



Report on Provincial Engagement Sessions

Métis Nation of Saskatchewan
Prairie Resilience:
A Made-in-Saskatchewan
Climate Change Strategy

January 31, 2019

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the strategic document *Prairie Resilience: A Made-in-Saskatchewan Climate Change Strategy*, the Government of Saskatchewan presents current actions and proposed new measures to strengthen the province and build resilience to climate change. The Government of Saskatchewan recognizes that its relationship with the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan is very important to succeed in the face of climate change. It also understands the importance of maintaining and enhancing partnerships with Métis communities to address and adapt to a changing climate through actions that are guided by traditional ecological knowledge.

Through the execution of 19 community engagement meetings attended by a total of 500 citizens of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan and other stakeholders, we were able to provide feedback on climate change. This information led to the breakdown of specific issues related to *Prairie Resilience: A Made-in-Saskatchewan Climate Change Strategy* as follows:

- MN-S/Provincial Communication, Engagement and Partnerships
- Climate and Weather
- Water Quality, Quantity and Distribution
- Vegetation and Wildlife Distribution and Health

The viewpoint of Métis citizens in each theme is captured and discussed along with suggested actions to address issues. Actions and opportunities are then defined in the subsequent section.

MN-S suggests that it is capable and interested in the co-development and execution of a long-term monitoring program. The monitoring program will assess currently available datasets as well as establish monitoring activities in areas that lack sufficient data coverage.

Throughout the process, it was noted that the community engagement sessions undertaken have been positive and productive. We feel that more engagement across a broad spectrum is warranted. Regularly scheduled engagement with the appropriate subject matter experts will allow and create a positive dialogue and ensures transparency between MN-S and the Province.

It is likely that climate change will increase the frequency and severity of many types of events that will require a community emergency response. The due diligence of the MN-S requires them to undertake and review community emergency response plans as a priority. MN-S is requesting that the Province provides capacity assistance and expertise to assess and update plans. This step should prove useful in reducing the risk of property damage and loss of life.

PROJECT APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Métis Nation of Saskatchewan (MN-S) entered into an agreement in July of 2018 with the Government of Saskatchewan to engage with MN-S citizens in regards to the Province’s climate change strategy. The Province released its [strategy](#), in addition, several documents were generated:

- *Prairie Resilience: A Made-in-Saskatchewan Climate Change Strategy*. (subsequently referred to as *Prairie Resilience*)
- *Saskatchewan Climate Change Resilience Measurement Framework: A Conceptual Approach* (Draft Issued February 2018)

Two engagement initiatives were held on behalf of the Province by MNP LLP:

- Industries directly impacted by draft regulations, April 23, 2018
- Federated Sovereign Indigenous Nations, Saskatchewan Tribal Councils and First Nation Economic Development Agencies/Organizations.

MN-S engaged Limnos Environmental Ltd. (Limnos) to assist with engagement, analysis and reporting. MN-S and the Government of Saskatchewan agreed upon a scope of work and support for the project. From September 24 to November 15, 2018, a total of 19 communities were engaged for a total of approximately 500 citizens and other stakeholders present at the engagement sessions. The agreed-upon strategy, which was achieved, was to engage one to two communities from each region. The schedule and location of the engagement meetings are presented in Table 1.

Date	Location	Region	# on Fig 1
24-Sep	La Loche	Northern Region 2	1
24-Sep	Buffalo Narrows	Northern Region 2	2
25-Sep	Ile-à-la-Crosse	Northern Region 3	3
25-Sep	Pinehouse	Northern Region 3	4
26-Sep	La Ronge	Northern Region 1	5
1-Oct	Big River	Western Region 2	6
1-Oct	Prince Albert	Western Region 2	7
2-Oct	Tisdale	Eastern Region 2	8
2-Oct	Melfort	Eastern Region 2	9
23-Oct	Cumberland House	Eastern Region 1	10
24-Oct	Meadow Lake	Western Region 1	11
24-Oct	North Battleford	Western Region 1A	12
5-Nov	Saskatoon	Western Region 2A	13
6-Nov	Indian Head	Eastern Region 3	14
7-Nov	Yorkton	Eastern Region 2A	15
7-Nov	Melville	Eastern Region 2A	16
13-Nov	Estevan	Eastern Regions 3	17
14-Nov	Swift Current	Western Region 3	18
15-Nov	Regina	Western Region 3	19

