

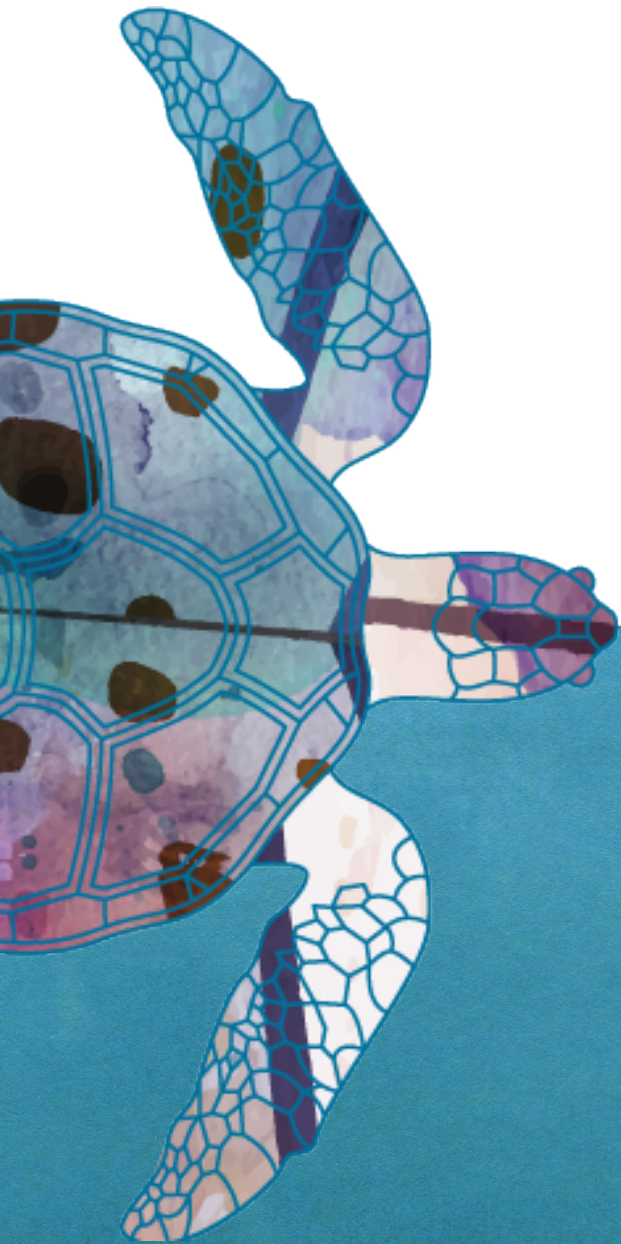


FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC INC.  
QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN INC.

# 2019 CLIMATE CHANGE REPORT



MARCH 31 2019



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### QNW Climate Change Project Team:

#### Carole Brazeau

Environment and Sustainable Development Coordinator (Winter 2019)

#### Naomi George

QNW's Coordinator for the Elders

#### Rebekah Elkerton

MA, Researcher and Report Writer (March 2019)



## KITCHI MIGWETCH

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# INTRODUCTION

“WHEN THE LAND SUFFERS, SO DO THE PEOPLE.”

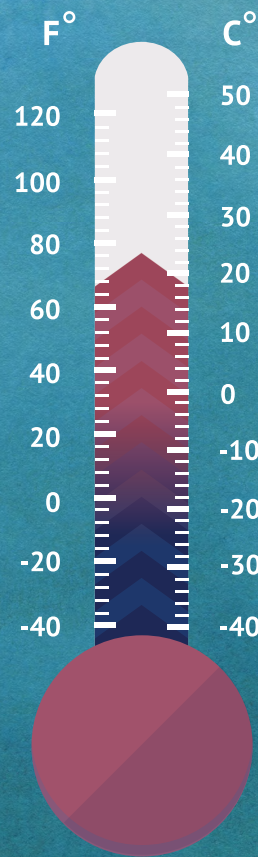
## ELDER

Quebec Native Women’s Association (QNW) represents the interests of the Indigenous women of Quebec. This includes the ten Indigenous nations that reside in the province, as well as the urban Indigenous community. These nations are the Abenaki, Anishinabeg/Algonquin, Atikamekw, Eeyou/Cree, the Huron-Wendat, Innu, Malecite, Mi’gmaq, Mohawk and the Naskapi. It is our mission to support Indigenous women in our efforts to better our living conditions through the promotion of non-violence, justice, equal rights and health.

QNW supports women in our commitment to our communities and we affirm that the health of Indigenous women has been threatened through the impacts of climate change.

Indigenous women’s rights under the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should be implemented in Canada. Colonization has devalued Indigenous knowledge, negatively impacted gender roles, culture, the safety of Indigenous women as well as the health of the land that sustains Indigenous peoples. The issue of climate change and environmental degradation continues to harm the lives of Indigenous women living on reserve as well as urban Indigenous women residing in Quebec. Indigenous well-being is understood through a holistic approach that emphasizes the need for connectivity and healing on the land. When the land suffers so do the people.

