

PHASE 2 | HARNESSING THE MOMENTUM



Indigenous Community Food Systems Initiative



FOOD MATTERS
MANITOBA

WHO WE ARE

Food Matters Manitoba is an Indigenous-led organization that is addressing the root causes of food insecurity in Northern Manitoba by creating systemic change. We enhance community access to local food sources through education, training, mentorship, and positive relationships - offering both immediate and long-term support to our 13 partner communities.

We prioritize people over projects, mentorships over workshops, and employment over volunteerism - establishing deep roots within communities and successfully creating impacts within the challenging environments of Northern Manitoba reserves.





WHAT GUIDES US

We understand that it takes many perspectives to see a picture clearly, and a wide range of skills and experience to tackle complex issues. This is why our partnerships with communities are built on **respect, communication, and commitment.**

We understand that change is made by people - that people crave opportunities for empowerment and strive to create solutions. This is why we work tirelessly to support food systems that foster the **local creation of long-term solutions to specific challenges.**

- **Relationships**
are at the forefront to establish healthy thriving communities, driving us to build local teams, and 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, 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 centred 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.”

THE PROBLEM

Food insecurity impacts Indigenous families in Canada at higher rates than non-Indigenous families. The same is true for health and community wellbeing - education, housing, labour force, and income. With Manitoba housing the highest population of Indigenous peoples in Canada, Northern Manitoba is disproportionately impacted with 73% of its population being Indigenous.

The legacy of colonization has disrupted and severed Indigenous communities from economic and societal systems, traditional knowledge, and healthy relationships that enabled them to function and thrive for millennia. The long-term systematic destruction of individuals, families, communities, and nations has created a self-sustaining system of trauma, dependence, and poor health. These issues are connected.

While many projects and initiatives exist to repair this damage, they fail to address the root cause with the level of intensity and consistency required to make meaningful change.



Indigenous families camped on the grounds of the Norway House Indian Residential School, 1925.
Image: © Library and Archives Canada



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.
- **Geographic 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 dependency on the outside world.



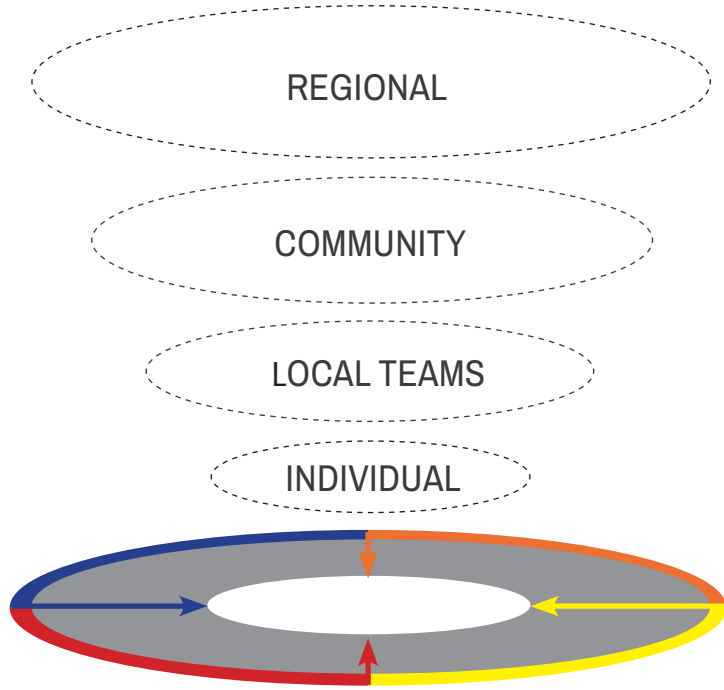
THE SOLUTION

Food Matters Manitoba is creating systemic change in Northern Manitoba.

We look at each community's strengths that can be supported while also providing new opportunities that communities are looking to add.