TABLE 1. ENGAGEMENT SCHEDULE AND LOCATION

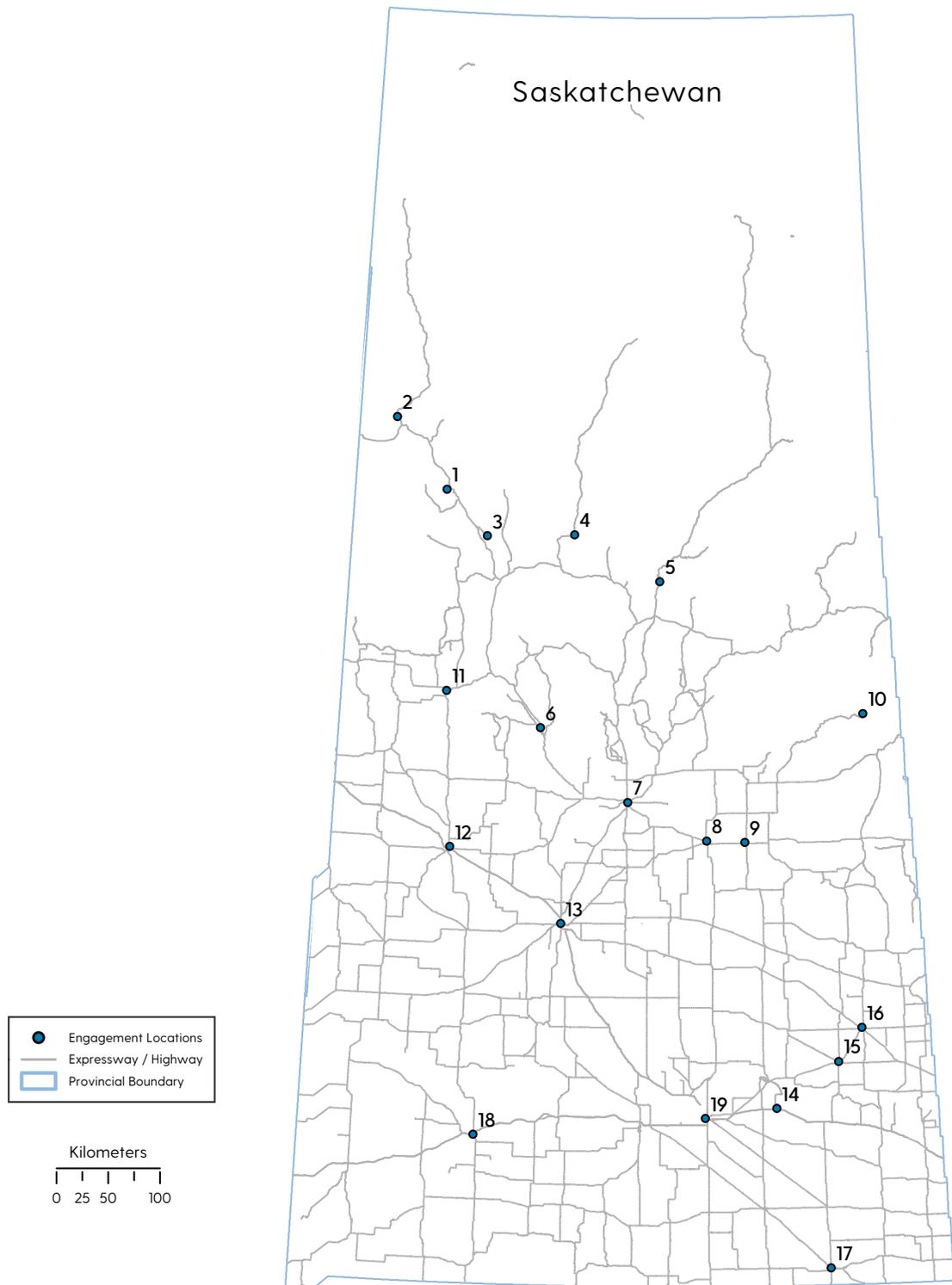


FIGURE 1. LOCATION OF ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS
DETAILS PROVIDED IN TABLE 1

THE METIS NATION OF SASKATCHEWAN

The MN-S is comprised of several regions and locals all falling under the jurisdiction of provincial governance. MN-S is a governing member of the Métis National Council, along with Metis Nation British Columbia, Metis Nation of Alberta, Manitoba Metis Federation and the Metis Nation of Ontario.

Citizens of MN-S have a unique culture that has evolved from people of North American Indian and European ancestry who coalesced into a distinct nation in the late 18th century. “Historical Métis Nation Homeland” means the area of land in west-central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis or Half-Breeds as they were then known. The Métis Nation – Saskatchewan includes values of both rural and urban citizens. Citizenship is predicated on individuals demonstrating this genealogy and cultural connection to that time and place and is governed by MN-S through the citizenship registry.

Under Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982, citizens of MN-S are defined as Indigenous. This confers all respective rights and obligations as defined therein to MN-S as a Rights Bearing Nation and to the Crown or its agents. It is important to note that engagement regarding the project upon which this report is based is not to be understood as the Province undertaking Duty to Consult, but rather to participate in open-ended engagement with the understanding that further (and possibly more formal) consultation regarding *Prairie Resilience* is warranted.

The MN-S has made guidelines and principles concerning engagement, consultation and accommodation available on its [website](#). These are summarized below:

- The fulfillment of the duty requires good faith on the part of all parties and consultations must be conducted in equitable, transparent and respectful manner.
- Timelines must be reasonable and provide sufficient opportunity for the Métis to review and assess the information provided by the Crown or industry.
- The Crown must recognize and support the unique capacity needs and realities of the Métis people and their elected governance structures at the local, regional and provincial levels.
- The Crown must provide the necessary funding/capacity to the Métis government or ensure the necessary funding/capacity is provided to the Métis government to engage with government and/or industry, as well as with Métis citizens.
- Consultations must be with the Métis government structures that are elected and supported by the Métis citizens. Consultations with individual Métis, service delivery organizations, mayors and municipal councils, and pan-Aboriginal structures cannot discharge the duty owed to the Métis, as a rights-bearing people.
- Métis government has the responsibility to consult with its citizens and represent its citizens, not the Crown or industry.
- Métis consultation processes must provide all Métis citizens the opportunity to participate and be heard (i.e. public meetings, timely information, etc.)
- Ultimate decision-making with respect to consultation and accommodation must rest with the affected rights-bearing Métis community and its citizens.

