

2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT



FOOD MATTERS
MANITOBA



A STRONG FOCUS ON **TRUST-BASED PARTNERSHIPS**
IS HOW WE APPROACH OUR WORK,
TOGETHER WITH THOSE WHO ARE IMPACTED,
WE WORK **TOWARDS CHANGE.**



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A LETTER FROM Food Matters Manitoba



The year 2024-25 was a year of continued growth, transformation, and change for Food Matters Manitoba. The sparks that were ignited in the previous year have been fueling change, spreading warmth through the North, continuing to foster, connections, and enhanced community-led action. Food Matters Manitoba continued to distinguish itself as an Indigenous-led organization strengthening the network of Elders and Harvesters, Northern Partners, Community Project Coordinators, Youth Harvesters, and other community members providing the vision and driving action for change, while collaborating with staff in the Winnipeg office.

In this annual report you meet some of the people on the ground leading and living food systems change. Through their work and sharing their knowledge and skills, gained through lived experience on the land and water, they are improving the food security of their communities.

The Harvester Program provides both immediate and long-term support to experienced, traditional Indigenous Harvesters who collect local and traditional foods through hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering. In 2024-25 the Harvester Program ran in Norway House, Brochet, Fox Lake/Gillam, Crane River, York Landing, and Sherridon. This year we feature the work of Harvester and Community Project Coordinator Myron Cook, in Brochet, Manitoba.

The Youth Harvester program seeks to cultivate the next generation of Harvesters, using a mentorship model. The program enables youth to safely go out on the land with an experienced Traditional Harvester to learn from them and be immersed in traditional knowledge, language, and culture, through hands-on learning and connection. This year we feature the mentorship of Northern Partner and Traditional Harvester Lester Balfour from Norway House Cree Nation / Kinosao Sipi. Lester harvests for his community and shares generously of his knowledge, time, energy and spirit with youth. You will also meet Youth Harvester Paul Nice, from Sherridon, Manitoba and read about his experiences on the land.

We also share impact stories from Community-Driven Northern Food Systems initiatives supported this year in Split Lake, Lac Brochet, Sherridon, and Fox Lake/Gilliam. For example, you'll meet teacher Vivian Lin from Split Lake / Tataskwiak Cree Nation who spearheads the school garden program providing vegetables to students and the community. Each community focuses their food systems work to align with the vision and assets of the local context.

Food Matters Manitoba believes in the power of learning through gathering, sharing, and harvesting together. In 2024-25 we supported three transformational gathering experiences – the Churchill Goose Hunt, the Norway House Ice Fishing Harvest, and the Annual Grow North Gathering in Norway House – each of these events are also highlighted in this report.

Food Matters Manitoba is grateful for the generous support offered by you, our donors, which provides the financial resources to fuel this amazing work. Thank you for being part of our network of change makers and joining with us on this journey of revitalizing Indigenous food sovereignty and feeding food systems transformation in Northern Manitoba.

