



## Where is the snow?

A question being asked by many people living in Northern Alberta. By now, there would be much colder temperatures, everything would be blanketed in white, and it would be the winter wonderland that we in Northern Alberta know and love. Instead, what we are seeing today, is what would be mild temperatures, going from warm too cold throughout the day and everywhere you look is brown. The ground and grass are sleeping, molded together to look the same color in most places, leaving the earth blanketed in brown everywhere, no leaves on the trees, so it looks quite barren, like everything is waiting for something to happen...and it is, but, still, we are waiting.

It has not snowed here in weeks, or rained, everything is dry, the land, our skin, our throats,...it is cold enough for the ice to be somewhat frozen, enough that the animals and birds cannot drink easily, so their struggle to stay hydrated is increased during this time. Those of us that know the importance of snow, winter, the cycles of the seasons, are praying for snow; for snow equals moisture. While there are a lot out there, who are simply oblivious, and actually liking the weather and why not? It's warm, no snow, you can get around with ease, the roads are safer to drive on, oh the reasons could be plenty.

But what if it doesn't snow, at all? If all 'winter', it just stays like this? Brown, not to cold and no snow. Well, here is what will happen, our skin will continue drying, as if we are drying from the outside to in, our respiratory problems will continue increasing, meaning more visits to the doctor and hospitals and more costs for medications. The beauty industry will continue soaring, the lotions will be bought off the shelves, while we try to gain moisture back. We will drink more water, which of course is a good thing, but where is the water coming from? And if the water does not reach its normal cold temperatures, what quality of water will we have? There goes more money, more for the water treatment plants, and more from our own pockets, for filters and bottled water, which we have come to believe is in endless supply.

The animals? The birds? All they have ever known, is the cycles of life, the cycles of the seasons. In spring it rains, everything is washed clean and watered and wakes up. In summer everything dances in the sun, growing happily, life is everywhere and everything is awake. In fall, everything starts to prepare for sleep, shedding its life to give to us, us people, birds animals...we all take that life and use it to sustain us until awakening again. And in winter....it snows and snows, the earth regenerates itself and takes the needed rest, while building up its reservoirs of moisture, in the streams, the lakes, the rivers, on the land, the snow is everywhere. Only to start again in the spring, when the temperatures get warmer, all the snow melts and turns to water and trickles everywhere, trailing into the lakes and streams, so fresh, clean, cold, it glistens in the sun...and we continue in the cycle of life.

But today...in the season of winter, there is no snow, when there should be, no real winter cold, but more of a barren, empty cold. Today, many are gathered in the one of the biggest international climate change gatherings in world history, in Paris France. And while I sit here in northern Alberta, I pray, that these leaders, will have some concrete plans and actions, solutions that we can all adopt, that will help save our winter. Many promises will be made, but what real actions will be taken and will the actions be big enough, smart enough and fast enough to tackle this mess we have got ourselves in, our dependence on extracting everything, at any cost, with no regard for the future. What will I do? Continue advocating for solar energy, working with the Keepers of the Athabasca to support First Nation and Metis communities to have solar projects, take any opportunities that may come available to have solar energy in my own home, make conscious choices to use as little electricity and gas as I can, drink a lot of water and Pray for the winter that our elders have only ever known...yes there has been talks of summer drought in the past, but there has never in elder memory, been No winter.

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