

*The animals watch: "We are your teachers and your kin. Will you walk alongside us in respect?"*

This Strategy, co-developed by the Métis National Council (MNC) and its Governing Members (GMs) – the Métis Nation of Ontario and the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta, presents five interconnected priorities for action: ecosystem healing; Métis-led conservation areas; understanding the state of the environment; food security and sovereignty; and water, ice, and snow. Each priority is grounded in Métis

knowledge systems, guided by a clear five-year outcome, and supported by actionable commitments and tailored engagement and partnership approaches.

The Strategy is structured to serve as a national advocacy

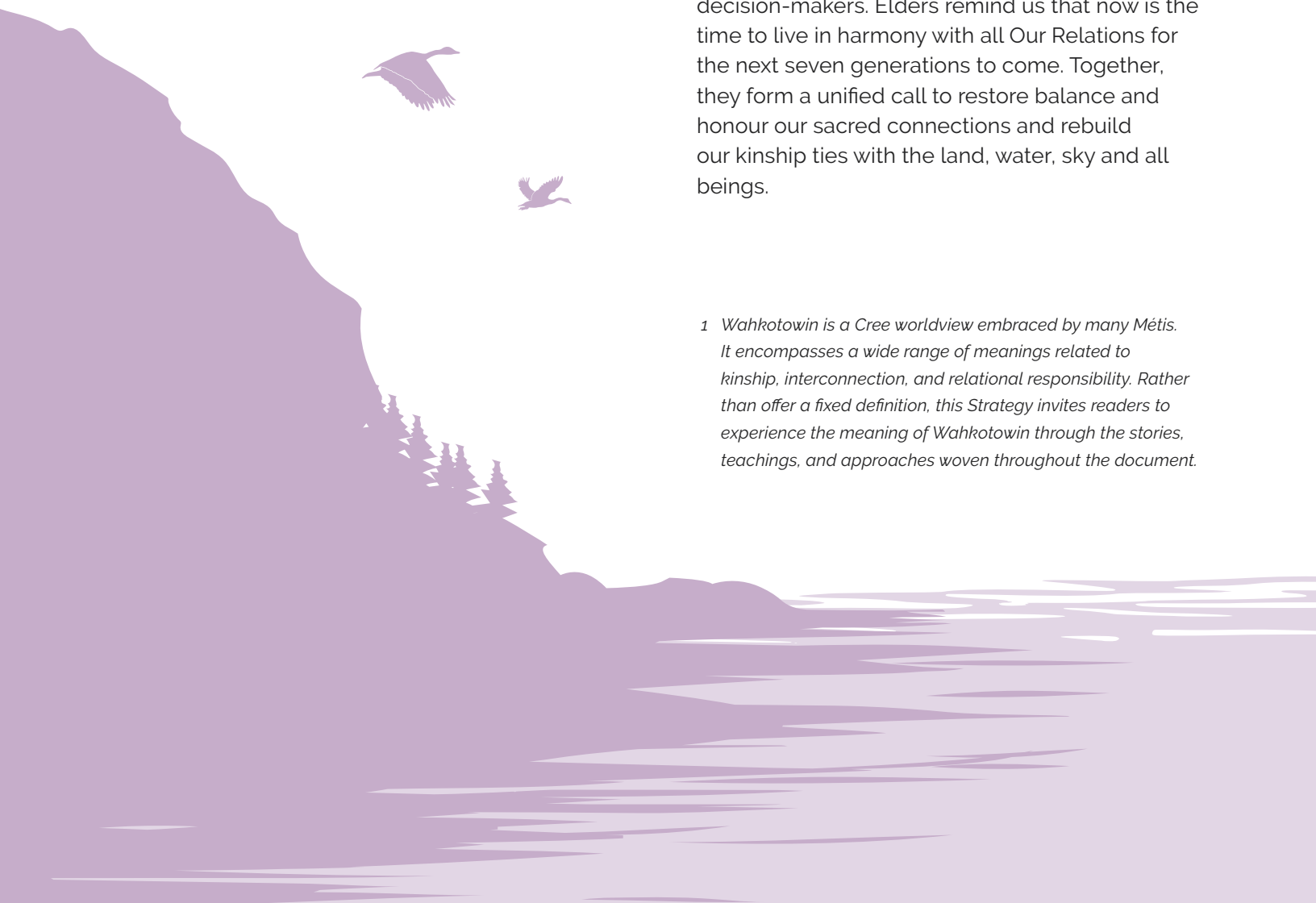


tool that reinforces the central role of Métis governance, culture, and rights in caring for all Our Relations. It was developed for use by the MNC, Métis governments, leaders, citizens, and collaborators—including other Indigenous governments, the public, NGOs, and federal and provincial partners. It also speaks to Mother Earth and all Our Relations—the land, water, ice, air, animals, plants, insects, rocks, and soil—rooted in Wahkotowin<sup>1</sup> and a recognition that our health and well-being are inseparable from the health and well-being of the natural world.

The Strategy's implementation and accountability is shared between the MNC and its GMs. It does not replace or direct regional initiatives but offers a cohesive platform to elevate shared priorities at the national and international level. It is considered an evergreen Strategy, reviewed and updated regularly, with a structured five-year review cycle and flexible governance model that ensures responsiveness, coherence, and adaptability over time.

Across generations, Métis citizens are stepping forward to fulfill our responsibilities to the land, waters and Mother Earth. Children and youth offer urgency and hope, ready to lead with knowledge and conviction. The middle generation carries responsibility today—balancing tradition and innovation in our roles as leaders, caregivers, and decision-makers. Elders remind us that now is the time to live in harmony with all Our Relations for the next seven generations to come. Together, they form a unified call to restore balance and honour our sacred connections and rebuild our kinship ties with the land, water, sky and all beings.

<sup>1</sup> *Wahkotowin is a Cree worldview embraced by many Métis. It encompasses a wide range of meanings related to kinship, interconnection, and relational responsibility. Rather than offer a fixed definition, this Strategy invites readers to experience the meaning of Wahkotowin through the stories, teachings, and approaches woven throughout the document.*



## OUR VISION:

### *Empowering Stewardship and Community*

Guided by the knowledge of our ancestors and inspired by the resilience of our communities, we reclaim our role as stewards and guardians of the land, water, ice, air, animals, plants, insects, rocks, and soil—protecting and healing all Our Relations for future generations.

## OUR VALUES:

### 1. HEALING:

The Métis approach to stewardship supports ecological, community, and personal well-being, recognizing that the health of the land and the people are deeply interconnected.

### 2. SELF-DETERMINATION:

Métis communities and governments lead stewardship efforts, grounded in our own governance, knowledge, cultural values and governments.

### 3. RECIPROCITY:

Stewardship is a responsibility—giving back to the land and all Our Relations in ways that sustain balance and mutual care. All Our Relations, human and more-than-human, carry responsibilities in sustaining life.

## OUR MISSION:

### *Restoring Relationships with All Our Relations*

The Métis Nation is restoring and strengthening our connections to all Our Relations. By supporting Métis people, uplifting traditional and contemporary Métis knowledge systems, and securing long-term partnerships and solutions, we work to heal the environment while sustaining our cultural identity, rights, and way of life.

### 4. INTERCONNECTEDNESS:

All life is connected. The Métis Nation takes a holistic approach that honours the interdependence of ecosystems, communities, and partners.

### 5. RESPECT FOR KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS:

Métis knowledge is inseparable from the people who hold it. Stewardship must centre Indigenous knowledge alongside western science in respectful, participatory, and inclusive ways.

### 6. COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP:

Strong stewardship outcomes are built through respectful, reciprocal partnerships that uphold Métis self-determination, rights, and long-term commitment.

## OUR PRIORITIES:

Caring for Mother Earth is a collective responsibility grounded in relationship. Through deep listening, inclusive engagement, and strong partnerships, the Métis Nation ensures that our diverse voices, knowledge systems, and leadership guide the path forward—for all Our Relations and for generations to come. These approaches are woven through the delivery of all priorities in this Strategy.

### 1. SUPPORTING THE WORK OF MÉTIS GUARDIANS:

Guided by a deep responsibility to care for all Our Relations, Métis Guardians walk the land and paddle the waters, observing change and listening closely. By helping weave Métis knowledge and western science, they help communities understand ecosystem health, respond to citizen concerns, and guide actions to protect the places we call home.



### 2. ECOSYSTEM HEALING:

Ecosystem healing is a pathway for Métis to renew relationships with Mother Earth. Rooted in Wahkotowin, restoration efforts support nature's renewal while reconnecting citizens to cultural practices and places. Through Métis-led actions—like returning Good Fire, revitalizing habitats, and establishing IPCAs—communities are protecting biodiversity, fostering resilience, and supporting climate adaptation across the Homeland.



### 3. MÉTIS-LED CONSERVATION AREAS:

Métis-led conservation is about being present on the land—caring for it, learning from it, and protecting both its ecological and cultural richness for generations to come. Through the creation of a network of Métis-governed IPCAs, rooted in our values and knowledge systems, we are reclaiming our role as stewards and restoring balance



where colonial models of conservation once removed us. These protected areas support healing, employment, and reconciliation, ensuring the land continues to sustain and be sustained by the Métis Nation.

### 4. FOOD SECURITY AND SOVEREIGNTY:

Métis food security and sovereignty are rooted in harvesting, growing, and sharing food in ways that honour our responsibilities to all Our Relations. These practices connect us to traditional laws and teachings, reduce reliance on industrial food systems, and strengthen cultural and ecological resilience. By supporting harvesters, expanding community food programs, and weaving land-based education with policy advocacy, the Métis Nation is reclaiming its place in the great cycle that sustains us.



### 5. WATER, ICE, AND SNOW:

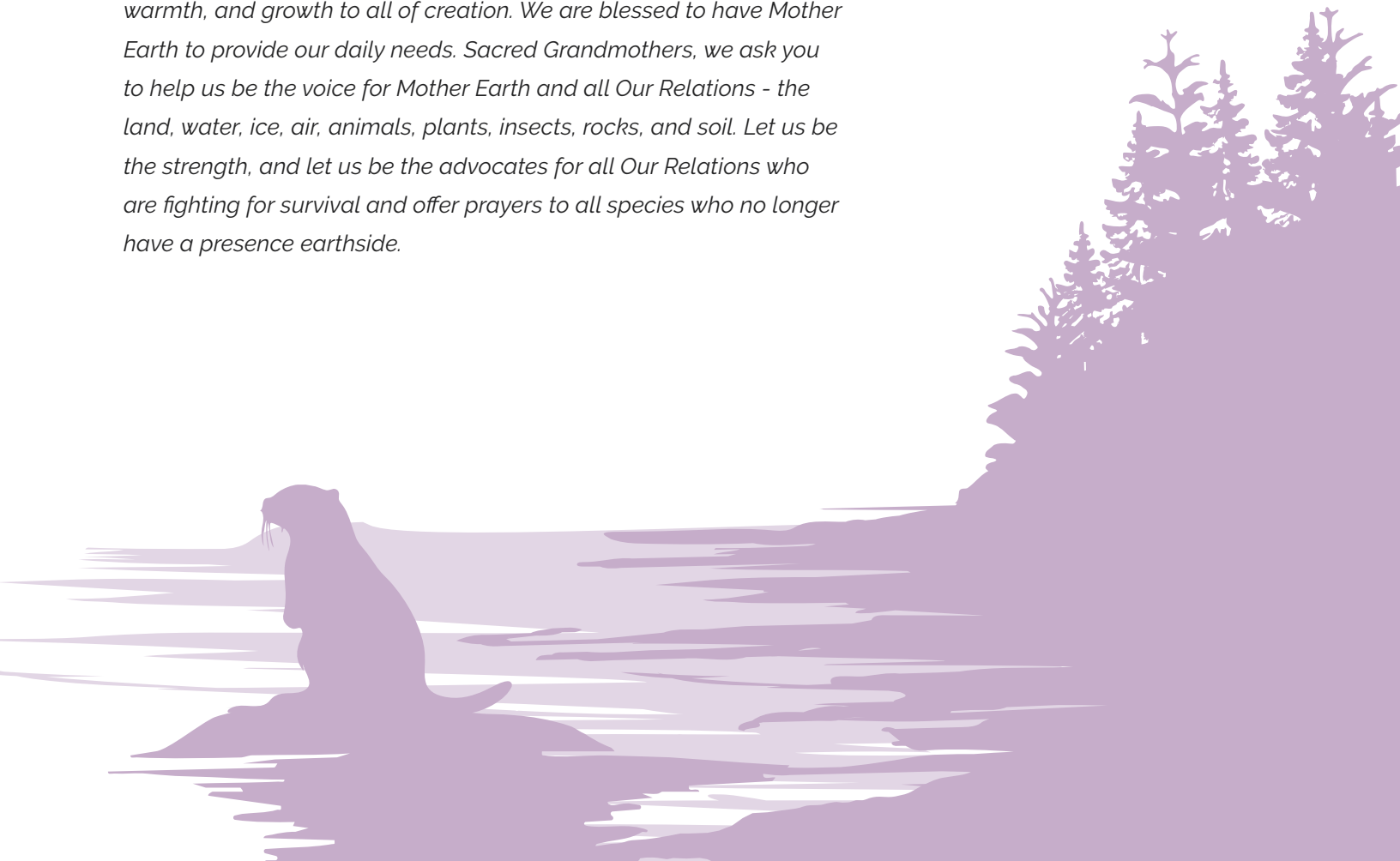
Water is sacred and alive—flowing through our bodies, our lands, and our stories. For the Métis, caring for water in all its forms—snow, ice, lakes, rivers, and rain—is both a right and a sacred responsibility. By strengthening governance roles, restoring ceremonies, and creating opportunities for water protectors to lead, the Métis Nation is upholding its responsibilities to water and ensuring its protection for generations to come.



