

Aboriginal Perspectives of Sustainable Development



Indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and fully support their identity, culture and interests, and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development. (The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development 1992, 1992)

Traditionally, Aboriginal people have exemplified the qualities of good stewardship in their interactions with the environment.

Aboriginal environmental knowledge developed over centuries of observing and understanding seasonal changes — changes that were taken into consideration as a natural part of daily life and decision making.

Decisions were made with regard for the environment, which ultimately met the needs of individuals, families, and communities.

As food gatherers, Aboriginal people moved to areas where the land was bountiful. Each of the

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Given that the Aboriginal population is one of the fastest growing segments in Manitoba, it is critically important that these beliefs and practices are maintained and passed on to new generations. However, in a world where sustainability has not been the norm, the challenge of this approach can be difficult. Aboriginal people face a double challenge — to maintain their traditional sustainability practices and to achieve equity in a fast-changing world.

Aboriginal beliefs and practices have also received global recognition, as evidenced in Principle 22 of the Earth Charter. This recognition provides a sense of hope and rekindles Aboriginal people's collective and social responsibility for the future — a responsibility that must be shared equally among all people.

Aboriginal people are rich in environmental knowledge and can provide important perspectives when considering the impact of economic decisions on the environment.

Aboriginal people are also a source of sustainability strategies that