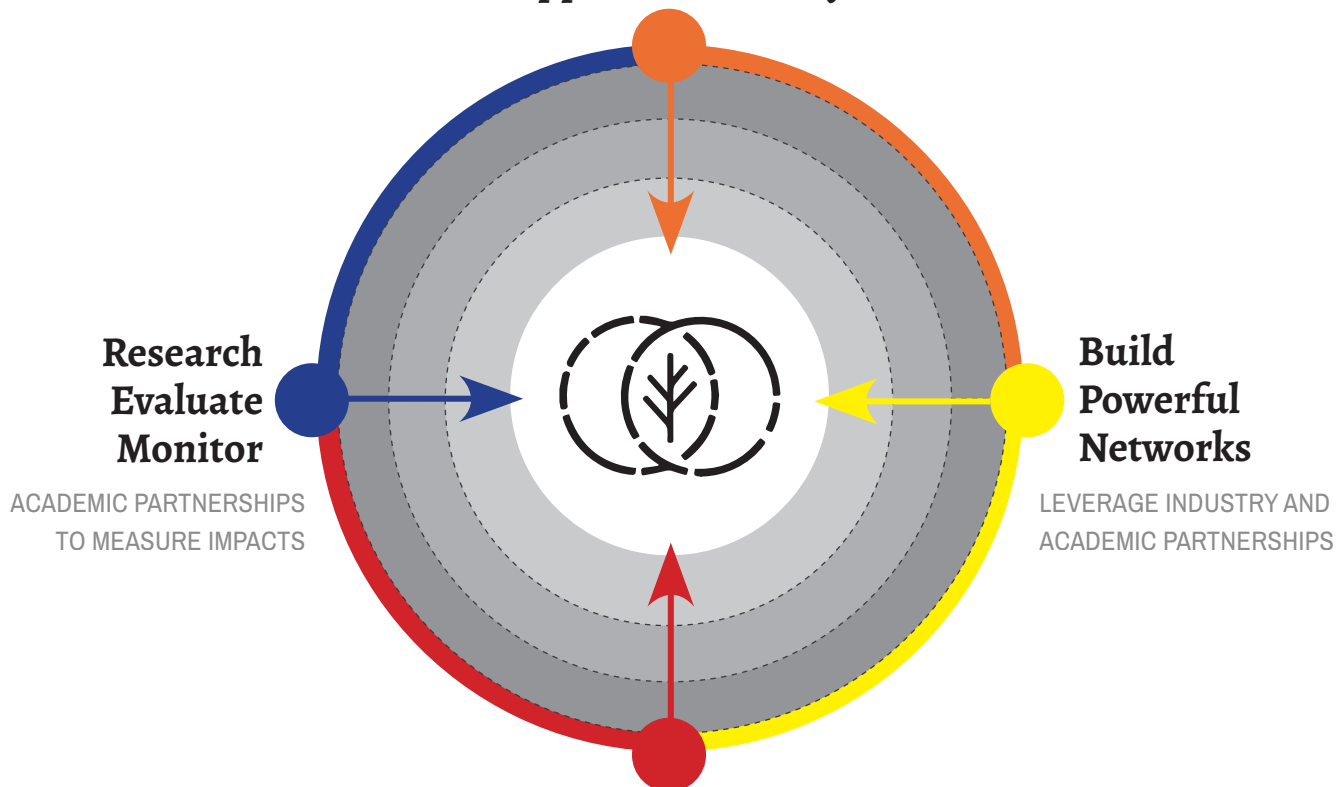
We support the leaders and change-makers of tomorrow by creating a solid foundation - a support structure of employment opportunities, materials, equipment, and education, enabling community members to harvest, innovate, and navigate challenges in a stable environment through mentorship and guidance.

We are rebuilding connections from the ground up - harnessing the spirit of resilience that exists from within our communities through dedicated partnerships, mutual trust, and commitment to the journey.



RELIABLE, ADAPTABLE, HOLISTIC SUPPORTS
 TRAINING, RESOURCES, MATERIALS, EXPENSES, GUIDANCE

Support the Journey



Build Human Capacity

YOUTH MENTORSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT
 BUILD LOCAL TEAMS AND OPPORTUNITY

WHAT WE DO

We empower individuals, create local teams, engage communities, and unite the region. We do this through by **centering Indigenous people, leveraging local strengths, culture and traditions, while bringing in a vast network of external experts, materials, and funding.**

With lived-experience and the wisdom of generations' old cultural solutions, paired together with academic research and technical expertise, Food Matters Manitoba is providing the ingredients for success to empower younger generations to continue this work far beyond our presence.