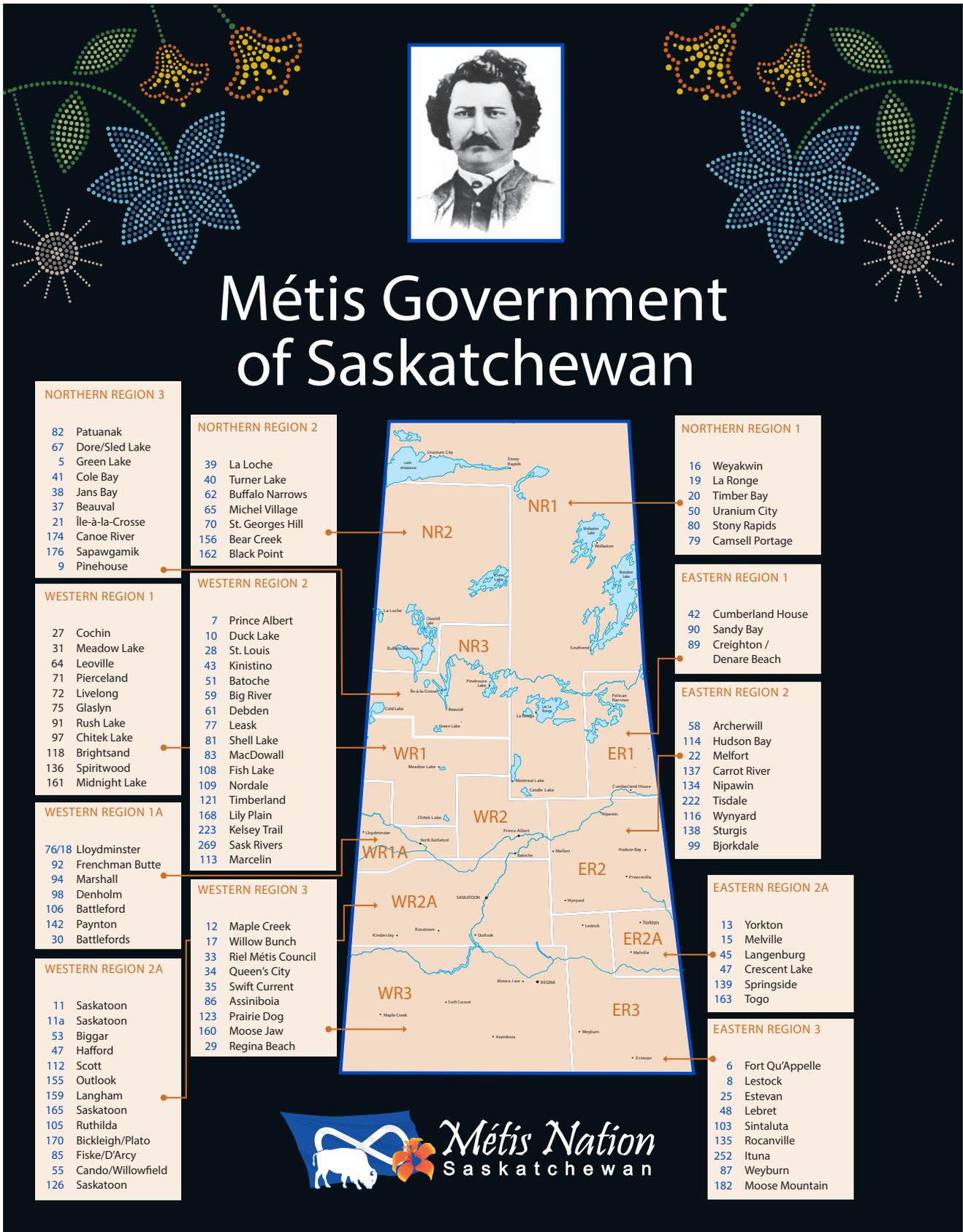


FIGURE 1. MÉTIS NATION OF SASKATCHEWAN GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

METHODOLOGY

The goal of the engagement sessions was to provide the Government of Saskatchewan the opportunity to introduce *Prairie Resilience* and to have MN-S assisted by Limnos to facilitate discussions around climate change. It involved the solicitation of questions and observations regarding the local and regional areas from MN-S citizens to provide a snapshot of MN-S concerns. The engagement process was developed and executed by MN-S following internal protocols. Session facilitation was the responsibility of a MN-S representative from the community or the provincial governing body. The engagement process was designed to allow attendees to have the ability to address a wide range of issues. Following short presentations (approximately 5-10 minutes each) from MN-S (Introduction to the session), Limnos (Introduction to Limnos) and the Government of Saskatchewan (Introduction to *Prairie Resilience*) the room was opened up to questions and comments from participants. Notes were taken regarding the discussion by a MN-S note taker, and later formed the basis for local session briefing notes held by MN-S and summarized in this report.

