

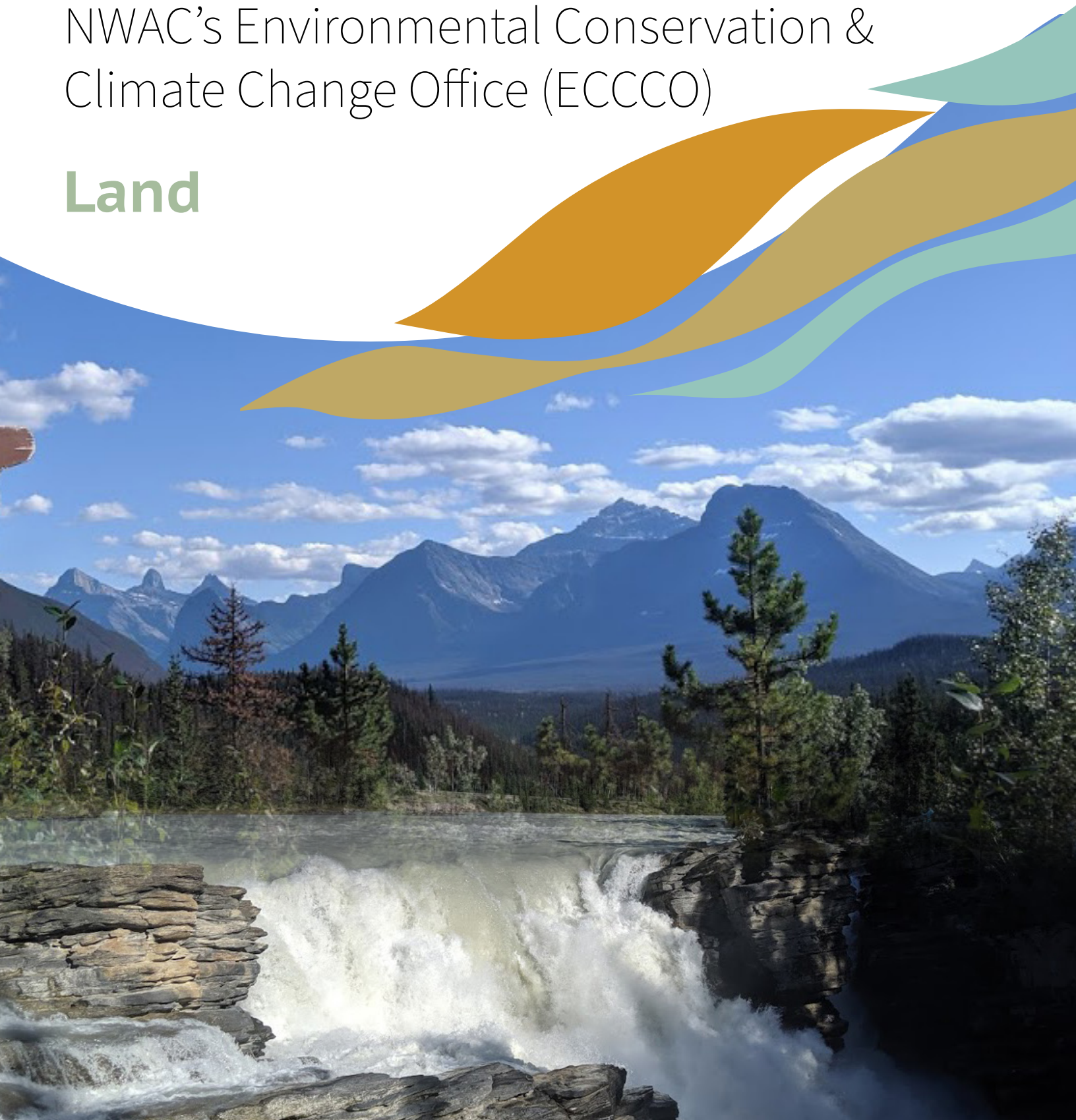
March 2020


# E-Newsletter

ISSUE 6

NWAC's Environmental Conservation & Climate Change Office (ECCCO)

Land





***The theme of the March edition of the ECCCO E-newsletter is 'Land.' While this topic could encompass volumes, this month's newsletter focuses on how climate change is impacting Indigenous women and gender-diverse people's land-based relationships and practices. The relationship between an Indigenous woman and her ancestral lands is a connection so deep and spiritual that it defies definitions—this deeply rooted connection is felt and lived. When climate change impacts the land, it affects Indigenous women.***

# The Land-Body Connection: A Reading List

By Isabel McMurray

As we move back into our communities and create space for healing in these uncertain times, I offer you a reading list. These articles and books speak to the land-body connection between Indigenous women and the land by highlighting the disruptions that colonialism has brought into the ceremonial communication between peoples and the land. These readings emphasize the parallels between the violence that has been inflicted against Indigenous women and the violence that has been inflicted against the Earth in the name of financial profit. Finally, the articles push you to think about your role in the name of decolonization and offers you tools and resources to work to achieve reconciliation.

## The Land-Body Connection in Creation Stories

Watts, Vanessa. "Indigenous place-thought & agency amongst humans and non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European world tour!)." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2, no. 1 (2013): 20-34, <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/19145/16234>.

