

# Impact Report

PHASE 1 | CREATING FOOD SYSTEMS FOUNDATIONS



**FOOD MATTERS**  
MANITOBA

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## APPENDIX | REFERENCES



**SECTION 1 | THE PROBLEM**

**FOOD INSECURITY**

Hampton House  
Chicken Nuggets 2kg  
\$42<sup>79</sup>

Hampton House  
Buffalo Chicken Strips  
\$45<sup>29</sup>

Hampton House  
Chicken Nuggets 2kg  
\$42<sup>89</sup>

# FOOD INSECURITY | CONTEXT



## Definitions

**FOOD INSECURITY** is defined by Health Canada as, “the inability to acquire or consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to so.”<sup>1</sup> Food insecurity is measured by severity:

**Marginal:** Limited food selection and/or worry about running out due to lack of money or access to food.

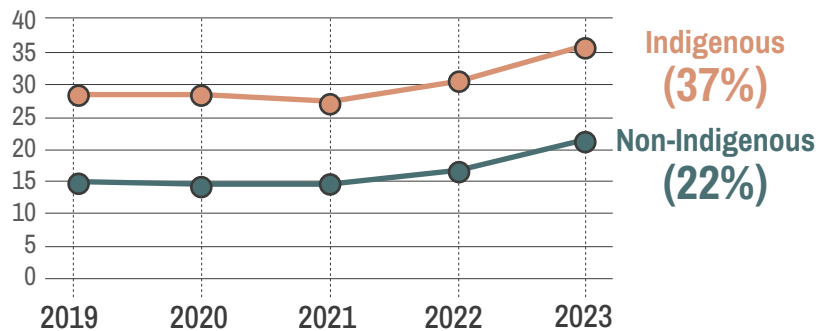
**Moderate:** Compromise quality and/or quantity of food due to a lack of money or access to food.

**Severe:** Reduced food intake, missed meals, and day(s) without food.

## Canada

In Canada, household rates of food insecurity have increased overall in the last 5 years from **17%** in 2019 to **23%** in 2023.<sup>2</sup>

**Fig. 1 | Food Insecurity Rates in Canada**  
(% of population aged 15 years and over)



**Indigenous peoples** experience food insecurity at a higher rate - almost **twice** that of non-Indigenous people in Canada.

**In Manitoba, the rates are even higher.**

### Did you know?

**1 in 7** Indigenous people in Canada live in Manitoba.<sup>3</sup>

**17%** of Manitoba's total population is Indigenous - the highest of all provinces.<sup>3</sup>

Fig. 1 | Statistics Canada, 2024, Food insecurity by selected demographic characteristics (Table: 13-10-0835-01)

1. “Food insecurity among Canadian families,” Health Canada, 2020.
2. “New data on household food insecurity in 2023,” University of Toronto, 2024.
3. “Aboriginal peoples: fact sheet for Manitoba,” Statistics Canada, 2016.
4. “Poverty Report Card,” Food Banks Canada, 2023.
5. “Community Health Assessment,” Northern Health Region, 2019.
6. “Food Insecurity in Northern Manitoba: The Research Journey,” Shirley Thompson, 2017.

## Manitoba

In 2023, the non-Indigenous population in Manitoba experienced food insecurity at a rate of **25%** - 3% higher than the Canadian average. Of that, **18%** reported moderate to severe levels of food insecurity.

**41%** of Indigenous people in Manitoba experienced food insecurity in 2023.

**34%** of which were moderate to severely food insecure.



**75%**

of Northern Manitoban families experience food insecurity - **over 3x** the rate in Canada.<sup>6</sup>

**73%** of Northern Manitoba's population is Indigenous.<sup>5</sup>

**1 in 5**

children in Manitoba experience household food insecurity.<sup>4</sup>

Rural areas are affected differently than urban areas, with **higher and increasing rates** of child stunting, malnutrition, wasting, and consumption of highly processed foods. Each playing a significant role in impacting the health and well-being of individuals.<sup>4</sup>

# FOOD ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

## Definitions

**FOOD SECURITY** is defined by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization as having *consistent economic, physical, and social access* to healthy food.<sup>7</sup>

**Economic access:** Income, poverty, and food affordability.

**Physical access:** Infrastructure, road access, and transportation.

**Social access:** Ability to obtain resources within society for nutritious and culturally appropriate foods.

Fig. 2 | 2011 Average Weekly Food Cost

In 2011, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority collected data from grocery stores across Manitoba to calculate average food costs across the province using the National Nutritious Food Basket - a survey tool created by the federal government to monitor the cost and affordability of 'healthy' foods across the country.

The 2008 Nutritious Food Basket is comprised of 67 items reflective of the Canadian Food Guide.

Fig. 3 | Average Annual Grocery Cost Comparison compiled from multiple sources (see appendix).

7. United Nations, 2023.
8. "Cost of the Revised Northern Food Basket in 2020" Nutrition North Canada, 2021.
9. "Rising food and gas prices a big concern for northern Manitoba First Nations already feeling the pinch," Lenard Monkman, CBC News, 2022.
10. Myron Cook, 2024.

## Northern Manitoba

Barriers limiting access and affordability to healthy foods in Northern Manitoba have been reinforced by **systems that were designed to serve large urban centres** and communities within close proximity.

These systems disregard the vast geographic span of the North - **covering roughly 400 000 km<sup>2</sup> or 60% of Manitoba's land mass**, as well as the **rich and prosperous history of local food systems that have allowed Indigenous peoples in the North to thrive for millenia prior to colonization**.

Current supports imposed from outside communities often address issues at a surface level, are misaligned, and lack understanding of the needs, existing capacity, and opportunities within communities.

The **Nutrition North Canada program**, for example, provides food subsidies for 121 northern and isolated communities in Canada - **17 in Manitoba experience transportation constraints resulting in high cost and low quality, unhealthy foods for communities**.<sup>8</sup> The financial burden on individuals and governments continues to grow without addressing the root issue.

Fig 2 | 2011 Average Weekly Food Cost (per family of four) using the National Nutritious Food Basket:

<b>\$186.67</b>	in Winnipeg
<b>\$273.44</b>	in Northern Manitoba
<b>\$411.44</b>	in Lac Brochet (isolated community)
<b>\$448.45</b>	in Shamattawa (isolated community)

Today, northern communities in Manitoba are being disproportionately impacted by **climate change, destabilizing global food systems, increasing costs of gas and transportation, and rising inflation** – further affecting the affordability and accessibility of food.

With **winter roads at a higher risk** due to unstable freeze/thaw conditions and climate change, **isolated communities will experience even greater disparities.**

Many communities in Northern Manitoba (both isolated and not) will often drive several hours to towns like Gillam, Thompson or The Pas.