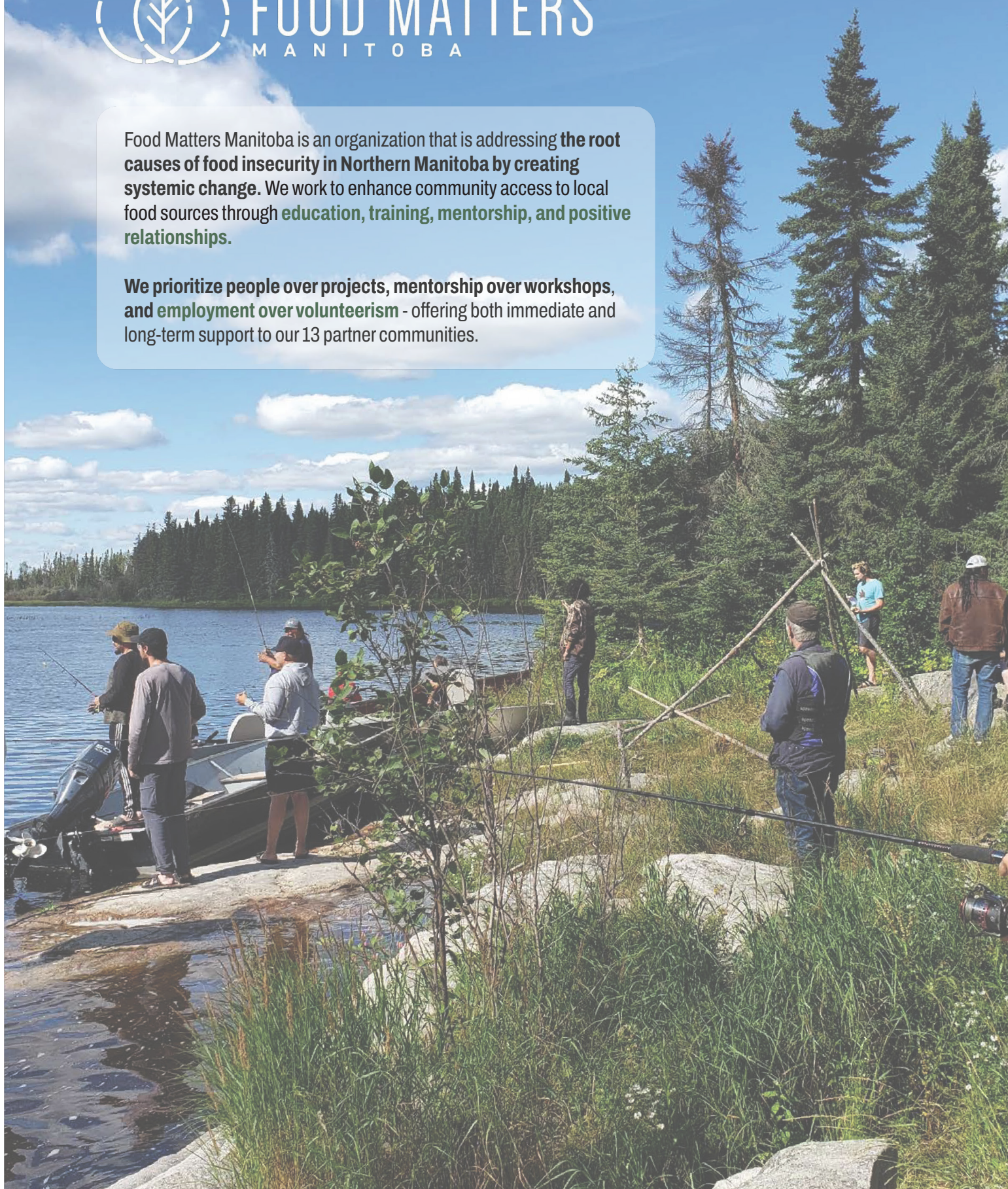
Ekwa pimohtetan - now let's walk together.





Food Matters Manitoba is an organization that is addressing **the root causes of food insecurity in Northern Manitoba by creating systemic change**. We work to enhance community access to local food sources through **education, training, mentorship, and positive relationships**.

We prioritize people over projects, mentorship over workshops, and employment over volunteerism - offering both immediate and long-term support to our 13 partner communities.





WHAT GUIDES US

★ Relationships

Are at the forefront. Understanding the complexity required to establish healthy, thriving communities drives us to build local teams and foster a thriving community throughout the region.

★ Food Production

Is viewed through the lens of the seasonal cycles as a sustainable holistic system for life, wellbeing, and community engagement.

★ Language and Ceremonies

Are valued and understood for their impacts of creating strong, stable, and committed individuals and communities.

