

Southwest Manitoba Priority Place

Environmental Conservation Gathering for Indigenous Communities Report



Buffalo field at the Sioux Valley Dakota First Nation.



Acknowledgements

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Sioux Valley Dakota Nation generously donated the use of the Veteran Hall and Charter Bus to host and transport participants. We also thank the community for their generous contribution of their communications staff's time for the event.

Land acknowledgement

This workshop took place on the lands of Sioux Valley Dakota Nation. The Southwest Manitoba Priority Place covers landscapes within Treaty 1 and 2 territories, the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, Ininiwak, Anishiniwak, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

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1.0 Background: Priority Places for Species at Risk

A Priority Place is an area of high biodiversity and conservation value both regionally and nationally that is regarded as a distinct area with a common ecological theme by its Indigenous and non-Indigenous inhabitants. Across Canada, there are currently 12 Priority Places. Each Priority Place is unique with varying terrestrial and non-terrestrial animal and plant species and opportunities for new and/or expanded collaboration and partnerships, particularly with First Nations, Métis, Inuit, industry, agricultural organizations, Watershed Districts, and rural municipalities. Priority Places have been identified across the country as part of the pan-Canadian Approach to Transforming Species at Risk Conservation in Canada. For more information visit: [URL](#)

The Southwest Manitoba Priority Place (SWMPP) Initiative is a collaborative, multi-partner project with the goal of improving species-at-risk conservation in southwestern Manitoba. This Priority Place Initiative is co-led by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) with support of a planning team, comprised of members drawn from local conservation organizations, the Government of Manitoba as well as the Government of Canada. In addition, a Joint Community Relations Team has been established to develop and implement a Joint Community Relations Strategy for the area, which will be a crucial tool for cultivating partnerships and communicating information.

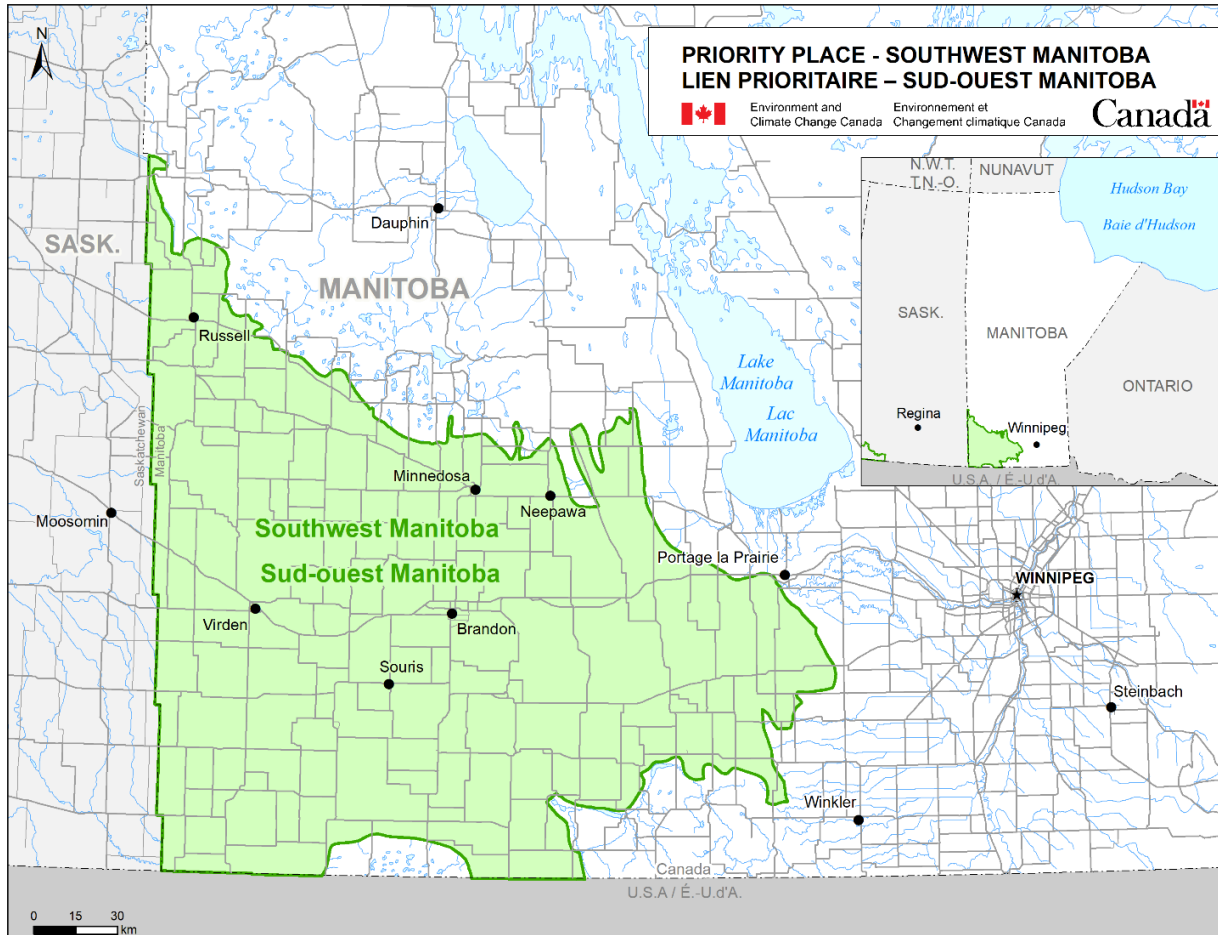
The objectives of the SWMPP Initiative are to strengthen the relationships between existing conservation partners, explore common ground with new partners and communities, and recognize a common vision that represents the shared interests in the area. Together with a broad group of partners, we will deliver a community driven, multi-partner, adaptive management-grounded approach to multi-Species at Risk (SAR) recovery in the Priority Place based on the following principles:

1. Multi-species and ecosystem-based approach.
2. Shared leadership and priorities.
3. Community-driven.
4. Reconciliation-minded.
5. Built to strengthen partnerships.
6. Evidence and knowledge-based decision making.
7. Improved monitoring and reporting.
8. Improved conservation outcomes for species at risk.
9. Increased co-benefits for biodiversity, ecosystems, and communities; and,
10. Delivery of strategic community relations and communication actions to inspire conservation action.

A collaborative Integrated Conservation Implementation Plan (ICIP) will be produced by this initiative, with the objective of honoring and incorporating the diversity of socio-economic and cultural

perspectives in southwestern Manitoba in the spirit of collaboration and reconciliation. These perspectives will inform a shared vision for the landscape, identify barriers and opportunities for conservation, and generate a collaborative and effective conservation strategy to be implemented on the landscape.

Figure 1. Map of the Southwest Manitoba Priority Place (SWMPP)



2.0 SVDN Environmental Conservation Gathering for Indigenous Communities

A priority of the SWMPP initiative is to seek input and perspectives from, and develop relationships and partnerships with, both Indigenous communities whose traditional territories overlap the SWMPP area, and non-Indigenous communities and organizations that work and live within the Priority Place. Previous engagement included a virtual Indigenous engagement session on February 16, 2023, followed by an in-person workshop on April 4, 2023. Both were facilitated by the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER). These were followed by seven rural community workshops across the area. If you would like to read about these workshop please click the following links for [CIER's report](#) on the first two workshops, and the [SWMPP Planning Leads' report](#) on the seven rural community workshops.

The Objectives of the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation Environmental Conservation Gathering were:

- To share perspectives about nature and incorporate community and cultural values into the vision of the SWMPP Initiative.
- To share information about local conservation activities/programs and challenges that affect conservation in communities.
- Hear about species at risk and habitat conservation programs in communities.
- Identify activities and partnerships to advance local conservation efforts.

The “Southwest Manitoba Priority Place Indigenous Environmental Conservation Gathering” was held in Sioux Valley Dakota Nation (SVDN) on September 21st, 2023. Building on the momentum of previous SWMPP engagement sessions, the gathering sought to collect a range of perspectives from multiple partners to support a community-driven and collaborative approach to multi-species/ Species-At-Risk (SAR) recovery within the SWMPP. Invitations were extended to 11 First Nations communities overlapping the SWMPP area, including:

- Birdtail Sioux First Nation;
- Canupawakpa Dakota Nation;
- Dakota Plains Wahpeton First Nation;
- Dakota Tipi First Nation;
- Gambler First Nation;
- Keeseekoowenin First Nation;
- Long Plain First Nation;
- Rolling River First Nation;
- Sioux Valley Dakota Nation;
- Swan Lake First Nation; and,
- Waywaysecappo First Nation.

2.1 Attendance

The Indigenous Environmental Conservation Gathering was attended in person and virtually by 110 participants, representing 9 First Nations located within the SWMPP area, 2 First Nations outside of the SWMPP, 9 Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations, and 3 non-Indigenous allies located nearby the SVDN reserve. Of the 110 participants, 108 attended the gathering in person, and 2 via Zoom. The event was also livestreamed on the [SVDN Governance YouTube channel](#) and has garnered over 315 views by the time this report has been drafted.