## Resource Extraction and Violence

[Edwards, Kyle. "How we treat women." \*Macleans\*, May 13, 2019.](#)

[Markusoff, Jason. "Are 'man camps' that house pipeline construction workers a menace to Indigenous women?" \*Macleans\*, May 31, 2018.](#)

## Resilience and Resources

[Whose Land Is It Anyway? A Manual for Decolonization. Ebook: FPSE News, 2018.](#)

de Finney, Sandrina. "Indigenous girls' resilience in settler states: Honouring body and land sovereignty." *Agenda: Empowering women for gender equality* 31, no. 2 (2017): 10-21, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10130950.2017.1366179>.

[Violence on the Land, Violence on our Bodies: Building an Indigenous Response to Environmental Violence. Native Youth Sexual Health Network and Women's Earth Alliance, 2016.](#)

## More

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 2014.

Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011.



# Climate change impacts next generation's plant-based medicine

By Sarah Niman

The Earth provides healing plants, but climate change threatens the circle of traditional medicine knowledge transfer.

Climate change impacts, such as warming temperatures, eroding soil, and dangerous weather, challenge this generation's medicine gatherers. Healing is multi-faceted and physical health is a cornerstone upon which Indigenous women can work with ancestral, traditional medicines to treat their bodies and spirits.

Many Knowledge Keepers record plant-based medicine onto pages but learning about plant-based medicine always requires a hands-on and land-based approach. Indigenous medicine practitioners caution against reading a book or an article before heading out to harvest plants without a teacher. Knowledge should always come from someone who knows about the plant's proper uses.

The older generation must be able to take the younger generation by the hand and teach them about harvesting—the protocols, the ceremonies and the method of distilling the plant's healing properties for use. And, of course, only a Knowledge Keeper can reveal to the younger generation the secret spots where certain plants are known to grow. A complete knowledge transfer occurs over a lifetime.

Plant medicine can be administered as herbal teas, poultices, inhaled vapours, salves and other applications. They can be used to treat illness,

injury, gastrointestinal disorders and spiritual maladies. For example, conifer tea (spruce tea) is high in vitamin C and is effective in treating immunity-lowering illnesses such as viruses or, in the past, scurvy.

Tobacco, sage, cedar, and sweetgrass are also medicines used in smudging ceremonies to heal spiritual ills. The herbal smoke, however, is also known to have anti-microbial properties that can prevent spreading illness.

The Mi'qmaq use maskwiomin, made from the oil of birch bark, to treat skin conditions such as rashes, eczema and psoriasis.

Climate change impacts threaten this knowledge transfer as many Indigenous people work hard to reclaim ancestral medicine practices. Colonization introduced a Western-centric worldview that discounted plant-based medicine as witchcraft. Shamans and other medicinal healers were seen as enemies to Euro-Christian medicine doctrines.

Western medicine is geared towards physical healing, but traditional medicines from the land heal the body and spirit. The act of medicine gathering can also heal as an act of reclamation.

***“The older generation must be able to take the younger generation by the hand and teach them about harvesting—the protocols, the ceremonies and the method of distilling the plant's healing properties for use”***



**Read More:**

[How Climate Change Uniquely Impacts the Physical, Social and Cultural Aspects of First Nations.](#)

[The Disproportionate Impact of Climate Change on Indigenous Communities.](#)

[Climate Change and the Health of Indigenous Populations.](#)

[“Climate Change is killing our Mother Earth”](#)

[Climate Change Impact on Indigenous Peoples’ Water Security, Land Use, Among Issues as DPI/NGO Conference Holds Series of Round-Table Discussions](#)



# NWAC's traditional foods project brings land-based knowledge onto the rooftop

*By NWAC staff*

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)'s new headquarters will be more than just a workspace—it will wear a rooftop greenhouse and garden. The rooftop garden will be a place of healing, reconciliation and Indigenous culture, designed under the guidance of Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers. In collaboration with NWAC, Elders and Indigenous women recommended ways to address food insecurity and the transfer of Indigenous culture and teachings using traditional foods.

The garden will reflect Indigenous environmental stewardship and offer NWAC's staff and visitors a way to re-connect to nature in an urban setting. The garden will feature walkways and seating areas among local plants, traditional agriculture, and medicines.

As a space of healing, the rooftop garden will especially feature traditional medicines and a commemoration to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). The commemoration will be designed by Indigenous women, non-binary, and two-spirit artists and Elders, celebrating the lives of MMIWG and honouring their memories. The commemoration will be a place of honouring and remembrance, offering a peaceful healing space for survivors and families of MMIWG.

The garden will use traditional growing methods and local plants. NWAC will host ceremonies, teachings, and a series of training workshops designed by an Indigenous Elder to teach traditional agriculture methods to Indigenous women, girls, gender-diverse people, and their families.

In addition to the garden, NWAC's new workshop space will include an industrial-sized kitchen. NWAC will host workshops to build off the garden's food-based knowledge teachings, which will include growing, harvesting, canning, preserving, cooking or lessons on how to make baby food. These workshops will infuse storytelling, tradition, history, culture, and education for sustainability—participants will be able to take the information with them to their communities.

The rooftop will include a year-round winterized greenhouse to grow herbs and traditional foods. The greenhouse will ensure a supply of medicines, herbs, fruits, and vegetables throughout the winter months for continuous programs and resources throughout the year, using a land-based knowledge approach.





Native Women's  
Association of Canada



L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada

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