We have conducted a preliminary consultation with Indigenous peoples in the province Quebec representing nine Nations. The QNW Climate Change project documented the participants’ insights on climate change and its impacts on Indigenous women and their families’ holistic health and our lives.



# METHODOLOGY

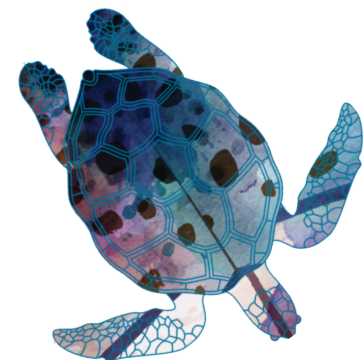
It is our goal to promote and acknowledge Indigenous women’s specialized knowledge of their environment, their health, and the health of their families and communities. QNW held a Climate Change Meeting in Montreal, Quebec March 7-8, 2019 where Indigenous women and Elders were asked to share their stories, knowledge, and solutions regarding climate change issues. One on one interviews with Indigenous women and Elders from various nations of Quebec were conducted, providing deeper insight into the individual experiences of Indigenous women on the land and in their communities.

Indigenous women’s voices have long been excluded from knowledge sharing projects. We assert that Indigenous women hold specialized knowledge in areas that Indigenous men do not as traditional gender roles in many communities are organized on land practises and experiences according to gender. For this reason, Indigenous women in many communities carry more plant-based knowledge than men and are recognized for their special relationship to water.

Indigenous voices have been excluded and/or silenced from conversations about climate change and environmental well-being due to colonial processes and ongoing governmental practices that devalue their experiential knowledge, ignoring the integral observational value of their insights.

We asked Indigenous women about their relationships to the environment and the changes they have observed, their traditional practices on the land, and about the health of their families and communities in a holistic sense.

The research conducted during the project has been recorded through various mediums, including audio and film recordings, to ensure greater distribution and re-centering on traditional oral knowledge sharing practices. In this report QNW also draws on scholarly material conducted research in this area, with a focus on Indigenous women’s voices. For further reading please see: Basile, Suzy. (2017). “Le Rôle et la Place des femmes Atikamekw dans la gouvernance du territoire et des ressources naturelles.” Ph.D Dissertation. Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue.



# TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND WOMANHOOD

In many communities, Indigenous women hold the unique responsibility of keeping botanical knowledge. This wealth of knowledge may include the medicinal value of plants as well as largely forgotten information of plants and trees as food sources, consumed by Indigenous peoples in the past. During the interviews conducted there was consistent concern for how plant-based knowledge of traditional medicines can continue to be utilized and shared when the health of the land is deteriorating due to climate change.

Botanical knowledge of traditional medicines is part a valued and respected practice in Indigenous communities and includes information about the varieties of plants and trees, their properties, growth phases and locations as well of the effects of climate on them. One research project held with Naskapi Elders found that women Elders had a developed understanding of local plants, their medicinal value and the processing techniques for the creation of medicines through ointments, tonics, and teas used to heal chronic or occasional health problems. Women in the region were largely able to distinguish the various parts of the plants and categorize species. Furthermore, they were able to identify the interaction

between plants and which combinations could be dangerous when consumed. (Lévesque, Geoffrey, and Polese 2016.)

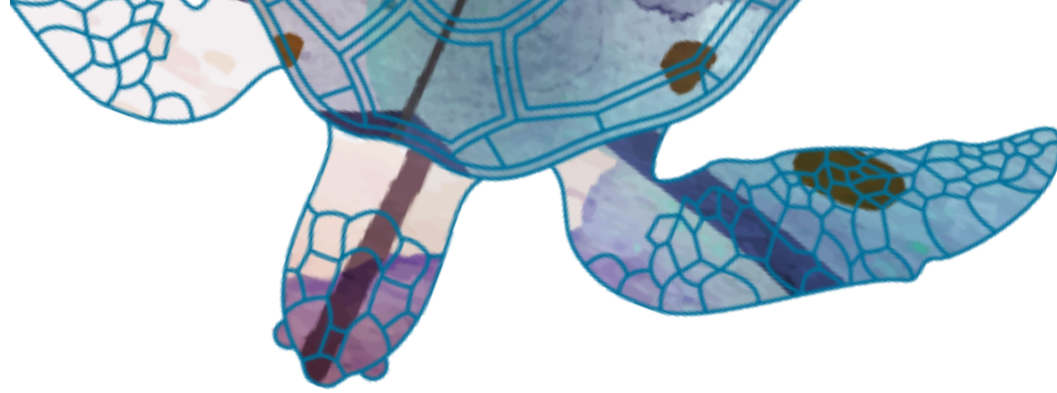
The gendered nature of plant-based knowledge has long been key to the interdependence of relationships within Indigenous communities. By organizing knowledge transfer in this way it was ensured that such important information would be passed on and that respectful relationships between each gender would ensue. Women's knowledge was respected for its importance and its transmission was done so with care. This was explained by Naskapi Elders who shared that in their traditions girls were taught about plants by their mother or grandmother however specialized knowledge about healing was not taught until a girl entered womanhood. (Lévesque, Geoffrey, and Polese 75.) It was understood that such information carried responsibility, to both the land and the community. Knowledge of the land is seen to be traditionally connected to coming of age, community membership, community healing, and womanhood.

