

Dear Métis Nation,

The Métis perspective on climate change is unique, as is the case with all Indigenous groups. Many Métis still rely on the land for their food, medicines, and cultural connection. Land has always been a significant aspect of cultural expression, a reality unchanged for the Métis since Red River. I grew up in East Prairie Métis Settlement, one of the eight Métis settlements in Alberta where it's common practice to supplement groceries with fresh moose, rabbit, and garden-grown produce. Berry-picking is a beloved summer pastime; I have fond memories of gathering saskatoons and blueberries with my mom and making jam afterward. Whenever I visited my Kokum's, there was always food to share. One of my favorite childhood memories is having my first rabbit stew while my Kokum and Dad laughed at my hesitance because I thought rabbits were too cute to kill. When I was sick, my mother would make me chew ratroot, and at gatherings, there would be plenty of laboom (mint) tea picked locally. Learning new stories would often take us out onto the land, a long walk through the forest and fields.

Land is our way back to ourselves as Métis, especially for those who grew up in cities or outside of their communities. It reminds us of who we are, who we were, and the future we want to build for those who will come next. So, it's no surprise that our innate connection to the land leads us to engage in discussions about climate change and stand at the frontline of climate change mitigation. Rebellion is in our spirit, so it's only natural that we would subvert the typically colonial processes of navigating climate change by creating our very own Métis Youth Climate Summit.

The Métis National Council hosted the first-ever Métis Nation's Youth Summit on Climate Change from April 5-7 in Ottawa. Created as a space for Métis youth to gather, learn, discuss, and deliberate on different facets of climate change mitigation, the summit was comprehensive yet not overwhelming in introducing Métis youth to the work in climate action. Topics ranged from Emergency Management to International Negotiations and Nature Conservation, covering various aspects of the industry and highlighting how our Métis perspective empowers us to lead in these spaces.

The summit was groundbreaking in that it not only had youth as participants but also as panelists. Representation of youth in this capacity is sorely lacking, not just in the climate action space. Seeing youth leaders sit on panels and facilitate discussions to guide other youth in becoming leaders in climate change activism was refreshing.

I had the privilege of sitting on a panel led by Kate Gillis, alongside other inspiring climate leaders. We discussed International Climate Relations and how our Indigenous perspectives give us a unique insight that sets us apart on the international stage. As the North American Youth Delegate Knowledge Holder for LCIPP, I shared my experience attending COP28 in Dubai and speaking to country representatives about traditional ecological knowledge that can

help shape climate policy and transition. We discussed the challenges of entering these colonial spaces as someone who sees the environment holistically rather than as a resource and how advocating for our rights and participation is essential to defending the land we love.

Other panels included discussions on the power of storytelling and creativity in advancing climate action across the motherland, as well as Indigenous-led solutions to create pathways to clean, affordable, and reliable energy. Each panel featured Indigenous youth leaders in their respective sectors who not only contributed to the conversation but also inspired other youths unsure of their place in the vast topic of climate change mitigation.

The weekend was filled with meaningful discussions, hearty laughter, and numerous opportunities for attendees to participate. Between well-led breakout sessions, meals, and exploring the Indigenous marketplace set up at the venue, the itinerary was packed, and I left each day feeling inspired. As someone who also engages with the colonial standard of climate gatherings - the United Nations - attending a Youth Climate Summit specifically created by and for Métis Youth who share the same perspectives as I do shed much-needed light in this race against a warming planet. More importantly, it ignited hope in the Indigenous youth leaders of today and tomorrow.

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