The goal of this report is to provide a summary of the information collected at the sessions as a whole and to create a thematic snapshot then. Each theme is related to one or more of the five areas considered in *Prairie Resilience*: Natural Systems, Physical Infrastructure, Economic Sustainability, Community Preparedness, and Human Well-being. The goal of this approach is to map out the themes of current concerns, but more importantly, provide a path forward for MN-S (as rights bearers) and the Province of Saskatchewan (as the Crown) to work in partnership to achieve mutual goals. The subsequent section provides context regarding this project from the perspective of MN-S.

PROJECT CONTEXT

Indigenous MN-S citizens often have a different perspective on environmental change than non-Indigenous citizens as many MN-S citizens still practice one or more aspects of traditional ways of life. This viewpoint is also more inclusive of a range of impacts rather than being strictly focused on climate. *Prairie Resilience* recognizes that there is a range of potential effects arising from climate change that could occur across the physical and human geography of Saskatchewan.

A second consideration is that many MN-S citizens indicated that any climate change pressures will affect landscape differentially based on the level of disturbance and cumulative impacts. Our thematic analysis will further define perceived issues, but there is a consensus that natural landscapes are much more resilient to impacts from climate change.

Finally, there is a consensus that a key to refining and complementing Traditional Knowledge is to assess the available western science datasets. As such we have commissioned a briefing note from the Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative (PARC) from the University of Saskatchewan. This document provides an analysis of weather station data, an assessment of climate before settlement from selected climate proxies and a forecast moving forward. This document will not specifically refer to the information contained in the PARC report, but we anticipate that this briefing note, as well as subsequent data analyses performed in-house, will inform and frame MN-S Traditional Knowledge.

WHAT WE HEARD:
THEMES AND LOOKING
FORWARD

INTRODUCTION

As previously stated, we have chosen to organize information collected from the engagement sessions into themes which can then be related to one or more of the five areas identified in *Prairie Resilience*. Our goal is that this will help both MN-S and the Province move forward on the planning and execution of the next steps that will mutually benefit both groups. We do not address all specific points brought forward but have them recorded in our community engagement documents, and they will be addressed as part of future anticipated work. The themes are not presented in any order of significance.

MN-S/PROVINCIAL COMMUNICATION, ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

For many citizens at the engagement sessions, this was one of the first times that they attended a community engagement meeting with the province. As stated by both the MN-S facilitators and the provincial representatives, the goal was to encourage a wide range of discussion. The Métis citizens brought up issues that do not fall within the scope of this project. This is a reliable indicator that more effort is necessary for engaging on a range of topics that would be useful for both parties. MN-S can commit to undertaking a review of issues that lie outside the scope of this project and bring forward engagement plans as appropriate.

The majority of MN-S citizens who attended each session indicated that they had not heard of the provincial plan. The opportunity to have provincial representatives explain the scope of what is legislated and proposed within the context of climate change and *Prairie Resilience* was beneficial. The consensus of MN-S citizens was that although the initial meeting was useful, further engagement is necessary with subject matter experts. The experts can then address local and regional issues.

The first round of engagements with the community sessions was co-developed but managed through MN-S protocol and principles. The initial engagement did not involve specific issues, and moving forward we anticipate sessions that are more focused on discussion topics that came directly from the Métis citizens at the community engagement sessions.

MN-S citizens recognized that resources made available during the engagement process helped to establish meaningful engagement as partners with the Province. The rights-bearing holders (MN-S) and proponents/Crown have a relationship that is asymmetric in terms of resourcing and expertise. The MN-S through this and other programs have been working diligently to improve capacity and increase symmetry with other entities. We suggest that both MN-S and the Province with its ministries and Crown Corporations work creatively to address these issues and provide positive outputs for both parties.