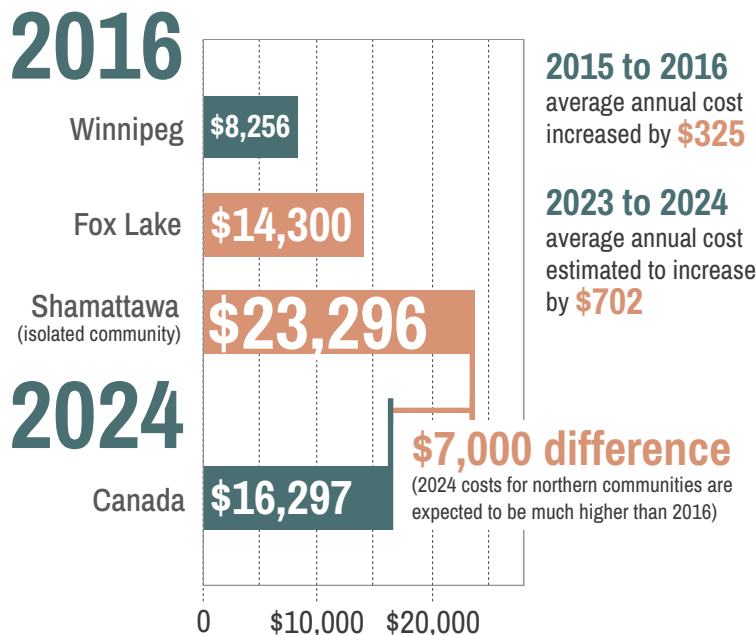
Brochet for example, is an isolated fly-in community with winter road access only. Residents will often ride share to split the cost of travel to Thompson - which is a 9 hour drive one way (530km by road).

The significant difference in grocery costs and the availability of more and better quality food options, is the reason many residents describe the trek as “worth it.”<sup>9</sup>

In 2024, the cost for a handful of raspberries (170g) in Brochet was:

**\$10.29**  
2x the cost in Winnipeg<sup>10</sup>

**Fig 3 | Average Annual Grocery Costs**  
(per family of four)



# FOOD NUTRITION & HEALTH

## Definitions

**DIABETES** is a chronic disease that occurs **when your body cannot properly use and store food for energy.**

When foods such as fruit, milk, some vegetables, grains, starch foods and sugar are consumed, **carbohydrates** (one of three main nutrients consumed) are broken down into **glucose or blood sugar** - these are the body's main source of energy.

## Food Insecurity & Diabetes

People who experience food insecurity consume more processed foods and have poor access to affordable nutritious food options. They are at a higher risk for:

- **Chronic diseases** like **diabetes**, obesity, heart disease, hypertension, arthritis, and asthma.
- **Mental health disorders** like depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders.<sup>11</sup>

These health conditions often present simultaneously at higher risks - leading to more severe, complex, and life threatening outcomes. Hypertension and obesity, for example, increase the risk and prevalence of type 2 diabetes significantly, as they influence the bodies ability to metabolize or control blood sugar levels.<sup>12</sup>

The rate of type 2 diabetes was **3.5 times** higher among First Nation Manitobans than all other Manitobans.<sup>13</sup>

**82%** of children with type 2 diabetes in Manitoba are Indigenous<sup>12</sup>

- In 2022, diabetes cost Manitoba's health-care system **\$152 million**<sup>14</sup>
- Diabetes and its complications is projected to cost the province **\$198 million by 2032**<sup>14</sup>

**Nutrition education saves \$10 in healthcare spending for every dollar spent on prevention.**<sup>15</sup>

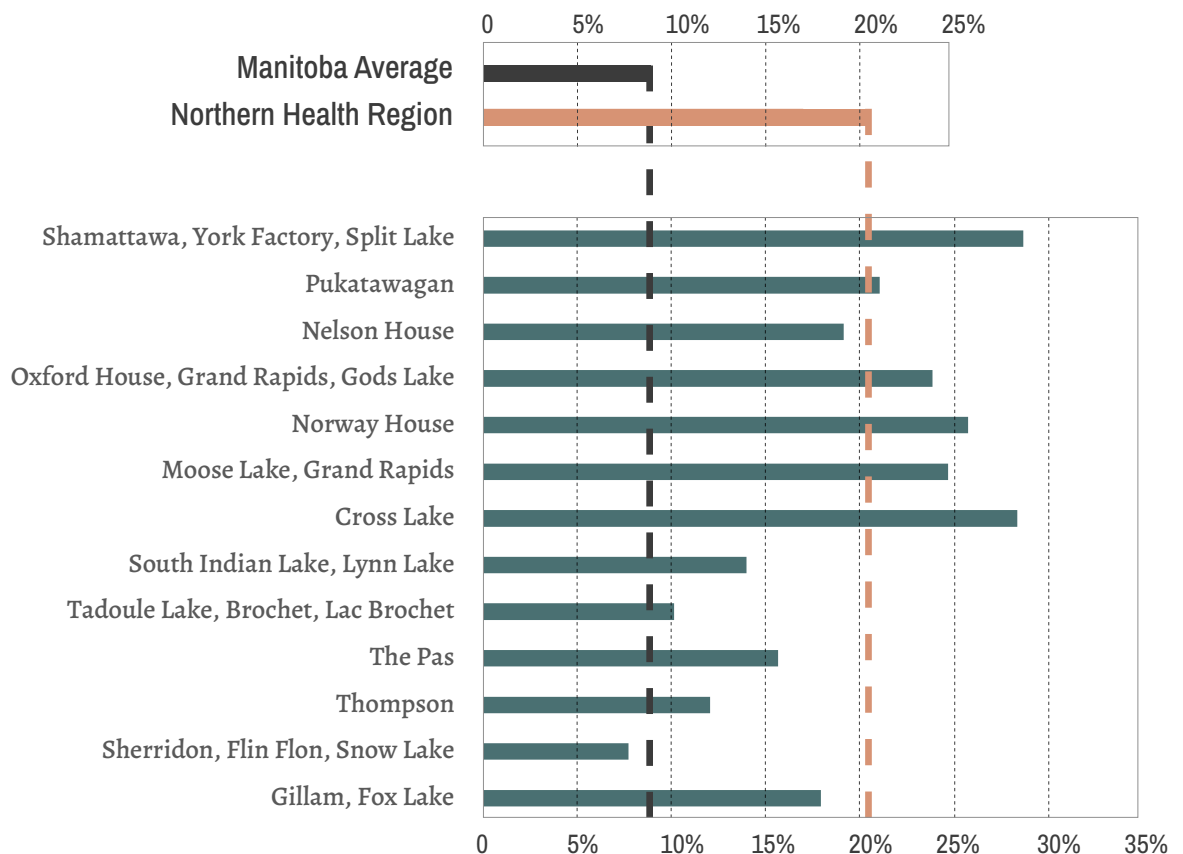
Fig.4 | Prevalence of Diabetes in Northern Manitoba

"The 2019 RHA indicators atlas," Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba, 2019.

11. "Community Health Assessment," Northern Health Region, 2019.
12. "2022 Pre-Budget Submission," Diabetes Canada, 2024.
13. "Type 2 Diabetes in Manitoba," Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba, 2020.
14. "Expanded coverage for diabetics in spotlight," Carol Sanders, Winnipeg Free Press, 2023.
15. "A Community-Based Economic Action Plan for Northern Manitoba First Nations," Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc., 2016.

“*Our families are being devastated by diabetes - a disease practically unknown to Indigenous people only 40 years ago. The fact that diabetes rates have become so high so fast tells us that it’s entirely preventable.*”  
 - Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.<sup>16</sup>

**Fig 4 | Prevalence of Diabetes in Northern Manitoba, 2014/15 -2016/17**  
 (Age and sex-adjusted % of residents (all ages) diagnosed with disorder)



# LEGACY OF COLONIZATION

Indigenous communities have been severed through colonization – severed from the societal systems, traditional knowledge, and healthy relationships that enabled them to function and thrive for millennia. The long-term systematic destruction on individuals and nations has created a self-sustaining system of trauma, dependence, and poor health.