# AN OPENING PRAYER FROM NÔTOKÊSIW KATHY BOSTON

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*Sacred Grandmothers from all directions. We humbly offer you prayers with respect, kindness, and hope. We are grateful for our families, our friends, our communities, and the animal friends we share our homes with. As long as the waters flow clean, we shall have water to sustain us. As long as we respect and care for the lands, we shall have homes, medicines, and food to sustain us. And if we keep the air clean, we shall have air to breathe to give us life. We are grateful for the guidance and wisdom of our Sacred Grandmothers. We are blessed for the connection we have with our Natural Family. We honour Grandmother Moon as she gives strength and energy to women. We give thanks for Grandfather Sun as he provides light, warmth, and growth to all of creation. We are blessed to have Mother Earth to provide our daily needs. Sacred Grandmothers, we ask you to help us be the voice for Mother Earth and all Our Relations - the land, water, ice, air, animals, plants, insects, rocks, and soil. Let us be the strength, and let us be the advocates for all Our Relations who are fighting for survival and offer prayers to all species who no longer have a presence earthside.*



# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: VICTORIA PRUDEN

Dear Readers,

It is with pride and enduring hope that I share this message with you as we advance the Métis National Council's Nature Strategy. Grounded in love for our homelands, our ancestors, and the generations still to come, this work reflects who we are as people - we are rooted in kinship, driven by responsibility, and inspired by the strength of our Nation.

Our relationship with land and water is not new. It is long-standing, sacred, and enduring. We have always known that we are one with Nature, not separate from it. This understanding has guided the way we care for the lands and waters, it has shaped our governance, our culture, and our way of life. As Métis people, we carry the strength of our unique culture and history while engaging in today's technology and advancements to protect the lands and waters that sustain us all. This dual perspective is a gift, and it is a bridge. This bridge offers opportunity for our communities to lead and thrive as leaders in these spaces, and for Canada to walk with us in a genuine and meaningful partnership.

Across the Homeland, our governments, Guardians, communities, and families are leading important work to care for Mother Earth and all Our Relations—the land, water, ice, air, animals, plants, insects, rocks, and soil. We are creating spaces where all roles in the community are valued for this work – the Old Ones, youth, harvesters, scientists, Knowledge Holders, and leaders walking side by side. Our Nature Strategy is built on a strong foundation, reaffirming our place in this space and our desire to work with others—governments, non-

government organizations, researchers, and all those committed to caring for Aîsky (Earth).

We extend a sincere invitation to collaborate. The Métis National Council is ready to co-develop solutions, and build lasting relationships rooted in respect and reciprocity. True partnership means recognizing the leadership already taking place on the ground in Métis communities and supporting it in meaningful and sustaining ways. We know that when we work together—with humility, with purpose and with our love for the land at the centre—we all benefit.

This Strategy is a call to action, a call to recognize and support the good work already happening, and a call to invest in the knowledge, governance, and vision of the Métis Nation. Above all, it is a call to walk forward together—in good faith, in good partnership, and with a shared commitment to all Our Relations for the next seven generations to come.

Our path is guided by love for our people, our lands, and our future.

Marsee • Kinanskomitin • Thank you,

*President Victoria Pruden*



# ABOUT THE STRATEGY

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## HOW IS THE STRATEGY STRUCTURED?

The Strategy is structured around five interconnected national priorities: (1) ecosystem healing; (2) Métis-led conservation areas; (3) examining the state of the environment; (4) food security and sovereignty; and (5) water, ice, and snow. Each priority area includes a narrative grounded in Métis knowledge systems, a five-year outcome, a set of concrete actions, and tailored engagement, collaboration, and partnership activities. The Strategy also outlines the vision, mission, and core values guiding this work, and clearly defines its audience and purpose as a national advocacy tool led by the Métis National Council, with strong support from its Governing Members (GMs)—the Métis Nation of Ontario and the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta. This structure ensures clarity, coherence, and actionability while reinforcing the central role of Métis governance, culture, and rights in caring for Mother Earth.



## HOW DID THE MNC DEVELOP THIS STRATEGY?

The development of the Strategy is the culmination of years of dedicated effort by members of the Métis Nation, reflecting a collective commitment to caring for all Our Relations.

Inputs were gathered through:

- Ongoing working groups, tables, discussions, and action plans including, but not limited to:
  - The Strawberry Moon Table on Nature (Métis Nation–Canada Joint Table on Nature and Conservation)
  - The Goose Moon Table on Climate Change (Métis Nation–Canada Joint Table on Clean Growth and Climate Change)
  - Métis Nation Land User Gathering (October 2023)
  - The Métis Nation Gathering for Our Land and Water—Establishing Métis Nation Nature Priorities (January 2023)
  - Métis Protected and Conserved Areas (MPCA) Technical Meeting (August 2022)
  - Pishkaapahtamihk Miyoo Wiichayhtowin: Nurturing the Relationship Virtual Gathering (May 2022)
- Ongoing work and representation at the international level (e.g., attending and preparing presentations for events at the 2024 United Nations Biodiversity Conference of the Parties)
- Input from existing strategies, reports, and working sessions, such as:
  - The Canada 2030 Nature Strategy
  - The Métis Nation Climate Change Strategy
  - The Evaluation of the Métis Guardians Program for the MNC and ECCC
  - The Development of the Métis Nation Climate Leadership Agenda

The Métis National Council Nature Strategy writing team included representatives from each Governing Member, the MNC, and an Elder and Youth representative. The writing team met in person and online several times throughout 2024 and 2025 to develop the priorities and draft the Strategy. Members of the National Métis Youth Council were also involved in drafting parts of the Strategy and its overall review.

Please refer to the section at the end entitled 'Gratitude' for the names of all members who contributed to the development and design of the Strategy.



## WHO IS THIS STRATEGY FOR?

### MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL

- This Strategy serves as a foundation for national and international advocacy, helping to advance Métis-led nature policy and secure long-term and sustainable investments that support conservation actions across the Homeland.

### GOVERNMENT

- Federal and provincial governments have a responsibility to recognize and support Métis rights and self-determination as we all work to heal our relationships with nature. This Strategy outlines pathways for governments to support and invest in Métis-led approaches grounded in our knowledge systems and land-based practices.

### MÉTIS LEADERSHIP

- This Strategy helps align and uplift the priorities of diverse Métis governments and communities, enabling shared action on nature and land-based healing. It supports knowledge exchange and builds collective capacity across the Homeland.

### MÉTIS CITIZENS

- All Métis citizens have a role to play in caring for the land, water, ice, animals, and all Our Relations. This Strategy is meant to inspire and empower individual and community stewardship grounded in Métis values and teachings.

### COLLABORATORS

- We believe in the power of working together. We welcome partnerships—with the private sector, foundations, NGOs, other Indigenous governments, and international allies—that are grounded in respect, reciprocity, and a shared commitment to nature.

### PUBLIC

- Everyone has a role to play in healing our relationship with Mother Earth. We hope this Strategy helps Canadians better understand our way of life and our distinct and ongoing contributions to land and water stewardship.

### ALL OUR RELATIONS

- This Strategy is for Mother Earth and all Our Relations—human and more-than-human. Our Relations include the land, water, ice, air, animals, plants, insects, rocks, and soil. It is rooted in the understanding that our health and well-being are inseparable from the health and well-being of Mother Earth. By focusing on Wahkotowin—the interconnectedness of all things—this Strategy calls us to remember our responsibilities to each other and to the land that sustains us all.



## IMPLEMENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This Nature Strategy has been co-developed by the Métis National Council and its GMs to advance our priorities at the national level.

Each GM may have their own regionally specific strategies or initiatives that reflect the distinct priorities, knowledge systems, and relationships with the land in their region. This national Strategy does not replace or direct those efforts. Instead, it provides a cohesive advocacy tool for the Métis National Council to elevate these shared

priorities on the national and international stage—securing recognition, funding, and partnerships to support Métis-led stewardship across the Homeland.

We consider this an evergreen Strategy that will evolve over time. It will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure it remains relevant and responsive. A structured review process will take place every five years, with interim updates integrated through the Strategy's governance. This adaptive model ensures a coherent national direction while allowing space for regionally grounded actions and perspectives.





# WHO WE ARE

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## HISTORY OF THE MÉTIS NATION

The Métis Nation emerged during the fur trade in the historic Northwest during the 18th century. Following the mixing of Indigenous women and European fur traders, a distinct process of ethnogenesis occurred establishing separate, distinct communities along the fur trading routes that span the Métis Homeland. Through this process, a new Indigenous People emerged—the Métis people—with our own unique culture, traditions, languages (Michif), way of life, collective consciousness, and nationhood. The Métis Homeland includes communities throughout the Prairie provinces (Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba), as well as contiguous

parts of Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and the northern United States. Not every person of mixed Indigenous European ancestry is Métis. In 2002, the Métis National Council General Assembly adopted the following national definition: "Métis 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." Consistently throughout history, Métis people have acted collectively to protect and fight for their rights, lands, and ongoing existence as a distinct Indigenous People and nation within the Canadian federation.

## MÉTIS CITIZENS AS RIGHTS HOLDERS

The Métis are a unique and distinct rights-bearing Indigenous People in Canada and are one of three recognized Indigenous Peoples whose rights are recognized and affirmed in Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. In 2003, the Supreme Court of Canada in *R. v Powley* recognized that Métis communities, which emerged prior to effective control and influence of European laws and customs, possess Métis rights that are protected as Aboriginal rights in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. The *Powley* decision also resulted in "the *Powley* Test," which describes a set of criteria

to not only define what might constitute a Métis right, but also who is entitled to those rights. The Supreme Court decision in *R. v Daniels* (2016) recognizes the Métis as "Indians" under Section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1982. This decision affirms the Government of Canada's fiduciary relationship with the Métis. The ruling in this case brought broader, significant impacts upon the Nation-to-Nation, Government-to-Government relationship as it pertains to land rights and areas of federal jurisdiction.



## MÉTIS GOVERNANCE

The Métis National Council (MNC) was established in 1983 to advocate on behalf of the Métis Nation both nationally and internationally to advance issues of collective importance to the Métis Nation, Métis Governments, and Métis citizens. Today, the Métis National Council receives its mandate and direction from the Métis National Council's GMs, the democratically elected leadership of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta (OMG), and the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO). Together, these Métis Governments represent over 100,000 registered Métis citizens—approximately 58% of Métis citizens registered with Métis Governments that have entered into self-government agreements with Canada.

The MNC, OMG, and MNO are signatories to the 2017 Canada-Métis Nation Accord, a foundational document in the contemporary expression of the special constitutional relationship between the Métis Nation and the Crown as partners in Confederation.

As the Métis-specific National Indigenous Organization in Canada (NIO), the MNC carries out three main functions:

1. Researching, developing, and coordinating national and international policy positions;
2. Convening Métis perspectives to develop strategies that advance shared priorities; and
3. Advocating for distinctions-based laws, policies, and programs at the national and international levels to advance Métis rights, priorities, and interests.



### *Kitchen Table Talks: The Heart of Métis Governance*

Métis communities have long practiced having decision-making discussions around a kitchen table. These informal gatherings were places where families and neighbours shared stories, debated issues, passed on teachings, and made collective choices grounded in respect and relational accountability.

Kitchen table talks are a symbol of how Métis governance is rooted in everyday life—intergenerational, consensus-based, and driven by care for community and land. They are where resistance movements took shape, harvesting practices were coordinated, and kinship responsibilities were reinforced. This way of being is also reflected in the Métis value of *Keeoukaywin* (the visiting way). *Keeoukaywin* is a way in which people connect and shape community and relationships with each other, and with the land. Métis knowledge holders note that visiting and spending time together serves practical, social, political, and spiritual purposes, deepening relationships that depend on that shared time and care.

Today's Métis governments, including the GMs, carry forward the spirit of *Keeoukaywin*. Through elected locals, community councils, and provincial assemblies, our citizens continue gather, visit, discuss, and work together to shape decisions that reflect both our historical practices and our modern aspirations. Whether around a kitchen table or in an assembly hall, the work of Métis governance remains grounded in the voices, values, and visions of the people.



## MÉTIS CULTURE & WORLDVIEW

Living in relation to the land, water, ice, air, animals, plants, insects, rocks, and soil, means seeing the world differently—as an interconnected web of relations between the self, the community, and in the broadest sense, between all things living and non-living. The Métis kinship worldview allows for our unique knowledge systems to form. As Métis people, we carry stories and contribute knowledge, such as land and water stewardship practices, cultural burning techniques, plant and medicine teachings, and sky stories. Each of these Métis ways of knowing shows how we can live in harmony with the natural world today and connect us with our First Nations ancestors' understanding of Turtle Island. Our worldview offers another perspective on how to address the current climate crisis, one which unfortunately, through colonial systems, has been long suppressed and relegated to the margins of crucial scientific and policy discussions. Colonial policies left the Métis without access to the rights afforded to land-owning, tax-paying European Canadians for most of the 20th century. Métis were legally separated from their inherent rights and kinship ties once provided by their Indigenous ancestry. We were left without a

land base, limited economic opportunities, and no formal access to education or health care. While other Canadians thrived in the emerging agriculture, resource extraction, and forestry industries, the Métis subsisted through hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering. The colonial practice of cultural assimilation and dispossession of lands also left our identity, culture, and worldview in hiding.

