

# Chapter 8

## Sacred Landscapes: The Intersection of Indigenous Women's Spirituality and Environmental Protection in Canada

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### ABSTRACT

*This research paper explores the profound connection between Indigenous women's spirituality and their roles in environmental protection in Canada. By examining traditional ecological knowledge, spiritual practices, and contemporary environmental activism, the study aims to highlight the integral role of Indigenous women in safeguarding their ancestral lands. The paper will delve into case studies of specific Indigenous communities, analyze the impact of colonization and industrialization, and offer insights into how Indigenous women's spiritual perspectives can inform broader environmental conservation efforts.*

### INTRODUCTION

For centuries, Indigenous women have served as the stewards of their communities' spiritual and physical realms in these lands that we now call Canada. Part of their role involves a spiritual tie to the land, seen as sentient and not merely something existing for our use. This article examines the nexus between Indigenous women's spirituality and environmental activism, illustrating how their spiritual practices uphold their conservation efforts. This understanding is of the essence, so that we

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continue to value and recognize what Indigenous women contribute in an important way to the conservation of nature and henceforth start viewing necessary policies being designed around their leadership.

A crisis of global proportions, compelling the world to respond with immediate and inclusive action. In Canada, Indigenous women have long been at the forefront environmental stewardship by leveraging centuries of traditional ecological knowledge. However Indigenous women in Canada have long been the custodians of both the spiritual and physical realms of their communities. Their roles encompass a deep-seated connection to the land, which is seen as a living entity rather than a resource to be exploited. This paper explores the intersection of Indigenous women's spirituality and environmental protection, highlighting how their spiritual beliefs and practices underpin their environmental stewardship. By understanding this relationship, we can appreciate the vital contributions of Indigenous women to environmental conservation and recognize the need for policies that support and amplify their leadership.

Indigenous women in Canada play a pivotal role in environmental stewardship and advocacy, deeply rooted in their historical and spiritual connections to the land. Historically, Indigenous women have been integral to their communities, serving as keepers of traditional ecological knowledge and leading sustainable practices that respect the environment (Kwaymullina, 2018). Despite the challenges posed by colonial policies, which disrupted their roles and marginalized their voices, Indigenous women have demonstrated remarkable resilience and leadership in environmental movements (Hoover et al., 2012).

The spiritual connection to the land is fundamental to Indigenous women's identities, where the environment is seen as a living entity deserving of respect and care (Wilson, 2006). This perspective is evident in practices such as the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address, which acknowledges the interdependence of all life forms and the importance of gratitude towards the natural world (Beverley, 2020). Women often lead these ceremonies, emphasizing their role as cultural and spiritual leaders within their communities (Campbell, 2017).

Furthermore, Indigenous women actively confront environmental racism and advocate for justice within their territories. Their leadership is critical in addressing issues such as land dispossession and the impacts of resource extraction, as seen in movements like the Clayoquot Sound protests (Tindall & Robinson, 2017). By integrating their cultural values and ecological practices, Indigenous women not only work towards environmental sustainability but also strive for the recognition of their rights and the protection of their communities (Smart Prosperity Institute, n.d.; Wain, 2021).

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