Table 1. Attending First Nations and Organization to the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation Environmental Conservation Gathering for Indigenous Communities.

First Nations	Organizations
Birdtail Sioux First Nation	Nature Conservancy of Canada (co-lead)
Canupawakpa Dakota Nation	Environment and Climate Change Canada (co-lead)
Dakota Plains Wahpeton First Nation	CM Indigenous Development (organizer & facilitator)
Dakota Tipi First Nation	Birds Canada (presenter)
Keeseekoowenin First Nation	Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources
Rolling River First Nation	Indigenous Kinship Circle* (presenter)
Sioux Valley Dakota Nation	Manitoba Important Bird Areas (IBA)
Swan Lake First Nation	Skinner Native Seeds (presenter)
Waywayseecappo First Nation	Wildlife Conservation Society (presenter)

*Due to unforeseen circumstances, the presenter from the Indigenous Kinship Circle could not attend in person or virtually. Christian Artuso, Environment and Climate Change Canada and member of the Indigenous Kinship Circle, presented on behalf of the group.

2.2 Gathering Overview

The Indigenous Environmental Conservation Gathering was a great success, made possible by all the participants. Participants were actively engaged in valuable and constructive discussions held throughout the day by responding to the prompted questions and breakout sessions. Following each breakout session, 2 volunteers from each group went to the front of the room to share their group discussions, and each of the sessions had 9-10 similarly sized groups. There were also 5 presentations held during the event with invited speakers from 6 different organizations.

Before the event began, attendees had time to sign in, enjoy snacks and refreshments, and view a display of cultural art, artifacts, medicines, and historical photographs curated by Sioux Valley Dakota Nation Knowledge Keeper Eugene Ross – many of which were handcrafted by him and also passed down generationally from community members. The display included a variety of items derived from bison and wild game, including tools, hides, furs, moccasins, accessories, skulls, antlers, medicine and pipe bags, bladder bags, traditional toys, and more. Also included in the display were tools for traditional food preparation, woven willow baskets, beadwork, sculptures, paintings, and traditional medicines. Eugene Ross answered questions throughout the day and later presented about the importance of maintaining cultural identity and the cultural connections to the ecosystem and the interdependence between them.

The Indigenous Environmental Conservation Gathering started with an opening prayer from local Knowledge Keeper Eugene Ross and a drum prayer song sung by SVDN community members Jeff Taylor and Bill McKay. Sioux Valley Dakota Nation Councillor Michelle Rosmus gave a warm welcome to the community and words of encouragement to the attendees. The gathering was facilitated by Cheyenne Ironman, CM Indigenous Development, and member of SVDN, and Rebekah Neufeld and Steven Anderson of the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

#1 – Defining a vision: What words come to mind when you think of nature, conservation or species at risk?

At the beginning of the gathering, we asked participants to write three words or phrases that they think of, or three things they value when they think of nature or conservation. We had participants stick these notes to the wall of the facility and then also compiled them into a word cloud. For the word cloud, we also included key words from responses to the pre-survey questionnaire for the question “*What do you value about nature*”.

Figure 2. Word cloud showing common word/phrases that participants thought of when they thought about nature, conservation, or species at risk.

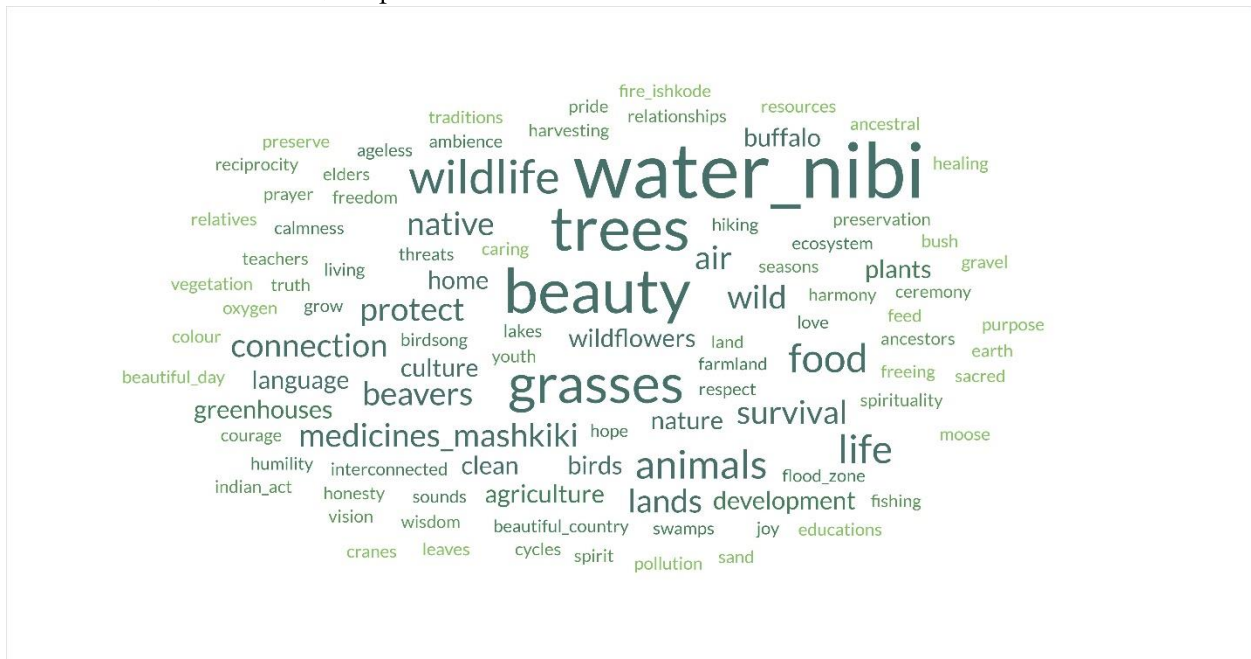


Figure 3. Sticky notes showing words and phrases used to generate the word cloud (Fig. 2).



Participants listened to 5 presentations throughout the day. The first PowerPoint presentation followed the opening remarks and was delivered by Ron Bazin of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) on the Southwest Manitoba Priority Place Initiative. The presentation included an overview, objectives, timeline, engagement strategy, progress, and ecological significance of the Southwest Manitoba Priority Place and outlined partnership opportunities. Questions from the audience were centered around the jurisdiction and management of Crown Lands in the province and what will result from the Gathering and previous SWMPP engagements held with Indigenous peoples.

First to follow the lunchbreak was Elder Eugene Ross. He emphasized the importance of prayer, cultural identity, language, resilience, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and how they are connected to the environment and conservation. The next PowerPoint presentation was delivered by Peter Soroye, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and Amanda Bichel, Birds Canada on ways in which Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) can support Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship through various modes – research, monitoring, collaboration, resources, policy development, and how the KBA Coalition can facilitate the consideration of Indigenous Knowledge in conservation policies and decision-making. The KBA Canada Coalition is composed of organizations and individuals with an interest in identifying and using information about KBAs; WCS Canada, Birds Canada, and Nature Serve Canada are responsible for steering the national KBA initiative.

The next PowerPoint presentation was delivered by John Skinner, owner of Skinner Native Seeds (SNS), a business which specializes in native prairie seeds and grassland restoration. John Skinner’s family has an extensive history of conservation. Their farm is located just north of Asessippi Provincial Park in Manitoba. His presentation included various native plant species (forbs, grasses, and wildflowers) and

how SNS has been using them to support restoration projects in Canada's prairie region. Cheyenne and John shared about his role in Sioux Valley Dakota Nation's restoration initiatives by working with the Nation to develop restoration plans for their bison herd pasture, potential pasture area, beautification of the viewing area, and plans for a native plant garden. He visited the community on multiple occasions, giving hands-on lessons to community staff and youth on sustainable seed harvesting, plant identification, and teaching the SVDN Community Garden staff about seed cleaning, germination, and growing.

The last presentation held at the Gathering was led virtually by Christian Artuso, Environment and Climate Change Canada, presenting on behalf of the Indigenous Kinship Circle (IKC). In his PowerPoint presentation, Christian outlined the Central Grasslands Roadmap Canadian Working Group and the IKC, to which he is a member of both groups. The presentation included an overview of the Central Grasslands Roadmap, the roles of both groups and how they can support Indigenous communities. The IKC is a cross-border Community of Practice for Indigenous people and allies working together to advance the wellbeing of communities and grasslands across Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Cheyenne Ironman, Sioux Valley Dakota Nation has been a member of the IKC since early 2022 and her involvement has resulted in new partnerships, resources, and exposure for the initiatives in the community.

These presentations were integrated between break-out sessions throughout the day which provided opportunities for in-depth group discussions and knowledge-sharing. The results of these sessions are summarized in the 'What we heard' section below.

Figure 4. Participants watch as a workshop attendee presents on their group's discussion on a breakout session.