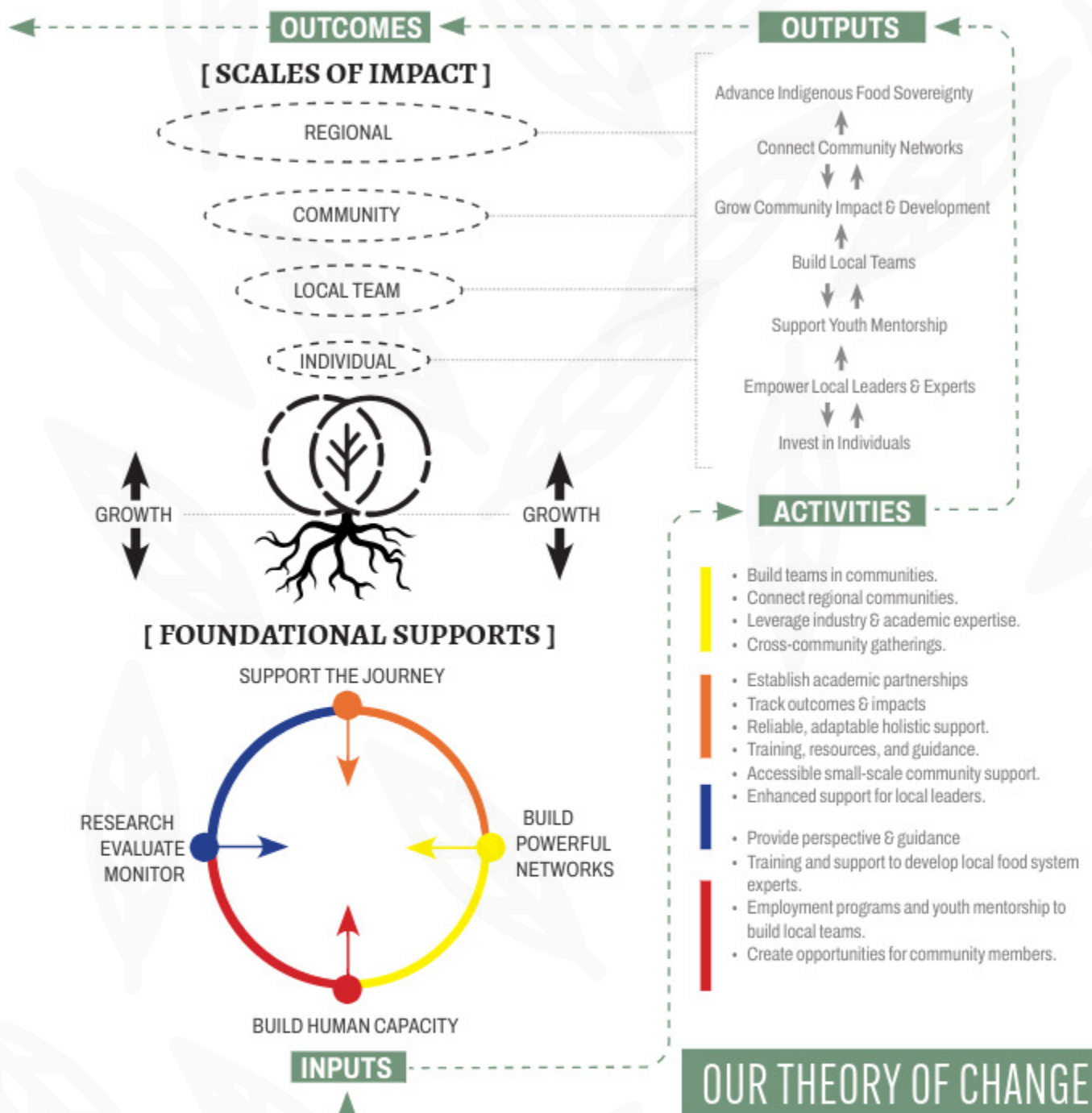
★ Indigenous Culture and Knowledge

Are leveraged to utilize existing strengths to build from and create powerful, resilient momentum.

*For Indigenous communities, **life** **always centers** the pursuit of food from the land.*

*The word for life, “**pimatisiwin**” translates to “**following that which has been given to us from the Creator.**”*





Our support system is a **process** that works to create **incubators for change**: an active and layered support structure of employment, materials, equipment, and education, enabling community members to harvest, innovate, and navigate challenges within their communities, while building up the foundation for an **Indigenous community food system**.

This approach is **strengths-based** and focuses on **empowering and building-up individuals and local teams, engaging communities to unite the region**. We have established deep roots in communities as a result and are successfully creating impacts within the challenging environments of Northern Manitoba reserves.



IN 2024, FOOD MATTERS MANITOBA MAINTAINED **4 LOCAL TEAMS** of **4 FULL-TIME HARVESTERS** AND **4 YOUTH HARVESTERS**, WHILE SUPPORTING YOUTH AND HARVESTERS in **4 ADDITIONAL PARTNERING COMMUNITIES**.

HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO

By partnering with **13 Indigenous communities in Northern Manitoba**, Food Matters Manitoba supports *the development of enhanced community food systems* - addressing food insecurity in the north through **empowering community driven initiatives**.

Traditional and healthy foods are a powerful and sustainable means to **reduce food insecurity** in our partner communities.

These partnerships are centered around **trust and respect** - drawing on the strength, experience, knowledge, and traditions of Indigenous Peoples. We look to each community's strengths that can be supported, while providing new opportunities communities are looking to add.