Indigenous communities practise respect for plant life, paying homage to the contribution made by medicinal plants to the well-being of the community. Indigenous scholar Lesley Malloch explains: "It is important that we pick medicine at its own correct time. We are instructed to take both the adult male and female plants. We are to speak to the medicine first and tell it we are asking for its power and that we are offering tobacco for its help. After acknowledging

its contribution to the life cycle, we carefully put out tobacco and pick what we need." (Malloch 468). These ideas were reiterated by participants in the Climate Change meeting who spoke to the importance of taking only what is needed in order to preserve medicines and resources for future generations as well as for the health of the earth and its ecosystems.

knowledge keepers and Elders asserted that these processes are being forgotten in Indigenous communities because of colonization and are largely unknown to non-Indigenous developers working in resource extraction resulting in harmful practices towards the earth.

Gratitude and actions to show thanks to the land for what it has given are integral to the process of maintaining a healthy relationship with the land. Indigenous



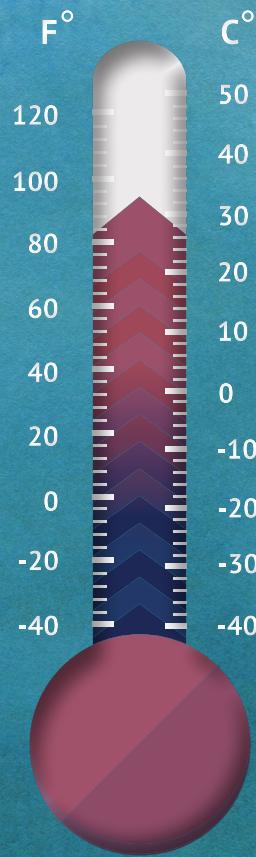
# TAKING TOO MUCH

“THROUGH THE TEACHINGS OF OUR CULTURE, WE LEARN ABOUT LIVING WITHIN OUR MEANS AND SHARING WHAT WE HAVE. WHAT WE’VE BEEN TAUGHT IS THAT TO LIVE IN HARMONY WITH THE ENVIRONMENT IS TO USE WHAT WE NEED AND THERE ARE WAYS OF TAKING BUT WHEN YOU START ABUSING THERE IS ALWAYS A REACTION, AND WAYS OF LIFE ARE CHANGED.”

ERIC HOUSE, ELDER

Each of the people who took part in this project spoke to the fact that as humans we are “taking too much” from the land. One Elder shared that Elders in her community who carry knowledge of traditional teas are protective of this knowledge including how to do it, and where to pick from. These concerns stem from fear that once they share this information people will pick too much and abuse the land. Another knowledge keeper shared that medicines in her community are picked at mass and sold for personal profit and this has left the land barren and disrespected the teachings her community has about respecting plant life.

Knowledge keeper Valerie Gabriel of Kahnstake explains that we have forgotten how to replenish both the land and ourselves. She asserts that environmental management is not the true problem, but rather human management is. It was voiced by the knowledge keepers who took part in this project that it is humans who need to learn and relearn how to remove what they need from the land in a manner that preserves for the future and is respectful to the land and species that provide for us. Metis and Cree knowledge keeper Dr. Cathy Richardson says: “That’s our role: to take care of other beings and to use our intellect for that task and if we don’t do that, we’ve basically failed in our species role.” The belief that, as humans, we have a responsibility to the land is something is common in Indigenous communities. We are all related, we are part of a larger system of relationships in which each life form has a role and responsibility.



# FOOD SECURITY

QNW asked Indigenous women and Elders to speak to the changes they have observed to the environment in their territories. Our findings are that Indigenous women have seen changes in wildlife patterns and the presence of animals in their territories. Indigenous women spoke to declining bird populations, or plant-based food sources that birds rely on to survive, as well as changing migration patterns observed during unlikely seasonal times. Changes such as these have impacted the ways in which Indigenous communities in Quebec access traditional food sources.

Some knowledge keepers expressed concern for the health of the animals which would normally be eaten in their communities. Fish specifically were noted as being unhealthy and discoloured when opened for preparation. Community members observed questionable appearances of animals and decided not to eat them. These experiences are discouraging and harmful to traditional diets in which Indigenous people would receive the nutrition from land-based sources.

Uncharacteristic weather patterns and storm events have also been noted as threatening to traditional diets due to inability to practise hunting and fishing, as it has become unsafe. Changing weather patterns have created dangerous conditions on the ice in some communities, implicating hunters and fishers as unable to retrieve food sources. These changes pose a threat to traditional

mobility patterns that have largely been forgotten but are, however, still practised in some communities.

