

# Metis Nation of Ontario Fish Monitoring Surveys

## Climate Communications Case Story



Carrots & Sticks



Feedback



Intrinsic Value Framing

### PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

**Project Title:** MNO Fish Monitoring Surveys

**Location:** Ontario, Canada

**Project Partners:** Metis Nation of Ontario

**Date:** Launched in 2023

**Climate Issue:** Fisheries management and invasive species control

**Action Area:** Conservation and community engagement

**Behavioural Theme(s):** Carrots & Sticks, Feedback, Intrinsic Value Framing

**Audience:** Métis fishers across Ontario, encompassing individuals and communities engaged in traditional and commercial fishing practices



*Traditional wildlife cues that indicate when fish come up and spawn may no longer ring true.*

*— Métis Knowledge Holder, Climate and Changing Fish, MNO<sup>21</sup>*

## IMPACT STORY

In 2023, the Metis Nation of Ontario (MNO) launched the Fish Monitoring Program to engage Métis fishers in fisheries management strategies and monitoring activities. The program includes three surveys that can be accessed year-round through the MNO website. Individuals are encouraged to participate by entering an annual prize draw for each of the survey categories. The program encourages community contributions and emphasizes the important role that traditional knowledge and lived experience plays in supporting environmental health and informing strategy and policy development. Moreover, by offering incentives for participating, MNO acknowledges that participant time is valuable and recognizes contributions in a tangible way.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES INCLUDE...

- Gathering community input to inform fishing management strategies and monitoring activities through lived experience;
- Supporting MNO harvesters in exercising their Section 35 rights; and,
- Tracking and managing the presence of invasive carp species in Ontario waterways.

## COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

- **Fishing Trip Reports:** Fishers provide details of their fishing trips, aiding in the collection of data on fishing habits and regional fish populations.
- **Fish Measurements and Health Reports:** The survey collects data on the size, health, and condition of fish, which is crucial for assessing fish population health and detecting early signs of environmental stress or disease.
- **Palatability Reports:** Participants report on the taste and quality of the fish they catch, which helps assess the impact of environmental changes and potential pollution on fish populations.
- **Annual Prize Draws:** To encourage participation, the MNO holds a prize draw for each survey category every September, giving participants the chance to win a \$250 gift card.

## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES & TAKEAWAYS

- **Carrots & Sticks:** The annual prizes serve as an incentive (or “carrot”), encouraging participation in the surveys and thus ensuring a steady flow of valuable data. The gift cards, worth \$250, can be used at local fishing and hunting shops, adding a relevant and substantial reward for participants. While there is no formal “stick” or penalty for not participating, the absence of community involvement in the surveys could lead to negative consequences. Lack of monitoring may result in the unchecked spread of invasive species, which can have detrimental effects on local fish populations and ecosystems. This potential risk underscores the importance of active participation in the program to maintain healthy and sustainable fisheries.
- **Feedback:** By sharing annual summary reports, participants and community members are kept informed and engaged in the program, showing that their input is valued and impactful (a less tangible but no less effective “carrot!”).
- **Intrinsic Value Framing:** Communication efforts are tailored to the target audience. These emphasize the importance of traditional knowledge and lived experience, inviting Métis fishers to be part of fish monitoring research as a way to honour these values.



## CO-BENEFITS

- **Community Engagement and Awareness:** Ongoing surveys foster a greater understanding among the Métis community about the health of the ecosystems they depend on.
- **Enhanced Fisheries Management:** By integrating traditional knowledge and contemporary data gathered through participant responses, the MNO can develop more tailored and effective fisheries management strategies.

## CONCLUSION

The MNO's Fish Monitoring Program represents a proactive approach to community-driven environmental stewardship. It highlights the importance of inclusive and participatory approaches to environmental management while also offering a simple and effective model for incentivizing and acknowledging community contributions. Additionally, by sharing information with participants in the form of an annual report, the Program recognizes that participant contributions are part of an ongoing exchange in which they are partners.

## SOURCE

Métis Nation of Ontario. (2023, October). Environment & Climate Change. <https://www.metisnation.org/programs-and-services/lands-resources-consultations/environment-climate-change/>

## MORE CASE STORIES AND RESOURCES ONLINE

This case story was developed by ICLEI Canada through the Ontario Resource Centre for Climate Adaptation (ORCCA) as part of a Climate Communications Toolkit. Find more case stories and additional climate communications resources online at [icleicanada.org/project/climate-communications-toolkit](https://icleicanada.org/project/climate-communications-toolkit)

ORCCA is a pilot initiative led by ICLEI Canada and supported by the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks alongside financial support from the Government of Canada through the federal Department of Environment and Climate Change Canada.

**CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT**