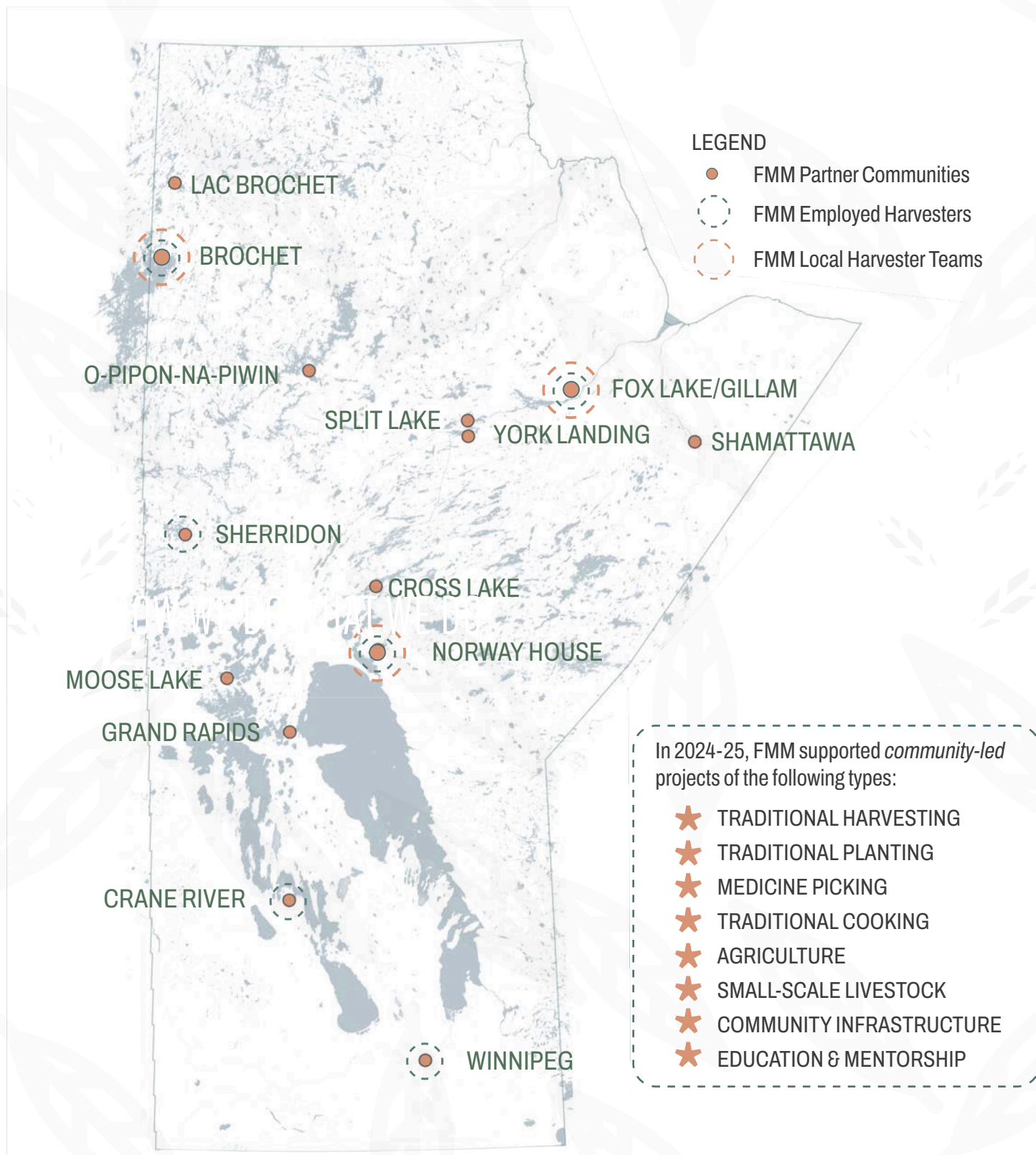


Our support varies from agricultural support to livestock, harvesting resources, medicine and ceremony support, infrastructure support, our harvester program, and youth harvester program.

By addressing communities' unique and individual needs, **we work together to build local food systems and support long-term community-led initiatives to reduce food insecurity**.



WHERE WE WORK



OUR 2024-2025 TEAM OF NORTHERN PARTNERS & HARVESTERS



Gordon Walker
Traditional Harvester & Mentor
Norway House



Lester Balfour
Traditional Harvester & Mentor
Norway House



Myron Cook
Community Project Coordinator
Brochet



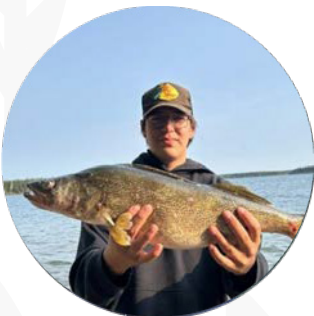
Lawrence Saunders
Traditional Harvester & Mentor
Fox Lake/Gillam



Drayden Jobb
Northern Community Facilitator
Fox Lake/Gillam



John Halkett
Northern Community Facilitator
Brochet



Cameron Saunders
Youth Harvester
Fox Lake/Gillam



Tegan Lockhart
Youth Harvester
Fox Lake/Gillam



Stanley Baker
Youth Harvester
South Indian Lake



OUR 2024-2025 TEAM OF NORTHERN PARTNERS & HARVESTERS



Paul Nice
Youth Harvester
Sherridon



Sidney Castel
Youth Harvester
Sherridon



Barry Little
Agriculture and Logistics Specialist

OUR 2024-2025 TEAM OF STAFF

Demian Lawrenchuk - Executive Director (Outgoing, March 2025)