## *Did you know?*

Between 1942 and 1952, Canada deployed nutrition scientists to perform highly unethical research on 1,300 Indigenous people - including 1,000 Children in Cree communities in Northern Manitoba (Norway House, Cross Lake, God's Lake Mine, Rossville, and The Pas) and at six residential schools across Canada.

These studies are what developed the Canada Food Guide.<sup>17</sup>

## Current Major Challenges

### **Instability and Lack of Capacity**

- Unemployment, lack of education and training, physical and mental health issues, substance abuse, and broken families.

### **Inadequate Support**

- Support imposed from outside communities is misaligned with needs, existing capacity, and opportunities.
- Grant opportunities fall short of required support, only temporarily addressing a piece of the problem.

### **Geographical Location**

- Existing food system designed to service large urban centres and adjacent communities.
- Transportation constraints result in high cost, and low quality, unhealthy food.

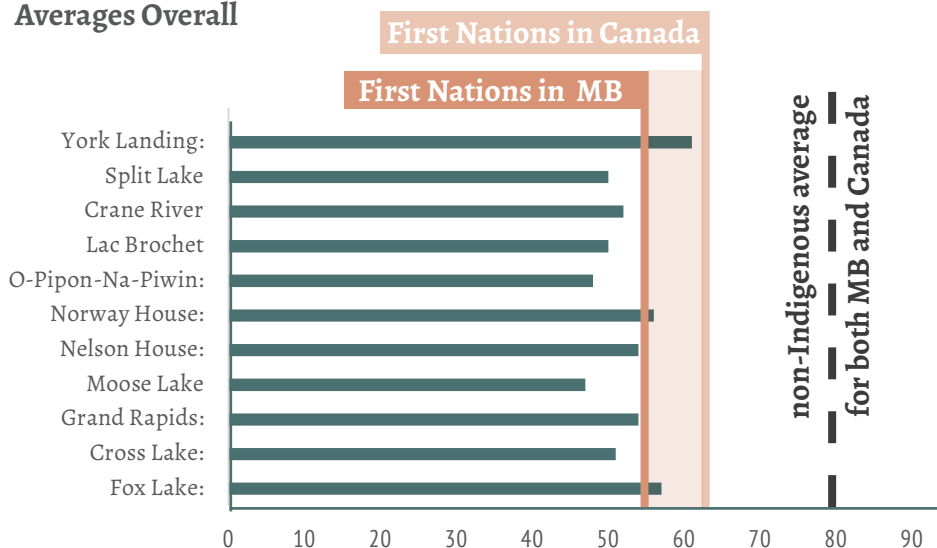
### **Loss of Traditional Knowledge**

- Loss of understanding and ability to sustain themselves within a region creates a dependence on the outside world.

# COMMUNITY WELLBEING

The **Community Well-Being Index (CWB)** is a tool to measure the well-being of a community. It was developed by the Federal Government in 2021 using census data, and aims to measure Education, Housing, Income, and Labour Force Activity by calculating a value ranging from 0 to 100 - the higher the value, the better.

**Fig 5 | 2021 Community Wellbeing Averages Overall**



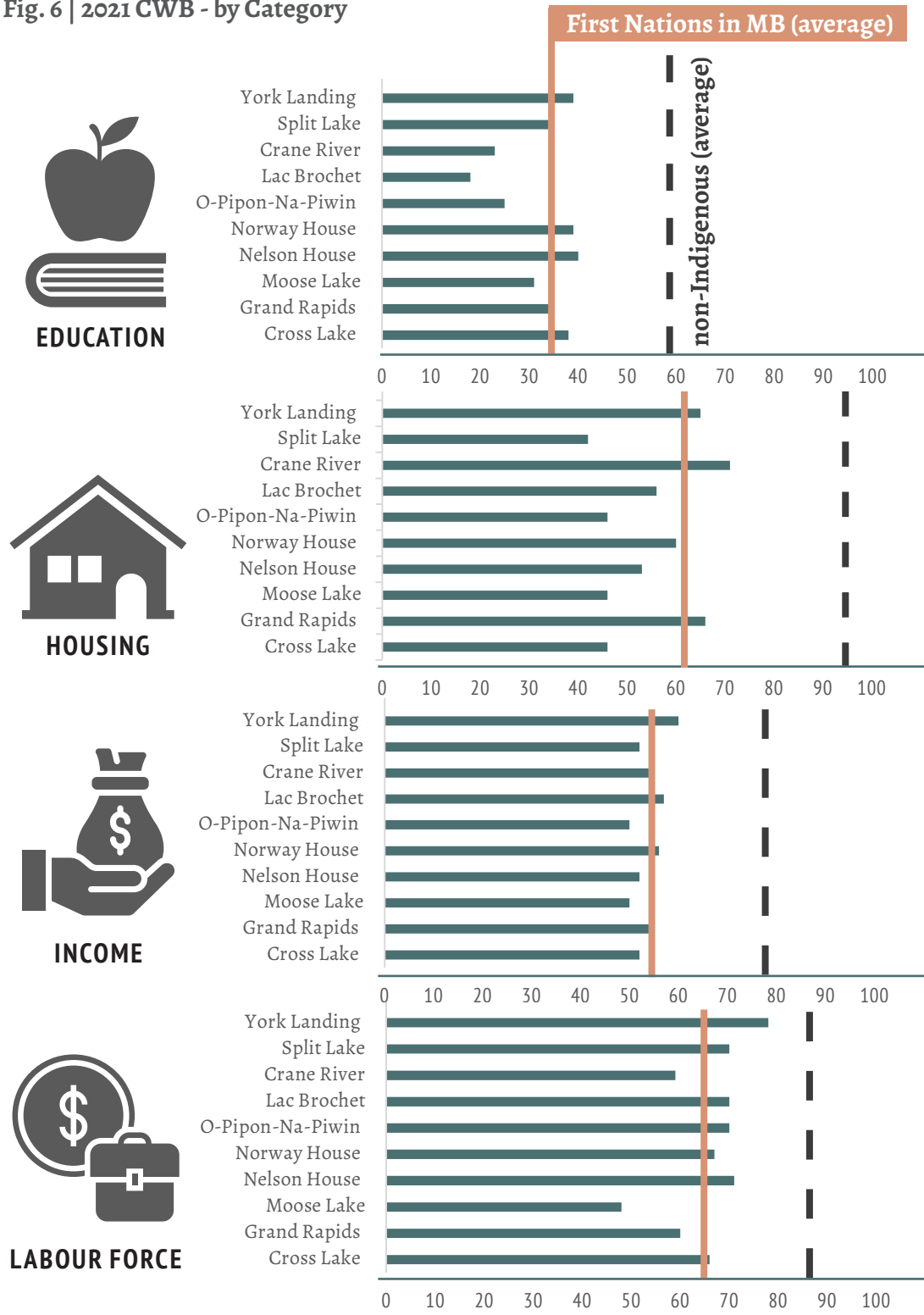
## What we found:

- There is a significant difference (~20 to 30 points) between the overall well-being of First Nations in Manitoba compared to non-Indigenous communities across Canada and Manitoba.
- Manitoban First Nations have fallen behind other First Nations in Canada, including the 11 Northern First Nations communities shown here - with 8 out of 11 measuring worse than the Manitoban First Nations average.

Fig. 5 | 2021 Community Wellbeing Averages Overall: "Community Wellbeing Index," Government of Canada, 2021.

Fig. 6 | 2021 CWB - by Category: "Community Wellbeing Index," Government of Canada, 2021.