Elders and knowledge keepers explained that when communities no longer live in accordance with traditional seasonal travel to source food, they live less active lives. When Indigenous people are no longer able to access healthy game for consumption, they must supplement with store-bought food. Indigenous people are more likely to live in poverty due to systemic racism and marginalization and as a result have less access to healthy food alternatives when traditional diets are wiped out, threatening overall community health. Climate change poses a significant threat to food security in Indigenous communities at large.



# INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE

Upon taking up this Climate Change Project, the QNW team felt that it was integral to include the voices of Elders, as they have been witnesses to climate change over a longer period and can speak to its impacts directly. During the Climate Change meeting, each of the speakers stressed the importance of Elders as “libraries of information,” and the need for community members, youth, and political decision makers to access the wealth of information held by Elders to find the solutions necessary for dealing with the impacts of climate change on Turtle Island/North America.

Due to changing lifestyles resulting from colonial influences and lack of access to healthy land-based resources, many communities have been impacted by changing roles of community members. The decline in on-the-land practises has changed and, in some cases, made it impossible for Elders to share their knowledge and fulfill their role of teaching the youth, preserving cultural values, and contributing. Elder knowledge about the non-human, spiritual, and ritualistic dimensions of the community and the earth will be forgotten if practices of inter-generational exchange are

not preserved. However the decline in environmental health due to climate change does not allow this.

These systems of responsibility are how Indigenous people understand their identity in relation to their role within the community, complementary to other community members and the cycles of the environment they inhabit. These systems hold great meaning in Indigenous communities and all members are affected when they are not fulfilled. Practices such as berry picking, hunting, fishing, and medicine picking can all be altered by changing seasonal climates that negatively affect timeframes for accessing resources. These practices are gendered in Indigenous communities and require exchange between young and Elderly community members. Community dynamics and collectivity are therefore damaged through inability to practise land-based activities.

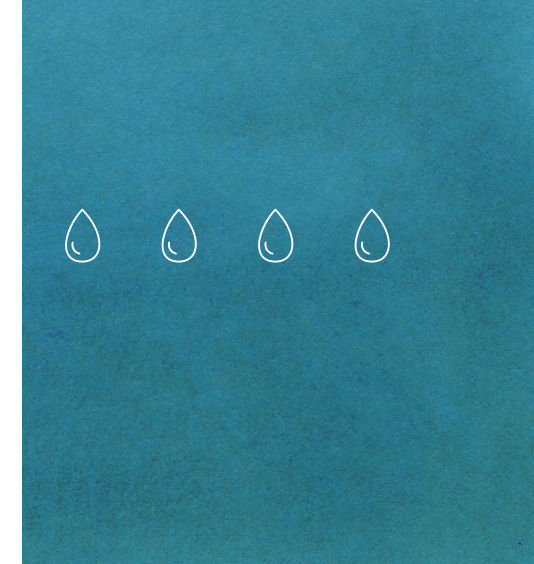


# WATER

“IF WATER DISAPPEARS,  
WE ALL DISAPPEAR.”

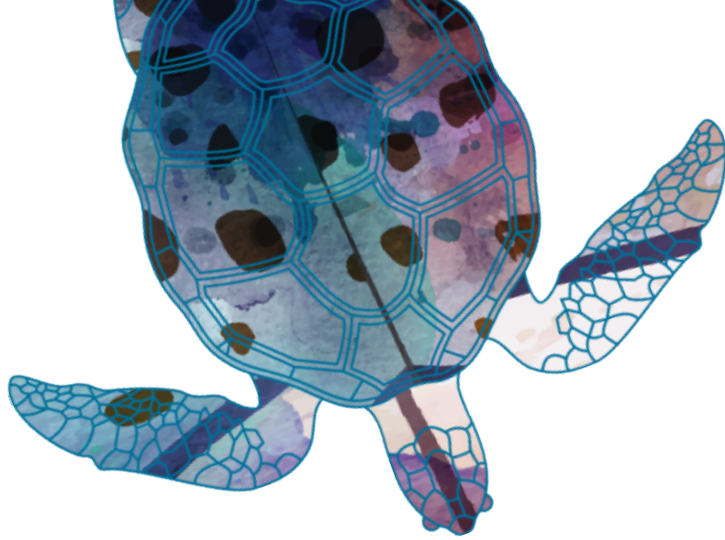
Threatened too by climate change is the health of the water. Indigenous women, in many communities, have traditionally been water protectors. It is believed that women have closeness, and special understanding of water directly related to their bodies and life-giving abilities. Anishinaabe scholar Deborah McGregor outlines this relationship, explaining: “Recognizing the vital importance of water to survival is the beginning of a healthy perspective. Water is the blood of Mother Earth. Similar to blood, which circulates throughout our bodies, nutrients flow into the land via water. Without blood serving its proper functions, we would die. It is the same with water” (McGregor 2009). From this we understand that not only do the Anishinaabe see the earth as alive and in need of our protection, but also recognize the dire situation if humans do not step up to protect water as a vital resource for all living things.