EDUCATION & MENTORSHIP



SPLIT LAKE | NORWAY HOUSE | CRANE RIVER

TRADITIONAL HARVESTING



NORWAY HOUSE | BROCHET



COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS



LAC BROCHET | CROSS LAKE | SHERRIDON

TRADITIONAL COOKING



BROCHET

MEDICINE PICKING & TRADITIONAL PLANTING



NORWAY HOUSE

AGRICULTURE & SMALL-SCALE LIVESTOCK



CRANE RIVER | FOX LAKE | SHAMATTAWA



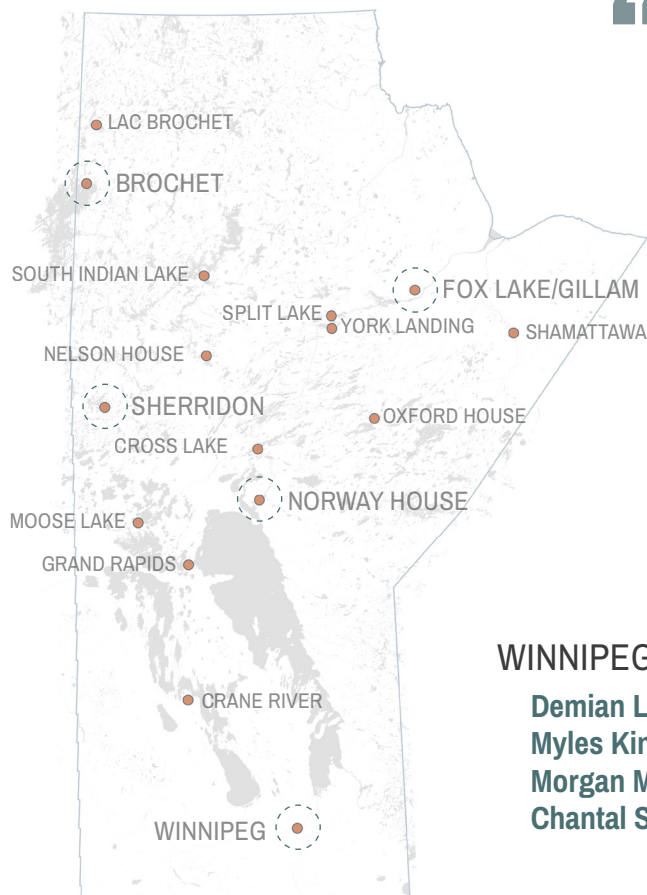
OUR TEAM & PARTNERS

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

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

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,
FMM Northern Programs Manager**

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



OUR NETWORK OF SUPPORT

GOVERNMENT FUNDING SUPPORTS

PROVINCE OF MANITOBA

- Northern Healthy Foods Initiatives
- Health, Seniors and Long-term Care

Indigenous Services Canada

Public Health Agency of Canada

OTHER CORE FUNDING SUPPORTS

Lawson Foundation

Northern Manitoba Food Culture Community Collaborative

Green Jobs Canada

Lulu Lemon Foundation

Catherine Donnelly Foundation

Ocean's North

Community Foundations Canada – Indigenous Peoples Resilience Fund

ACADEMIC PARTNERS

St. Boniface Hospital Research Centre

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

- Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences
- Rady Faculty of Health Sciences
- Faculty of Environment, Earth and Resources

Manitoba Teachers Society

Frontier School Division

INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Food and Beverage Manitoba