Fig. 6 | 2021 CWB - by Category



### Perpetuating the Problem

- Destruction of Indigenous communities prolonged over generations – **damages are now self-sustaining and increasing.**
- The solution requires large, focused, and long-term commitment **to reverse this trajectory.**
- The cost of maintaining the status quo is immense, and **treating the symptoms** through food subsidies, health care, social assistance, continuous small-scale grants, and food banks **are not the solution.**
- The **human potential** of the largest geographic area in Manitoba is largely untapped.
- The problems faced in Indigenous communities across the province are Manitoba's problems. **It impacts us all.**

In March 2023, all 11 bands of Keewatin Tribal Council declared a joint statement of emergency because of **chronic underfunding, lack of access to health services, public safety, and infrastructure in their communities.**<sup>18</sup>

“

*Every week, we are forced to bury our people who have died due to **suicide, violence, inadequate medical services, drug overdose, complications from diabetes,** and other **entirely preventable** circumstances under a discriminatory system.”*

**-Grand Chief Walter Wastesicoot 2024,  
Keewatin Tribal Council**

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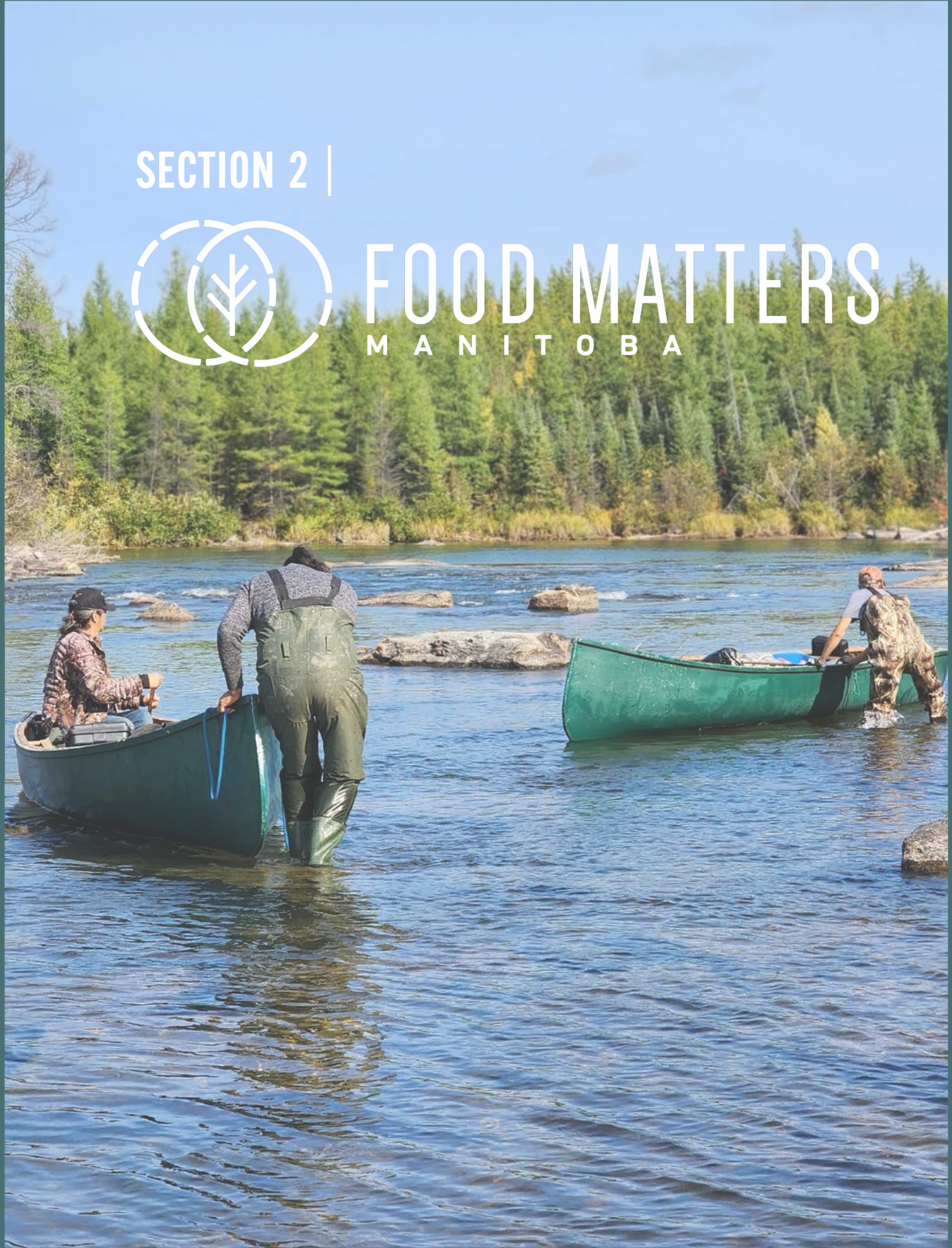
18. “Chiefs of 11 bands vow to pursue self-determination,” Katie May, Winnipeg Free Press, 2024.

SECTION 2 |



# FOOD MATTERS

M A N I T O B A



# AN INDIGENOUS APPROACH

## 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.



“  
*Passed down through  
traditional teachings  
is the warmth of connection  
to each other and the land.*”

- Demian Lawrenchuk 2024,  
FMM Executive Director

Our Executive Director is a traditional community harvester from Fox Lake Cree Nation who brought a **deep knowledge of the challenges** faced within communities, along with an **understanding of the strengths and opportunities**.

More importantly, this brought together a **network of empowered change makers, elders, and harvesters** to create a **relevant, adaptable, sustainable, and impactful operational method**.

The demonstrated success of Food Matters Manitoba stands apart from the industry due to our **restructuring as an Indigenous organization – led, guided, and driven by Northern Indigenous peoples and culture**.



**Gordon Walker**, FMM Northern Partner, Traditional Harvester & Mentor

In order to preserve the traditional ways of life, Walker is adamant that it is essential to pass along **traditional Indigenous education** to younger generations.

“  
*We tell stories to learn, we tell stories to the young people so that they will remember these words, these teachings.*”

- Gordon Walker 2024,

# The Food Matters Manitoba System

## Incubators for Change

Our support system works to create incubators for change: a 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.

### Foundational Supports (Root Uptake)

#### Building Human Capacity

- Creating local food system experts through employment, training, and resource support
- Youth mentorship and employment programs, building local teams and opportunity
- Creating opportunities for community members

#### Building Powerful Networks

- Creating teams in communities
- Connecting communities throughout the region
- Leveraging expertise from industry and academia