CLIMATE AND WEATHER

A concern raised during community engagement sessions was the increase in extreme weather events. Northern communities noted that the frequency and severity of high wind events had increased recently. Many southern communities recorded extremes in spring and summer precipitation events leading to overland flooding. Southern communities noted that seasonal extremes have become more common; with the example of 2018 which was one of the driest summers in a decade. The northern and central communities noted a change in seasonality. The communities noted with a consensus that winters have become warmer and spring conditions have arrived early.

The reliance on the traditional resources of the local landscape means many MN-S citizens are more likely to note changes in climate and weather. The instrumental record of climate in Saskatchewan extends back to the late 1800s. It was geographically constrained and designed to provide information regarding areas with larger populations, as opposed to areas that may be more representative of regional climate. The opportunity to use anecdotal evidence from MN-S citizens allowed to assess the adequacy of the instrumental grid and address the information gaps that may exist.

WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water was raised as an issue at nearly every community engagement session. Precipitation regimes vary significantly throughout the province, the south generally being dry, and the north being wet. River systems mirror this distribution, with watersheds from the South Saskatchewan northwards yielding much higher flow and less seasonal variability than watersheds in the south. Today there are no significant inter-basin water transfers in the province (water from Buffalo Pound to Moose Jaw and Regina as potable water being an exception).

The regions had significant concerns regarding water quantity variability, quality, and distribution. Examples of specific concerns include:

- Change in seasonal water level fluctuation impacting the growth of traditional medicine plants
- Impact of water quality on the fishing industry
- Blooms of toxic algae observed in lakes
- Water level management structures hazardous to the environment
- Local and regional flooding and drought
- Poor water quality stemming from climate change, agricultural and industrial activity and other undefined factors
- Water management practices impacting traditional ways of life and water quantity and quality

Water issues varied on the local and regional scale, with each community engagement session discussion bringing forth different concerns. There is a consensus amongst MN-S citizens that significant changes to water resources are negatively impacting the traditional way of life.

The belief is that impacts to water resources are significant and warrant further work. The suggestion is that MN-S works with the Province to identify existing archival datasets for waterways of concern. The Saskatchewan Water Security Agency and MN-S should develop a relationship to better understand their role in stewardship and management of water resources in the province. The MN-S position should be to provide better feedback on anticipated impacts to changes in natural and managed watersheds stemming from climate change and management practices.

VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE DISTRIBUTION AND HEALTH

MN-S citizens rely on the land for traditional food, medicines, and ceremonial practices. The Constitution Act of 1982, under Section 35 ensures access to these resources. MN-S citizens noted that there had been recent changes in the distribution of species. Animal species ranges have been shifting location presumably as a response to better foraging or predation opportunities found in other areas of the province. The traditionally harvested species have been decreasing in quantity and quality, and the seasonal availability of these species has shifted considerably. In many instances, citizens have noted that the quality of the fish has significantly decreased in the past decades.

The economy and environmental changes, resulting in loss of habitats, made reliance on traditional harvesting more difficult. MN-S citizens across the province noted a few instances of being denied access to Crown lands. The situation further exacerbates the MN-S citizens' attempts to access traditional foods and medicines.

The MN-S citizens as traditional land users suggest they should be instrumental in partnering with the province to understand these changes. Hunters, fishers, and gatherers could provide qualitative and quantitative data with regards to the variables noted above. A further step would be for the Province to commit to ensuring access to Crown lands and prevent private landowners and other parties from denying access.



THE PATH FORWARD:
ACTIONS AND
OPPORTUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

The previous section of this document details some of the suggested actions to follow up on specific themes raised during the first community engagement sessions. The next part of the report provides a proposed list of measures that will address issues raised by MN-S citizens. MN-S will moves towards building a better understanding of climate change impacts at the community, regional and provincial level, and create datasets that incorporate western science and Traditional Knowledge.