Indigenous communities across Canada have called attention to the dire water situation in First Nations communities. The National Women’s Association of Canada states that one third of all First Nations living on-reserve use drinking water systems that are detrimental to their health. This indicates that Indigenous bodies are at risk due to a failure to protect indigenous lands and waterways necessary for survival. Water contamination is directly linked to financial



interests of industries that fail to respect Indigenous peoples and lands. Contamination of water affects a multitude of species, destroying entire ecosystems and threatening traditional practices that honour water and all the life forms it supports.

During the Climate Change meeting held by QNW, Dr. Cathy Richardson explained how the degradation of water impacts well-being in the simplest of terms stating that if children are no longer able to swim in a lake, due to fear of contaminated waters, we are doing something wrong as human beings. She affirms that the world that is being created through climate change is one in which people live in fear. The psychological implications of living in fear of basic resources result in Indigenous people experiencing anxiety and an identity crisis as they are unable to maintain their traditionally interconnected relationship with their environment. Undeniably, as one Elder states: “if water disappears we all disappear.”



## URBAN INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCES

Whether living in their home community or in the city, Indigenous women maintain their connection to the environment and experience the impacts of climate change. Of the knowledge keepers who took part in the QNW meeting on Climate Change those who identified as urban Indigenous peoples were no less sensitive to the state of the land and water and the degradation of environmental health than their reserve-dwelling counterparts. Whether feeling connected still to their home community and territory, or feeling rooted in the land they currently occupy, Indigenous women noted that they had strong emotions and reactions to loss of environmental health and safety.

Indigenous people who took part in this study, noted the bond they feel with other Indigenous communities, within Canada and internationally based on ecological oppression that has resulted in the loss of traditional territories and cultural practices. Indigenous people are coming together over environmental issues and the climate change crisis to find solutions and support one another across communities.

This was clear during the March 15, 2019, Climate March, an international initiative in which concerned youth advocated for the environment and called on world leaders to make better decisions that will heal, replenish, and protect the earth. QNW members and allies took part in the march in Montreal and saw Indigenous women from communities across Quebec walk alongside Indigenous urban women who equally feel the impacts of climate change. These pivotal moments in community building based on experiences of oppression and disconnect with traditional practices are difficult to process as Indigenous people are unifying over negative experiences rather than healthy ones.

## SPIRITUALITY & HOLISTIC HEALTH

“WE ARE NOT DOING WELL ON THIS PLANET. AS HUMANS WE ARE NOT LIVING UP TO OUR SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMITMENTS. THERE ARE A LOT OF SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS AROUND IT AND BECAUSE WE HAVE CERTAIN CAPACITIES, ONE OF OUR ONLY JOBS IS TO TAKE CARE OF OTHER SPECIES, TO TAKE CARE OF THE PLANET, OTHERWISE WE ARE PRETTY EXPENDABLE.”

**DR. CATHY RICHARDSON  
(METIS, CREE)**

Whether on reserve or in the city, many Indigenous people practise spirituality that is based on the interconnectedness between human beings, the environment, and the world. About half of the women who shared their knowledge with us, made references to prophecies they had learned as part of their community’s belief system as well as prophecies they had learned through interaction and relationships with Indigenous people from other nations. In relation to climate change, we heard varying stories about the current time we are in and what it meant to the spiritual beliefs of multiple communities, the cycles of humanity, and what the result could be for the future of the world. The consensus was that the time for change is now. Indigenous people have prophesied a need



for great change and renewal for humanity to survive. It is understood that Mother Earth will cleanse and heal herself despite our existence and we must take part in this healing process in order to continue as a species. The connection between Indigenous prophecies about the health of the earth and the need for spiritual change on part of humanity is a common theme across nations.

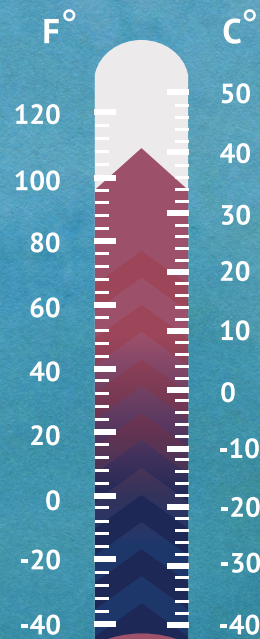
Elder Irene Bearskin-House discussed coming-of-age rituals as a marker for Indigenous identity, spiritual health and how such spiritual beliefs are related to practices on the land. Traditionally all communities practised some type of coming-of-age ritual or ceremony in which young people were welcomed into the community as full members and seen as adults. These practices asked that young people accept responsibility to the land, their community, and relationship with the spiritual world. With the loss of healthy land bases for Indigenous people to practise coming-of-age traditions spiritual health and ultimately holistic health are threatened.