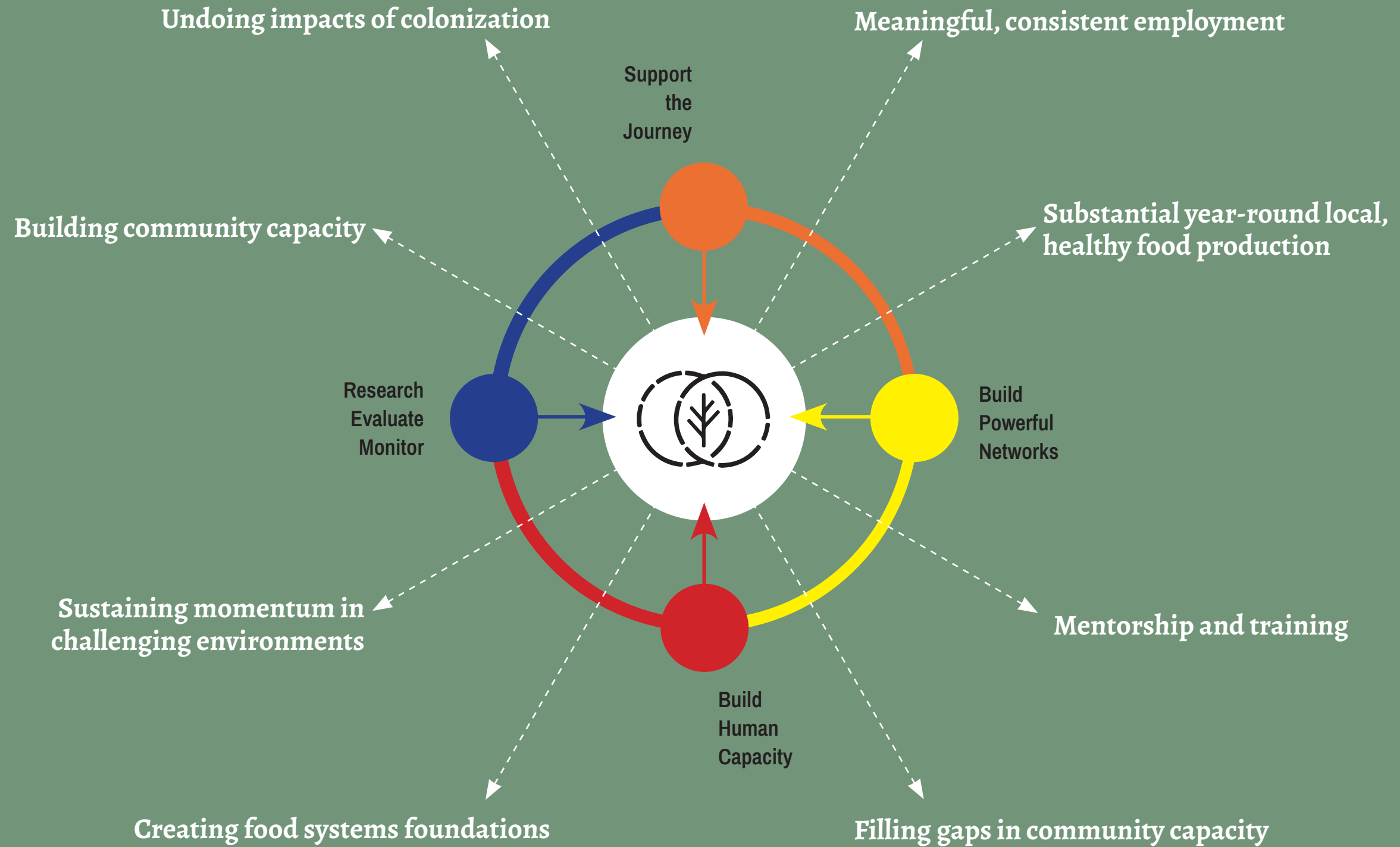
#### Supporting the Journey

- Reliable, adaptable, holistic supports
- Training, resources, materials, expenses, guidance
- Small-scale, easily accessed supports for communities
- Enhanced, focused supports for leaders on the ground

#### Research, Evaluation, and Monitoring

- Tracking outcomes and impacts
- Guiding the work
- Academic partnerships





PHASE 1 | CREATING THE FOUNDATION

In Action:

EDUCATION & MENTORSHIP



SPLIT LAKE | NORWAY HOUSE

TRADITIONAL HARVESTING



NORWAY HOUSE | BROCHET

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS



LAC BROCHET | SHERRIDON

TRADITIONAL COOKING



BROCHET

MEDICINE PICKING



NORWAY HOUSE

AGRICULTURE



CRANE RIVER | FOX LAKE

TRADITIONAL PLANTING

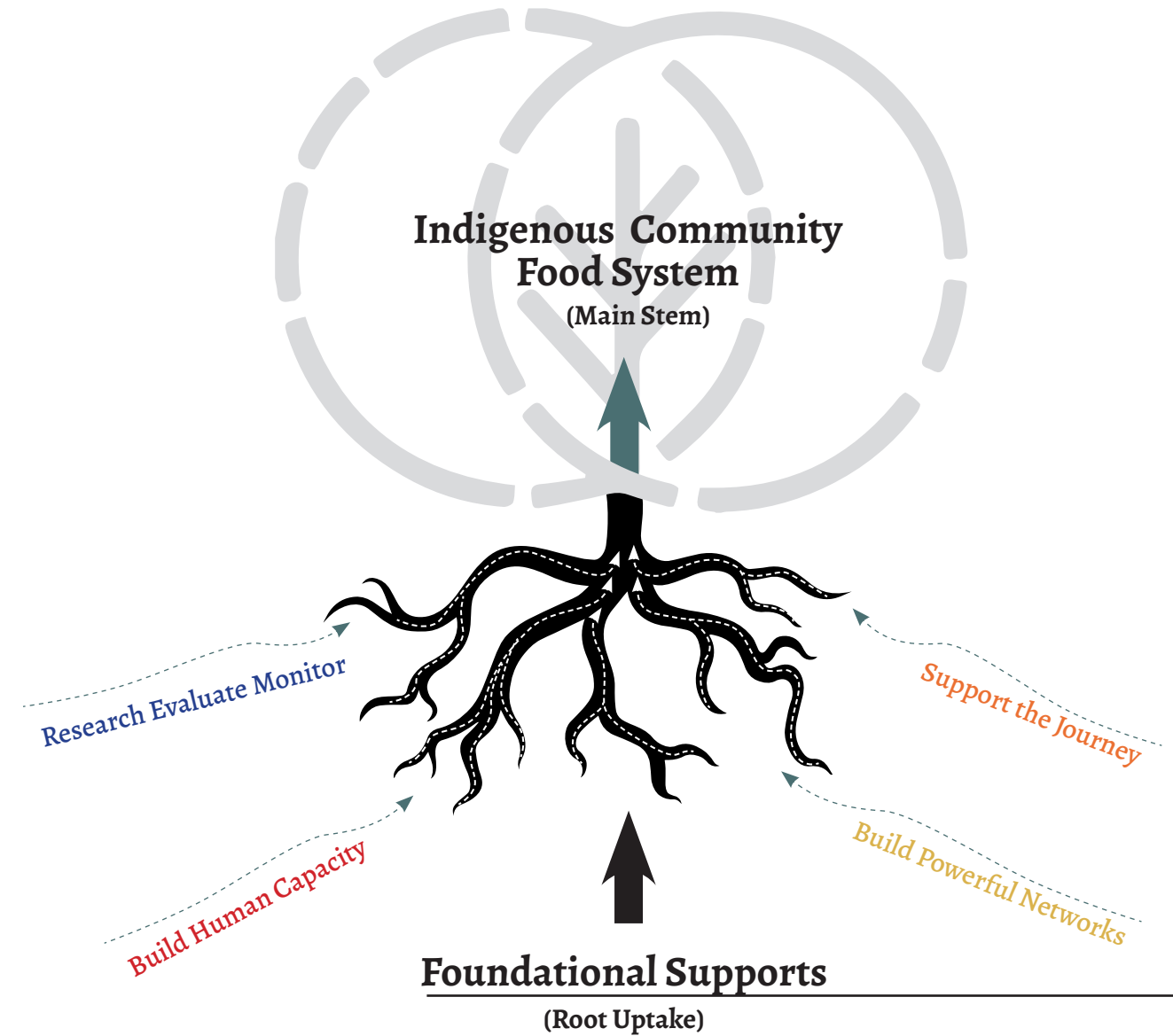


NORWAY HOUSE

SMALL-SCALE LIVESTOCK



SHAMATTAWA



Partnering Supports:

| Northern Community Partners | FMM Core Staff | Funders |  
| Academic Partners | Industry Stakeholders | Collaborating Organizations |