MONITORING

The themes listed above that MN-S foresees the establishment of a long-term monitoring program as a priority. The citizens of MN-S have concerns regarding the potential impacts that in many cases overlap those of other Saskatchewan citizens. The traditional use of land is vital in many cases for the livelihood of Métis citizens. The MN-S strongly feels that this traditional connection to the land provides insight into critical variables that can help create an effective monitoring system for all of Saskatchewan. The context of monitoring is to envision a program that includes the following:

- Assessment of the available instrumental record in order to identify gaps
- Engagement of MN-S citizens from all regions to better understand monitoring priorities and rationale
- Training of MN-S monitors with a focus on youth in monitoring methodologies
- Intergenerational transfer of Traditional Knowledge from Knowledge Holders to monitors
- Co-development with the Province of a long-term monitoring program that addresses data gaps identified by both parties
- Development of a data sharing agreement that maximizes public disclosure of monitoring observations

The MN-S review of *Prairie Resilience* suggests that much of the monitoring activity proposed above will need to be undertaken to ensure competent assessment of performance. The MN-S as a partner will allow benefits to both parties. The Province will have access to Traditional Knowledge that may not otherwise be accessible to them. The co-development and co-execution of monitoring ensure transparency for both parties and furthers the goals of the partnership. The engagement of MN-S youth creates a better understanding of environmental issues and their management from a pragmatic and evidence-based system. The reinforcement will go along with new involvement in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and employment.

REPRESENTATIVE AREA NETWORKS

During the community engagement sessions, the Province introduced the concept of representative areas network (RAN; <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/business/agriculture-natural-resources-and-industry/land-management/saskatchewan-representative-areas-network>). A question that arose from MN-S citizens was the process by which traditional and cultural resources were assessed in RAN lands. We suggest for new RAN areas that a co-development process for assessment accounts for Traditional Knowledge be developed and enacted with MN-S.

Our understanding is that RAN lands are under-represented in the south of the province. The MN-S is aware of several parcels of land in southwest Saskatchewan that are being transferred to the Federal or Provincial Crown that may be suitable for inclusion into the RAN holdings. The MN-S should have the opportunity to partner in the assessment of these parcels for inclusion.

Questions arose around how MN-S citizens may (or may not) engage in activities within the realm of traditional ways of life on RAN lands. The understanding is that participating in these activities would be limited not by the designation of a parcel as being a RAN holding, but rather on the form of protection (i.e., provincial park, wildlife preserve, etc.). The MN-S requests that the Province co-develops guidelines for their citizens regarding access to RAN lands based on protection status.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The MN-S communities believe that the increase in risk from extreme events caused by climate change, such as forest and grass fires and flooding, must be proactively addressed. The assessment and updating of community Emergency Response Plans (ERP) is a priority. The MN-S would like the province to indicate the resources available to conduct ERP assessments and updates. The above information and access will be useful to know for related programs such as FireSmart that could be accessed by communities. The considerable risk reduction in the potential loss of life and property can be achieved and will heighten the awareness of MN-S citizens to potential emergencies and how to react in an emergency.

The MN-S suggests that the Province supports an assessment of current ERP in Métis communities throughout Saskatchewan. This assessment would lead to updated ERPs that will need to be adopted and enacted by MN-S. The subject matter experts from the Province must ensure that MN-S First Responders understand the potential local hazards and response protocols and best practices.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION

The MN-S citizens noted that the impacts of climate change could only be perceived over long periods. The Métis citizens have a significant concern about the changes in the environment, and it was being noted that some of these changes will erode the ability of communities to remain viable. Environmental changes represent challenges but also the opportunity to create strategies for adaptation to new conditions. These strategies will allow for communities to stay resilient, healthy and viable in the future.

The assessment of the potential impacts of climate change on a community requires a multidisciplinary approach. The local and regional forecasts of climate change, as well as assessing and forecasting demographic and economic variables is essential to Métis communities. The desired outcomes would be defining and estimating the risk, mitigating the risk where possible and identifying adaptation strategies that will ensure enhanced community resilience. The MN-S and the Province could co-develop a protocol for this assessment and apply it to one or more, particularly vulnerable, communities.