In the latter half of the 20th century, our people developed alternative political, cultural, educational, and economic institutions to ensure the continuance of our ways of knowing and our ways of life. This was once accomplished through a network of Métis-led organizations that advocated for Métis rights, addressed inequities facing our people, and preserved Métis language and culture. Today, our governments are stronger than ever as they work towards the full implementation of self-government. Our people are reconnecting and reinvigorating their language, culture, and history, and through these rediscoveries, they are reconnecting to the land and water. The struggle for Métis rights, as stewards of the land, as harvesters, and as a distinct Indigenous Peoples under the constitution of Canada, remains ongoing to this day.



# OUR MÉTIS NATURE STORY

The Métis are a people connected by the great waterways of Turtle Island. Our kinship networks extend across watersheds and the Great Boreal Forest, connected by a shared way of life that centres our relationships to the land, water, ice, air, animals, plants, insects, rocks, and soil, and spirit. We are nurtured by the love of our grandmothers, Grandmother Moon, the Earth Mother, and Creator. We are guided by the wisdom of our grandfathers, the sun, and the rocks. We are emboldened by our youth and children, for whom we take care of our home and traditions that they too may be able to participate in these sacred relationships for generations to come.

In Anishinaabemowin, the Métis were often referred to as *wisaakodewin* which sometimes translated to “burnt wood,” the phrase refers to the new shoots that grow after a burn. We are rooted in the lands and waters of our First Nation foremothers. Though we were raised in a new environment, one shifted by the fires of colonialism, our roots persist, nourished by the

lands, waters, and ways of life of our ancestors, Métis, First Nation, and European voyager.

Our traditions vary, dependent on our local relations. In the Upper Great Lakes and nearing waterways, we are fisher peoples. In the Great Prairie, we are bison peoples. Across the Homeland, you will find us on the trap line, ice fishing, canoeing, planting gardens, maintaining farms, and gathering medicines. We are a people with an inextricable connection to our Homelands, our daily lives ebbing and flowing with the changes of the seasons.

Despite numerous forced relocations, despite ongoing attempts to remove us from our kin, human and more-than-human, we continue to connect with each other and our homelands. We are a people with an indelible and adaptable spirit, gifted to us by our ancestors and fed by the lands and waters.

Michif, Wisaakodewin, Bois-Brûlés, Half-breed, Otipemisiwak—we are Métis. We belong to the land.



## Yesterday:

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### *The Voices of Mother Earth and All Our Relations – the land, water, ice, air, animals, plants, insects, rocks, and soil.*

We are the land, water, air, animals, plants, insects, rocks, and soil. We have been here since time immemorial, offering sustenance, shelter, and stories to all who walk upon us. Long before borders and titles, Indigenous Peoples walked in harmony with us, recognizing that we are all interconnected. They knew that when they took from the land, they must give back. These humans understood that the rivers sang stories of life, the air carried the voices of ancestors, and the animals shared their teachings through their presence and gifts.

Our relationship with humans was reciprocal. They knew our rhythms—when to hunt, when to fish, when to harvest medicines, and when to leave us to rest. They respected the balance of life, recognizing that all Our Relations are part of a larger whole. The

bison, the beaver, the eagle, and the fish all played roles in sustaining this balance. The Indigenous Peoples of our sacred land centred this worldview and let it guide their actions.

But then, things changed. New people came. The land was divided and claimed. The waters were controlled. The air was polluted. The animals were hunted without respect. The original inhabitants were pushed off the lands they had always known, their rights diminished, their knowledge disregarded.

The voices of the land, water, ice, air, animals, plants, insects, rocks, and soil became quieter as the balance was lost. We whispered our stories to those who would listen—the Elders, the Knowledge Holders, the harvesters who remembered the old ways. But many could no longer hear us. They were too focused on surviving in a world that no longer recognized our shared connections.



## Today:

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### *Reconnection and Healing*

Today, many Indigenous Peoples are working with love and courage to reclaim their relationship with us. They are listening again to the stories of the land, water, ice, air, animals, plants, insects, rocks, and soil. For the Métis, they are recognizing that healing the environment means healing themselves and their communities.

Métis citizens are returning to traditional practices—cultural burning, harvesting protocols, and land stewardship—to restore the balance that was lost. They are braiding traditional knowledge with modern science, using both to understand the changes we have experienced and to guide their actions moving forward.

Partnerships are being formed to protect and heal key areas, like wetlands, forests, and grasslands. Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) are being

established, ensuring that lands can be cared for in ways that reflect Métis values and governance. Community-led monitoring programs are helping to listen to the voices of all their Relations once again.

And Métis youth are stepping forward, learning from Elders and Knowledge Holders. They are rediscovering their roles as stewards of the land, finding new ways to protect what we all share. We understand that conservation is not just about protecting resources—it's about maintaining relationships. It's about respect, reciprocity, and resilience.



## Tomorrow:

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### *A Vision for Future Generations*

*The land speaks: "Will you continue to listen to us?"*

*Will you teach your children to care for us?"*

*The water flows: "We are life. We will nourish you if you protect us."*

*The air whispers: "Breathe deeply. We carry your stories and your ancestors' voices."*

*The animals watch: "We are your teachers and your kin. Will you walk alongside us in respect?"*

In seven generations, the Métis Nation will look back on this time as a turning point. They will see that the work done today—to heal the lands, waters, and communities—ensured that their descendants could continue to live in harmony with Mother Earth. They will tell stories of how the Métis reclaimed their rightful place as guardians and stewards of the land.

These future generations will not see conservation as an external act but as a way

of being—an intrinsic part of Métis identity and culture. They will know that the land is not a resource to be exploited but a relative to be respected and cared for.

And we the land, water, ice, air, animals, plants, insects, rocks, and soil will continue to speak to our human relations. We will continue to guide, teach, and sustain all those who listen.

## Reconnecting Through Healing

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This journey is one of healing and reconnection. The Métis Nation is rebuilding what was fractured by colonization. We are reclaiming our voices, our lands, and our traditions. By listening to the stories of the natural world, the Métis are restoring relationships that have sustained our people for generations.

Healing the land is healing the people. Healing the water is healing the communities. Healing the air is healing the future.

Together, the Métis Nation and Mother Earth will move forward, guided by the wisdom of the past and the hope of tomorrow.



## MÉTIS ROLE IN ADDRESSING THE BIODIVERSITY CRISIS

As Indigenous Peoples, the Métis Nation has a unique role to play in addressing the decline of ecosystems and biodiversity. Contrary to western science and mainstream public policy, a Métis vision for healing the lands, waters, and air invokes the principle and teaching of Wahkotowin. Wahkotowin is a Cree worldview that describes relations between all plant and animal life, embodied in many profound Métis ideals. Wahkotowin reflects the virtues of reciprocity, support, and decency that should be upheld and honoured in the relations one has with their kin. The worldview reminds us that all manner of life—not just humans but all Our Relations—are animate and relational, that all of creation is related and inter-connected <sup>2</sup>.

The Métis role in addressing the biodiversity crisis is also unique due to our Nation's cultural and political history. Métis nationhood can be conceptualized through the Cree term Otipemisiwak translating to "the people who own themselves." This overarching worldview is understood through the economic and political histories of our people. Especially relevant to leading on nature and biodiversity action, Métis the concept of Otipemisiwak was key to evolving family-level governance structures to collective political authority to guide large-scale buffalo hunts with centralized and mutually agreed upon structure and leadership <sup>3</sup>. Through the advancement of self-government and by articulating self-determined nature priorities, we are well positioned to advance stewardship work that is grounded in the concepts of both Otipemisiwak and Wahkotowin.

### NEW PARADIGM OF NATURE CONSERVATION

Nature conservation in Canada was conceived as a colonial mechanism to forcefully relocate many Indigenous Peoples from the land that was their home for countless generations. This relocation was rooted in the belief that we are separate from nature and that the only way to protect nature was to separate humans from it. Historical colonial mindsets could not comprehend that Indigenous Peoples were actively tending the land and were themselves an integral part of the landscape and long-term health of all the plant and animal kin who resided there. The face of conservation is changing on Turtle Island, but there is still much more to do. Government acknowledgement of the colonial harms to Indigenous Peoples through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, was a start. Now, Indigenous Nations are leading the charge into the new paradigm of conservation with initiatives like Guardians Programs and Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas. This is because true conservation of land and protection of species is about relationship and reciprocity with the land, not exclusion from it. As Métis, we have a responsibility to honour our ancestors, and to weave knowledge systems and ways of seeing the natural world. To move forward, we must acknowledge the truth of the past, reconcile with the harm that has been caused, and come together to take care of Mother Earth as she has always taken care of us.

<sup>2</sup> Maria Campbell in *Wildcat*, "Wahkohtowin in Action," 14.

<sup>3</sup> Gaudry, "Kaa-tipeyimishoyaahk"

## ***A Youth Perspective***

Youth today have inherited a world facing dangerously rising temperatures, unprecedented species loss, and widespread biodiversity decline—all driven by human actions that focused on immediate needs and wants, rather than those of the generations to come. This reality has left many of us feeling frustrated and cheated out of a future where the land and its beings thrive. However, we refuse to remain passive. Instead, we choose to act—to course-correct our current trajectory and work toward a future where the natural world, both human and non-human, can flourish and live in harmony once again.

From a Métis perspective, our responsibility extends far beyond the next generation. We are taught to consider the impact of our actions for at least seven generations to come. One day, we hope to become Old Ones who witness the next generations carrying forward the work that we begin now. We dream of a future where our descendants look back and see this moment as a turning point—a time when Métis stepped up to honour our reciprocal relationship with our Mother Earth. She has sustained us since time immemorial; now, it is our turn to give back. The path forward must be rooted in reciprocity with the land, the water, the skies, and all Our Relations. We know that when Mother Earth flourishes, so do the people.

But how do we carry this responsibility forward while honouring the knowledge of those who came before us while innovating new ways to address today's biodiversity crisis? An essential step is the protection of vital calving, nesting, and spawning grounds, as the survival of our animal kin depends on these sacred spaces. This includes safeguarding freshwater sources, mitigating pollution in our waterways, and ensuring that critical habitats remain intact.

In many regions, collaboration is key. Simple but meaningful changes, such as delaying agricultural harvests for a short time to allow bird species to hatch and move safely, can make a profound difference. Rising temperatures, habitat loss, and the spread of disease threaten many species, making it crucial that we take action now.

Addressing this crisis requires a multi-faceted approach. This means educating our communities about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, advocating for stronger environmental policies, and holding governments and industries accountable for responsible stewardship.

Métis youth have begun leading the charge in reconnecting and revitalizing our traditional ways to begin healing the land we live on. Many have stepped into leadership roles within their communities, organizing initiatives based on the land, cultural workshops, and environmental stewardship programs that are all rooted in Métis knowledge and values. Their efforts ensure that the next generation grows up with a deeper connection to the land, our culture, and identity as Métis people.

### ***A Middle Generation Perspective***

As members of the middle generation—the parents, aunts and uncles, elected leaders, professionals, and Knowledge Holders of today—we hold a profound responsibility. The Elders have gifted us with teachings rooted in Wahkotowin and Otipemisiwak. The youth are looking to us with urgency and hope. Now is our time to act.

Our generation is uniquely placed to lead in this moment of ecological crisis. We hold decision-making power in communities, institutions, and families. We are raising children while caring for aging relatives.

We live at the intersection of ancestral knowledge and contemporary systems. And we know that real conservation is about relationship not control.

We see stewardship as something lived. It is not just professional, it is personal. When we restore grasslands, we make space for bison, medicine, and ceremony. When we protect watersheds, we protect our families' drinking water. When we speak for species at risk, we are defending our way of life.

We also know how to navigate complexity. We can speak the language of governments, funders, and data systems while staying rooted in Métis ways of knowing. We must push for action that reflects our values: Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, land-based education, cultural burning, and ecosystem restoration. These are not projects; they are commitments to Mother Earth.

Let us be the generation that leads with humility, courage, and clarity. The choices we make today will shape the stories that are told tomorrow. Let them be stories of reconnection, healing, and renewal—for land, water, sky, and all beings who call them home.



### ***An Old One's Perspective from Nôtokêsiw Kathy***

As an Old One, I carry the stories, teachings, and grief of all that has come before, and the responsibility to guide what comes next. I have watched as many of Our Relations have disappeared from this world, not by natural rhythms, but because of choices made without care for the land, the water, the air, and the beings who share this Earth with us.

Still, I believe in our power to change course. The time is now to return to our place within our Natural Family—to walk with humility alongside the land, the animals, the plants, the winds, the waters, and one another.

This is not the work of one generation. It must be shared between the young ones, the middle ones, and the old ones. We must stand together and learn to live again in a good way: with respect, with appreciation, and with the understanding that we are not above nature—we are part of it.

The path forward is not only about survival; it is about returning to harmony. Let us live the change, not just call for it. Let us give back to the Earth that has sustained us since time immemorial. Let us listen deeply, act wisely, and walk forward together—for the sake of all Our Relations, and for those yet to come.