The event concluded after the last Sharing and Knowledge Transfer session with a closing prayer, door prize draws, and gifts for the invited speakers.

Attendees were invited to an optional field trip to visit the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation's bison ("buffalo"/Tatanka) herd following the conclusion of the Gathering. The herd of over 100 bison also consists of 13 white bison (Tatanka Ska) which hold immense cultural significance to the Dakota people. Attendees were bussed by the Nations' new charter bus to the bison compound located on the reserve, where local Elder Oswald McKay shared information on the history of the SVDN herd and the story of the White Buffalo Calf Woman (Pte San Win). The day concluded after the attendees returned to the Veteran's Hall.

Figure 5. Elder Oswald McKay shares the history of the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation bison ("buffalo"/Tatanka) herd and the story of the White Buffalo Calf Woman (Pte San Win) with gathering participants



Figure 6. Group photo of gathering participants visiting of the bison (“buffalo”/Tatanka) field.



3.0 What We Heard

3.1 In-person Gathering - Summary of Group Breakouts

3.1.1 Breakout 1: Priority Topics – Based on the Registration Form Questionnaire feedback – what we heard; do you agree?

Participants were provided with a summary of the feedback received from the questions in the registration form. They were prompted to break into groups and respond to the following question: **Based on the Registration Form Questionnaire, do you agree? What other priorities do you have in your communities?**

Participants formed 9 groups (each with notetakers) and responded to the prompt. Then a Group Sharing and Knowledge Transfer session followed, with each group having 2 volunteers sharing their feedback. The main themes, priorities, barriers, and challenges that emerged from the discussions were identified and listed below.

Theme 1: Increase environmental awareness & education using an ecosystem approach and hands-on learning/ knowledge transfer. (all 9 groups)

Participants expressed a collective desire among communities to drive tangible changes on the ground with the wellbeing of the ecosystem and the wellbeing of future generations at the forefront of all decision-making processes. However, they felt more awareness and education is needed so initiatives have the best chances of success and continuity, and that a hands-on approach such as land-based learning, is the most (or would be) the most effective strategy in their communities. Land-based activities help individuals grow relationships with nature and their communities and it facilitates the transfer of Traditional Knowledge, language, culture, and skills.

Participants indicated that a hands-on approach can and should include Western Science. They said overcoming apathy, a lack of knowledge, and understandings about human impacts on the environment requires both perspectives and a collaborative approach. They also highlighted their desire to see conservation and restoration actions take an ecosystem approach, rather than focusing on a single species.

They wish to see community members of all ages making more sustainable choices in their daily lives, being actively engaged in decision-making, having vast opportunities for direct participation, and to have a sense of ownership in environmental initiatives. They would like leadership to communicate more with members, being informed and supportive, and to take a step back to allow community members to drive initiatives and participate in conservation boards and districts. They would like leadership to advocate for funding, build relationships with other Indigenous communities, non-Indigenous landowners, non-government organizations, and governments. Communities wish to develop policies and implement sustainable/ best practices in all areas of governance and in the management of lands and waters – and increasing environmental awareness and education is a crucial step in achieving their goals.

Priorities:

- Learning about tangible actions and opportunities to ensure future generations have access to clean water, food, housing, traditional foods & medicines, as well as access to community-owned and operated alternative energy sources and finite resources (such as land, minerals, fossil fuels).
- Revitalizing traditional practices and cultural values surrounding sustainability and co-existence with all living beings through a land-based approach. Encourage everyone in the community to get involved and focus efforts on youth.
- Learn and be able to implement better, more sustainable practices at community & individual levels.
- Learning how to maintain and protect habitats for critical species.

Challenges:

- Lack of knowledge – not knowing where to access reliable scientific information.
- Lack of funding and resources to increase capacity & employment.
- Overcoming apathy and sense of responsibility to act. People need tangible solutions and accompanying evidence or reasoning to believe they can make a difference.
- Individuals need to see all people, all levels of governments, and industries doing more/ taking collective action, as they have greater impacts on the environment.
- Changing ecosystems impacting transfer of TEK – habitat degradation, animal migration, reduction or loss of plant and wildlife species, contaminated water, some activities requiring travel to greater distances (logistics can become a barrier).
- Inadequate consultation/ engagement from other levels of government; changing legislation and control over lands often results in less access to them and impacts the ability to exercise traditional rights and practices.
- Lasting impacts of colonization and the residential school system (harms to language and cultural identity, breakdown of community and family, addictions, poverty, etc.)

Barriers:

- Land-based or cultural approaches to environmental awareness might not be understood, or seen as less valid than Western Science, and therefore less likely to be funded.
- Introducing & maintaining changes can be costly, require time, community (or individual) buy-in, human capacity, additional products/equipment/ infrastructure, and loss of convenience.
- Funding is either limited, unavailable, difficult to access or apply for, not known about, or has complicated reporting systems.
- It can be difficult to find appropriate contacts and establish partnerships.
- Provincial Conservation and government not providing information about lands – such as maps of Crown Lands, limiting physical access, excluding First Nations in processes to convert Crown Lands (provincial and federal).

Steps/ actions that communities are taking:

- Integrating land-based teachings, language, and culture into the education curriculum.
- Hiring land-based coordinators, language instructors, and programming to bridge generational gaps between Elders and youth. Funds are primarily accessed through the Jordan's Principle Initiative (JPI) available to all First Nations communities. The JPI is a flexible funding program to

benefit children's health and wellbeing by providing access to appropriate health and educational services, subsidizing costs, and funding community cultural, language, recreation, and prevention programming. Several communities are increasing environmental awareness, sustainability, culture, and language through JPI funding.

- Community workshops, gardening programs, recycling programs, etc.
- Networking and creating mutually beneficial partnerships/ relationships.

Theme 2: Community well-being (clean water, food, housing, recreation, health and wellness, public works, etc.) (all 9 groups)

Prioritizing community well-being is essential, yet meeting basic needs such as access to clean water can pose significant challenges for many communities. Groups identified systemic challenges such as stagnant or limited increases in government funding over time leading to critical infrastructure being in a state of disrepair or unable to meet the increasing needs of growing populations. Participants noted that having resources and infrastructure to address social, health, and economic challenges listed below were equally important to them and their communities.

Priorities:

- Safe, clean drinking water now and for future generations.
- Land management – planning for infrastructure and future development in harmony with the environment/ ecosystem.
- Acquiring or improving infrastructure: water treatment plant, health and wellness centres, treatment facilities (addictions), recreational facilities for all age groups – youth, adults, and Elders, and more housing (see next bullet).
- Addressing the housing crisis with an eco-friendly approach (energy efficient, energy alternatives such as solar power or geothermal heating and cooling). Provide housing for families (including small families), Elders (with assisted living), and single people.
- Solutions to bring the cost of living down/ more affordable.
- Feeding the community with healthy, affordable (or free), locally produced food (organic agriculture, community gardens, bison and cattle production, chicken coops, and supporting hunting, fishing, and foraging).
- Manage diverse commercial and economic development streams (agriculture was cited the most)
- Recreational groups, programs, and infrastructure provided for all age groups – youth, Elders, and adults.

Challenges:

- Increasing housing or development with limited reserve lands.
- Increasing housing or development with limited lands suitable for development.
- Balancing human/community needs with conserving nature (keeping balance) with limited or no environmental data, science-based education/knowledge, or capacity to carry out assessments and monitoring programs.
- Finding resources and funding to address basic and social needs.

- Adapting to climate change – more severe and unpredictable weather and events such as flooding, drought, fires, etc.

Barriers:

- Funding is either limited, unavailable, not widely known about, and/or has complicated application or reporting systems.
- In addition, some funding programs rely on evidence-based metrics rooted in Western Science or require project delivery by people with academic accreditations or collaboration with academic institutions (which networking, mistrust of academics, or differing values/ vision can be additional barriers).
- Lack of government support.
- Consistency in support and capacity –
 1. Employee turnover - having dedicated people to maintain programs, projects, and transfer knowledge/ skills.
 2. Funding availability and support is susceptible to changes in federal and provincial government priorities.
 3. Change of local leadership every 2 years.

Steps/ actions that communities are taking:

- Learning and exploring opportunities for funding, capacity building, economic development, etc.
- Bringing more awareness to issues, lobbying for change.
- Communities learning and helping one another, collaborating, or taking regional approaches to challenges.

Theme 3: Recycling and Waste Management (8 out of 9 groups)

Nearly every group voiced the need for better solid waste management and recycling/ waste diversion programs in their communities. Among these groups, they were concerned about having limited reserve lands (running out of space for landfills/dumps) and concerns about soil, water, and air contamination, as well as animal and human impacts.