## IDENTITY AND CONNECTIVITY

Many Indigenous peoples affirm that their identity is directly linked to their relationship with the land. At the very core of how identity is experienced by a person is through names. QNW's Elder Irene Bearskin-House reminds us that Indigenous names, now called spirit names, are based in the land and the animals. Our identity is understood through, and mirrors, happenings that occur in nature. Our ways of processing life and healing ourselves are also based in the environment. Elder Bearskin-House questions how we will continue to practise our identities and traditions when the land is no longer there, and the youth are no longer experiencing the world through relationships with the land. A healthy relationship with one's own identity was noted by the Elders, as essential to a person's ability to succeed. It was widely felt that the future of the youth and their well-being is threatened in the current reality of separation from the land because the land is no longer a healthy source to sustain Indigenous communities.

Knowledge keeper Valerie Gabriel, Mohawk Nation from Kahnstake points out that psychology and the environment are intrinsically related. For Indigenous people this is reflected in how we approach holistic health. She asserts that if we are unable to replenish ourselves through our relationship with the land by practising traditional cultural activities that support holistic well-being than we will be unable to practise land stewardship necessary to heal the earth and confront the issue of climate change. Gabriel believes that there is not one single solution but there are as many solutions as there are people in the world, and for that reason people must heal and feel connected to their environment if we are to see positive change.



## THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples was adopted by Canada in 2016. It includes 46 articles outlining the rights of Indigenous peoples are entitled to in all areas of their lives. Multiple articles in the declaration refer to Indigenous land rights, access to culture, and consultation. Through this study it has become clear that Indigenous rights have not been honoured, despite having been adopted by the Canadian government. We assert that through resource extraction, large scale pollution and contamination of the land, water, and resources, the well-being of Indigenous peoples is threatened daily in Canada. Warming seasonal temperatures, change in the movement patterns of wildlife, and large-scale storm events impact the ways in which Indigenous peoples can practise their culture. The seemingly naturally occurring weather events, and the man-made contamination of land and water are complementary effects of climate change that hinder the well-being of all people but most significantly harm those who have strong ties to the land and those who are systematically oppressed.

### SAFETY AND PROTECTION

Indigenous womanhood, which is deeply rooted in connection to territory and land-based knowledge and experiences, remains a position of oppression as Indigenous women face systemic racism and threats to their safety at the hands of both the Canadian public, the judicial system, and the Canadian institutions who devalue them. This is reflected in the large numbers in which Indigenous women are murdered and / or have gone missing in Canada. Article 22 of UNDRIP specifically addresses, “particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of Indigenous Elder’s women, youth, children, and persons with disabilities in the implementation of this declaration.”

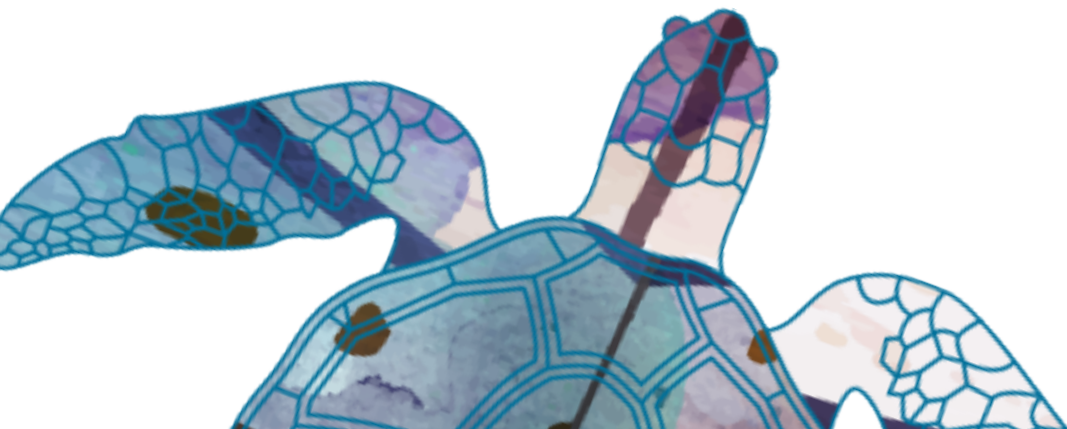
It, furthermore, asserts that these groups should enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.” These call-outs have yet to be fulfilled. Resource extraction, which is directly linked to climate change impacts, was noted by interviewees to put Indigenous women at further risk to violence as outsider men enter Indigenous territories in large numbers to work on extraction projects. These men are known to bring drugs and alcohol to communities at mass and have little respect for the safety and autonomy of Indigenous women.

## CULTURE, CONSULTATION AND HEALTH

UNDRIP Article 8 states that Indigenous women have a right to live safely in their territories, without fear of dispossession or any form of forced assimilation. The failure to address and take appropriate steps to remedy climate change impacts is a direct failure to support Indigenous peoples in practising their culture, which requires access to healthy land-based resources such as medicine and water. This affects Indigenous peoples' ability to feel connected to the land and further removes them from the ability to maintain a healthy relationship with their Indigenous identities and communities.

Article 19 of the Declaration calls for appropriate consultation of Indigenous peoples in adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them. During each interview held, Indigenous women noted that their voices have yet to be heard and respected about climate change and government approved practices that affect the land. Each of the interviewees and speakers who shared their knowledge with QNW had recommendations for the government and in many cases expressed feeling powerless to share their specialized knowledge with governmental and industrial leaders whose decisions directly impact Indigenous territories and waterways.