Cynthia Neudoerffer - Transitional Executive Director (Incoming, March 2025)

Myles King - Northern Programs Manager

Morgan McCurdy - Northern Programs Coordinator

Chantal Schromeda - Communications Coordinator

Robin Smyth - Executive Assistant

OUR 2024-2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kirsten Earl McCorrister - Chair April - November 2024

Cynthia Neudoerffer - 2024 Board Member

November 2024 - January 2025 Chair

Chris Maxfield - Incoming 2025 Chair
2025 Treasurer

Paul Labun - Incoming 2025 Vice Chair
2024 Board Member

Allison McCullough-Butchart - Outgoing 2024-2025 Vice Chair
2024-2025 Board Member

Thea Green - 2024-2025 Secretary

Mackenzie Krietz - 2024-2025 Board Member

Mya Kidson - 2024-2025 Board Member



2024-25 HIGHLIGHTS

HARVESTER PROGRAM



The Harvester Program is a solution co-developed through our Northern partnerships. Harvesters **collect local and traditional food sources** through **hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering**. Food Matters Manitoba provides both **immediate and long-term support** to traditional and local harvesters in our partner communities.

Immediate support is provided through honoraria, equipment, travel, and supplies.

Long-term support is offered to dedicated traditional harvesters who are interested in creating a measurable impact in their communities through full-time employment. **Traditional harvesters are elders, community members, and youth** - preserving key **Indigenous traditions** and passing down knowledge to the next generation.

At Food Matters Manitoba, **we work to bypass barriers and challenges in current food insecurity interventions**. We strongly believe in **employing individuals** who are working towards important **food initiatives, community wellbeing, and fostering self-determinative environments**.

The Harvester Program is aligned with the principles of **Indigenous food sovereignty, self-determination, and environmental and fiscal sustainability**. **The goal is to provide traditional food that is healthy, local, and readily available year-round to the community** - particularly to elders and families needing extra support.

In 2024-25, the Harvester Program ran in **Norway House, Brochet, Fox Lake/Gillam, Crane River, York Landing, and Sherridon**.

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT BROCHET



DURING THE 2024-25 FISCAL YEAR, FMM SENT BROCHET:

- ★ RABBIT SNARES FOR YOUTH HARVESTERS
- ★ HOT TENT FOR ICE HUNTING & ICE FISHING
- ★ SLEEPING BAGS AND PADS FOR YOUTH
- ★ NETTING FOR FISHING AND POULTRY
- ★ FIRST AID SUPPLIES FOR SAFETY
- ★ FISHING RODS + HOOKS FOR FISHING
- ★ MEAT PROCESSING SUPPLIES FOR HARVESTING
(MEAT GRINDER & BAGS)
- ★ LAND-BASED EQUIPMENT FOR HARVESTING
(AXES, KNIVES, SHOVELS)

“
The good things I see with the work
we do is that we help one another -
we help the less fortunate families.”

- Myron Cook, Community Project Coordinator &
Traditional Harvester in Brochet, 2024



2024-25 HIGHLIGHTS

YOUTH HARVESTER PROGRAM

“Teaching *our way of life* to the young ones *is important.*”

- Lester Balfour, Norway House, FMM Northern
Partner & Traditional Harvester, 2024

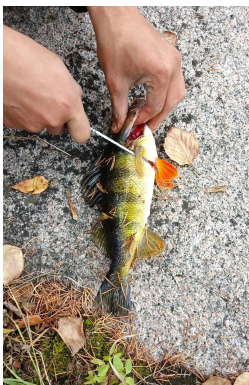


Youth play an integral role in ensuring local food systems thrive in the north.

The Youth Harvester Program provides opportunities for youth to **safely go out onto the land** with one of our experienced harvesters to *learn from them* - enabling *traditional knowledge* to be passed down through hands-on learning and connection.

The Youth Harvester Program emphasizes the positive impact being out on the land provides. It promotes **physical health, emotional and spiritual well-being**, building good relationships, and *respect toward the land* and others.

It inspires a sense of **responsibility for the knowledge shared**, all while getting back to *traditional roots*, providing for the community, and *eating healthy and traditional foods*.





YOUTH EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHT - PAUL NICE



“

*I look forward to fishing on the beautiful sunny days out on the ice. **There's something awesome about being out in the wilderness** and **sharing this cold landscape** with all the other animals just trying to survive these frozen months.*

The ptarmigans don't let the cold phase them and I don't let it phase me either - I'm out fishing as much as I can be.