Bioscience Association Manitoba

Protein MB

Farm Credit Canada

Futurepreneur

COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

Northern Manitoba Food Culture Community Collaborative

Fireweed Food Coop

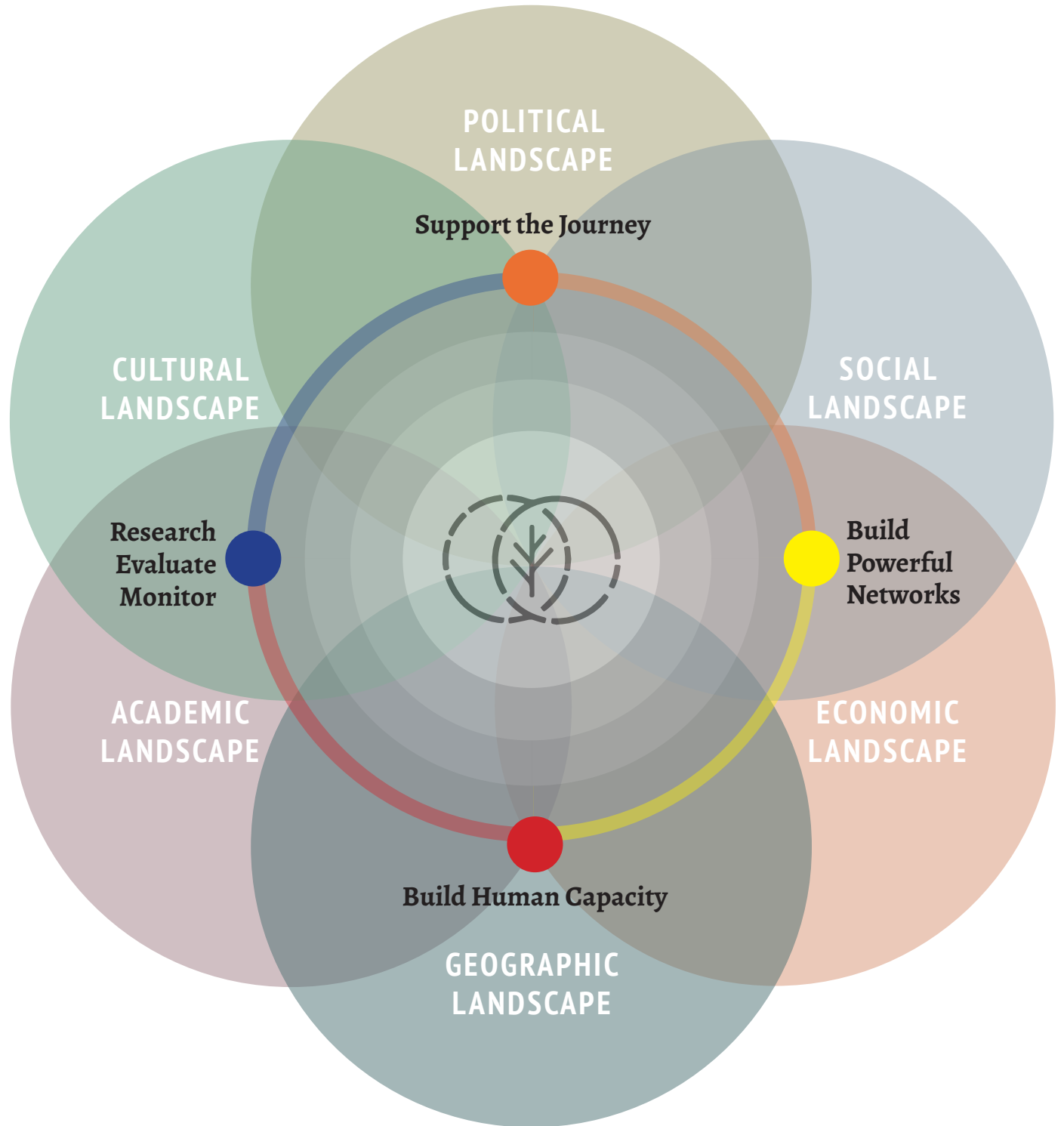
Ocean's North

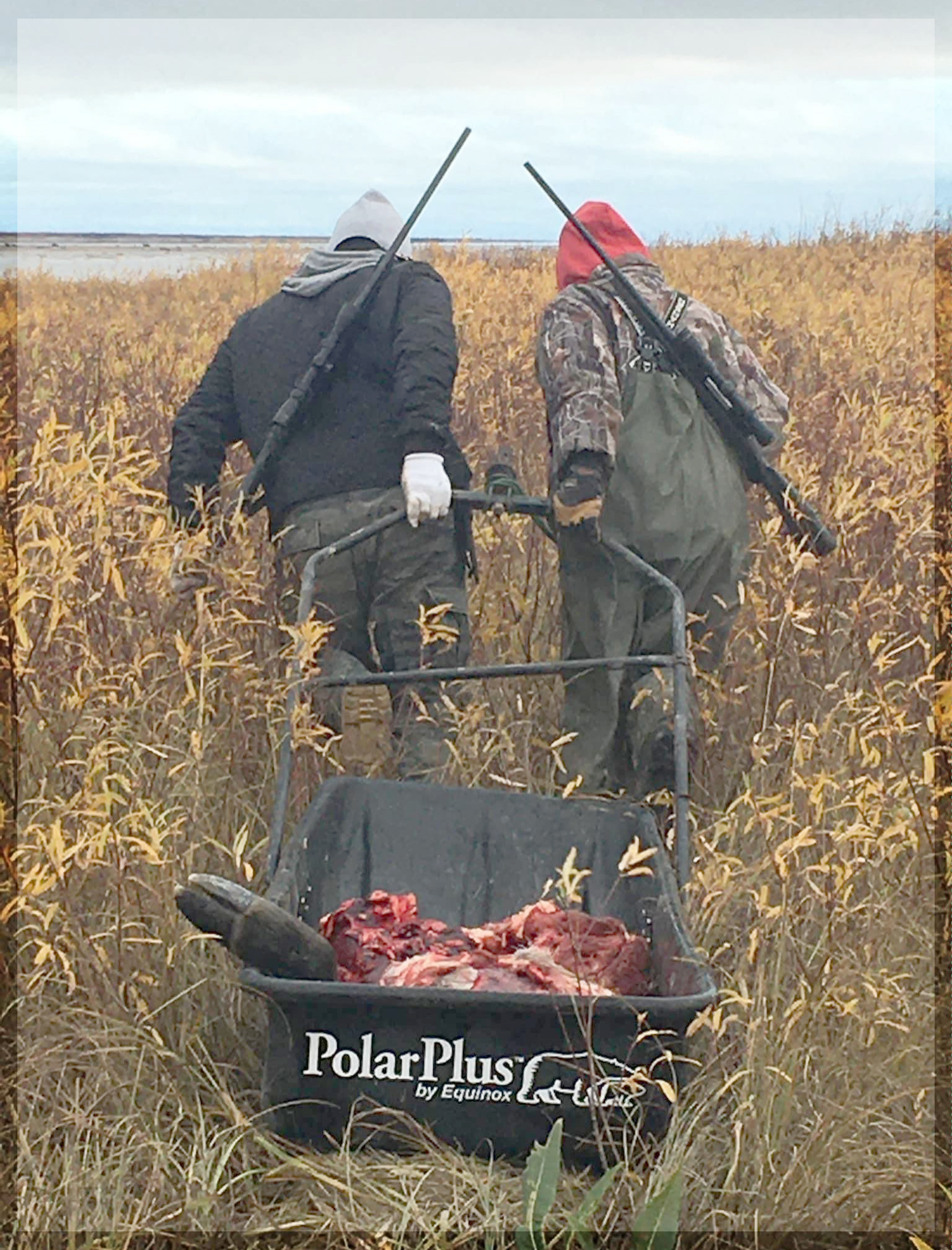
Dillon Consulting


Jordan's Principle

Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative







PolarPlus
by Equinox 

THE OPPORTUNITY

Indigenous communities were the original entrepreneurs and economic drivers of these regions, with complex knowledge systems of resource development and vast, intricate networks of trade.

By kickstarting Indigenous economic development across Manitoba, we will propel a new reality of sustainability, prosperity, and health. This initiative is designed to harness the growth and momentum of our food sovereignty work as a driver for Indigenous and community owned businesses.

By further developing local capacity, expertise, and experience, we will methodically unlock the human potential of Manitoba and help create a future where Indigenous communities once again stand tall as leaders in the economic world.



THE JOURNEY

TO INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The second phase of this journey will build upon the momentum and success of years of work with our community partners. It will address the most pressing challenges and barriers while building off of our foundations within partner communities and across the region, and begin to build the pillars of their local community food systems.

We have demonstrated substantial value from the beginning of the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative - amplifying its depth and impacts by restructuring an Indigenous led approach, recreating our entire organization around it, building a complex network of support, and demonstrating our commitment to the wellbeing of Manitoba.

Food Matters Manitoba and our community partners are ready to continue increasing the impact of our work at the intersection of Indigenous food sovereignty and community economic development.



**Phase 2 | Indigenous Community
Food System Initiative**



Phase 1 | Creating the Foundation



THE VISION

A modern Indigenous community food system will include local traditional harvests, local agricultural harvests, imported food, along with processing and far reaching value-added market capabilities.

It will be owned and operated by the community – creating sustainable food sources, jobs, revenue streams, and new opportunities.