Priorities:

- Bringing lots of awareness and education into the community (how & what to recycle, tips to reduce waste, etc.).
- Divert as much waste out of landfills as possible by implementing household recycling (with pick-up services), accessing Producer Responsibility Organization programs (for example, used tires, batteries and electronics, hazardous waste, etc.), and composting.
- Teach/ revitalize traditional sustainability practices such as repairing, reusing, reducing, sharing, not wasting, and using sustainable/ biodegradable material, bringing own dishes to events/ feasts, etc.
- Cleaner communities – organizing community cleanups and reducing littering.

Challenges:

- Lack of funding for capital purchases, resources to increase capacity & employment to implement a household recycling program with pick-up services or separation of waste.
- Many of the challenges are the same as the first theme – overcoming apathy, sense of responsibility, convenience, and costs for alternatives.
- Lack of recycling education – sometimes garbage ends up in recycling bins.

Steps / actions that communities are taking:

- Community recycling bins (must drop off).
- One community transfers all waste to a municipal landfill (Canupawakpa Dakota Nation) and is registered with several Producer Responsibility Organizations.
- Community compost bins & vermicomposting.
- Community clean-ups.
- Workshops held in schools and communities to increase awareness, teach recycling.

Theme 4: Self-sufficiency and community sovereignty (7 out of 9 groups)

Nearly all groups clearly identified “self-sufficiency” and “sovereignty” as priorities – while all groups identified local empowerment (increasing employment, capacity building, knowledge transfer, skills, youth leadership, etc.) as a crucial step in achieving other goals they identified. All groups wished to see solutions driven and carried out by the members of their own communities and to have the community members trained, motivated, and able to mentor others to keep initiatives thriving well into the future. Several noted that more external networking and collaboration with organizations/ governments is needed, but ideally, any collaborative initiatives should be inclusive of youth and community members.

Priorities:

- Capacity building in all areas: more employment, training, and mentorship programs and empowering youth to become leaders.
- Control/ management of lands by and for Indigenous communities.
- Control over own economies (agriculture cited the most)
- Local food economy – agriculture, community gardens, greenhouses, bison and beef, chicken, and greater support and knowledge transfer for hunting, fishing, and foraging.
- Data sovereignty.
- Building relationships with surrounding farmers.

Challenges:

- Lack of capacity, funds, or not knowing where to begin.
- Being under the Indian Act.
- Social challenges – physical, mental, spiritual health and wellbeing.

Steps / actions communities are taking:

- Gaining more control and jurisdiction to govern themselves.

- Youth councils – youth are encouraged to share their perspectives, actively participate in events, and volunteer.
- Work mentorship programs.
- Building employment capacity through training and funding opportunities.

3.1.2 Breakout 2a: What kind of activities or strategies would you like to see in your communities?

Following the same format as the first breakout session, participants formed into **new groups** and later presented their ideas and responses in a Group Sharing and Knowledge Transfer session. Attendees were asked: **What kind of activities or strategies would you like to see in your communities?**

The list below represents the most frequently mentioned and emphasized activities and strategies identified by the groups. See the table below for a full list of activities identified in this session.

Activities:

- Land-based activities/ teachings* offered to community and schools through the curriculum.
- *See table below for all land-based activities participants identified.
- More workshops, training, and programs designed for hands-on learning and held outdoors.
 - More education/ awareness through resources, workshops, and programs for the community and schools about **Environmental conservation & protection of natural resources**:
 - Stewardship & stewardship programs/ networks
 - Action/mechanisms to prevent destruction or degradation of lands, loss of traditional plant medicines.
 - Identification of plants and medicines (incl. traditional names & teachings).
 - Identification of critical species native to the area (incl. Species at Risk).
 - Identification of Species at Risk and invasive species information (such as leafy spurge, zebra mussels, wild boar) - including geographical spread and how they overlapAddress or prevent overuse of land and water.
 - Education about the impacts of agricultural chemical run-off and other contaminants in water, soil, air, and wildlife.
 - Education about recycling – more workshops and programs for the community and schools.
 - Increase understanding of bison management and its beneficial impacts on the environment as a keystone species

Strategies:

1. Increased Community & Leadership Involvement (9 out of 10 groups)
 - More effort to make events interesting, engaging, and fun for youth.
 - More involvement from band leadership: improved communication with the community, more consultation/ engagement, enforcement, and **follow-up**. Participants noted that follow-up to community engagement sessions are rare.

- Better communication: community members are always informed, up-to-date, and have in-depth understandings about the direction of decisions affecting them.
 - Involvement of an Elder council for consultation and information sharing.
 - Pool resources and collaborate with other programs (not just Jordan’s Principle)
 - Start projects with ceremony.
2. Youth Involvement and Outdoor Activities
- More involvement from youth in environmental activities.
 - Encouraging connection/ relationship with the land and nature.
 - Reduce the dependency on technology/ electronics (phones, videogames, etc.).
 - Bringing in experts in Western Science and local Knowledge Keepers.
 - Expand school curriculum to be more experiential of conservation opportunities and outcomes.
 - Expand school curriculum to be more experiential of conservation learning (using a land-based approach), opportunities and outcomes – using an ecosystem approach and hands-on learning/knowledge transfer.
3. Supporting community-based monitoring, build local capacity to conduct assessments, restore habitat and monitoring; establish goals or metrics at the local level
- Work together to identify activities that need to be monitored and implemented at the local scale; guided by local aspirations and perspectives.
 - Finding ways to support other priorities that are connected to health and wellbeing.

Table 2. Land-based and other activities mentioned in Session 2a:

Land-based Activities:		Other types of activities:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elder and youth medicine picking • Identification, teachings, and names of traditional plant medicines • Traditional foods • Traditional gardening & harvesting – Indian corn (pshdayapi) • Tanning hides • Community hunt & hunter camps/ gatherings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture camps • Tipi set up • Connections with horses • Wild horse races • Kayak and canoeing • Survival skills • Obstacle races/ challenges • Land and water stewardship (traditional practices and teachings) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree planting program • beading and sewing classes facilitated by knowledge keepers and elders • Drum making • Habitat restoration – planting native plants • Seed collection workshops • Sports and recreation • Saddle making • bike races

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishing & fishing camps • Traditional and cultural teachings & values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a multi-generational space for gathering & teaching about nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • memory walks
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3.1.3 Breakout 2b: What partnership opportunities exist, or you want to see? What resources will be needed?

*Note: The following lists were compiled by gathering participants and not exhaustive.

Partnerships (both existing and/or needed):

- A centre or office to share information and available resources:
 - Programs
 - Funding
 - Improve communication (where a lack of transparency exists or is perceived)
 - Support with funding applications and project management.
 - Indigenous student field work recruitment- information hub for finding suitable candidates – to increase involvement of youth in environmental activities.
- More networking between First Nations
- Schools (k-12), trades, academia
- Other First Nations
- Surrounding farmers/ landowners
- Organizations, businesses, funders
- Formation of local organizing committee for environmental projects & funding
- Bring in experts/ people knowledgeable outside of the community (to fill need)
- Citizen science platforms

Specific Organizations/ Businesses identified:

- Skinner Native Seeds
- Manitoba Conservation District
- Conservancies for wildlife, plants, grasses, water, and land stewardship
- Key Biodiversity Areas program/ network
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada – Indigenous Pathfinder program
- Food Matters Manitoba
- Waterways – An Indigenous-led program that works to provide canoe lessons to Indigenous youth in Manitoba
- Manitoba Solid Waste Management

- Little Buffalo Youth Camp - Elders teach moccasin making, fur mittens, etc. while sharing teachings and stories
 - Industry – those working in the area for assistance and knowledge transfer regarding nature and biodiversity management (includes members of the conservation community spending time on the land with Elders to learn about Indigenous perspectives on environmental issues)

Resources (both existing and/or needed):

- Elder and community knowledge
- Funding/ mazaska/ shoonia
- Committed, invested groups of individuals
- Proposal support – process, how to write
- Access to information
- Mapping of species
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and training
- Meeting space
- Transportation vehicle(s) to deliver programs
- Opportunities for networking + assistance with travel and accommodations
- More ways to share/ pool resources
- More access to land (to practice land-based activities, exercise traditional rights)
- Equipment and supplies – for example – gardening supplies, lumber, seeds, tools, etc.
- Gun safety courses, information about regulations, guns, and ammunition

Funding Programs identified:

- 2 Billion Trees Initiative
- Nature-based Climate Solutions Fund
- Aboriginal Fund for Species-at-Risk (AFSAR)
- Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP)
 - Advance incentive and insurance programs

Note: The above list was compiled by gathering participants and not exhaustive. Additional federal and provincial funding programs may be available for some initiatives.

What others can do to help:

- Offer consistent and continuous funding programs.
- Embrace Indigenous Knowledge and methodologies of learning by doing.
- Adapt funding programs or collaborative initiatives to be inclusive to the whole community – roles and spaces for everyone to participate, contribute, or learn.
- Adapt programs/ initiatives to be more inclusive by addressing transportation barriers.