## **COLLABORATING WITH PARTNERS:** *A Path Toward Healing Relationships*

### **PARTNERSHIPS BUILT ON STRONG FOUNDATIONS**

The Métis Nation seeks partnerships that are built on the values of mutual respect, reciprocity, and shared commitments to healing Mother Earth and our communities. True collaboration requires more than transactional relationships, it requires trust, long-term commitment, and a recognition of Métis self-determination. Partnerships must centre Indigenous governance, shared values, and cultural knowledges and initiatives that are led by and for the Métis Nation.

### **LONG-TERM, FLEXIBLE FUNDING**

Métis-led initiatives thrive when they are self-directed and community-driven. We welcome partners who are willing to support conservation and stewardship efforts through long-term, flexible funding arrangements that allow Métis communities to set their own priorities and goals without the burden of extensive, fragmented reporting requirements.

Short-term, project-based funding limits continuity and often fails to meet the holistic needs of the Métis Nation. Instead, multi-year funding agreements provide the stability needed to achieve meaningful outcomes over time. These arrangements should reflect trust and respect, recognizing that our governments are best positioned to determine what is needed to deliver successful nature programming.

### **WEAVING KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS TOGETHER**

Partnerships with the Métis Nation must create space for the weaving together of our knowledge

systems with western science. This process—often referred to as braiding knowledge—is critical for creating holistic and sustainable solutions to environmental challenges.

However, it is essential that partners recognize that Métis knowledge systems cannot be taken or used in isolation. We must be actively involved in the application of their knowledge systems. It is not enough to learn from Métis Knowledge Holders and then apply that knowledge without their continued involvement. Partnerships must be collaborative and reciprocal, ensuring that our voices remain central throughout planning, implementation, and evaluation.

The weaving of knowledge systems requires ongoing dialogue and relationship-building. Partners must be willing to listen, learn, and adapt their approaches to respect our ways of knowing and being. This collaborative approach ensures that all relevant forms of knowledge contribute to solutions that honour the interconnectedness of all living things.

### **MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

The Métis Nation seeks partnerships based on mutual accountability. This means that reporting and evaluation processes should be co-designed and aligned with Métis governance structures. Our governments love to share the good work they are doing to protect all Our Relations and are accountable to their citizens and communities. Co-designing these processes ensures that all collaborators are transparent and accountable.

This co-developed approach to accountability reduces the administrative burden often placed on Indigenous Peoples in funding arrangements.

Instead of fragmented reporting to multiple partners in various formats, the Métis Nation seeks streamlined reporting processes that are meaningful, culturally appropriate, and efficient.

### **WALKING TOGETHER IN PARTNERSHIP**

The Métis Nation invites partners to walk alongside them on this journey of healing and reconnection. Partnerships should be based on shared goals and values, with both parties contributing their unique strengths to achieve holistic conservation and stewardship outcomes.

Partners must recognize that the Métis Nation is not a stakeholder, it is a rightsholder. This distinction is critical to understanding our role in decision-making and governance. We seek partnerships that reflect this understanding and respect our inherent rights and responsibilities as stewards of Mother Earth.

By walking together in partnership, the Métis Nation and our collaborators can create a legacy of healed relationships, resilient communities, and thriving ecosystems that will sustain future generations.

### **WORKING WITH OUR INDIGENOUS KIN**

The Métis Nation recognizes the importance of building strong, respectful relationships with other Indigenous Peoples. These relationships are grounded in shared histories, interconnected lands, and common goals to protect and sustain the environment for future generations. The Métis Nation acknowledges that all Indigenous Peoples are stewards of their traditional territories, and collaboration with Indigenous kin is essential to ensure the health of all Our Relations.

Working with other Indigenous Peoples means respecting their sovereignty, governance systems, and knowledge systems. We seek to create protocols for respectful engagement that honour the unique roles and responsibilities of all. These collaborations must be reciprocal and rooted in trust, recognizing that distinct Indigenous Peoples bring valuable knowledge and perspectives to the table.

The Métis Nation is committed to standing in solidarity with other Indigenous Peoples, across Turtle Island and internationally, in advocating for land rights, environmental protection, and cultural revitalization. By working together, Indigenous Peoples can amplify our voices, share best practices, and ensure that Indigenous knowledge continues to guide stewardship efforts across all territories.

This collaboration is not just about shared advocacy—it is about healing relationships between Indigenous Peoples. We understand that colonization created divisions between Peoples. Today, there is an opportunity to rebuild these relationships, strengthen bonds, and work collectively toward a shared vision of healthy lands, thriving communities, and resilient ecosystems for generations to come.



# THE STRATEGY

## *Vision*

### *Empowering Stewardship and Community*

Guided by the knowledge of our ancestors and inspired by the resilience of our communities, we reclaim and maintain our role as stewards and guardians of the land, water, ice, air, animals, plants, insects, rocks, and soil—protecting and healing Mother Earth for future generations.

## *Mission*

### *Restoring Relationships with All Our Relations*

The Métis Nation is restoring and strengthening our connections to all Our Relations. By supporting Métis people, uplifting traditional and contemporary Métis knowledge systems, and securing long-term partnerships and solutions, we work to heal the environment while sustaining our cultural identity, rights, and way of life.

## *Values*

The values outlined in this Strategy reflect what is most important to the Métis in guiding how the Strategy is implemented. They express the principles and ways of being that shape Métis relationships with the land, with each other, and with all Our Relations, and serve as a foundation for action.

### **1. *Healing***

Healing and health are at the heart of the Métis approach to conservation and stewardship. This extends beyond restoring ecosystems to include strengthening the relationships between people, communities, and the natural world. Health and healing involve addressing the impacts of colonization, advancing reconciliation, and supporting the natural capacity of both the land and our communities to be thriving and resilient. In some cases, this requires active care and restoration; in others, it means being patient, bearing witness, or stepping back to allow nature to renew herself. The Métis Nation prioritizes actions that promote well-being for all living beings, recognizing that the health of the land is connected to the health of the people.

### **2. *Self-Determination***

Self-determination is both a right and a guiding principle for the Métis Nation. It reflects the ability of Métis communities to govern our own actions and decisions in alignment with our cultural values, knowledge systems, and governance structures. Self-determination means that the Métis will lead the development, implementation, and evaluation of conservation efforts in our territories. It also involves creating rules and sustainable stewardship practices, ensuring that harvesting, fishing, and land stewardship are conducted in ways that conserve populations and mitigate harm.

### **3. *Reciprocity***

Reciprocity is the practice of giving back to Mother Earth. For the Métis Nation, conservation and stewardship are not acts of charity but of responsibility and mutual care. Reciprocity involves recognizing the gifts of the natural world and ensuring that actions taken to benefit human communities also benefit ecosystems. This value ensures that conservation efforts prioritize balance, respect, and sustainable use. It also reflects

a belief that all Our Relations—not just humans—carry responsibilities. Animals, plants, water, and the land each play their part in sustaining life. By honouring and upholding our own responsibilities, we help maintain the relationships that hold the world together.

#### **4. *Interconnectedness***

Interconnectedness, rooted in the concept of Wahkotowin, recognizes that all living beings are part of a larger, interconnected system. The health of all Our Relations is intertwined. This value guides the Métis Nation to take a holistic approach to conservation, ensuring that decisions reflect the complexity and interdependence of ecosystems. Interconnectedness also emphasizes the importance of maintaining relationships with other Indigenous Peoples and with partners to achieve shared goals.

#### **5. *Respect for Knowledge Systems***

The Métis Nation values both Indigenous knowledge systems and western science, recognizing that each brings unique insights to conservation efforts. However, Métis

knowledge cannot be separated from the people and communities who hold it. Respect for knowledge systems means working in partnership with Knowledge Holders and Elders, ensuring that the knowledge is woven into conservation strategies in ways that are culturally appropriate and respectful. It also means recognizing the sovereignty of Métis knowledge and ensuring that it is not extracted or applied without active Métis participation.

#### **6. *Collaboration and Partnership***

Collaboration and partnership are essential to achieving long-term conservation goals. The Métis Nation believes that working together with governments, organizations, and other Indigenous Peoples strengthens conservation outcomes. True partnership is built on trust, respect, and mutual accountability, with an emphasis on long-term, flexible funding arrangements that support Métis self-determination. Partnerships must be reciprocal, with all parties contributing our knowledges, resources, and perspectives to achieve shared goals.

## ***Priorities***

The Strategy includes five interconnected priority areas for action:

- Supporting the Work of Métis Guardians
- Ecosystem Healing
- Métis-led Conservation Areas
- Food Security and Sovereignty
- Water, Ice, and Snow

Each priority includes a narrative description of what the priority means for the Métis Nation, a clearly defined short-term outcome that outlines what we are aiming to achieve, and a set of desired actions that describe how we will reach that outcome. In addition, each priority is supported by a set of engagement, collaboration, and partnership activities. These are introduced in the box below, with further details included within each priority area.

## ***Engagement, Collaboration, and Partnership***

### ***Community Listening and Learning***



Community engagement and education are foundational to the success of all Métis Nation priorities. Effective engagement and reporting ensure that Métis citizens, including those who experience underrepresentation, are active participants in conservation and restoration efforts, strengthening our connection to Mother Earth. Teaching and learning programs rooted in Métis knowledge systems help citizens to take an informed and culturally aligned role in stewarding the environment. By fostering awareness and understanding, and by creating ethical spaces where diverse voices, knowledge systems, and leadership are respected and can work in relationship—the Métis Nation can build capacity within communities to protect and sustain Mother Earth for future generations.

### ***Finding Strength Across our Diverse Métis Nation***



The diversity of the Métis Nation is represented in the multitude of voices spanning across age, gender, geography, socio-economic realities, and more. We acknowledge the diversity of all who make up the Métis Nation and celebrate the differences that make us stronger. By appreciating how our differences open our minds to diverse experiences and perspectives, we learn, adapt, build resilience, and support each other when facing climate change impacts.

We acknowledge those most often underrepresented in nature funding and policies; we aim to amplify their voices and solutions. There can be no decisions made without including those most affected in the conversation. Youth, Elders, women, gender-diverse peoples, fellow Indigenous kin, and many other groups will bear the brunt of nature and biodiversity loss, while having contributed to the problem the least. While amplifying the voices of those often left out of the conversation, we must also acknowledge the overlapping identities and experiences of individuals among and alongside these groups. Our approach in this Strategy, and our advice to other governments and organizations, is to use an intersectional lens when identifying nature priorities and actions so the unique experiences of all Our Relations are represented in the solutions moving forward.

While we all sit at the intersection of multiple identities and systems of power, it is this diversity that enriches our collective endeavour to restore relationships with all Our Relations, ensuring a path forward that will leave no one behind.

***Elder, Harvester, and  
Knowledge Holder  
Engagement***

Elders, Harvesters, and Knowledge Holders carry vital knowledge, skills, and lived experience that are essential to Métis environmental stewardship. Our teachings reflect generations of close relationships with the land, water, and all Our Relations. Harvesters in particular offer real-time insights into ecosystem health and play a central role in sustaining Métis ways of life. Engaging these Knowledge Holders in planning, monitoring, and education ensures that conservation and restoration efforts are grounded in practice, informed by observation, and connected to daily life. Our voices help guide intergenerational knowledge transfer, maintain cultural continuity, and anchor environmental action in Métis worldviews. Valuing and supporting our leadership ensures that traditional and land-based knowledge continues to shape and strengthen future initiatives.

***Youth Engagement***

Youth engagement is vital to ensure the continuity of Métis cultural practices and environmental stewardship into the future. By providing youth with opportunities to learn from Elders and Knowledge Holders, by participating in land-based activities and contributing to conservation efforts, the Métis Nation can foster a new generation of stewards. Youth bring fresh perspectives, energy, and innovation to environmental initiatives. Encouraging their involvement not only builds capacity but also strengthens cultural identity and community resilience for the long term.

***Collaboration &  
Partnerships***

Partnerships are essential to amplify the impact of Métis-led conservation and restoration efforts. By collaborating with government agencies, NGOs, community organizations, and other Indigenous Peoples, the Métis Nation can access additional resources, share best practices, and advocate for policy changes that support our priorities. Partnerships also help bridge the gap between different knowledge systems, ensuring a holistic and inclusive approach to environmental stewardship. Building strong, reciprocal relationships with partners ensures that Métis values and perspectives are respected and incorporated into broader environmental initiatives.



## Supporting the Work of Métis Guardians

Métis culture includes being on the land and water. Whether it's for fishing or hunting, berry picking or searching for medicines, travelling by boat, vehicle, or even dog sleds, the Métis move through the land and waters throughout the year. Being on the land and water creates a holistic view and cultivates the relationship with nature and a sense of responsibility to care for all Our Relations. This connection allows for the Métis to observe changes that occur as they happen over time. This is the strength of the Métis Guardian program, a program where citizens monitor water quality, berry health, wildlife, and more to support our understanding of environmental change and where actions for adaptation and mitigation may be needed.

Understanding the health of the lands and waters involves braiding western and Métis knowledge systems. For the Métis Nation, this process is deeply tied to listening to the land and recognizing that all Our Relations communicate their health through natural signs and changes. Pairing this with western science tools for gathering and analysing data are key for not only quantifying change, but also to be able to work with governments, environmental non-government organizations and academic institutions.