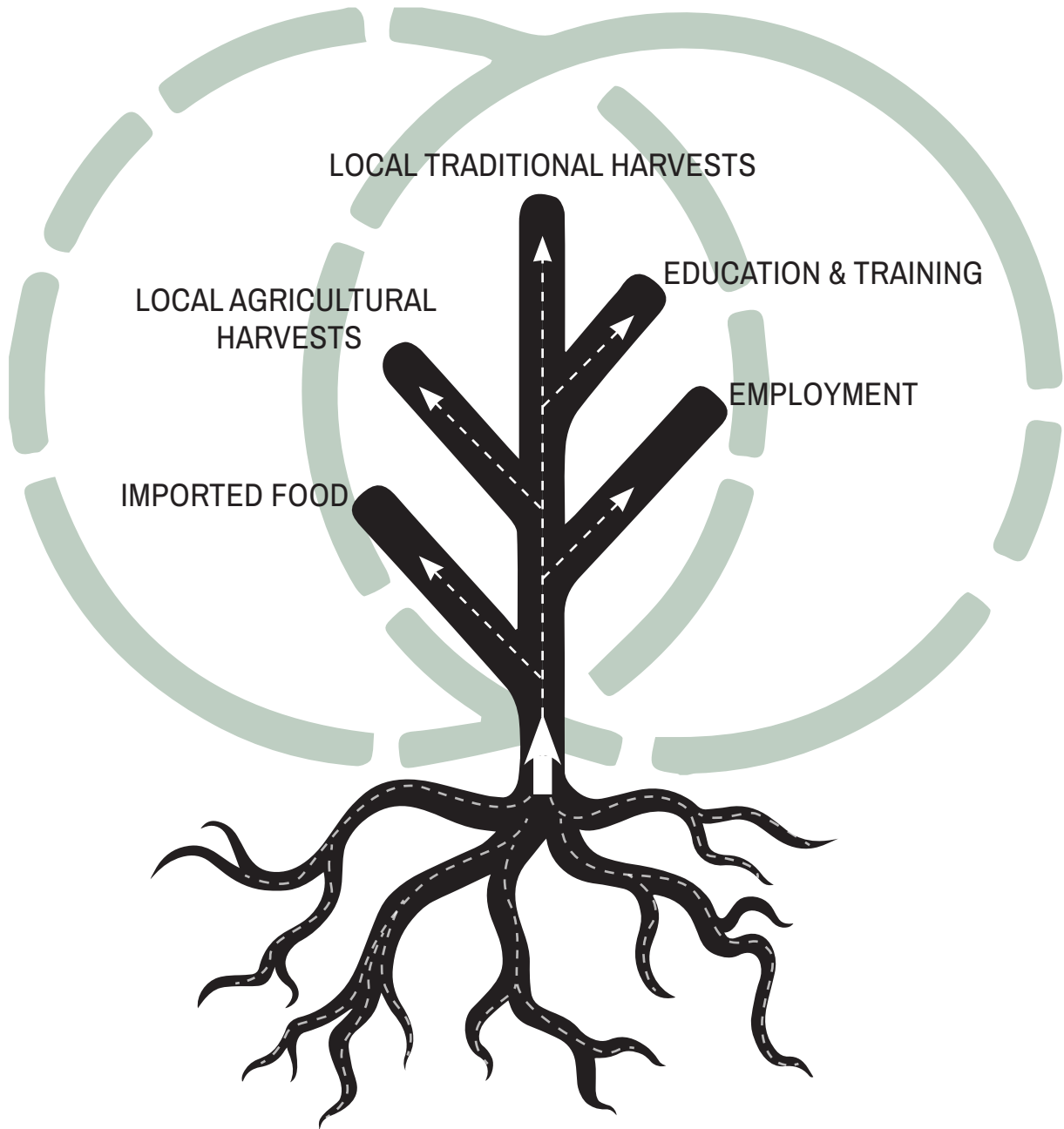
The food system will embody Indigenous principles and traditions while leveraging the leading technological advancements, industry best practices, and academic research. Each community's system may materialize differently, but the principles and impacts will be similar.

The system will sustainably harvest local wildlife and flora, while creating new pillars of local production through agriculture - taking pressure off the natural resources.

Traditional harvests will continue to provide necessary education and development to local youth, while agricultural production will open up a new reality for economic development.

Value-added and specialty products will reach international and global markets bringing wealth to communities. Employment and training programs will raise the quality of life, while inspiring and empowering surrounding communities.