- Create or share opportunities to visit, gather, and learn about the communities, the people, and cultural protocols.
- Extend invitations, share opportunities to network, and offer assistance to remove potential barriers wherever possible.
- Collaborate on initiatives that can lead to greater opportunities for education or employment.
- Bring back recycling incentives.
- Share information, resources, and equipment where possible.
- Learn more about First Nation hunting rights.
- Greater transparency to help Indigenous peoples access more land (Crown lands) to practice hunting and other Inherent Rights.
- Increase/ improve Indigenous engagement – could be modelled after AAFC’s Indigenous Pathfinder’s program or just having a consistent contact(s) to help Indigenous people navigate the organization or departments’ available resources or programs and to connect with the right people.
 - Updating environmental sciences curriculum to incorporate Traditional Indigenous Environmental Knowledge - support Indigenous student participation in environmental science

3.2 What We Heard: Gathering Short Summary

This section of the report identifies and summarizes the common or recurring themes throughout the gathering. Many common themes were evident throughout with the common themes being: *Environmental Health and Ecosystem Services, Collaboration and Engagement; Cultural Connections and Community Sovereignty; and Knowledge and Resource Sharing.*

3.2.1 Key Concerns and Challenges:

Environmental Health and Ecosystem Services

Challenges that exist under this theme were often attributed to an under-appreciation of nature and natural endowments. In many cases environmental damages that were noted by communities were the result of Western society’s past and current development. In addition, some participants noted a growing disconnection between youth and their societal connection to nature and the land. Several contributing factors stemming from colonization and intergenerational trauma (e.g. the ongoing impact of residential schools) were identified including the impacts of addiction, the advancement of technology, and systems that disrupt communities’ traditional lifeways. Youth programming represents an opportunity to redress these impacts and connect with nature (see below). The impacts of climate change on the health of the land and water were also a concern, and future impacts were an area of uncertainty.

Collaboration and Engagement

Community members identified that there is generally inadequate and inconsistent engagement with Indigenous communities prior to policy/program development. Current approaches to decision-making do not meet the needs of communities or are not effective, or the correct people are not engaged. They also noted policies or programs tend to favour Western approaches and metrics (rely heavily on quantitative data or single-species approaches). Furthermore, current programs and policies have

unintended consequences like perpetuating the disconnection of Indigenous people and their lands, Rights, and practices. A common example was the privatization of crown lands without proper engagement or consultation.

Further, a lot of incentive programs are created for private landowners, and current programming further perpetuates this disconnection and does not consider roles for Indigenous people to participate in these programs. Opportunities should be explored for Indigenous people to participate and collaborate with incentive program delivery.

Cultural Connections and Community Sovereignty

Participants noted that they often have a lack of control over land, due to the impact of the Indian Act and other policies that reduce access to land or ability to exercise traditional Rights and practices. The harms of colonization to Indigenous communities' language, teachings, and cultural heritage need to be redressed, and conservation initiatives need to consider and incorporate truth and reconciliation in their development.

Knowledge and Resource Sharing

Participants identified gaps between Western Science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge that need to be bridged to move forward in partnership with communities. In addition, communities can struggle to discern the truthful, relevant, and useful information related to the environment and conservation, due to the sheer abundance of information available from the internet, government, and conservation partners. Much of this information is provided in highly technical documents that are inaccessible to communities without local expertise or capacity. Presenting this information in a way that communities can understand and use requires both educated and knowledgeable staff, as well as time and resources to modify language and translate information. Participants also expressed a desire to know more about the impacts of climate change that may occur at a community scale.

To allow for environmental conservation, the need to also advance socio-economic opportunities within communities was also identified. Current programs available are often short-term funding or resources, which are limited in effectiveness. By the time a program becomes well-known, figured out, or accessed; priorities and resources change, which causes initiatives lose momentum and key partners follow suit. Participants felt current programs are also restrictive and confusing in their funding specifications, making access to these resources difficult and time consuming.

3.2.2 Key Priorities:

Thinking about strategies and priorities in the future, the following overarching strategies emerged as suggested priority areas to focus future efforts.

Key strategies for challenges under the theme of *Environmental Health and Ecosystem Services* included:

- Ongoing land and water stewardship
- Training and support for adaptive management
- Greater involvement of youth in conservation and land-based programming
- Incorporation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge into existing land management plans

Key strategies for challenges under the theme of *Collaboration and Engagement* included:

- Support for interconnection between Indigenous communities and with the land
- Partnerships and relationship building with multiple nature organisations and industries
- Co-development of conservation and funding initiatives that can produce mutually beneficial results and growing strong partnerships that are rooted in respect, transparency, and co-learning
- An all-encompassing ecosystem-approach to collaborative conservation – because everything in nature is interconnected.
- Collaborating with Indigenous people to work with with private landowners to employ practices like prescribed burning which originated with Indigenous people
 - This type of collaboration honours the history indigenous people have with the land and does not appropriate or misrepresent the practice as a “new and innovative tool”

Key strategies for challenges related to *Cultural Connections and Community Sovereignty* include:

- Acknowledging and working to redress harms to culture, land, species, and habitats.
- Co-developing initiatives that can produce mutually beneficial results and growing strong partnerships that are rooted in respect, transparency, and co-learning
- Increased access to lands for traditional uses(food/medicine/culture), supporting the transfer of language and the connection it forms between people and the land
- Ensure access to land and resources for experiential immersion and personal connections to the land which are vital ways of passing on cultural knowledge

Key strategies for challenges related to *Knowledge and Resource Sharing* include:

- Education for communities and youth
- Capacity building to access grant/funding application opportunities
- Plans with actionable and tangible outcomes
- Reciprocal learning through Truth and Reconciliation

3.2.3 The above strategies could help to achieve the following desired future outcomes:

Environmental Health and Ecosystem Services:

- Without water we can't live – nature should be the first consideration of decision-making
- Food security -including gardening and access to a variety of healthy and abundant natural food and game
- Clean and available water - now and for future generations
- Care and stewardship of lands and waters
- Health and wellness within communities
- A future where people are connected to and value nature
- Natural places are in better condition than they are now
- The resilience of lands and communities is supported by programs designed to protect nature for future generations and strengthen the values they have for nature

Collaboration and Engagement

- Collaborations and partnerships that are mutually beneficial with opportunities for co-learning
 - Consultation and communication occurs at the right scope
 - Community-driven Policy and program decision-making
 - Diverse Partnerships– even beyond the SWMPP project boundary
- A greater focus on and empowerment of youth, so they carry forward the knowledge and skills to meet their needs sustainably and maintain ecosystem health

Cultural Connections and Community Sovereignty

- Preservation and celebration of cultural identity and livelihood
- Recognition that we are not separate from nature – cultural identities and languages evolved with nature and nature evolved with the relationships and sustainable practices
Indigenous people employed
- Support for community sovereignty
- Experiential immersion and personal connections to the land continue to be vital ways of passing on cultural knowledge, crucial for maintaining continuity in endeavors, and building continuity for initiatives
- Traditional use of lands (food/medicine/culture) – and the connection that language brings - are the fabric of life
- Stories and the knowledge of elders create connections

Knowledge and Resource Sharing

- Opportunity to learn about the natural world and connected ecosystems, through social connections, events, and recreational activities
- Resources are available for economic and social needs
- Initiatives are formed that produce mutually beneficial results and growing strong partnerships that are rooted in respect, transparency, and co-learning
- All people have access to enjoy natural spaces
- Climate change information is readily available and helps communities plan for the future
- The disproportionate impact of climate change on Indigenous communities is recognized and resourced equitably
- A plan for the Southwest Manitoba Priority Place that delivers actionable and tangible outcomes

4.0 Next Steps

The SWMPP Planning team has been drafting a conservation plan which will include inputs and ideas expressed by communities and partners. The priorities, challenges, strategies, and opportunities identified in this gathering will be incorporated into this conservation plan where they connect with goals and objectives that support resilient and healthy landscapes for biodiversity and species at risk and the people and communities that rely on them. For those strategies and priorities that may not align directly with the scope of this plan, this information will be incorporated into other initiatives by project partners, and shared with not only the organizations that participated, but also conservation, government, and community partners across Manitoba.

The ICIP team and other partners will continue to build on relationships created through the workshops and gatherings, and where possible engage communities throughout the next steps of this project and through other conservation initiative. A Joint Community Relations (JCR) Team will establish a joint engagement strategy that will serve as a useful tool for continuous, efficient, and effective community engagement to continue the relationship building started with these workshops and gatherings.

Through winter and spring 2024, the following activities will be occurring:

- 1) The project team will be incorporating feedback from all the community engagement sessions into the conservation plan, and share this report and feedback received with partners across Manitoba.
- 2) Advisory groups will be established to provide guidance and expertise on relevant and specific conservation theme(s) of interest.
 1. Advisory groups will draft strategies through targeted working groups focused on priority threats, species, habitats, or strategies.
- 3) Reports and communications materials on the outcomes of the overall conservation plan development will be developed and deployed through various channels.
- 4) A first iteration of the SWMPP Conservation plan will be completed by March 2024.

