

Wetlands (a reflection) by Elder Marjorie Muise

The western portion of Newfoundland features bogs, fens, swamps and marshes in various areas easily accessible en routes 406 and 407 as well as route 1 (Trans Canada Highway).

These wetlands have been home to me and my family all my life. The marshes and bogs provided many things, one being food.

Walking in the marshes barefoot had several benefits for my foot health by improving circulation, massaging the soles and acting as a natural exfoliant helping to remove dead skin cells and soften calluses. It improves balance and coordination. The natural environment in marshes and bogs can be calming to reduce stress.

Wetlands are areas of water that thrive in wet conditions. They are vital ecosystems for wildlife, they filter pollutants, they provide flood and drought protection. Plants like cattails, reeds and mosses are just some of the unique vegetation found in the wetlands.

Wetlands form where land and water meet. They provide habitats for a wide range of species. Wetlands provide water purification and flood control.

Wetlands come in various forms; marshes, swamps, bogs, fens, and floodplains.

The importance of wetlands is that they provide essential breeding, nesting, and feeding grounds. Wetlands act as a natural filter. Wetlands remove pollutants and improve water quality because they absorb excess water during heavy rain and they store large amounts of carbon helping to regulate the climate.

On any typical day in spring, summer, or fall marshes and bogs in western Newfoundland provided several types of berries. Berries that First Nations Mi'kmaq always gather in western Newfoundland. Berries to preserve for winter and pick to enjoy all summer and fall like marsh or squash berry, bakeapple (cloudberry) , cranberry and partridgeberry. We also picked wild red raspberries and blueberries, all from the wetlands...

The pitcher plant, Newfoundland 's emblem since 1954, is found in the province's marshes and bogs. The plant is a testament to nature's ability to adapt and survive in challenging environments.

There are many threats to our wetlands; some being habitat destruction for agriculture development that leads to wetland losses. Pollution and industrial runoffs contaminating our wetlands. Climate change is a big one in how our weather patterns affect the ecosystems in wetlands. Invasive species like non-native plants and animals that disrupt the natural balance of wetlands. One that gets me everytime is all terrain vehicles destroying these lands. Not many regulations from the government. These off-road all terrain vehicles ruin the habitats of the wetlands and kill the ecosystems.

We all have an obligation to take care of our wetlands. They offer us the opportunity to birdwatch, fish, hike and explore. They give us so much more.

Many organizations take accountability to protect these lands. Community engagements continue to bring awareness and educate people on the importance of wetlands for our survival and ecosystems.. **All my Relations: Msit No'kmaq!**

How is the land speaking to you?