Phase 3 | A Modern Indigenous Food System



NEXT STEPS

CONTINUED OPERATIONS - SCALED UP

- A. BUILDING HUMAN CAPACITY
- B. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY ECOSYSTEM ENGAGEMENT AND MOBILIZATION
- C. COMMITTED COMMUNITY SUPPORT
- D. RESEARCH, EVALUATION AND MONITORING

CREATE & IMPLEMENT A BOTTOM UP SYSTEM OF SUPPORT: INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM INITIATIVE

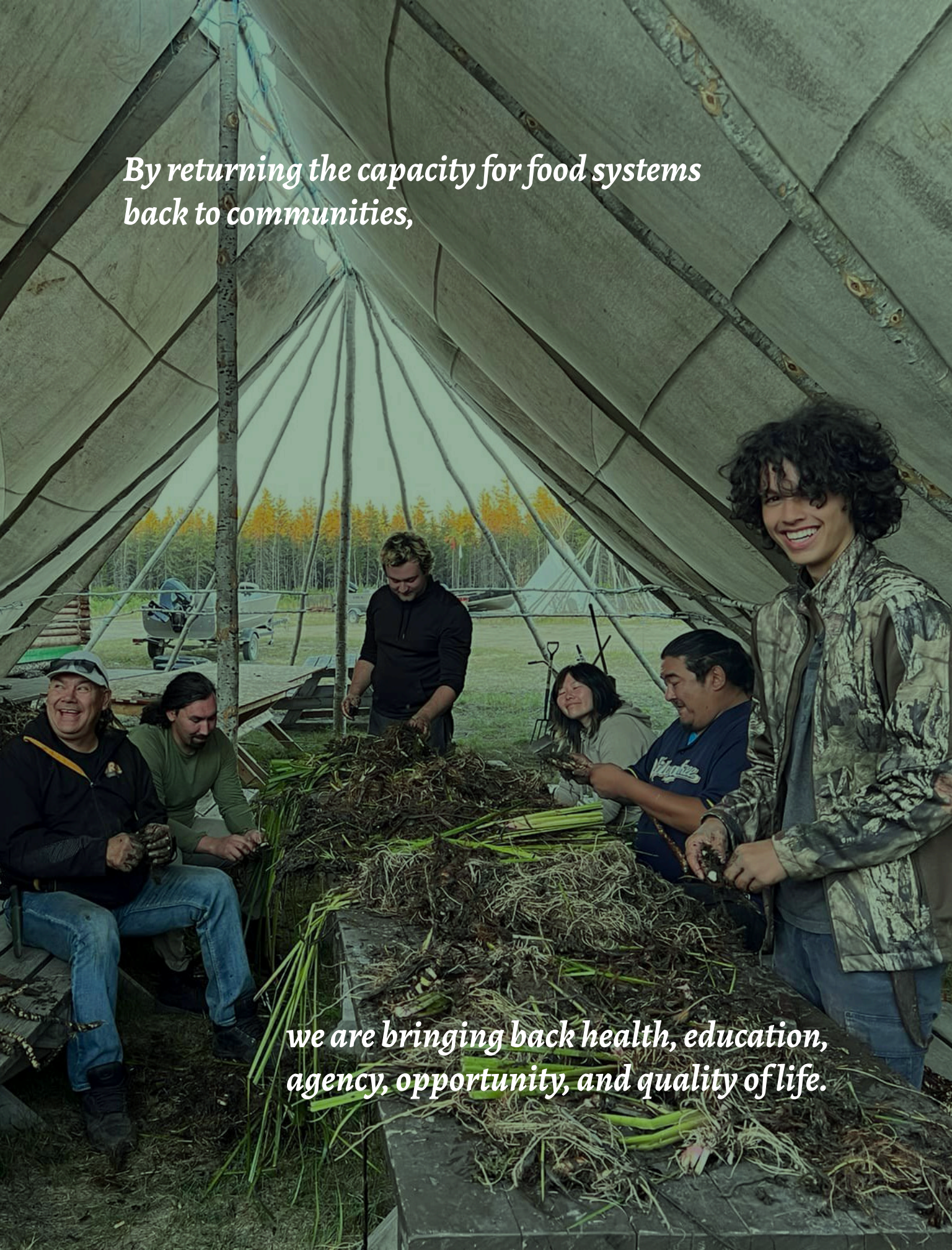
- A. COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM ASSESSMENTS
- B. SYNTHESIZE REGIONAL ASSESSMENT
- C. NEW INITIATIVE MODEL FOR SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES
- D. CUSTOMIZED COMMUNITY WORK PLANS
- E. PROTOTYPE IMPLEMENTATION, REASSESS NEXT PHASE OF SUPPORT