Article 24 (1) states: "Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practises, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals." As stated earlier in this report, access to traditional medicines and botanical knowledge has been threatened through the impacts of current colonial processes that aim to disconnect Indigenous peoples from taking part in traditional systems of responsibility. The impacts of climate change have altered territories, seasonal practices, and the ability for communities to access land-based resources. Conservation of traditional health practises remain under threat until climate change and practices contributing to it are addressed in a solutions-based way by those with the power to create change.



## RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAND AND PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Article 25 puts forth that Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their spiritual relationship with their traditional lands, waters, and resources. The holistic approach of Indigenous spirituality emphasizes how spirituality affects the overall health of a person. Cree Elder Eric House explains: "The medicinal plants that we use and the ceremony that we use can cure diseases that cannot be cured by medical science. We know the Creator; we know the spiritual world.

All diseases and everything of the body either starts from the heart, the mind, or the spirit and medical science can't touch that, but we deal with it daily." Spiritual health is understood to directly impact physical well-being and Indigenous peoples have a right to practise land-based spirituality which cannot be done if resources are removed or destroyed.

UNDRIP Article 29 calls for the right to conserve and protect the environment, including free, prior and informed consent regarding traditional territories and effective measures to ensure the monitoring, maintaining and restoring health of Indigenous peoples. These rights have yet to be fulfilled as the conversation about the impacts of climate change on Indigenous peoples' health is continuing. Our findings are that much needs to be done to alleviate and ultimately stop the course of destruction that humanity is currently on.



## WHAT THE ELDERS SAY

“WE, INDIGENOUS WOMEN, WILL NOT GO QUIETLY NOR STOP DEFENDING OUR LAND AND CULTURAL VALUES UNTIL WE SEE SOLUTIONS”

**MARLENE HALE**  
WET’SUWET’EN FIRST NATION

### CONSULTATION AND RESPECT

Knowledge keeper, Marlene Hale of the Wet’suwet’en Nation spoke to the issue of resource protection and consultation at the QNW Climate Change Meeting, she contends that the Canadian government must consult Indigenous people according to traditional community leadership paradigms, such as hereditary chiefs. This will be a step towards the restoration of a respectful relationship with Indigenous peoples.

Failing to do so is a further erasure of Indigenous knowledge, tradition and community values. Hale notes that Indigenous women are on the front lines of this fight and should not have to chase the government to have their voices heard. She affirms that if the government is to truly aim to reconcile its relationship with Indigenous peoples, Indigenous women and Elders must have access to spaces where their voices and concerns may be heard by the most influential decision makers on the climate change front. She asserts that we will not go quietly or stop defending the land and our cultural values until we see solutions.

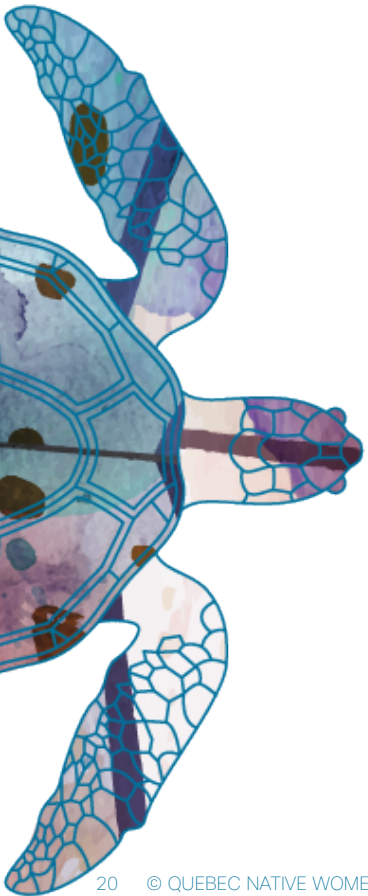
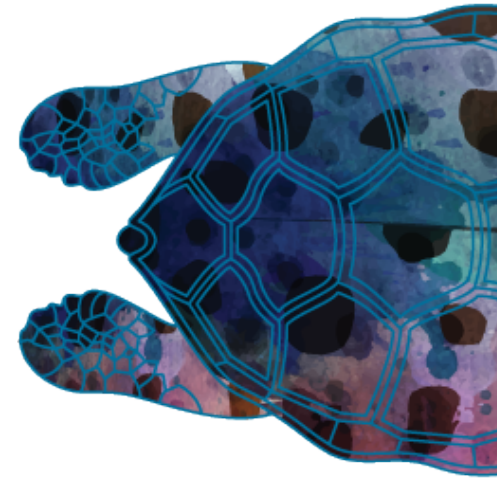
“WE NEED TO BE ABLE TO BE BETTER STEWARDS OF THE LAND THAN WHAT WE ARE DOING TODAY. TODAY EVERYTHING IS SO COMMERCIAL, PEOPLE JUST WANT TO MAKE MONEY AND WE DON’T LIVE LIKE OUR ANCESTORS. WE CAN’T LIVE OFF THE LAND THE WAY THEY DID SO WE NEED TO BE EXTRA CAREFUL IN HOW WE ARE USING THE RESOURCES THAT WE HAVE NOW FOR THOSE FACES NOT YET BORN.”