The monitoring initiatives made possible by the Métis Guardians program are essential for informed decision-making and stewardship. It helps Métis communities adapt to environmental changes, develop effective restoration strategies, and ensure that future generations inherit healthy and resilient ecosystems. The establishment of data sovereignty, as recognized in Article 31 of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, is a pillar for the monitoring program and ensures the knowledge and data gathered is controlled and owned by the Métis communities or governments that are tied to the monitoring.

### SHORT-TERM OUTCOME (5 YEARS)

Within five years, the Métis Nation will have established comprehensive, community-led approaches for understanding the current health of the environment, integrating Métis knowledge systems and other scientific methods. This system will provide critical information for guiding conservation and restoration efforts, responding to citizen concerns, and empowering Métis citizens and Guardians to take an active role in caring for all Our Relations.

### ACTIONS TO ADVANCE THIS PRIORITY

#### *Deepen Community-led Monitoring Programs:*

- Renew and enhance Métis Guardians funding.
- Establish protocols for environmental monitoring that incorporate Métis and western knowledge systems.
- Train Métis Guardians in data collection and analysis, ensuring that community members are actively involved in monitoring efforts, including identifying and investigating citizen concerns.
- Monitoring plans to consider the importance of water quality, biodiversity and the health of culturally significant species, and citizens' experiences on the land and water.
- Create the process and cultural infrastructure needed to ensure that monitoring data can be used to support ecosystem healing, including related climate action. See the next priority area for more detail, noting the strong overlaps and interconnectedness between the work of Métis Guardians and other priorities.

**Create Knowledge Sharing Systems:**

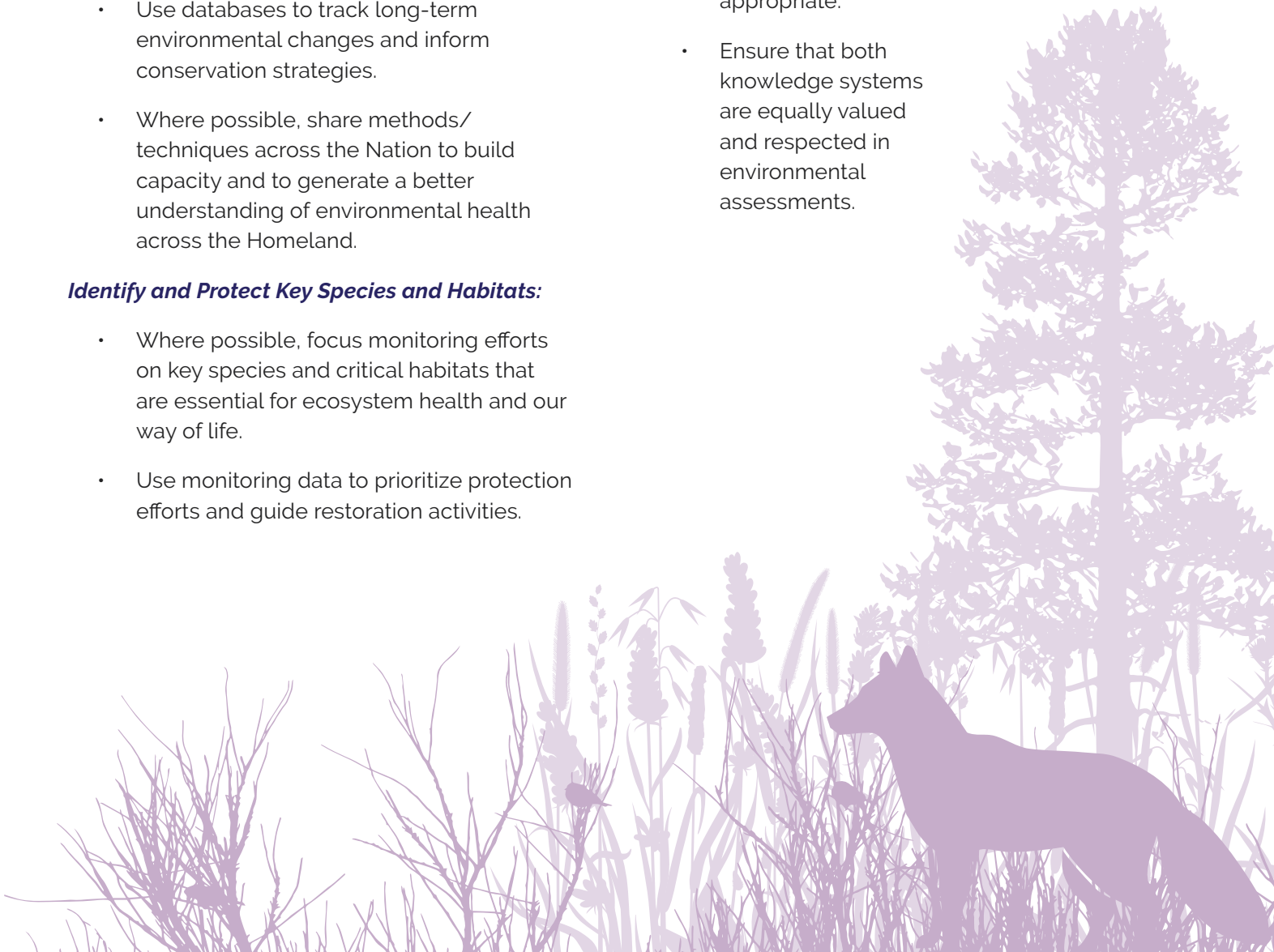
- Clarify Métis government ownership over data collected from within their relevant geographic boundaries.
- Create systems to share data within the Métis Nation and outside parties that are approved by leadership.
- Ensure that the databases are governed by data sovereignty principles, with access controlled by the appropriate Métis authority or government.
- Use databases to track long-term environmental changes and inform conservation strategies.
- Where possible, share methods/ techniques across the Nation to build capacity and to generate a better understanding of environmental health across the Homeland.

**Identify and Protect Key Species and Habitats:**

- Where possible, focus monitoring efforts on key species and critical habitats that are essential for ecosystem health and our way of life.
- Use monitoring data to prioritize protection efforts and guide restoration activities.

**Promote Weaving Knowledge Systems:**

- Identify and support Métis-specific approaches to gathering environmental information.
- Encourage the bringing together of both Métis and western knowledge systems to provide a more holistic understanding of the environment, including advocating for and developing processes to ensure that relevant information is shared with and considered by decision-makers when authorized and appropriate.
- Ensure that both knowledge systems are equally valued and respected in environmental assessments.





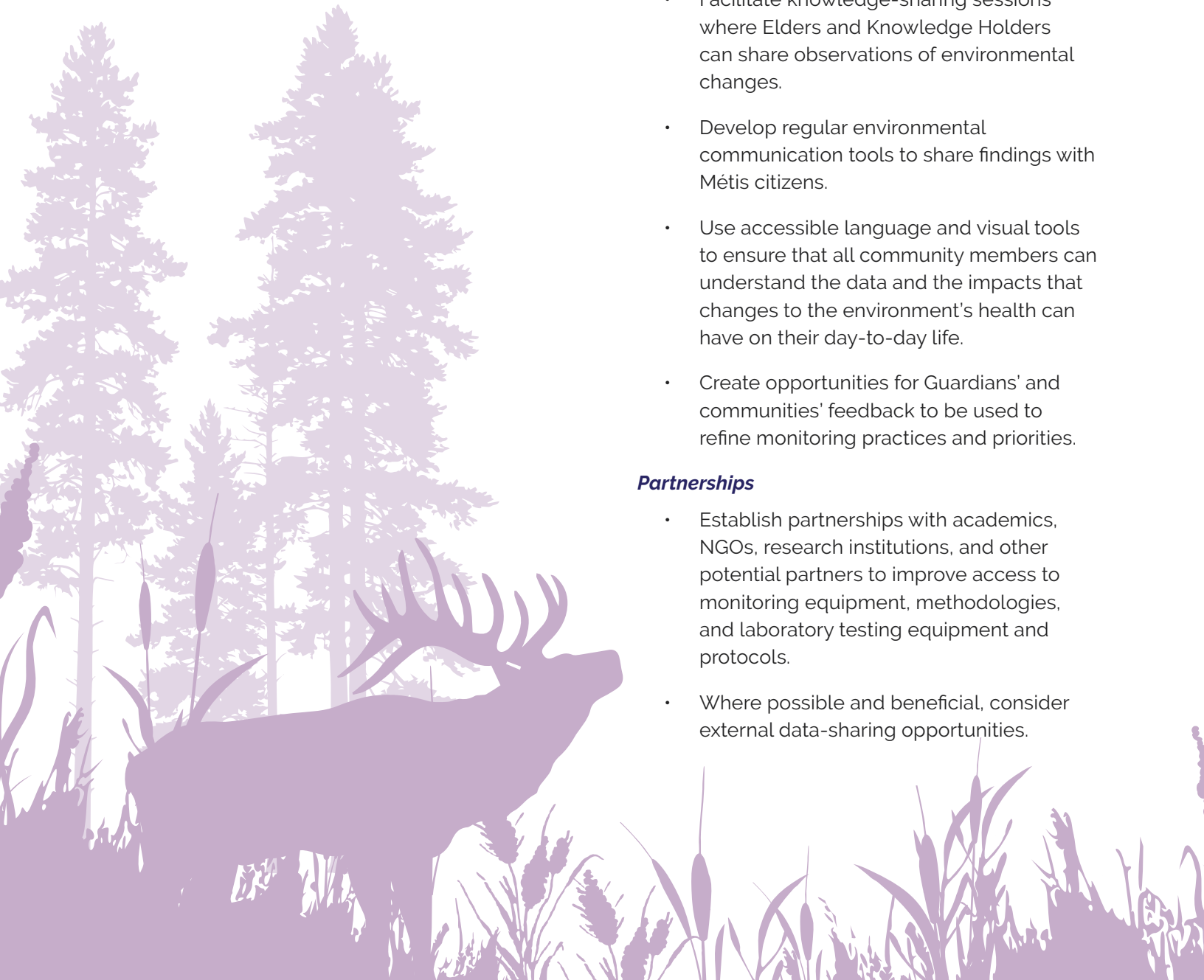
## *Engagement, Collaboration, and Partnership Activities for this Priority*

### **Community/Youth Engagement and Education**

- Facilitate knowledge transfer from Elders and Knowledge Holders to younger generations.
- Ensure monitoring activities are based on community needs and interests.
- Provide opportunities for communities to participate in monitoring activities, including technical training and education when possible, as well as bringing in more citizens into the Guardians network of each Métis government.
- Facilitate knowledge-sharing sessions where Elders and Knowledge Holders can share observations of environmental changes.
- Develop regular environmental communication tools to share findings with Métis citizens.
- Use accessible language and visual tools to ensure that all community members can understand the data and the impacts that changes to the environment's health can have on their day-to-day life.
- Create opportunities for Guardians' and communities' feedback to be used to refine monitoring practices and priorities.

### **Partnerships**

- Establish partnerships with academics, NGOs, research institutions, and other potential partners to improve access to monitoring equipment, methodologies, and laboratory testing equipment and protocols.
- Where possible and beneficial, consider external data-sharing opportunities.





## Ecosystem Healing

The Métis have always maintained deep connections to the land that permeates our culture, languages, foods, arts, stories, traditions, and ceremonies. These connections are rooted in the relationships with the ecosystems, species, and places across the Métis Homeland. With Mother Earth being the source of all things, the Métis cared for the land, knowing it would care for them in return. However, this reciprocal relationship was impacted by uprooting Métis through colonial practices and degrading ecosystems across the Métis Homeland through urbanization, industrial development, agricultural expansion, and more. Given the intrinsic connection between the Métis and our lands, ecosystem restoration involves nurturing the conditions for nature to heal itself—revitalizing degraded lands, waters, and habitats to support biodiversity, sustaining natural processes, and strengthening the relationships between people and the land. In doing so, we walk alongside all Our Relations in their renewal—supporting ecosystem healing, while also enhancing our ability to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Healthy ecosystems store carbon, buffer against extreme weather, and support local food systems—all of which are essential for long-term resilience.

From a Métis perspective, ecosystem restoration is about more than repairing environmental damage—it is an act of healing that reconnects communities to our cultural practices and traditions. Restoration work is guided by the principles of Wahkotowin, which emphasize the kinship and interconnectedness of all living things and the responsibility to care for the land in a reciprocal way. This approach ensures that ecosystems are not only restored to health but are resilient to future changes, benefiting all relations for generations to come.

### SHORT-TERM OUTCOME (5 YEARS)

Within five years, the Métis Nation will build internal capacity and demonstrate the ability to complete ecosystem restoration activities on Métis-stewarded lands. These activities will support restoring degraded landscapes, building climate resilience, improving biodiversity and habitat productivity, and providing Métis citizens opportunities to engage in reintroduced cultural practices and land stewardship.

### ACTIONS TO ADVANCE THIS PRIORITY

#### *Revitalize Key Species and Habitats:*

- Reintroduce native species to lands and waters to enhance biodiversity, restore balance to ecosystems, and restore relationships with Métis citizens (e.g., interactions with species and habitats, harvesting of plants and animals for food or medicines).
- Develop and implement conservation strategies and programs that will support the presence, re-introduction, and/or recovery of species-at-risk and cultural keystone species, and their habitats across the Métis Homeland.
- Develop and implement conservation strategies and programs to mitigate impacts of invasive species on lands and waters across the Métis Homeland, including the development of creative solutions guided by Métis worldviews.
- Build capacity (e.g., funding, staff, expertise, infrastructure) to support Métis-led restoration activities targeting forests, grasslands, wetlands, and other critical habitats that have been degraded.