5.0 Appendices

5.1 ‘What We Heard’ – Pre-Gathering

Prior to the workshop, invitations were sent to communities along with a Pre-gathering questionnaire. In some cases, these questions were asked in interviews with interested communities. Below are the questions and responses received to this questionnaire. In many cases, responses are grouped by the age of the respondents, with youth, adults, and Elder’s responses as categories.

5.1.1 Question 1: What do you value about nature?

Youth Responses

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calming, Relaxing. • Calming, going for walks. • Water and air. • Land. • Everything because nature is beautiful in every and all ways. • The animals, I love animals and I hate that most are dying out because of humans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How pretty and providing it is. The colours and the sounds and relaxing. • Everything I like it all. • I value the trees and the ground from which we plant. • All of the environment. • Maybe it’s the fact nature is our main way of getting food and building materials.
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Adults’ Responses

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother earth and the life she created through herself that’s reflected in every being. • I value everything about it – the connection and calm feelings you get when you’re outside. I love taking in the beauty, all the different sounds coming together in the spring through fall, the stillness in winter...Nature provides everything we need. • I value the beauty of nature and the different teachings and medicine that it offers. • I value the connection that I feel when I’m outside. It’s something that is deeply ingrained in me since childhood. Having the freedom to play outside, in the trees, going for walks, camping out, and watching my parents grow their gardens was special. Mother nature gives us so much. • Connectedness and inspiration, reminds me of our place in the world, and our relations. • Fresh air, growth. • Preservation. • It’s beauty and diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The spirituality within our relatives. • The spirit of nature and our connection to our environment. • The relationship we have with nature. The foods, the medicines, and other resources it provides us. • I value the traditional medicines and the positive intake on our mental health that nature brings to us. • Fresh air, plants, and wild animals. • I value it all, keeping it alive and well, and for it to continue yearly and prosper. • I value everything about the environment. • All the environment. • Everything that it provides to us. Water, land, trees, and animals. • Food – without clean food the human body doesn’t function. • I love the seasons and watching stuff grow. • Water, animals, caring for the land. • The air, land, water. • The resources it provides. • Natural balance. Nature provides everything we need.
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Elders' Responses

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The abundance of traditional foods and medicines in our territory. • The beauty of it and the calming. • Water is life. • Water. • The Presence of animals, trees, hunting...absence of clean water, availability of land and clean air. • Everything – we have to take care of it cause it takes care of us, we depend on nature it doesn't depend on us. • Love the colours of the changing seasons – nature is beautiful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weather and all the animals. • Mother nature in general. • I value all wildlife – birds, animals, plants, trees, etc. • Environment – taking care of land/ plant more trees they're our source of breath. No chemicals or pesticides should be used on the land. • I love the seasons changing, the weather. • It's beauty, spiritual connection I feel when surrounded. It's ability to provide all the components of life.
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5.1.2 Question 2: What are your community's biggest priorities?

Youth responses

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving people homes and making sure the community has everything it needs. • Educating the children. Making programs which people can participate in. To grow and expand the community. Keeping the people together and out of jail. • My community is big on clean water, safety, nature, and healthy environments in and surrounding the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children. • Going pesticide-free. • Water and land. • Keeping the community Safe. • It would be nice to have a youth centre. • I don't know. • Making it a better place. • Food and ways of making money for the community.
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Adults' Responses

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting the medicines and respecting the animals and the land. • Housing – infrastructure. • Taking care of youth and elders. • Food security in a time that is getting more expensive to live. • Taking care of our people – ensuring people have access to food, getting more homes in the community, cultural and language programming. Food security and food sovereignty are major priorities, not only that but ensuring the foods are traditional, healthy, grown locally, and free of pesticides, herbicides, and other chemicals. A lot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would say the children, they're the future of the community. • To get the gardens to prosper more and more each year and become abundant for our own people. • When it comes to nature, I believe that the main priority is the harmful and long-lasting effects of chemicals on the land and water. • Going organic. • Going pesticide-free and other chemicals. • Current state of affairs? Elections and politics. Food insecurity is a big issue, and clean drinking water. A safe community. There have been a lot of
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<p>of change has happened in the past few years to support more land-based and environmental programs and we make sure to incorporate language and culture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land conservation and water management. • Youth having a lot more programs for everyone basically giving people second chances. • Our communities' biggest priority right now is commercial development and residential development. • Food sovereignty, mitigating impacts to the river from Agricultural runoff. Accessibility to traditional foods and medicines. 	<p>violent deaths related to the ongoing drug and alcohol issues. Lack of housing, and poverty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-sustaining. Get to a point where we don't have to leave to get basic items. • To be honest, I'm not too sure. • Keeping wildlife & small creatures, birds. • Profit. • Sovereignty and prosperity. • Protection of animals. • Wetland protection and restoration, water monitoring, migratory bird monitoring and riparian restoration. • I am connected in some ways to Hamiota/ Kenton communities. It seems the priority is profit.
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Elders' Responses

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of drug and alcohol abuse on people; it effects physical, mental, and spiritual health. Shortage of housing, unemployment, education issues, etc. like most communities. • Education, communication, the children, and the youth to make a better community. • To have clean water and land conservation. • To have clean water and land conservation. • More housing for our people. • Traditional culture – ties in with our life. Community should all be taught tradition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing, food, and the children. • Trees. • I feel the community's biggest priority is the well-being of families (parents, children, and elders), the environment, and climate change – what the future holds for us. • The children – the youth; growing gardens, people should be growing their own food, being self-sufficient. • (Social challenges) Stop young children from being mean to each other. • Our environment has changed a lot from when I was young and that's why I'm interested in your work and giving support where I can.
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5.1.3 Question 3: What factors, motivations, or perceptions in your community are barriers to protecting nature and achieving your community's priorities?

Youth Responses

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone respects and values nature in our community. We are taught to respect the earth. • The other humans. • I don't really know what. • Keeping our communities clean and safe, for wildlife and other animals in the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't know. • Not letting community know of any projects that involves water and land. • Knowledge gaps and government policies. • Economic or societal beliefs. • None.
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Adults' Responses

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lagoon project, knowledge gaps. • Knowledge gaps, there is pollution to our waterways by farmers spilling their chemicals into rivers. • Big companies do the destruction. • Government policies that allow development without a plan for future generations. • There are a lot of competing interests – we have limited reserve land and being in a valley bounded by the river with a lot of flood plains makes it challenging for housing and infrastructure development so we're limited on how and where we can build, but also want to protect and enhance biodiversity as much as possible. So, in thinking long-term is how do you balance taking care of our people and preserving nature, while facing climate change? • I tend to believe that the main factors within the community are lack of education surrounding local environmental issues. Misunderstanding of community barriers and how surrounding practices affect us locally. • Policies or lack of information sharing – politics, possibly. • This is what I will be exploring with my community when it comes to concepts of protected spaces. • Location (First Nations located on less desirable lands, swamps, surrounded by farm lands). Shortage of lands. Government funding is never enough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's no land-base worker in our community anymore. When we did, he brought us a plastic shredder and it would cut the plastic into smaller pieces to be reused for other things. I would like to see that going again sometime in the future. • I don't think there's a land-based worker at the moment, nobody doing this work right now in the community. • I am not too sure about this at this time. • There are none. • All examples mentioned, knowledge gaps, societal beliefs, economics and government policies. • Teaching why it's important on what we are trying to do for our future and working together with an open heart and mind. • People are too focused on their work than on the environment. • Knowledge gaps & transportation. • Gaps in knowledge on preservation. • Only leadership makes decisions. • There is no awareness and lack of community drive. Feels like not enough people care or take the environment into consideration. • Funding, knowledge gaps, community participation. • Focus on profit/ yield-based agriculture, factory farming propaganda from industry, lack of compliance officers, corrupt environmental protection departments.
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Elders' Responses

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politics, lack of communication, and information, much, much more. No band meetings. • Teaching the young kids from the beginning – need to instill those values like being self-sufficient and the cultural values (such as respect for all life) and traditions. Teach them from a young age to be proud of who you are, and not rely on the government. • Not enough people believe in climate change and making changes in their lives such as wasting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough knowledge, political decisions without community input. • Funding. • Sandy soil, trees. • I feel leasing our lands out to farmers is our biggest barrier. Mother nature is damaged and destroyed by all the chemicals that are used. • Lack of education and caring – you still see people littering and that's an easy change to make. • Plastics – need recycling improved (pick up from homes), could do plastic bottle drives, cans,
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foods, polluting water, throwing away trash, driving all the time. • Societal beliefs.	food items shouldn't be taken to the dumps. Do something about water and drainage – drainage to rivers.
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5.1.4 Question 4: What is already being done (current initiatives) to protect nature in your communities? Are they effective? What other concerns would you like to see addressed?