*By returning the capacity for food systems
back to communities,*

*we are bringing back health, education,
agency, opportunity, and quality of life.*

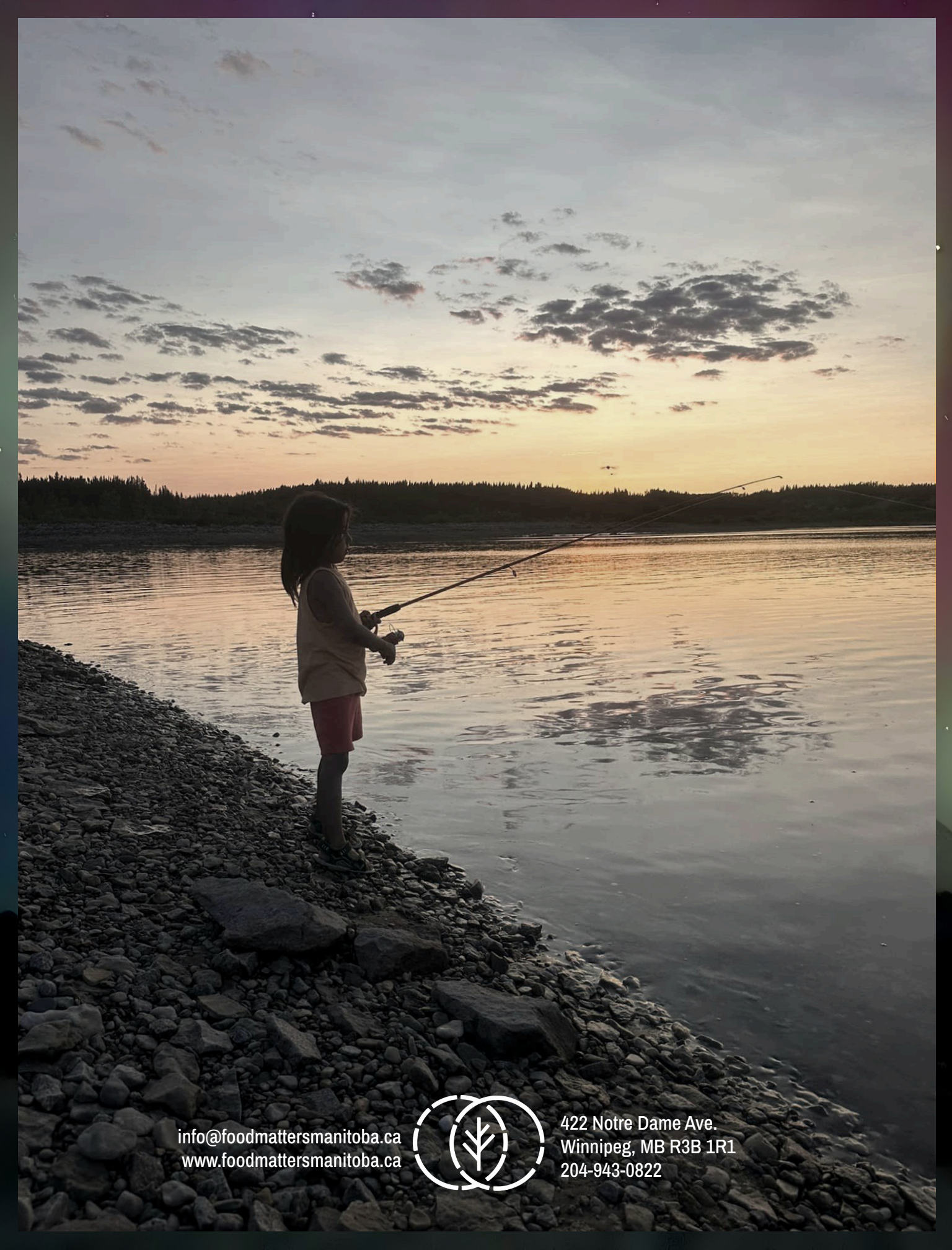


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Through this work (with Food Matters Manitoba), we're finding a way to rekindle that spirit in us, to bring back that community cohesion, to unlock the potential of the North so we can stand up together as a province, and set the example for the rest of the country and move forward together with prosperity.”

- Demian Lawrenchuk 2024,
FMM Executive Director





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