***Sure, some days the fish** are hard to come by, but being outside on scenic days makes me **look forward to going out** and seeing what's new in the wilderness."*

- Paul Nice, Youth Harvester in Sherridon, 2024



2024-25 HIGHLIGHTS

LAND-BASED HEALTHY LIVING CLUB

*Financial Contribution from the Government of Canada / Contribution financière du gouvernement du Canada

*Financial Contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada / Contribution financière de l'Agence de la santé publique du Canada

The Land-Based Healthy Living Youth Club (LBHLYC) focuses on traditional harvesting as a pathway to **promote health and well-being by engaging youth** in rebuilding traditional ways of life, such as *harvesting and gathering food* and using *traditional medicine*, to address the risk factors related to **Type 2 Diabetes**.

Part of the Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC) **Type 2 Diabetes Challenge**, the program is empowering *healthy and sustained* changes in *attitudes, practices, and lifestyles* among Indigenous youth. By building on existing community assets and using *community-informed practices and culturally based traditions* the program is seeking to address the risk factors for **Type 2 Diabetes**.

In 2024-25, the LBHLYC established two staff teams - each comprised of an experienced **Traditional Harvester** lead and one or more **Youth Harvesters**, a 2 person team in Brochet, MB and a 4 person team in Fox Lake, MB. A *Memorandum of Understanding* was formalized with **Fox Lake Leadership**, a *Band Council Resolution* is being pursued with Brochet Leadership, and partnerships were established with the **Fox Lake and Brochet schools**.



“**Our work** raises awareness about the importance about our **traditional ways of life**. Being out on the land holds **transformative power the for youth**. I have seen taking the youth out into the land and, **to see him with my own eyes transform into a young man** and start thinking differently. **To start focusing on life.**”

- **Marvin Cook**, Elder and Traditional Harvester in Brochet, 2024



2024-25 HIGHLIGHTS

LAND-BASED HEALTHY LIVING CLUB



Following the **Annual Harvesting Cycle** in each community, the LBHLYC seeks to **deeply engage youth throughout the year** in **traditional harvesting** activities that are grounded in cultural practices and interwoven through connecting to **Elders, Traditional Knowledge Keepers, and Language Holders**, participating in ceremonies, *building relationships*, and developing their whole selves (*physical, mental, emotional, spiritual*) working with **Harvester Mentors**.

The LBHLYC Teams hosted the following activities in 2024-25:

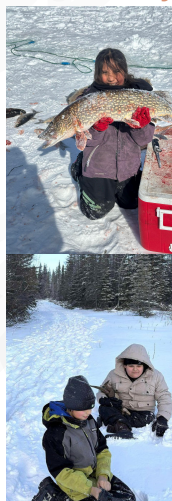
Fox Lake

- ★ Annual **Norway House** Gathering (August)
- ★ Fox Lake Youth **Canoe Trip** (August)
- ★ Sweat Lodge (constructed October, and **running regular sweats** to support youth mental health & well-being)
- ★ **Moose** Hunt (August)
- ★ Moose and **Caribou** Hunt (December)
- ★ Youth **Rabbit** Snaring Club (December)
- ★ Caribou **Hunting** (January)
- ★ **Sweat Lodge** Building (construction started)
- ★ **Ptarmigan** Hunting (February)
- ★ Norway House **Fishing Trip** (Feb-March)
- ★ **Community** Fish Fry (March)
- ★ Trail **Cutting** (March)
- ★ Sweat Lodge **building** (March)
- ★ **Ice Fishing Atkinson / Inland Lake** (March)



Brochet

- ★ Annual **Norway House** Gathering (August)
- ★ Brochet / Fox Lake **Hunt** (November)
- ★ **Hide Tanning** and Tufting Workshop with Grace Masse (November)
- ★ Youth Rabbit Snaring **Club** (December)
- ★ **Caribou** Teaching in School (December)
- ★ Ptarmigan **Hunting** (January)
- ★ **Community Feast** at Band Hall (January)
- ★ Caribou **Hunting** (February)
- ★ **Ptarmigan** Hunting (February)
- ★ Norway House **Fishing Trip** (Feb-March)
- ★ **Walleye** Fishing (March)



Food Matters Manitoba is continuing to grow this program in 2025-26, including evaluating the **early impacts of the work**.

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada

2024-25 HIGHLIGHTS

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN NORTHERN FOOD SYSTEMS



SCHOOL GARDEN IN SPLIT LAKE



In 2024, Food Matters Manitoba sent **seeds, grow lights, 2 grow towers, 10 counter top grow pods for classrooms, floor fans, plant food, seed starters, and soil** to continue supporting the school garden program in Split Lake, spearheaded by teacher Vivian Lin.

The garden has produced lettuce, peppers, tomatoes, strawberries, green onions, cilantro, basil, cilantro, etc.