Youth Responses

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of our farms are going organic and we value mother nature a lot, we protect the wildlife and we plant a lot of seeds. • We all went seed-picking (all native seeds) to plant them in other spots around the community. • Going pesticide free on the land. • The new water treatment plant and community gardens are two big things that are helping our community and the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The security and the people of Sioux Valley naturally have love for the land will come to it's defense. I believe there will be future projects to further increase the security. • Yes I guess the restoring of the grasslands. • I don't know. • Nothing. • The JP Land-based program. • Community clean-ups.
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Adults' Responses

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land-base workers, elders gathering, teaching the next generation the responsibilities that we have as Indigenous peoples. • Water pollution. • Speaking with elders and community members. • Replanting acres of farmland for community use. • Being done – grassland restoration, restoring former crop field back to grasslands, sustainable bison management planning, community gardens, greenhouse, and lots of land-based programs. <p>Other concerns I'd like to see addressed – solid waste management, our dump is almost full and we can't keep making holes in the ground and burying or burning garbage – there needs to be long-term planning, recycling programs, and cultural/ attitude shifts to consume less and think of our garbage as a more permanent issue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think we're going organic. • Going pesticide free. • Water treatment centre, working on upgrading homes, restoring land with no chemicals, bringing in natural energy. What I would like to see is the Mouth (fishing spot) to get help with fishing – tables structures for cutting up fish and benches). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would say when we have our community clean up in the community it brings us together and get plenty of garbage bags full, and also our recycling bins we have provided to us. I find it useful because there's not as much garbage to throw away a lot of it can be recycled. • We recycle and have community clean-ups once in awhile. • We are growing natural plants that grow wild here. We are trying to ensure that plants/ vegetables are abundant. We are a work in progress. • I am not entirely sure or well informed about what is currently being done. I understand that there has been change with the farmlands and pesticides being used. Other than that I would like to know more about future plans. • There is some recycling being done but not enough. The garbage dump is filled with items that are recyclable and can be reused in other areas. The community's garbage is taken here and set on fire. Dangerous chemicals then leaked into the ground, poisoning the soil and ground water. We are polluting our lands, and the habitats of animals that live around the dumps.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would like to see the river that flows through the community be healthier. • Fines for starting fires and I would like to see the protection of animals discussed more. • Brokenhead Wetland Ecological Reserve, joint projects with the University of Manitoba. Much work has to be done. • Wayway has started a recycling program but there hasn't been much education and information shared. • Restoring the prairie grasslands, soil management, going organic with our fields. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many to list, but happy to see food sovereignty discourse but more money making needs to occur to protect and enhance language, lands & water, and culture. • Project to mitigate toxins in river by planting filter species, Beautification team which supports clean up or river and community. Received government climate adaptation funding to support efforts. • 1) recycling, energy conservation initiatives, nature trails; 2) concerns - same as above; 3) air pollution from feedlot and vehicles, lack of community food production/ education.
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Elders' Responses

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aquaphor pollution, wastewater system development. Harvesting issues. Land and water rights, development. • I don't see anything being done to protect our nature. The lagoon project tore up a major mint patch and sage patch without community input on traditional picking sites. • Cattle....will think more on this. • Will think more on this. • Not there in the community a whole lot – but the importance of education to the children and our culture having pride in our culture and instilling it in them when they're young. Knowing their traditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grass fires and clean water. • Less littering. More cigarette disposals. • Mother nature is being damaged in our community and used as land owners are allowing it. We need to make some changes for our future generations to come. • They have recycling bins now, but more education is needed on how to properly recycle (example – I seen a garbage bag in the recycle bin), and we have the community gardens to feed the people and it helps the pollinators. • Housing concerns, community gardens – traditional ones. Better policing within the community. Elder meetings – have high schools included as they are the future leaders. Name roads in Dakota.
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5.2 Gathering photographs

Figure 7. Gathering participants during a breakout discussion.



Figure 8. Gathering participants during a breakout session.



Figure 9. Gathering participants during a breakout session.



Figure 9. Gathering participants watch a breakout group present on their discussion.



Figure 10. Gathering participants watching a presentation.



5.3 Transcripts from Group Breakout Sessions

5.3.1 Breakout 1:

Group 1

Issues

- save the bees
 - planting wild flowers
 - Albert Einstein – If the bees go, humans are next
- Long-lasting effects of chemicals on the land and water
 - can't use the land anymore
 - land changing – flooding
 - mineral rights
 - oil drilling
 - fracking
- Affecting wildlife and humans
- Clean water for future generations and for wildlife
- Sustainability of finite resources
- More education on recycling dangerous chemicals, products
- Organic approach to food
- More eco-friendly minded choices/daily living
- Reusing and reducing our (stuff) carbon footprint
- Interconnected – biodiversity *
 - “web of life”
 - “sacred hoop”

Barriers

- lack of funds/interest
- expense – cheaper to buy disposable than biodegradable
- disconnection from land and cultural teachings (due to colonization and residential schools)
- lack of communication/education

What is being done?

- tree planting
 - recycling
 - workshops
 - greenhouse
 - land based programming
- Lands department
- gardens
- comm + home

What concerns would you like to see addressed?

- more effective recycling community wide approach recycling pickup
- grassfires every spring and fall
 - kills good species

- ruins habitats for species at risk
- weeds thrive
- survival – how to purify water

Group 2

- clean water
- recycling and pickup
- cancer – is our environment causing cancer
- youth activities (land based, etc.)
- pesticide free/organic
- windmills
- replanting trees
- cultural activities
- community gardens (potatoes, traditional corn, etc.)
- eco friendly houses
- solar panels/wind power/wind turbine
- land based activities
 - hunting/hunting camps
 - hiking
 - fishing
 - tipi set ups
 - kayaking
 - ceremonies
 - working hides (rawhides, drums, robes, jackets)
 - protect land and water (pick garbage, lobby gov.)
- horse riding/maintenance (Dakota are a horse people [Shunk Wakan])
- replant our fields with traditional plants and medicines
- self sustaining agriculture (community gardens, chickens, buffalo, etc.)

Priorities

Building relationships – with surrounding farmers, communities

- youth council/activities
- elders single/couples housing (assisted living)
- community wellness centre (exercise track/equipment)
- activity groups for all age groups (mentoring programs, hunting, beading, golf, baseball, dancing, singing, etc.)

Group 3

Spirits within:

- clouds
- fires
- winds
- trees

Nature and spirituality are all connected

Trees are the source of life, we need them to breath

- provide life for us. Tables, chairs, homes

- provide food (apples, oranges, etc.)
- Make Recycling bins:
- plastics/cans
 - food waste, to use as compost

Group 4

Good understanding of what nature offers

Animals we don't see as much!

- beavers
- moose
- prairie chickens
- wild turkeys
- muskrats

Animals we want to continue to see!

- bears
- fox
- deer
- buffalo
- elk
- moose
- cougars
- birds (all)

Foods/Nature

Hunting
Fishing
Gardening
Gathering wild berries
Roots
Medicines

Health/Mental Health

- tea
- smudge
- fresh air
- water

Group 5

What do you value about nature?

- it's giving, it provides habitat, food, medicines as long as we care for it
- it's resilient if we give it a chance
- spiritual connection, grounding
- wildlife
- all of it

What are your communities biggest priorities?

- housing and commercial development
- water, safe drinking water in advance
- agriculture
- land management and native administration
- relationships with nature: diplomacy and healthy communication
- profit and keeping-up-with-the-joneses
- natural area preservations and restoration
- self-sufficiency as a community and permaculture
- proper sewage infrastructure
- proper sanitation services – recycling

What factors, motivations or perceptions in your community are barriers to protecting nature and achieving your community priorities?

- lack of education and awareness
- environmental misinformation
- apathy
- lack of community or feeling one has an ability to act
- access to tools and resources
- lack of government support and/or infrastructure
- lack of appreciation for vital resources (like plastics) reusability

What is being done?

- recycling
- caveats protecting
- conservation areas
- community gardens
- organic agriculture
- biodynamic agriculture
- education for youth
- developing resources
- Dakota Bird Book

Needs done?

- more protective caveats
- more education about resources and place/projects
- native grasses restored in ditches, etc.
- elimination of chemicals*

Group 6

Question 1

Agree with the concept of conservation but this needs to include all people – farmers, municipalities

- the Indian Act controls what happens on all lands
- need to be a general policy

Example: pesticides and fertilizers that run into rivers

Question 2

Priorities:

Land use policy

- growing our own food
- Control of economic opportunities in our communities (i.e. hay/bison)
- need to take personal and collective action instead of complaining
- community policies to address community issues – beavers, grassfires,
- expand recycling program to include batteries, oils, paint, etc.
- protect the land for recreational purposes for the youth (i.e. swimming)
- protect the plants/medicines
- develop recreational facilities for youth. i.e. swimming pools, etc.