***Cultivate Climate-resilient Landscapes:***

- Design and implement programs to enhance carbon sequestration and reduce soil erosion through the planting of native plants, such as trees, shrubs, and grasses.
- Identify and secure high-carbon landscapes to protect them from disturbance or development through such actions as the establishment of IPCAs.
- Design and implement programs to restore naturally occurring water levels of drained or altered wetlands to help mitigate drought and forest fires.

***Return Fire to the Land:***

- Work with firekeepers to safely use Good Fire on the land to enhance biodiversity, restore ecosystems, and reduce wildfire risk.
- Advocate for putting Good Fire on lands managed by government agencies, NGOs, and academics, and to provide opportunities for Métis community involvement.
- Facilitate the sharing of knowledge about the cultural and ecological importance of putting Good Fire on the land within the Métis community and the public.
- Build capacity (e.g., funding, staff, expertise, infrastructure) to support Métis firekeepers.

***Establish Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs):***

- Recognize and build on the close relationship between ecosystem healing and IPCAs. IPCAs are a central mechanism for advancing the outcomes and actions outlined above. See the next priority area for more detail, noting the strong overlaps and interconnectedness between ecosystem healing and other Strategy areas.





## *Engagement, Collaboration, and Partnership Activities for this Priority*

### **Community Engagement and Education**

- Secure substantial and multi-year funding to support land-based programming (e.g., culture camps, harvesting camps, land-based healing, etc.).
- Create opportunities for Métis citizens to connect with lands and waters and participate in land stewardship activities (e.g., habitat improvements, restoration, cultural burns), especially on Métis-stewarded lands.
- Improving access to information regarding actions Métis citizens can take to help recover species and restore habitats on our properties or Métis-stewarded lands.

### **Elder, Knowledge Holder, and Harvester Engagement**

- Facilitate regular gatherings with Knowledge Holders to guide restoration efforts with traditional Métis knowledge.
- Document and share traditional teachings on land stewardship, ensuring intergenerational knowledge transfer.

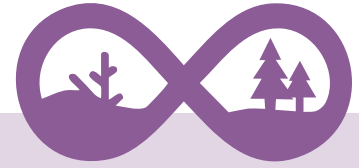
### **Youth Engagement**

- Create opportunities for youth to learn from Elders and engage in land-stewardship practices.

### **Partnerships**

- Build partnerships with conservation organizations, government agencies, and other Indigenous communities who are willing to walk together with the Métis Nation to re-naturalize, restore, and improve the state of our lands and waters.
- Secure long-term funding to sustain restoration projects over time to ensure the Métis Nation can continue to participate and lead in efforts to steward our lands and waters.





## Métis-led Conservation Areas

Indigenous-led conservation broadly places Indigenous Peoples at the forefront of efforts to protect and care for all Our Relations. Unlike colonial conservation models that often exclude our voices, Métis-led conservation emphasizes the importance of our governance, stewardship, and cultural values in shaping sustainable conservation efforts. Historically, colonial conservation models have removed all humans, including Métis, from the land; this disrupted a carefully balanced relationship that benefitted the natural world, including the Métis who are part of it.

For the Métis Nation, Métis-led conservation means Métis presence on the land protecting both ecological and cultural heritage and ensuring that future generations can continue to live in harmony with the land. This active relationship with the land supports us spiritually, physically, and mentally, and provides opportunities for ongoing employment in ways that work in partnership with the land and waters. Supporting this relationship through the creation of Métis-conservation areas is an important step on the path towards reconciliation.

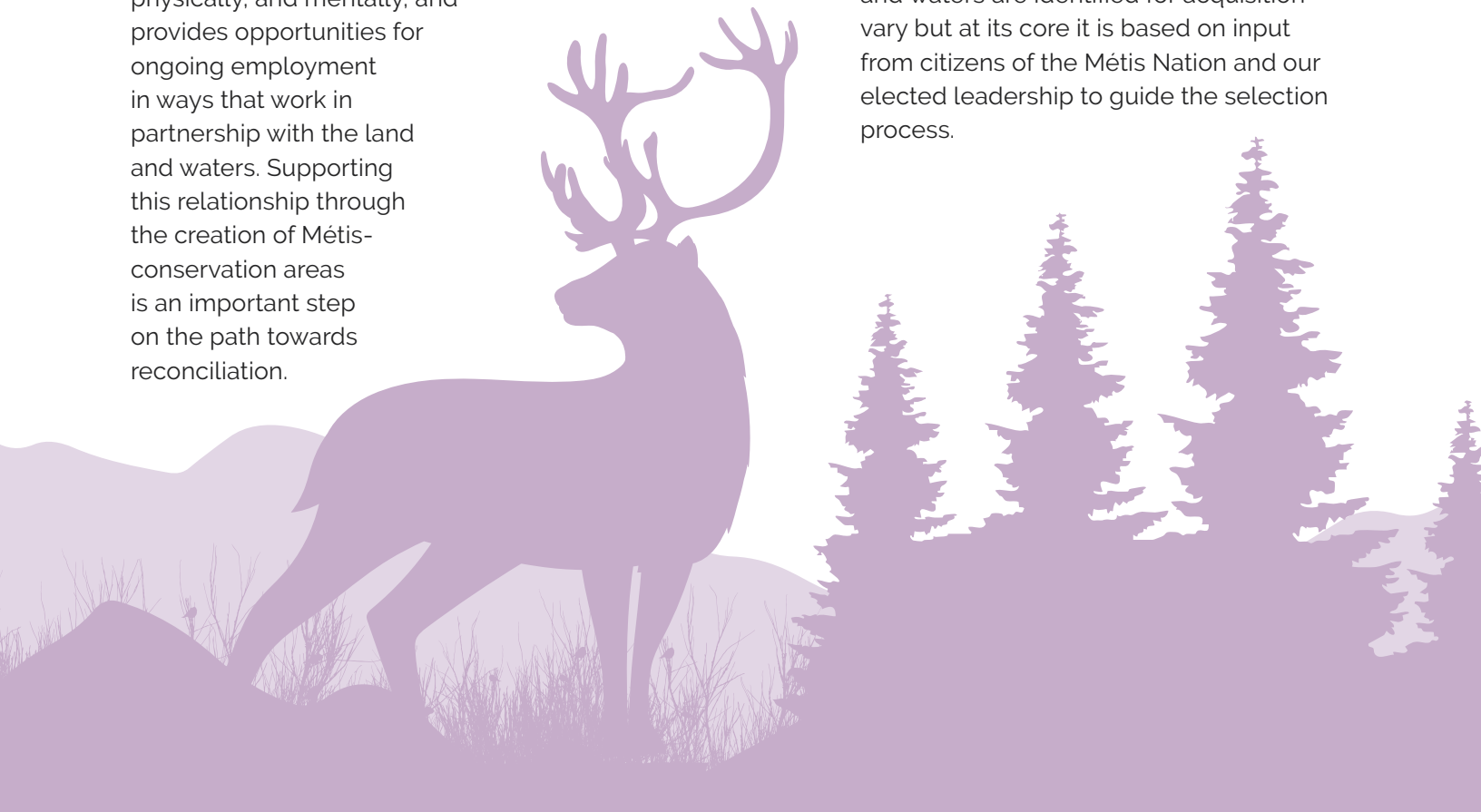
### SHORT-TERM OUTCOME (5 YEARS)

Within five years, the Métis Nation will have established a network of IPCAs—a collection of protected places across the Homeland that are connected through Métis ownership, governance, and stewardship grounded in Métis values and knowledge systems.

### ACTIONS TO ADVANCE THIS PRIORITY

#### *Establish Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs):*

- Advocate for a Métis-led process to identify and select land for purchase (rather than needing to follow the current federally driven IPCA selection process).
- Identify and secure priority lands and waters for conservation under Métis stewardship. The process by which lands and waters are identified for acquisition vary but at its core it is based on input from citizens of the Métis Nation and our elected leadership to guide the selection process.



- Where possible, leverage existing relationships and funding opportunities for the creation of IPCAs.
- Advocate for policy changes that recognize and support Indigenous-led conservation initiatives.

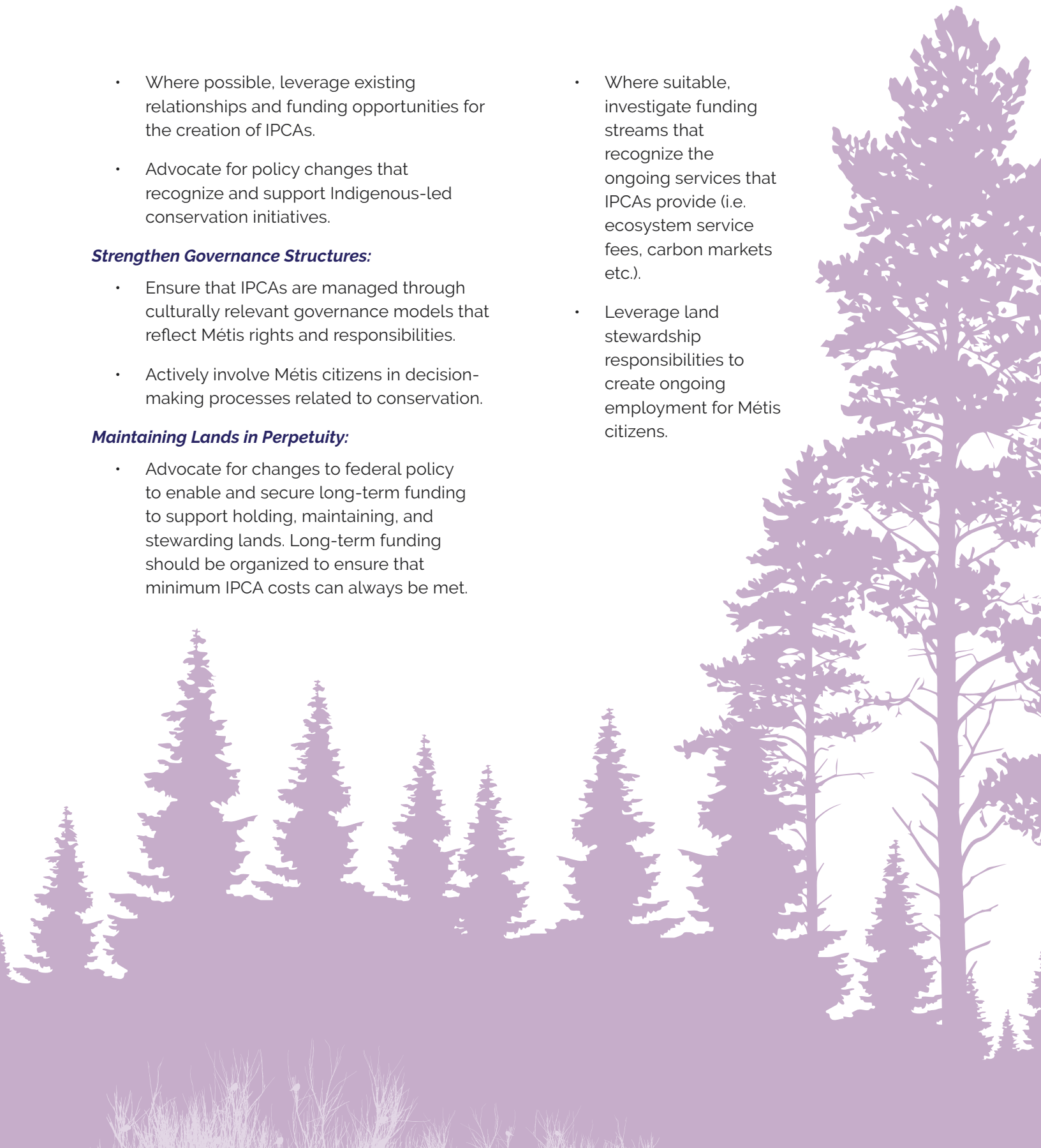
***Strengthen Governance Structures:***

- Ensure that IPCAs are managed through culturally relevant governance models that reflect Métis rights and responsibilities.
- Actively involve Métis citizens in decision-making processes related to conservation.

***Maintaining Lands in Perpetuity:***

- Advocate for changes to federal policy to enable and secure long-term funding to support holding, maintaining, and stewarding lands. Long-term funding should be organized to ensure that minimum IPCA costs can always be met.

- Where suitable, investigate funding streams that recognize the ongoing services that IPCAs provide (i.e. ecosystem service fees, carbon markets etc.).
- Leverage land stewardship responsibilities to create ongoing employment for Métis citizens.





## *Engagement, Collaboration, and Partnership Activities for this Priority*

### **Community Engagement and Education**

- Develop educational programs, spaces, and infrastructure that connect Métis citizens, especially youth, to the land through stewardship activities.
- Create spaces and opportunities for land-based learning to foster a deeper understanding of teachings and practices from the land.

### **Elder, Knowledge Holder, and Harvester Engagement**

- Facilitate the sharing of knowledges on stewardship and conservation practices.
- Include Elders and Knowledge Holders in the planning and stewardship of IPCAs. .