**ELLEN GABRIEL, KAHNESATAKE**

### WHAT WE LEAVE BEHIND

Land defender and human rights protector, Ellen Gabriel of Kahnstake shared her observations of the changing climate in her community, and what impacts she sees this having for her people. She has observed changes in temperature, increase in humidity, changes to the winds, and invasive species bringing harm to the pines she continues to defend as she did during the 1990 Oka Crisis.

Gabriel asserts that these changes indicate that future generations will have to deal with the messy legacy we are leaving behind unless we find ways to adapt to a changing world and find more sustainable ways of living. While previous generations were able to be very self-sufficient with caring for their health, by picking medicines from the land, climate change and destruction of plants have disrupted these practices. She urges that these issues are deeper than environmental rights, and go beyond human rights, because the health of the land is interlinked and interdependent with our survival. We need to consider the responsibilities that we have towards each other and to all our relations, including the four-legged, to ensure that they are protected and that they have an opportunity to survive.



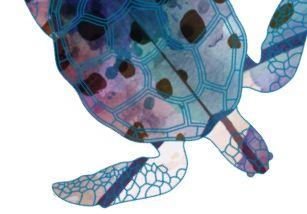
## COLONIZATION ONGOING

It is known that Indigenous peoples are still dealing with the implications of colonization. However, QNW acknowledges that colonization is not a finished project (Czyzewski 2011). Indigenous peoples, like all marginalized groups, have faced experiences of normalized invisibility and systemic racism. This is clear in the continual failure to respect and enforce Indigenous peoples' rights.

These gaps in support for Indigenous healing and reclamation of culture through land-based practices that sustain community health and well-being are inexcusable if reconciliation is to be achieved, as it is so often talked about by the Canadian government. Canada's history of colonization cannot be separated from the current impacts of climate change on Indigenous peoples. Colonization continues if Indigenous peoples are still facing systemic devaluing of our holistic health. Indigenous peoples understand health to be a matter of balancing four realms: the mental, the spiritual, the emotional, and the physical. When one of these realms is ignored or unable to achieve well-

being then so is the individual. We are witnessing that these realms are in fact unable to come into balance for entire communities and peoples who lose access to land and land-based practices because of the impacts of Climate Change. This is a preventable problem as policy change and recognition of Indigenous rights to land and culture could restore holistic health for Indigenous people, the land, and ultimately the Canadian population as Indigenous people carry knowledge which could enhance ethical extraction techniques to limit overconsumption and destruction of the environment.

Natural laws and human rights need to be respected. Global warming is a crime against humanity. It is an issue for the survival of all of humanity. We must have ethical and sustainable development in Canada. Indigenous peoples have a right to self-determination in our homelands. Indigenous women, youth and Elders should be included at the decision-making tables in a process of decolonization and real change.



## CONCLUSION

The Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers have spoken and said the time for change is now. If we are to fulfill our duty as stewards of mother earth, Indigenous peoples' voices need to be included in the conversation about climate change solutions. Indigenous peoples' holistic health is being threatened through inaccessibility to land-based practices that serve to create community, support sustainable living and provide medicines to the people for good health. QNW supports Indigenous women in improving the well-being of our families and communities and asserts that this will not be possible until meaningful actions are taken to confront the climate change crisis. We have presented that Indigenous women, Elders and knowledge keepers' voices should be integral contributors to finding ongoing solutions to the global crisis of climate change. The process of colonization continues as long as Indigenous peoples' rights are denied and global warming continues unabated. If Canada truly respects a Nation to Nation relationship, the earth and all its inhabitants must be prioritized over monetary greed and the next seven generations protected as our children are our most valuable resource.

We uphold that more research is necessary for assessing

climate change and its impact to the well-being in the lives of Indigenous women, communities and Nations. Indigenous peoples have been affected by climate change in serious ways, including threats to food security, the sad disappearance of our relations including caribou and birds, our holistic well-being and access to traditional cultural practices. Threats to the earth have caused for the destruction and disruption of ecosystems. Due to the devaluing of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge there remains large gaps in climate change knowledge and about the intricacies of how each community and region is being impacted by global warming. QNW recommends a more detailed analysis of these critical issues and increased ethical consultation with Indigenous peoples.

There is a long road ahead of us in addressing climate change and its impacts. It is time that Indigenous knowledge and observations are valued in this struggle. Climate change affects all human beings and our relations but Indigenous peoples seem to be the first adversely impacted. Indigenous women are at the forefront of the climate change struggle; however, QNW upholds that as human beings we should not have to live our lives struggling against an oppressor but instead merit to live *Mino Madiziwin / Une Belle Vie / A Good Life / in our homeland*. This requires that the state - the Canadian government and policy-makers - assess the changes necessary for combatting climate change and implement policies that reflect this.



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