Communities need adequate resources to deal with disasters (major fires etc.-> adequate fire department/training)

Group 7

Overall: Ceremony

Brokenhead Ojibwe Nation

- water
- ag
- wetlands
- prairie protection
- Brokenhead River
- Community to Community communication/partnerships/monitoring programs
- Data sovereignty
- assessment/monitoring
- wildlife/Bird inventory
- soil assessment
- drug & alcohol abuse
- housing

Sioux Valley

- SW (??) hill – trees
- Access to indigenous food/garden – elders
- more sharing from hunting, trapping, fishing
- elk/moose introduced in 70's/80's – result of forestry and ag
- birds – more(none??) today – climate change
- food, frogs and agriculture effects

Other

- tree planting initiatives
- ticks
- air quality
- drought and flood mitigation

- invasive species
- on the land gatherings and engagement

Group 8

What are your priorities?

- inclusion in conservation initiatives
- mentorship – indigenous youth empowering our future leaders
- water- protecting our water systems from contamination
- landfill sites – decommission – cleaning it up
- recreation- for youth to keep out of trouble
- for elders – socialization and to give them purpose
- recycling – solid waste management
- looking after the buffalo (food/water)
- food source- community garden community hunts
- housing – more housing, more space for band members)a lot of intergenerational members living together)
 - energy efficient
- employment and training – capacity building for our youth – certification in all sectors
- Hydro – solar panels – wind farm
- Health centre – physician/nurse practitioners on site
- *Youth Prevention Centre- drop in centre for at risk youth (open 24/7)
- drug prevention – n/a-AA
- Harm reduction- more awareness of what it is
- Chicken program – provide kits for community members to grow (raise) chickens – eggs, meat
- Elders Club – cultural/language input/preservation

(side notes)

- Skinner native seeds
- western porcupine grass, - what are the indigenous terms?
- hoary puccoon
- wildflowers
- IINNII rematriation research

Language-preservation, promotion, retention

- loss of language as a result of Indian Residential School
- Sioux Valley and Swan Lake
- protection of natural aquifers

Group 9

- water quality – chemical run-off from farmlands
- disappearing grasslands – wildlife
- pollution – air and water
- loss of wetlands
- erosion
- forestry being knocked down (clear cutting) – less habitat for wildlife
-

Community Ideas

- community gardens (potato/corn, traditional food)
- replanting trees, grass, wildflowers
- recycling program
- Collecting seeds
- Knowledge, understanding, education on topics of priority in community. Water barrel -program

5.3.2 Breakout 2 (group numbers are not associated with group numbers above):

Group 1

2a) – What kind of activities or strategies would you like to see in your community?

- better communication – leaders -> people
- Elder council – to be consulted and informed
- elder’s voice/knowledge is important
- on the land workshops- hands on/field learning
- bringing in specialists to work with community
- combine expert and traditional knowledge
- more involvement from youth (activities [environmental] for youth)
- more traditional knowledge sharing**
- special workshops
- soil
- water purifications
- endangered species
- more!! Land-based education and awareness curriculum in schools

2b) - What partnership opportunities exist, or do you want to see? What resources will be needed?

- Skinner native seeds
- would like to see more partnerships with wildlife, plants, grasses, conservancies
- funding, maza ska, shoonia!!
- committed, invested group/individuals
- proposals, policies needed
- proposal support – process, how to write
- Access to information
- mapping species
- geographic (areas) information systems
- KBA’s - key biodiversity areas

Group 2

Like to see in the community

- more traditional and land-based teachings
- better waste collection or management strategies
- **more band leadership involvement/following up/cooperation, enforcement
- more education and awareness!!
- funding that is continuous/consistent
- connection with horses

-we are self-governed so lot of these things should be in place. Leadership should be letting us do these things

Concerns

- when are these things going to happen?
- where does this information go and when is it shared back with us?
- worried this is all about politics (NDP visit)
- lots of good ideas, but will they ever happen?

Partnership Opportunities? Resources?

- who is in charge of the resources
- bring in people to the community that can share knowledge
- e.g. recycling, seeds, garbage management

Group 3

- keep natural medicines
- stop destroying and preserving land and natural resources
- overusing land and water
- using chemicals (gets into rivers)
- bring balance back (for example too many beavers and need more trees but nowhere to sell beavers and hard to make a livelihood on that)
- keeping animals natural to here, here
- putting developments in places where it doesn't destroy our land and resources
- keeping teaching from elders being passed down
- like how we took care of the land
- medicines
- wisdom, knowledge, stories
- language
- values
- Dakota laws
- grow food for the community from our garden (self-sustaining). Helps out the community
- encourage the connection with the land and keep the energy between people and the environment
- get recycling programs where they don't exist. Education about this
- tree planting program! Get involved in programs that support
- education to the younger generation so they know about the environment/conservation
- more funding for all of the above

Group 4

2a)

Transfer of knowledge

- elder and youth medicine picking
- teaching the names of sage, sweetgrass, cedar, etc. In Dakota and Ojibway (Anishnaabe)
- beading and sewing classes facilitated by knowledge keepers and elders
- drum making
- tanning hides

- food harvesting – indian corn (pashdayapi)
- potatoes, fruit trees (plums, saskatoons)
- Hunting-community hunt – hunters gathering
- fishing
- creation of a multigenerational space (elders, knowledge keepers, youth, children) - connection and learning about nature

2b)

- 1) Watershed district- swan lake works in partnership with Pembina Valley Watershed District
- 2) Agrifoods Canada – habitat monitoring, community members, work alongside – partnering
- 3) MWM – Manitoba waste management
- 4) Little Buffalo Youth Camp – elders week teaching moccasin making, fur mittens, stories/teaching of history is shared at the same time

Group 5

2a)

- resources for taking action against invasive species
- info shared more in schools and activities centred on the land/environment
- more community workshops
- more sharing of traditional knowledge
- more intercommunity involvement
- more land planted down to native plants
- seed collection workshops/teaching
- plant ID knowledge

2b)

- formation of organizing committee for environmental projects
- elders are a great resource of knowledge
- committee to create plans to gain funding
- meeting place
- vehicle for field trips
- planting tools and supplies
- way to share knowledge on many levels I.e. kids, teens, adults
- opportunities for networking
- travel expenses
- a specific project
- a way to share resources
- more access to land***

Group 6

2a)

- gardening-involving youth
- mentored hunts – teach youth how to hunt
- tree planting – increasing enthusiasm among younger generations
- sports and activities

- knowledge transfer between generations
- get youth back onto land
- building relationships with land
- addressing the transportation barriers
- university
- education opportunities

2b)

- elder gardening stations
- Raised tables and benches
- people to build
- seeds water cans, gloves, hand tools,
- lumber
- Partnership – hardware stores
- hunting (mentored)
- gun safety course
- info on regulations
- access to teachers
- guns, ammunition, transport
- canvas tents
- teepees
- access to hunting area
- Partnerships – land-based education, grants, Food Matters MB, Waterways, Schools
- Tree planting – partnerships – 2 Billion Trees Initiative(MB gov)
- nature based climate solutions
- agriculture and agrifood Canada – indigenous stream
- amphibians/reptiles
- partnerships: - citizen science platforms
- AFSAR
- HSP
- schools 0 collect monitoring data
- knowledge sharing
- opportunities to visit, gather
- cultural protocol – different in each community
- starting projects with ceremony

Group 7

- culture camp (knowledge keepers/?? - steven to check)
- land-based training:
- hunting camp
- fishing camp
- traditional food
- traditional medicines
- tipi setup
- elder workshops/teachings
- saddle making

- sports days
- wild horse races
- kayak races/canoe
- fishing derby's
- bike races
- memory walks
- more resources – not just one resource (Jordan's Principle)
- spirituality
- obstacle courses for youth
- friendship
- communication: respect

- language:
- Oyate: one big family working together not just one.
- Wookichiya (to help)

Group 8

- 1) We agree its time to address the environment collectively, time to take care of the land – animals, insects – plants. They take care of us
- 2) Recycling

- land based teachings (old ways)
- gardening
- picking medicines
- community hunting (food source management)
- get more involvement in FN with other org (info, networking)
- involvement in water stewardship
- more clarity on the planning involvement
- Manitoba start a cash back for recycling incentives (deposits)
- plant trees

Group 9

2a)

- community garden
- food sovereignty
- community hunts
- protection of the land/water
- protection of the medicines
- education*** - related to status rights
- expansion of land base
- clean up Assiniboine River

2b)

- partnership? - education from MB Cons
- first nation hunting rights
- a need to understand
- partnership – looking after crown land

-resources? Funds to take care of land

Group 10

Keesee Sioux Valley Canupawakpa

- a) Community direction lead by the people – direction is known by all
 - a. Get healthy – physical, mentally, spiritually
 - b. -kids need to get back outdoors, put down technology
 - c. -sports
 - d. -community working together to feed the community
- b) A center of office to let us know what is available
 - i. -programs
 - ii. -partnerships
 - iii. -better communication
- b. People need to know what's available
- c. Funding/management- resourcing
- d. -more networking between First Nations