The garden program **continues to provide vegetables for students and the community.** Students remain engaged with the growing process, as they **learn how to care for vegetables and incorporate them into their diets** with the successful breakfast program.

“*We are running a very good breakfast program this semester, and we are providing lettuce and greens for salads to go with **hot breakfast.**”*

- Vivian Lin, 2025

“

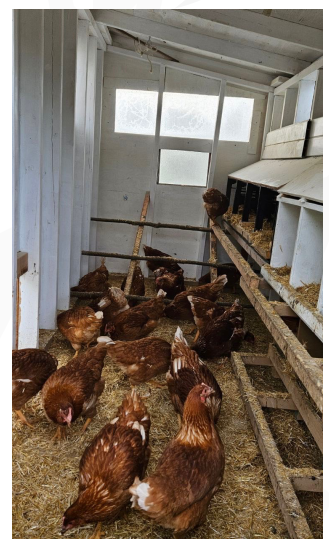
***Step by step** our programs advocate for our traditional ways within the community. With everything that has happened to our people we will stand strong and create programs like ours at Food Matters to **reconcile**, revitalize, and rebuild our culture."*

- Myron Cook , Community Project Coordinator in Brochet, 2024



CHICKENS IN SHERRIDON

In 2024, Food Matters Manitoba provided Northern Partner **Donnell** in Sherridon, with *chicken fencing, chicks, and a mix of layers and broilers* to **establish and maintain the chicken coop!**



COMMUNITY-DRIVEN NORTHERN FOOD SYSTEMS



MOOSE HUNT IN LAC BROCHET

In 2024, Food Matters Manitoba helped fund the *annual moose and caribou hunt in Lac Brochet*, which involved youth and traditional harvesting mentors **harvesting traditional food** that was brought back for their community. **Seeds and harvesting supplies** were also sent to Lac Brochet *for gardening*.





GARDEN BEDS IN FOX LAKE/GILLAM

In 2024, **Food Matters Manitoba** sent seeds to the Food For All program in Fox Lake/Gillam, for **raised garden beds** for elders and the community.

The garden beds produced a variety of fresh and healthy produce, such as **potatoes, onions, carrots, etc** which were *distributed to the elders and community members.*

The initiative was supported by **youth employees** whose labor built **the garden beds** - thanks for your hard work!



IN 2024, OUR PARTNERS IN FOX LAKE / GILLAM

RECEIVED **60 SEED PACKS**

AND BUILT **56 GARDEN BEDS**

2024-25 HIGHLIGHTS

CROSS-COMMUNITY HARVESTS



CHURCHILL GOOSE HUNT

In 2024, from May 14th to 18th, Food Matters Manitoba supported nearly **30 Indigenous and Inuit youth** from Manitoba, as they **traveled to Churchill for a week of geese harvesting.**

Food Matters Manitoba provided the youth and mentors with *accommodation, supplies, and equipment.*

The youth were accompanied by **Community Project Coordinator, Myron Cook and Traditional Harvester and Northern partner, Lawrence Saunders Jr.**, among other experienced hunters. *Experienced harvesters mentor and facilitate learning as the youth harvest and process the food to bring back to their communities.*

Youth from varying communities **connected to their culture and built relationships with one another on the land** prior to returning to their respective communities *to process the geese for a feast.*

“

I'm hoping the kids continue this lifestyle in the years to come because they're the future harvesters for the communities.”

Lawrence Saunders Jr., Northern Partner & Traditional Harvester, 2024

“
**Gaining feedback and support, we’ve
made this trip more accessible for youth
and harvesters.**

*We also make sure the experience doesn't stop in Churchill,
as the processing and feasting is just as important.”*

- Myles King, Northern Programs Manager, 2024

IN 2024, OVER 300 GEESE WERE HARVESTED & BROUGHT BACK TO COMMUNITIES.



NORWAY HOUSE ICE FISHING HARVEST

In March, Traditional Harvesters and Northern Partners, **Lester Balfour** and **Lawrence Saunders Jr.**, organized a cross-community harvest in Norway House, with support from **Elder Gordon Walker**. The trip was intended to **bring fish back for the community of Fox Lake/Gillam** as a result of non-consumable walleye in the area due to high mercury levels.

Partners from **Norway House, Fox Lake/Gillam, and Brochet** enjoyed two days of ice fishing with participating youth. Youth attending had the **opportunity to learn Cree** as they set and **pulled nets** for walleye and trout.

The successful trip resulted in **over 50 walleye** brought back to Gillam to hand out to community members and have a fish fry!