### **Partnerships**

- Establish partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, and other Indigenous communities to strengthen conservation efforts. Working in coordination with other organizations can help reduce duplication, create efficiencies, and generally improve outcomes for all parties involved.
- Where possible, use IPCAs to support external targets such as the Government of Canada's international commitments <sup>4</sup>, goals of provincial and territorial governments <sup>5</sup> or the objectives of NGOs.



<sup>4</sup> The Government of Canada has agreed to meet several international goals, such as the Global 30 by 30 target, which aims to protect 30% of Canada's land and waters by 2030, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which includes 23 individual targets focused on halting biodiversity loss. The creation of IPCAs would Canada help to achieve these goals.

<sup>5</sup> All Canadian provinces and territories list goals and responsibilities to maintain a healthy environment. For example, Alberta states it has a responsibility "to protect and enhance Alberta's environment and ecosystems to ensure a sustainable future, making life better for Albertans." The creation of IPCAs would help provincial and territorial jurisdictions meet their self-declared goals and responsibilities.

## ***BURNED OUT OF AGAWA BAY:***

### ***The Creation of Lake Superior Park and the Displacement of Métis Families***

<https://www.ontariometisfacts.com/>

Following the loss of the Sault Ste. Marie Métis community's traditional River Lots, in the early decades of the 20th century, a group of Métis families re-established themselves at Agawa Bay. Around 1903, Dave Bussineau and his wife Mary started to build a home at Agawa Bay. Soon after, Arthur Davieaux and his wife Viola also moved to the Bay, followed by the Roussain family around 1920. Louis Miron and his family also lived on an island nearby. For more than 60 years, these four families lived a beautiful life at Agawa Bay. They hunted, fished, gardened, harvested maple sugar, cut wood, and guided tourists. Many of their relatives came and went with the seasons. Then, in 1967, Ontario government officials arrived at Agawa Bay in float planes and told the families they had to leave. According to the officials, the Métis villagers were "squatters" who had no right to live there. The newly created Lake Superior Provincial Park, they said, was intended "for the enjoyment of all, not the few." The government worked to remove the Métis from Agawa Bay with the final act in this forced eviction occurring in 1968 when government employees burned the Métis homes to the ground. One Crown employee later recalled that they, "torched a lot of the buildings that had to go... nobody considered anything here of historical significance." The creation of Lake Superior Provincial Park shows the dark side of western conservation practices. Conservation practices that include the Métis worldview can both protect our lands and waters while supporting the peoples who are in relationship with it.





## Food Security & Sovereignty

Food security ensures that individuals and communities have reliable access to sufficient, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food. Food sovereignty goes a step further by emphasizing the right for all humans to define and govern our own food systems, including production, distribution, consumption, and access to healthy foods. For the Métis Nation, food security and sovereignty are deeply tied to harvesting practices, such as hunting, fishing, and gathering, as well as the ability to grow and preserve food in sustainable ways. Harvesting, gathering, and growing not only allow us to feed our families and communities, but they provide invaluable teachings on our role as humans in the circle that connects all beings. These practices also reduce emissions associated with industrial agriculture and long-distance transport, making them an important climate solution grounded in Métis knowledge systems.

Improved access to healthy food and food systems is vital for Métis. Métis are disproportionately affected by food insecurity when compared to the average Canadian. Systemic racism and colonial systems have led to Métis families being more likely to experience food insecurity. Métis food sovereignty teaches us to align ourselves with natural law, the great cycle. It humbles us and reminds us that we are not above the land but part of it. Our plant and animal kin give their bodies so that we may sustain ourselves. Ultimately, Métis approaches to food sovereignty are grounded in relationships, gratitude, and reciprocity. Our harvesters are the boots on the ground, maintaining intimate relations to the land and land-based teachings. These teachings have provided the basis for Métis law and governance, past and present, as seen in the Laws of the Buffalo Hunt, the Powley Decision, and internal harvesting policy.

### SHORT-TERM OUTCOME (5 YEARS)

Within five years, Métis communities will have increased access to traditional and locally produced foods through improving opportunities to harvest, community food programs, and access to sustainable agriculture and aquaculture.

#### *The Buffalo Hunt*

The first Métis government was formed annually for the purpose of regulating the Buffalo Hunt. The Métis would elect hunt captains that would organize the men into hunt brigades. Each brigade in the hunt was subject to the laws of the Buffalo Hunt – a series of eight rules that sought to maintain order amongst the ranks of the hunt, outlining rules for when and how to hunt and punishments for violating these laws.

These laws were put in place to mitigate the effects of greed and make sure that enough buffalo were left to spawn new buffalo to hunt in the future. In this way, the Métis were among the first to codify a set of conservation laws, as they were aware that the bounty of the Canadian prairies was not endless and that measures had to be taken to assure abundant resources would be available in the future.

This important thread of Métis history is an example of how the Métis balanced economic interests in a way that honours nature and preserves its resources for sustainable future use.

***The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #18 acknowledges the state of Indigenous health and the importance of addressing food security as a key factor in improving the health of Indigenous communities. Supporting our ability to hunt, harvest, gather, and grow directly bolsters food sovereignty, stewardship, community health, and cultural continuity.***

## **ACTIONS TO ADVANCE THIS PRIORITY**

### ***Support Harvesting Practices:***

- Advocate for policies that protect and expand Métis harvesting rights (including hunting, fishing, and gathering) as well as increased access to land and waters.
- Develop programs to educate citizens on harvesting protocols and safe, sustainable practices, with an emphasis on intergenerational knowledge transfer.

### ***Enhance Community Food Programs:***

- Establish community gardens, food forests, and greenhouse programs in Métis communities to increase local food production.
- Develop food growing and preservation initiatives, such as soil restoration, canning workshops, and seed-saving programs.
- Advocate for improvements to existing policy to allow the creation of food-sharing networks that distribute harvested and grown food within the community, ensuring that all citizens have access to nutritious meals.

### ***Promote Métis-led Agriculture and Aquaculture:***

- Support the maintenance and development of sustainable inland fisheries and water-based ways of life in waters within the Métis Homeland.
- Strengthen sustainable Métis-led agriculture and small-scale farming.

- Explore opportunities for community-led agriculture and aquaculture projects that align with Métis knowledge systems and environmental stewardship.

### ***Develop Food-Sovereignty Education Programs:***

- Implement land-based learning programs to teach citizens how to harvest, grow, and preserve food in sustainable ways.
- Incorporate cultural teachings on the importance of food sovereignty in community education initiatives.
- Create workshops and resources on topics such as hunting safety, fishing techniques, and traditional food preparation.
- Increase access for Métis citizens to pursue careers that support improving food sovereignty through training opportunities and funding.

### ***Better Understand Métis Food Security and Food Systems:***

- Develop a baseline understanding of how climate change and federal/provincial policy is impacting our food security and accessibility to traditional Métis foods, agriculture, food systems, and medicines, as well as access to all food systems.
- Conduct research to understand, inform, and determine action to enhance Métis food security and sovereignty.
- Develop innovative solutions for building circular economies within the Métis Nation that support Métis food systems and sovereignty, aligning with Métis values, nature stewardship, and ecosystem healing.



## *Engagement, Collaboration, and Partnership Activities for this Priority*

### **Community/Youth Engagement and Education**

- Facilitate knowledge transfer from Elders and Knowledge Holders to younger generations.
- Improve access to hunter safety and other harvesting-related education.
- Increase opportunities for in-person, on-the-land learning.

### **Elder, Knowledge Holder, and Harvester Engagement**

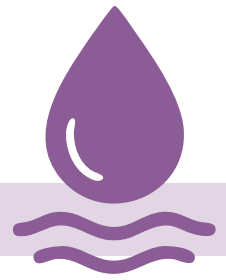
- Ensure Métis harvesters, Knowledge Holders, and Elders have avenues to express concerns and share expertise on food priorities.
- Ensure internal Métis policy is driven by the voices of those in relationship with the land, maintaining harvesting traditions and teachings.

### **Partnerships**

- Establish partnerships with local farmers, entrepreneurs, fisheries, and conservation organizations to improve access to fresh and sustainable food sources.
- Work with government agencies to review and understand policies that impact, and advocate for policies that support food security, sovereignty, and harvesting rights.
- Collaborate with other Indigenous Peoples to share best practices and strengthen collective food-sovereignty efforts.



## ***Water, Ice, and Snow***



Water is life. It needs to be treated with respect as a living entity that is life giving and not simply as a resource that exists to be used and owned. Water comes in many forms—it is the glaciers and the snow and ice, it is the ground water, the wetlands and the creeks, the rivers and lakes. It is the clouds and rainstorms. All these forms of water are important in themselves and play a vital role on the land and the ecosystems that sustain us. It has shaped the landscapes that we live with today and is essential for the growth of our medicines and food. We are made of water; like the rivers on the land, water flows through our bodies. We need water to live.

Water is sacred. Through its constant movement through cycles and flows, water connects everything and everyone on Mother Earth across time and space. Like many Indigenous Peoples, the Métis have a sacred relationship with water. We understand how water connects us to the land and our kin; it is at the essence of who we are. We travelled the rivers and lakes, lived along them and depended on them for our culture and existence. We travelled over the snow and ice to traplines. It is part of our language and ceremonies. We recognize the rights that water has as one of our kin. This relationship needs to be honoured, and that is why Indigenous Peoples need to be included in governance, not just to listen or present, but to participate in the protection and stewardship of the water and lands as it is a responsibility for our Nations.

The responsibility the Métis have to water is a sacred role in the Métis culture, usually held by women. The ability for the Métis to access and care for the water has been eroded through different processes of the church and government, and restoring those rights is an important step in the reconciliation.

The rights for us to access and care for water plays an important role in Truth and Reconciliation in Canada. Furthermore, both the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Canada's United Nations Declaration Act Action Plan recognize that "Indigenous Peoples have the right to a healthy, natural environment" and acknowledge the sacred relationship and responsibilities of Indigenous Peoples to Mother Earth.

### **SHORT-TERM OUTCOME (5 YEARS)**

Within five years, the Métis Nation will build on the important relationship with water by participating in different levels of water governance. Governance includes government and rights holders, institutional rules and cultural practices, all at the levels from watershed to federal governance. The Métis Nation will fulfill our responsibilities to water by increasing opportunities for Métis to maintain and strengthen our relationships with water through creating space for water teachings and ceremony, maintaining public access to water, and increase programs for involvement in water stewardship, such as policy, monitoring and clean water technologies, fishing and Guardian work. The measurement of success is increased participation by Métis citizens in all areas related to water governance and cleaner and healthier water, in all its forms, across the Homeland.



## ACTIONS TO ADVANCE THIS PRIORITY

### ***Create Space for Water Protectors to Lead in Water Governance:***

- Support an Ethical Space for water protectors to work together and lead the Nation in water governance.
- Strengthen engagement with all levels of government (e.g., water circles) to help guide the Nation in water protection and stewardship.
- Identify water/watersheds that the Métis Nation has the responsibility to care for and protect.

### ***Advocate for Métis Inclusion at All Levels of Water Governance:***

- Identify bi-national (i.e., International Joint Commission), federal, provincial, municipal and watershed level governance in which the Métis Nation needs to be included.
- Identify opportunities for co-development of water governance and policies.

### ***Include Indigenous Culture, Language and Ceremony in Water Governance:***

- Water governance at local levels need to include Indigenous languages to help rebuild those sacred relationships with those waters.
- Bring ceremony back into governance structures to restore our holistic relationship with the water.
- Look for opportunities to bring Métis and First Nation Knowledge Holders together to learn from and work together in ceremony.

### ***Develop Programs for Métis Citizens to Pursue Water-related Careers:***

- Training and academic support in water monitoring, water policy, and water services, such as sanitation and safe drinking water.
- Co-develop training programs braiding Métis knowledge and western science for Métis Nation citizens.
- Employment in traditional Métis activities, such as guides on water, snow and ice, and fishing (commercial, sport, and personal).





## *Engagement, Collaboration, and Partnership Activities for this Priority*

### **Community/Youth Engagement and Education**

- Facilitate knowledge transfer from Elders and Knowledge Holders to younger generations about water teachings and ceremonies.
- Support opportunities for youth to gain experience in different levels of governance and advocacy.
- Provide work opportunities, such as guides (fishing or canoe) or other careers in line with traditional Métis work.

### **Elder, Knowledge Holder, and Harvester Engagement**

- Develop programs for Knowledge Holders to be a part of water monitoring and management.
- Create spaces for Elders and Knowledge Holders to be leaders in protecting and advocating and in educating our younger generations on having good relationships with water.

### **Partnerships**

- Establish partnerships with the Canada Water Agency, and Environment and Climate Change Canada.
- Work with government and non-government agencies to advocate for policies and programs that support the Métis Nation's rights to their responsibility to water.
- Collaborate with other Indigenous Peoples to share best practices and strengthen collective water-governance methods.
- Collaborate with government and NGOs to protect and enhance access to water for Métis citizens in areas where access has become difficult.
- Collaborate with universities and researchers to advance water policy, research, water monitoring, etc.