Connect Community Networks



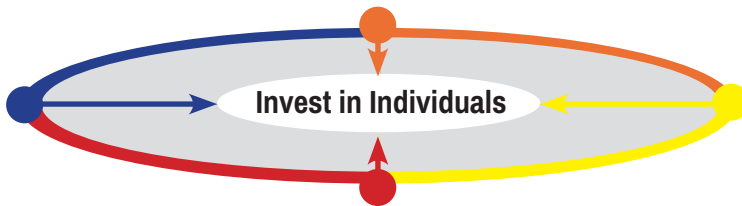
Build Local Teams



Support Youth Mentorship



Build up Experts & Local Leaders



**People, Mentorship, and Employment**

Food Matters Manitoba is addressing the root causes of food insecurity by employing community members and mentoring youth to lead change from the ground up.

By prioritizing people over projects, mentorships over workshops, and employment over volunteerism, we have established deep roots within communities, successfully creating impacts within the challenging environments of Northern Manitoba reserves.



**Lester Balfour**

FMM Northern Partner & Traditional Harvester in Norway House

**Types of Harvests include:**

*Fish, vegetables, rabbits, moose, caribou, geese/duck, chickens/eggs*

128 harvesting days over 2 years



**Scotty Saunders**

FMM Northern Partner & Traditional Harvester in York Landing

**Types of Harvests include:**

*Rabbit, marten, fox, otter, wolf, fish, geese*

31 harvesting days over 7 months

## Our Evolving Journey

### Provincial Intervention

The **Northern Healthy Foods Initiative (NHFI)** was created in response to high food costs in Northern and remote communities, as highlighted in the Northern Food Prices Report (2003).

### Food Matters Manitoba Partners

Food Matters Manitoba (FMM) became a prominent partner of the NHFI - administering funding through projects and programs in **13 Northern communities**.

### First In-Community Hire

FMM hires its first **Indigenous Harvester** as a member of staff from one of the Northern communities.

### Harvesters Honoraria Offered

FMM began fundraising to provide **honoraria to local community harvesters**, compensating them for their time and expertise - enabling their full commitment toward harvesting activities.



*Within each community there are amazing human beings that are **committed to improving the lives of their people** - leaders within the community, expert harvesters; individuals who are stable, reliable, and skilled.*

*Those are the people that we began to support.”*

*- Demian Lawrenchuk 2024,  
FMM Executive Director*

2004

2010

Between **2010 and 2019**, FMM focused primarily on **small-scale agriculture projects and workshops** (cooking, gardening, canning, etc.) through the NHFI.

These efforts were successful at engaging people at a surface level, however, struggled to establish a **foundation and generate momentum beyond short-term projects**.

### Challenges & Limitations

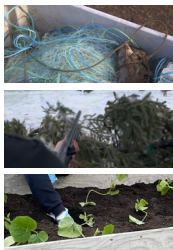
- Short growing season limited viability of garden projects.
- Resources for culturally relevant solutions were inadequate. (e.g. insufficient budget, space, staff, etc)
- Lack of program diversity.
- Unrealistic expectations of band employees to support projects when there is an existing struggle to manage workloads, minimal support, and high turnover rates.
- Overwhelming emphasis was placed on community volunteers to establish these new food systems.
- Lack of long-term support and guidance for newly introduced food practices.

**FMM Hires Indigenous Executive Director**

**Demian Lawrenchuk**, Traditional Harvester from Fox Lake Cree Nation and FMM's former Northern Programs Manager, became the organization's first Indigenous Executive Director.

**Traditional Harvesting Supports Offered**

Equipment, supplies, and resources offered to local harvesting experts to provide immediate support **toward culturally relevant, healthy, and meaningful food production for their communities.**



- NETS
- FISHING EQUIPMENT
- HUNTING SUPPLIES
- SNARES
- SEEDS
- SOIL
- LAND ACCESS
- TEACHINGS

**FMM Hires Two Full-Time Harvesters**

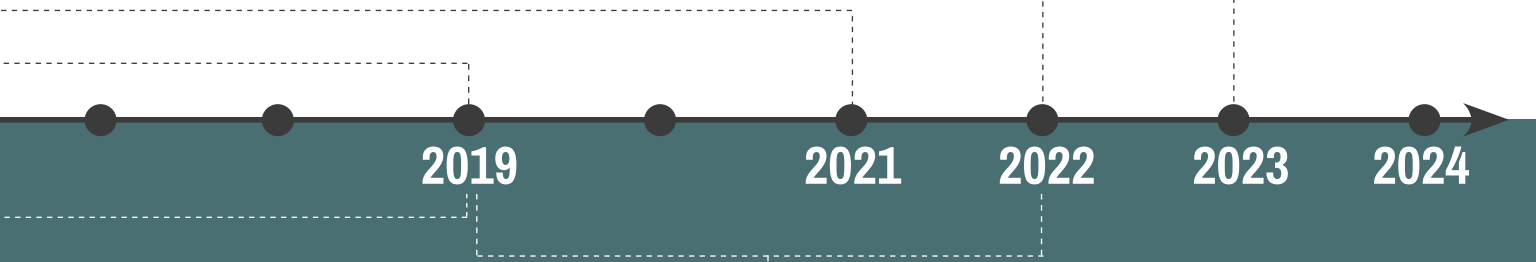
**Community Project Coordinators** from Brochet and Fox Lake were hired **to lead harvesting initiatives within their communities.** Youth participation and interest increased greatly.

**FMM Hires Eight Community Youth**

**Youth employees** were hired on a term-basis to learn from local traditional harvesters, elders, and to mentor other youth. **Local teams were built - significantly improving the quality, quantity, and consistency of harvests.**

**FMM Regional Annual Gatherings**

Multi-community harvests and an annual regional gathering for **3 consecutive years** has contributed to stronger **cross-community relationships.**



2019

2021

2022

2023

2024

Between 2019 and 2022, FMM's relationship with Northern community partners began to shift as there was more day-to-day involvement - leading to open and honest dialogue on community challenges, barriers, and needs.

These perspectives highlighted new opportunities on how the NHFI could be administered **to better support local community access to culturally relevant, healthy foods - building on existing capacity for long-term impacts.**

**Opportunities for Long-term Impacts**

- Empower local community leaders and harvesting experts through:
- Immediate supports: equipment, supplies, honoraria, and access to resources.
- Long-term supports: Providing mentorship, employment, and training opportunities for people in communities; building local teams by connecting with youth, and drawing on the support and guidance of Elders.
- Connect communities across the region toward Indigenous food sovereignty.

A young child, likely of Indigenous descent, is the central figure in the image. They are wearing a vibrant green and teal camouflage snow suit with a hood, a red knit beanie, and a green face mask. The child has a pained or distressed expression, with their eyes squeezed shut and their mouth open in a grimace. They are holding two dead ducks, one in each hand, raised above their head. The ducks are white with dark wings and heads. The background is a natural, outdoor setting with dry, brownish vegetation and a body of water in the distance. The overall tone of the image is somber and impactful.