“*The most memorable part of the gathering was the conversations and stories shared with everyone at the gathering. It means a lot to me to experience something like this in the Northern region. I've only ever been to ceremonies and gatherings that took place in Selkirk and around Winnipeg. I learnt new skills on hide tanning and saw new methods of fileting fish. I am very thankful to be a part of it all.*”

- John Halkett, Northern Community Facilitator, 2024

2024-25 HIGHLIGHTS

GROW NORTH ANNUAL GATHERING IN NORWAY HOUSE



In 2024, Food Matters Manitoba staff, Northern partners, workshop facilitators, and guests attended the Annual Gathering in Norway House - hosted by **Northern Partners**, traditional harvesters, and Elders Gordon and Madeline Walker at the Kinosao Sipi Cultural Camp.

This year, attendees participated in a variety of immersive workshops and activities led by Northern partners including beekeeping, fishing, hide tanning, fire starting, medicine picking, preparations for a traditional feast, and more!

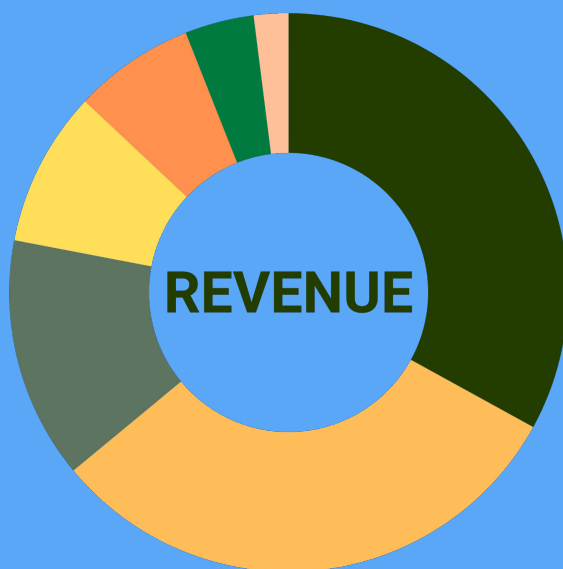
It was a wonderful few days full of delicious traditional food, knowledge sharing, youth involvement, and community. We'd like to give a huge thank you to everyone who made the gathering such a memorable experience.

We look forward to next year's gathering!

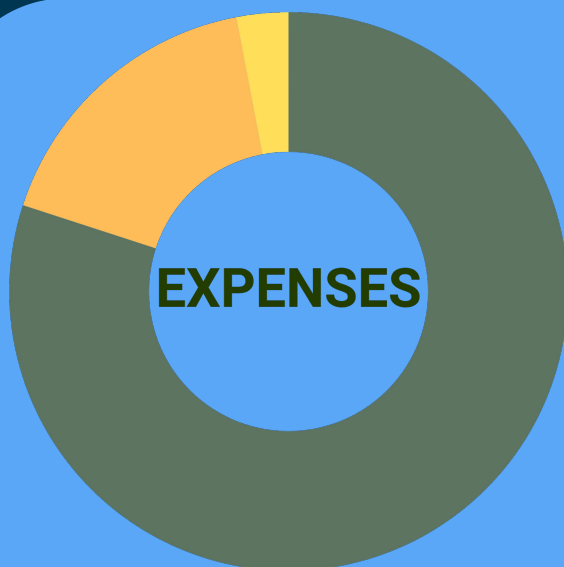




FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



- 33% came from Foundations
- 31% came from Federal Government - program support
- 14% came from Provincial Government - program support
- 9% came from other sources
- 7% came from Not-For-Profit - program support
- 4% came from Donations
- 2% came from Academic Partnerships



- 80% paid for Programs
- 17% paid for Administration
- 3% paid for Fundraising

***Visit our website to view our full Financial Statements**

A MESSAGE TO OUR FUNDERS

Ekosi, Thank you,

Your generous support has equipped us for another year of strengthening local capacity, expertise, and experience with our community partners.

With a growing foundation of support, Food Matters Manitoba and our community partners are ready to increase the impact of our work through joint initiatives at the intersection of Indigenous food sovereignty and community economic development.

Please join us for the exciting year ahead!

FEDERAL FUNDERS:

- *Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)
- *Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)
- *Department of Heritage - Sport

INDEPENDENT FUNDERS:

- *Northern Manitoba Food Culture and Community Collaborative (NMFCCC)
- *University of Manitoba
- *Oceans North
- *Lawson Foundation
- *Food & Beverage Manitoba
- *Indigenous Peoples Resilience Fund

PROVINCIAL FUNDERS:

- *Department of Agriculture
- *Health Seniors and Long-Term Care
- *Municipal and Northern Relations



Together we can make a difference toward Indigenous food sovereignty and drive forth positive change!

Visit our website to explore our programs, or connect via email or phone:

www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca

info@foodmattersmanitoba.ca

204-943-0822

Follow us on social media for the latest updates!



@foodmattersmanitoba



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