RESOURCE, AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY

The shift away from natural landscapes reduces the resilience capacity of an area to mitigate stressors stemming from climate change. The MN-S notes several examples such as fire suppression management of a forest leading to a build-up of fuel, yielding more significant fire events. Climate change is driving an anticipated increase in the frequency and severity of fire events. The suppression in managed forests has a higher probability of undergoing a more catastrophic event. The present agricultural practices that require the use of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers already negatively impact soil and water quality. The climate change will potentially bring about warmer winters, earlier springs, and hotter summers. The extended growing season and new invasive pest species and weeds, require even more intense use of agricultural inputs and further negatively impact soil and water.

The MN-S citizens raised concerns regarding cumulative impacts to the landscape from the resource, agricultural and industrial sectors. The Métis expressed concerns about the concept of a ‘tipping point’ of the landscape where it would not be possible to continue traditional ways of life. One of the most difficult parameters to assess in the environmental assessment process is cumulative impacts. The assessment can be complicated when considered across sectors of development in communities.

The first step is to better understand the effects of climate change within the context of present-day scenarios. The risk posed by cumulative impacts requires a better understanding of the intensity and types of resources development across the province. The MN-S does understand that this may not be feasible for the entire provincial footprint, but an opportunity exists to assess areas that are representative of development intensity or types. The heightened concern, however, is due to the nature or severity of development. MN-S and the Province should explore co-development methodology to assess the present, as well as potential climate change and cumulative impacts.

FURTHER MN-S **PROVINCIAL ENGAGEMENT**

Prairie Resilience correctly points out that climate change is an issue that crosses nearly all government departments and Crown corporations. The MN-S understands that the initial engagement sessions were successful, although there is a range of issues that MN-S citizens would like the appropriate parties to address. The MN-S strongly suggests that the engagement undertaken thus far can be shared within the government as a template to address MN-S citizens in matters that are not directly related to this project.

The context of climate change anticipates that further engagement is warranted within the Métis communities. The information from this report must be returned to the community and assessed for future benefits. The basis of the feedback requires that focused follow up is necessary regarding local and regional specific interests. The MN-S considers the engagement process to be the beginning stage of regularly scheduled meetings. The methodology encourages communication, increased transparency and ensures that MN-S citizens are receiving information directly from governmental representatives.

CONCLUSION



The initial joint engagement sessions were successful, and the MN-S have begun the groundwork for further partnerships. The MN-S values this opportunity to raise what are unique issues and concerns regarding climate change and provide a path forward to achieve the goals of both MN-S and the Province with regards to *Prairie Resilience*. The MN-S looks forward to the future and the establishment of a Nation to Nation governance structure.

Specific findings include:

- The Métis Nation of Saskatchewan feels that the initial engagement sessions have proven positive and useful. We strongly suggest that this continues not only regarding *Prairie Resilience* but also on a broad range of subjects that are of mutual concern to MN-S and the Province.
- Climate change is likely to affect a range of natural systems that are already impacted by economic activity that has changed the landscape. The Métis Nation of Saskatchewan can develop and execute the monitoring of critical environmental systems. This program would include assessing all current data, analyzing existing data for gaps and implementing new areas for monitoring as appropriate. This process would incorporate the procedures of western science but would also be informed by the unique Traditional Knowledge held by the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan.
- Many Métis Nation of Saskatchewan communities are expected to be exposed to significant risk stemming from events such as forest fire and flooding that will be exacerbated by climate change. A comprehensive review of Emergency Response Plans is warranted for these communities at risk. By assessing and updating these plans, we can build community resilience, reduce the likelihood of loss of property and life during disaster events, and build community capacity to prepare for and address these events.

We look forward to further collaboration.