**SECTION 3 |  
THE IMPACT**



“ The biggest impact is *seeing our people starting to heal, the elders and youth from the wild food we provide.*”

- Lester Balfour 2024,  
FMM Northern Partner

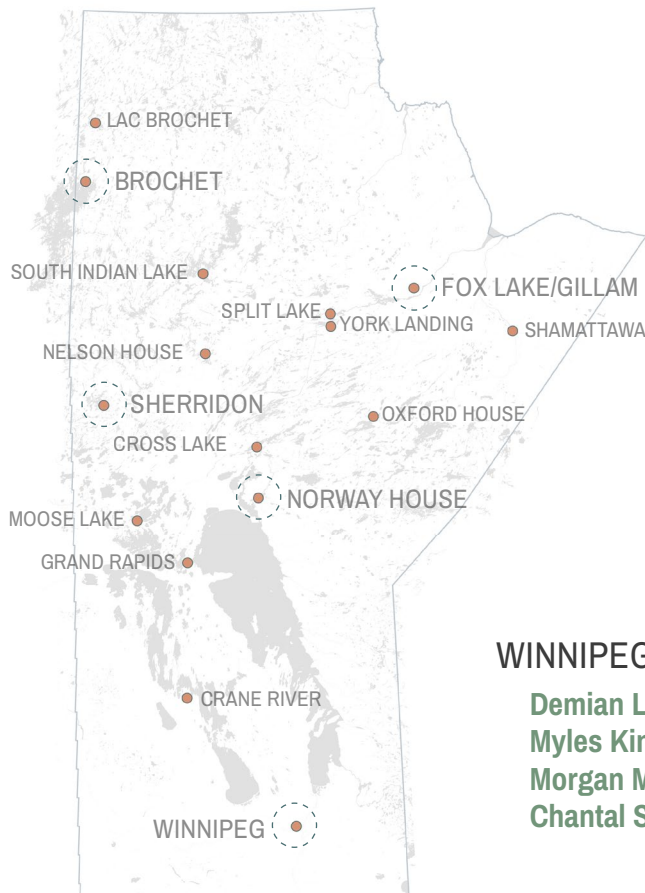


# OUR TEAM & COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The success of Food Matters Manitoba stands apart from the other organizations due to our restructuring as an Indigenous organization, **led, guided, and driven by northern Indigenous people and culture.**

We are building up a human network of change makers, elders and harvesters, that have been meaningfully empowered and leveraged to create **a method for operations that is relevant, adaptable, sustainable and impactful.**

## FMM Partnering Communities



“

*The Northern communities are in the driver’s seat. A program or project will not endure if it doesn’t align with the **vision and will of the community** we’re supporting.*

***All of this has to be community-led.***

**- Myles King 2024**

### WINNIPEG OFFICE STAFF

- Demian Lawrenchuk**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
- Myles King**, NORTHERN PROGRAMS MANAGER
- Morgan McCurdy**, NORTHERN FACILITATOR
- Chantal Schromeda**, COMMUNICATIONS FACILITATOR

## FMM Northern Harvesters

### NORWAY HOUSE TEAM



**Gordon Walker,**  
TRADITIONAL HARVESTER  
ELDER & NORTHERN PARTNER



**Lester Balfour,**  
TRADITIONAL HARVESTER  
ELDER & NORTHERN PARTNER



**Shante Gamblin,**  
YOUTH EMPLOYEE

### FOX LAKE/GILLAM TEAM



**Lawrence Saunders,**  
TRADITIONAL HARVESTER  
NORTHERN PARTNER



**Jaden Lavallee,**  
YOUTH EMPLOYEE



**Cameron Saunders**  
YOUTH EMPLOYEE

### YORK LANDING

**Scotty Saunders,**  
TRADITIONAL HARVESTER  
NORTHERN PARTNER

### CRANE RIVER

**Hailee Ranville,**  
YOUTH EMPLOYEE

### BROCHET TEAM



**Myron Cook, FMM COMMUNITY**  
PROJECT COORDINATOR &  
TRADITIONAL HARVESTER

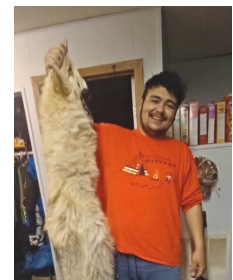


**John Halkett,**  
YOUTH EMPLOYEE

### SHERRIDON TEAM



**Sidney Castel,**  
YOUTH EMPLOYEE



**William Cook,**  
YOUTH EMPLOYEE

## FMM Community Project Coordinators

### Lawrence Saunders

Fox Lake/Gillam Community Project Coordinator

#### Types of Harvests:

Geese, smaller mammals (rabbits, martens), fish, beaver, garden (vegetables, fruits), duck, moose, caribou, and chickens.

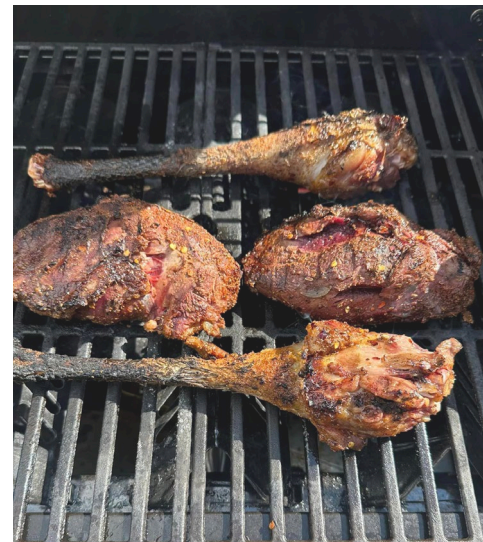
#### Over 165 harvesting days over 3 years

Lawrence is a father of five who teaches and mentors the youth in Fox Lake/Gillam about the traditional ways of life. He has been harvesting with FMM since 2021, but learned from a young age under the mentorship of an Elder in York Landing.



In April 2024, over 100 geese were harvested with various groups of youth and adults, and were distributed to community households in Fox Lake.

“ I hope to carry that tradition on to our youth up in the North for their generations and their kids.”



## Myron Cook

Brochet Community Project Coordinator

### Types of Harvests:

Geese, fish, caribou, rabbit, beaver, and moose.

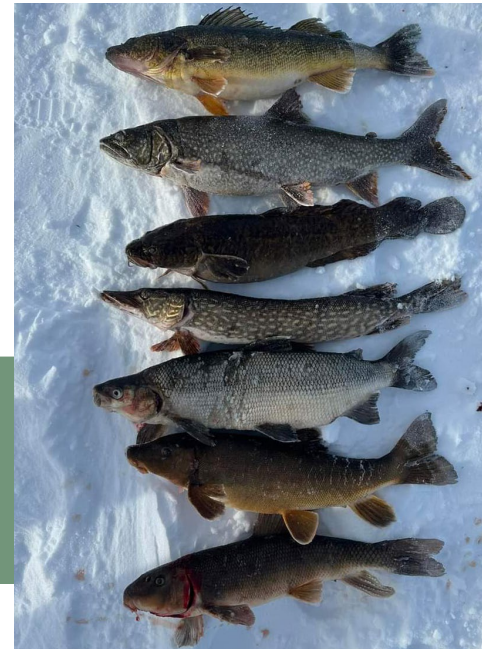
### 170 harvesting days over 2 years

Myron is an expert harvester dedicated to sharing his knowledge with youth out on the land, and making sure everyone is fed healthy, good quality food.



“ I learnt from my father when I was of age how to hunt and fish - the best fish, the biggest fish, the best part of the meat.”