## Closing and Gratitude

We hope this Strategy inspires the kind of positive change that all Our Relations would be proud of. We hope one day we will hear them echo back to us:

*"We speak with one voice, as the land, the water, the air, the animals, the plants, the insects, the rocks, and the soil. We are the ones you walk with, drink from, breathe in, harvest, and learn from. We have always been here. We give food for your bodies, medicine for your healing, and stories for your spirit. Even when we were forgotten, we continued to give.*

*Today, we feel your return. We feel the footsteps of those who walk gently. We feel the hands that plant and tend. We hear the songs and stories that speak our names again. We see the fires lit with care, the waters protected, and the animals harvested with respect. We feel the spirit of Wahkotowin being restored.*

*To those who listened, gathered, wrote, and revised, we thank you. To those who brought vision, who facilitated, who guided and supported this work, we thank you. To the youth whose voices and art opened hearts, and to Nôtokêsiw whose words closed this circle, we thank you. To those who offered support from across governments and organizations, we thank you for walking alongside.*

*This Strategy carries your care, your knowledge, and your responsibility. It is rooted in a shared journey that spans lands, generations, and worldviews. We do not ask for perfection. We ask for healed relationships, for reciprocity, and for your continued presence. As you care for us, we will care for you. As you heal, we heal. And together, we will grow forward."*





## ***From the Nature Strategy Writing Team***

The writing team included Environment and Climate Change technical staff from the Métis National Council, the Otipemisiwak Métis Government and the Métis Nation of Ontario, and the Elder/Old One and Youth Representative from the Strawberry Moon Table on Nature: Nôtokêsiw Kathy Boston and Kimberley Lebel, respectively. The writing team met several times over the course of one and a half years (in person and virtually) to develop and draft the Strategy in collaboration. Members of the writing team include: Jesus Karst (MNC), Kelsey Scarfone (MNC), Courtney Vaughn (MNO), Jesse Fieldwebster (MNO), Jennifer Pylypiw (OMG), Jordan York (OMG), Nôtokêsiw Kathy Boston and Kimberley Lebel. We also give our sincere thanks to Kimberly Mosicki (OMG) and our colleagues with the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan and the Métis Nation of British Columbia who all contributed to the early drafts and ideation for this Strategy. We also thank our Directors and other colleagues who joined brainstorming sessions and writing workshops, and contributed their reviews and edits as the Strategy was finalized, including Erin Myers (MNC), Andres Filella (OMG), and others.

The collaborative writing process was facilitated and supported by Jennifer Davis (SystemShift Consulting). We could not have completed this work without Jennifer's tireless efforts to keep us authors on track while facilitating and supporting creative ideation that included space for culture and Métis knowledge systems. We are very grateful for the time and effort you dedicated to supporting us in a good way.

### **MÉTIS YOUTH**

In addition to the Youth members of our writing team, we are grateful to the MNC Youth Council for their engagement and review, with specific thanks to Rebecca Lavalley (OMG). We are very grateful to the many youth who submitted incredibly inspiring artwork for consideration as the cover of this Strategy.

### **MÉTIS LEADERSHIP**

The writing team gives our gratitude to the MNC's President, Victoria Pruden, as well as the Presidents of both the Otipemisiwak Métis Government and the Métis Nation of Ontario, for your leadership and support of the work we all do as technicians including this collaborative effort to articulate a shared vision for caring for all Our Relations, and supporting climate adaptation across the Homeland.

### **GRAPHIC DESIGN**

Special thanks to Darcy Senger (graphic designer) who beautifully designed the Strategy, and to Halie Finney (artist) who developed three powerful art pieces to reflect the vision of the Strategy. Your artistic expression is essential to telling this story.

### **GOVERNMENT OF CANADA**

Thank you to the Canadian Wildlife Service and all federal members of the Strawberry Moon Table on Nature for your support of this vital work. This Strategy will support our collaboration for many years to come.





REMEMBER OUR KINSHIP

Acrylic on canvas 2025

By Solène Callioux

### **About the Front Cover:**

#### **Winner of the Métis National Council 's Youth Cover Page Art Contest**

*This painting, Remember Our Kinship, is a deeply personal reflection of the enduring spiritual and cultural connection between the Métis people and the bison. It represents both a historical truth and a living memory, held close by generations of Indigenous Peoples despite harsh disruptions of colonization. In this piece, I invite the viewer into a quiet yet powerful moment: a young Métis girl seated in the long prairie grass, gazing up at a bison, not with fear, but with recognition.*

*This painting reflects the deep and sacred relationship between the Métis people and the bison, a bond rooted in respect, survival, and spiritual kinship. Our ancestors followed the herds across the Plains, relied on them for food, shelter, tools, and clothing, and honoured them in ceremony and story. Every part of the animal was used with care and respect. This reciprocal relationship defined not only our survival but also our values. We lived in kinship – not domination – with the land and all it has to offer, given to us by our creator.*

*The vibrant colour palette of this painting; warm oranges, yellows, purples, and rich earth tones – evokes the feeling of a memory or a dream. It's as though we are witnessing a vision from the past that lives in the stories of our Elders. The scene feels both nostalgic and spiritual. The girl's expression is calm and contemplative; she is not startled by the bison's presence. This creates a feeling that's almost familiar, like a reconnection with an ancient relative. Her shawl bears the colours and stripes of the Métis sash. She wears a blue-ribbon skirt and hide-tanned moccasins, decorated with traditional bead work art, grounding her in her identity and cultural continuity.*

*The bison, towering and textured, is painted with deliberate strokes that show movement and depth. This great animal is a symbol of strength, endurance, and spiritual wisdom. His eye, locked gently with the girl's, represents a dialogue: one of remembrance, of teachings passed down, and of mutual respect. He reminds us of what once was but also of what still can be.*

*This painting is also a quiet resistance. It remembers what colonial violence tried to erase. The mass slaughter of bison by European settlers was not just ecological devastation, it was an intentional act of cultural genocide. By eliminating the bison, colonial powers aimed to destroy Indigenous autonomy and starve out the people whose lives were interwoven with the herds. By the late 1800s, bison were nearly extinct, and with them, a way of life for the Métis and many others.*


*Yet, the bison lives and returns in spirit through, storytelling, and art. The girl, too, is a symbol of continuity—a young woman rooted in tradition and looking forward. Together, they represent a healing of relationships, the reclamation of culture, and the resilience of Indigenous identity.*

*As a young Métis artist, this painting is part of my journey in reconnecting with my culture, my ancestors, and the land. "Remember Our Kinship" is more than just a tribute to the bison, it's a reflection of my own search for identity and belonging. Through my art and, specifically this piece, I'm learning what it means to be in relationship with the land and the stories that shaped our people. Painting this was a way to honour that connection, and to remind myself, and others, that our culture is still here, still strong, and still living through us.*

*Through Remember Our Kinship, I hope to offer more than just a visual story. I hope to create space for reflection about the importance of restoring balance with the natural world, about honouring Indigenous knowledge, and about the responsibilities we carry to our ancestors and to future generations. This is a painting of hope, memory, and cultural resurgence. It is a call to remember not only who we are but the sacred relationships that shape our lives.*

# THE MNC NATURE STRATEGY & CANADA 2030 NATURE STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

The Métis National Council Nature Strategy contributes directly to Canada's national commitments under the 2030 Nature Strategy, including the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Canada's strategy sets out targets and actions to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, with specific commitments related to Indigenous leadership, conservation, restoration, and knowledge systems. The table below provides a crosswalk between the MNC Strategy and relevant targets in Annex 1 of Canada's 2030 Nature Strategy. This alignment illustrates how Métis-led actions not only reflect Indigenous rights and responsibilities but also play a vital role in advancing national and global biodiversity outcomes.

MNC National Priority	Related Canada 2030 Implementation Target (Annex 1)	Alignment & Notes
<p><b>ECOSYSTEM HEALING</b></p> 	<p><b>Target 2:</b> Restore 30% of degraded ecosystems by 2030</p> <p><b>Target 8:</b> Minimize pollution impacts on biodiversity</p>	<p><i>Actions such as restoring wetlands, bison reintroduction, Good Fire use, and species-at-risk recovery directly support ecosystem restoration and resilience.</i></p>
	<p><b>Target 11:</b> Ecosystem contributions to climate change mitigation and adaptation</p>	<p><i>Highlights cultural burning, afforestation, and nature-based solutions like carbon sequestration that co-benefit climate and biodiversity.</i></p>
<p><b>MÉTIS-LED CONSERVATION AREAS</b></p> 	<p><b>Target 3:</b> Restore 30% of degraded ecosystems by 2030</p>	<p><i>Direct alignment with federal 30x30 commitment and the MNC's IPCA expansion, governance models, and employment benefits for Métis citizens.</i></p>
	<p><b>Target 21:</b> Ensure Indigenous participation in conservation and land use planning</p>	<p><i>Approach centres Métis governance and reciprocal partnerships; priority also supports culturally grounded stewardship frameworks.</i></p>

MNC National Priority	Related Canada 2030 Implementation Target (Annex 1)	Alignment & Notes
<p><b>MÉTIS GUARDIANS</b></p> 	<p><b>Target 12:</b> Increase access to biodiversity data</p>	<p><i>Environmental monitoring programs contribute to data systems while emphasizing knowledge sovereignty and Two-Eyed Seeing approaches.</i></p>
	<p><b>Target 21:</b> Indigenous knowledge integration</p>	<p><i>The Strategy calls for weaving Métis and scientific knowledge, participatory research, and data sharing under Métis control.</i></p>
<p><b>FOOD SECURITY &amp; SOVEREIGNTY</b></p> 	<p><b>Target 10:</b> Sustainable management of biodiversity for food and nutrition</p>	<p><i>Actions to enhance harvesting rights, inland fisheries, agriculture, and food sharing networks contribute to resilient food systems.</i></p>
	<p><b>Target 20:</b> Ensure benefits to Indigenous Peoples</p>	<p><i>Includes culturally relevant food practices and the revitalization of traditional food systems as economic, cultural, and health-enhancing assets.</i></p>
<p><b>WATER, ICE AND SNOW</b></p> 	<p><b>Target 7:</b> Reduce pollution from excess nutrients, pesticides, and hazardous waste</p>	<p><i>Métis efforts in water governance, clean water training, and technology support water health and restoration.</i></p>
	<p><b>Target 22:</b> Indigenous rights to lands, territories, and resources</p>	<p><i>Actions emphasize ethical space for water protectors, co-governance models, and the sacred role of water across all forms, including snow and ice.</i></p>

# THE MNC NATURE STRATEGY & UNDRIP ALIGNMENT

The Métis National Council Nature Strategy is rooted in the inherent rights, responsibilities, and knowledge systems of the Métis Nation. It supports the realization of rights articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which Canada has committed to implementing through the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDRIPA). The table below highlights how the priorities and values of the Strategy align with specific UNDRIP articles. This alignment reinforces the Strategy's role in advancing the implementation of UNDRIPA and affirming the rights of the Métis Nation in areas such as land governance, environmental protection, cultural revitalization, and participation in decision-making.

<i>MNC Strategy Priority/Theme</i>	<i>Relevant UNDRIP Article(s)</i>	<i>Alignment &amp; Commentary</i>
<b>SELF-DETERMINATION</b>	<p><b>Article 3:</b> Right to self-determination</p> <p><b>Article 4:</b> Autonomy in internal affairs</p>	<i>The MNC prioritizes Métis-led governance, decision-making, and control over conservation, aligning with the right to determine and pursue self-directed strategies for land and nature.</i>
<b>ECOSYSTEM HEALING</b>	<b>Article 29(1):</b> Right to conservation and protection of the environment	<i>Emphasizes healing as both ecological and cultural, supporting actions like cultural burning and species restoration to fulfill environmental rights.</i>
<b>MÉTIS-LED CONSERVATION AREAS (IPCAS)</b>	<p><b>Article 26:</b> Right to lands, territories, and resources</p> <p><b>Article 32:</b> Right to determine development priorities</p>	<i>IPCA work asserts land stewardship and cultural governance, aligning with rights to maintain traditional territories and decide how they're used.</i>

MNC Strategy Priority/Theme	Relevant UNDRIP Article(s)	Alignment & Commentary
<b>MÉTIS GUARDIANS, MONITORING &amp; KNOWLEDGE SOVEREIGNTY</b>	<b>Article 31:</b> Right to maintain, control, protect, and develop cultural heritage and traditional knowledge	<i>The MNC strategy promotes Two-Eyed Seeing and Métis-led monitoring with strong data sovereignty, reinforcing rights to protect and apply Indigenous knowledge systems.</i>
<b>FOOD SECURITY &amp; HARVESTING</b>	<b>Article 20:</b> Right to traditional subsistence activities  <b>Article 25:</b> Spiritual and cultural relationship with lands	<i>Métis food sovereignty actions (e.g., harvesting rights, land-based education, traditional practices) directly advance rights to feed and sustain communities through tradition.</i>
<b>WATER, ICE, AND SNOW</b>	<b>Article 25:</b> Maintain spiritual relationships with water  <b>Article 29(2):</b> Right to clean water	<i>Calls for water co-governance, ethical space for water protectors, and safe drinking water training align with rights to clean water and spiritual water governance.</i>
<b>CULTURAL &amp; INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE</b>	<b>Article 13:</b> Right to revitalize and transmit language and oral traditions  <b>Article 14:</b> Right to education	<i>The MNC's emphasis on Elders, youth engagement, and land-based education ensures intergenerational knowledge sharing and cultural continuity.</i>
<b>COLLABORATION &amp; PARTNERSHIP</b>	<b>Article 18:</b> Right to participate in decision-making  <b>Article 19:</b> Right to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC)	<i>The MNC approach emphasizes partnership on Métis terms and mutual accountability, supporting collaborative governance that centres on FPIC and nation-to-nation relationships.</i>