In 2023, all 600 households in Brochet (on-reserve) and those living in the township were served fresh harvests thanks to Myron.



“ I get to teach the younger children, my nieces and nephews. We help the less fortunate. We hunt for them, we fish for them.

They get that food and the teachings, our traditional way of doing it, nothing goes to waste.”





Youth Harvester, Shante featured cleaning medicines in Norway House.



Youth Employee, Cameron Saunders built garden boxes for the Elders housing in Fox Lake with Community Project Coordinator, Lawrence Saunders and Executive Director, Demian Lawrenchuk.



Youth Harvester, William Cook, has been building upon his harvesting knowledge in order to provide for elders and the greater community of Sherridon.

## FMM Youth Employment

Youth harvesters were hired to learn and assist local harvesters and FMM Community Project Coordinators, **forming strong community teams** that improved the quantity, quality, and consistency of harvests while developing local expertise.

These teams also supported other community programs, conducted surveys and interviews, and engaged more elders and youth, fostering a strong community movement.

### Common Themes reflected in Youth Journal submissions:

- Feeling a sense of pride being able to provide for the community.
- New skills they've learned have provided them with the knowledge they need to improve their harvesting skills.
- Passing along traditional knowledge to the younger generation.
- Getting back to their traditional roots.
- Working together.

*“ I decided to join the community food initiative. This meant I would get to hunt and gather in the Ancestral/Traditional Territory of the Kiciwapa Cree Nation. In the last year, I travelled to many different locations to hunt and gather.*

*Floyd North, my grandpa, was my guide and teacher. His extensive knowledge of the history, culture, language and practices of the land were great life learning experiences.”*

**-Sidney Castell 2024,**  
FMM Youth Harvester, Kiciwapa Cree Nation

“

*When I was out pulling nets, we were able to keep some trout for ourselves after dropping off fish to community members who needed it.*



*I had an amazing tasting trout, the meat was bright and orange and I thought about how clean and fresh our waters are for us to have healthy foods from our lands and waters.*

*The community members really enjoy when we bring them”*

*- John Halkett 2024,  
FMM Youth Harvester, Brochet*

*Mentored by Myron Cook*



*“I'm proud I was able to teach my younger cousins the basics of marten trapping and snaring - getting them fur, showing them how to skin and learning how to skin better myself.”*

*- Jaden Lavallee 2024,  
FMM Youth Harvester, Fox Lake*



# ANNUAL COMMUNITY GATHERINGS



## Churchill Goose Hunt (Spring, 1 week)

For 3 consecutive years, FMM has supported harvesters from its partnering communities to hunt and process the overpopulation of various species of geese.

Youth from across the province had the opportunity to harvest and bring back **over 300 waterfowl** for their communities, to be **incorporated in household meals, school programs, and community gatherings.**

In addition to harvesting traditional foods with the help from seasoned mentors, Lawrence Saunders and Myron Cook, the week also fostered new memories and meaningful connections.





## FMM Annual Gathering (Summer, 1 week)

Each Summer, FMM hosts an annual gathering in **Norway House Cree Nation**, inviting participants from **all 13 partnering communities** to engage in a diverse range of activities.

Including:

- Hunting and fishing
- Medicine and berry harvesting
- Traditional food preservation
- Traditional cooking
- Ceremonies and language
- Feasts
- Irrigation training
- Beekeeping training
- Berry crop planting
- Snowshoe making

The gathering also allows for cross-organizational collaboration, with past participation from NMFCCC, Grow North in Leaf Rapids, Bayline Regional Roundtable, Four Arrows Regional Health Authority, and Frontier School Division.





## AN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM



In 2023, over 500 seed packs were sent to partner communities and around 50 garden beds were built!



Our Asset-Based Approach builds on local Indigenous traditions, leverages local strengths, cultural connections, and the surrounding environments to produce fresh food that is shared throughout communities.

By utilizing this pathway for repeated success, our Northern partners build capacity and confidence to incrementally add more components to the food system such as poultry, gardens, and greenhouses.





In 2022, the Good Food Access Fund, enabled FMM to provide 1 month of increased support to the Harvesters Program in 7 communities.

*(Lac Brochet, Brochet, Fox Lake, Norway House, York Landing, Split lake, and Crane River)*

During this time, **5250 lbs** of caribou, geese, ducks, pickerel, whitefish, and trout were harvested.

**That is 13,125 protein-rich meals.**



For comparison, 1 month in:

Fox Lake, during geese season, averages to ~1000 lbs or 2,500 meals.

Norway House, during ice fishing season, averages to ~1250 lbs or 3,140 meals.





**Elder - Robert Beardy,**  
Traditional Harvester and FMM  
Executive Director's Mentor  
from Fox Lake Cree Nation



“

*He embraced me with open arms, and day after day he began to take me out and mentor me.*

*It was spending all that time with him that put me on the path to understanding how to be a man and how to be a good person above all else.”*

- **Demian Lawrenchuk 2024,**  
FMM Executive Director

Passing on traditional teachings & knowledge to youth is vital for the perseverance of Indigenous cultures and food systems.

The photo to the right features our Executive Director's daughter, as she learns from and assists an elder in preparing and planting a bush garden at a traditional harvesting site in Norway House - demonstrating the holistic, cyclical impact of the journey towards **Indigenous Food Sovereignty**.



### Figures:

\* All images unless otherwise are from FMM Staff or Northern Community Partners.

#### Fig.1 | Food Insecurity Rates in Canada

**Data from:** Statistics Canada, Food insecurity by selected demographic characteristics, “Table: 13-10-0835-01” (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310083501>), 2024.

Statistics Canada, “Food insecurity among Canadian families”, (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2023001/article/00013-eng.htm>), 2024.

#### Fig.2 | 2011 Average Weekly Food Cost Comparison

**Data from:** Rand, C., Houde, C., Nash, A., et al., “The cost of eating according to the ‘Nutritious Food Basket’”, ([https://professionals.wrha.mb.ca/old/extranet/nutrition/files/Professionals\\_Reports\\_FoodBasketReport.pdf](https://professionals.wrha.mb.ca/old/extranet/nutrition/files/Professionals_Reports_FoodBasketReport.pdf)), 2012.

#### Fig. 3 | Average Annual grocery costs - timeline comparison

**Source:** Eaton, M., “53°N + North.Frayed.Net Regional Design Studio”, University of Manitoba, 2017.

**Data from:** Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc., “A Community-Based Economic Action Plan for Northern Manitoba First Nations”, ([http://www.mkonation.com/uploads/7/2/9/9/72991287/2016-may\\_25\\_mko\\_economic\\_development\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.mkonation.com/uploads/7/2/9/9/72991287/2016-may_25_mko_economic_development_strategy.pdf)), 2016.

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#### Fig. 4 | Prevalence of Diabetes in Northern Manitoba, 2014/15 - 2016/17

**Data from:** Fransoo, R., Martens, P., Burland, E., The Need to Know Team, Prior, H. and Burchill, C.. “RHA Indicator Atlas 2019 Data Extras” [Excel data]. Manitoba: Regional Health Authority, 2019.

#### Fig. 5 | 2021 Community WellBeing Averages Overall

**Data from:** Government Of Canada, 2021. “Community Wellbeing Index”, (<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/SAC-ISC/CWB/index-map-en.html>)

#### Fig. 6 | 2021 CWB - by Category

**Data from:** Government Of Canada, 2021. “Community Wellbeing Index”, (<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/SAC-ISC/CWB/index-map-en.html>)

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