



CONFRONTING THE FOOD SECURITY CRISIS IN CANADA

2023 Impact Report

CHILDREN'S
NUTRITION



LAND-BASED
EDUCATION



FOOD
SECURITY



FOOD
SOVEREIGNTY



CAPACITY
BUILDING





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Thank you! We extend our heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support and partnership, which has made a significant impact on children and families in Indigenous communities across Canada.

Amidst another challenging year, your generous gift has helped boost the resilience of Indigenous communities struggling with ongoing inflation, rising food prices, and high levels of food insecurity. We are deeply appreciative of your shared commitment to community-led development and your alliance as genuine partners with Indigenous community members.

You are helping to create better access to nourishing food for children through school nutrition and food distribution programs. You've supported an increase in home and community gardens, which are boosting the nutritional value of meals and helping families defray the rising cost of food. And, you've empowered students, families, school staff, and Elders to work together using traditional, culturally-appropriate methods for food growing, gathering, and preserving. In so doing, Indigenous communities are gaining greater sovereignty over local food systems.

Indigenous communities across Turtle Island continue to be among the most food insecure in Canada, so again this year we applied the generous donations of CFTC supporters to vital food distribution programs such as food hampers. These have not only addressed immediate food shortages but also stemmed the tide of growing food insecurity.

In autumn 2023, we were able to create two documentaries that highlight some of the important projects you are supporting: *GROW: An Indigenous Food Sovereignty Story*, which highlights the food forests in Treaty 6 and Treaty 8 territories (Alberta and Saskatchewan, respectively); and *Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds and Healthy Spirits in New Brunswick*, showcasing the work being done in Wolastoqiyik and Mi'kmaw territories by the Neqotkuk, Elsipogtog, Natoageneg and Esgenoôpetitj Nations to support children's nutrition and land-based education in schools, and to improve food security.

These videos were created by local Indigenous filmmakers, an indicator of our commitment to working in collaboration with Indigenous communities towards social and economic self-determination. We are thrilled to be able to raise Indigenous voices to share their own stories – part of our journey to reconciliation and healing.

We hope you enjoy the videos and this 2023 Impact Report, and that they help you feel connected to the future you are walking side-by-side with these communities to create: one where every child can flourish and achieve their full potential.

Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out.

With deep gratitude,

Mapy

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CANADA'S MULTI-FACTOR FOOD SECURITY CRISIS IN 2023

From the price of eggs, bread, and gas, to ever worsening weather events, to continuing supply chain disruptions brought about by global conflict, no one has remained untouched by the major events and trends of 2023. But, as observed during the uneven recovery from the pandemic, those already in vulnerable situations found themselves most at risk and least equipped to withstand these challenges. Inflation, job losses, income reductions, and economic vulnerabilities, along with the effects of global conflict and climate disasters, hit socially and economically marginalized groups the hardest, including children, youth, families, and Elders in Indigenous communities in Canada.

Canada's rate of food inflation rose to 11.4% in January 2023, its highest level since the 1980s. People living in poverty in Canada in 2023 were spending more than 45% of their income on food, without accounting for other costs that have also skyrocketed, such as housing and transportation.

Canadians are expected to continue to feel the effects of high food inflation, with food insecurity expected to rise in 2024. The effects of climate change and the impact of high transportation costs, because of higher oil prices, are also predicted to continue.¹



According to PROOF's Household Food Insecurity in Canada report,² released in mid-2023 and based on StatsCan data of 2022, the prevalence of household food insecurity in Canada's ten provinces rose to 17.8% in 2022 – the highest recorded in Canada's 17-year history of monitoring.

Canada's Atlantic provinces had the highest rate of individuals living in food-insecure households followed closely by Alberta. Among **Indigenous families living in the provinces and off reserve, the rate of food insecurity is 48%.**³

¹ Dalhousie University, the University of Guelph, the University of British Columbia, and the University of Saskatchewan, [Canada's Food Price Report 2023](#), 13th edition, 2023.

² PROOF (Food Insecurity Policy Research), [Indigenous Food Insecurity](#), retrieved May 11, 2023.

³ StatsCan, Report: [Food Insecurity Among Canadian Families](#), Nov 11, 2023.

These estimates do not include people living in the territories or on reserves, who are known to experience high vulnerability to food insecurity, nor do they factor in the ongoing inflation of 2023. Most experts agree, however, that Indigenous people living on reserve or more than 50 km from a major centre have been driven into deeper levels of economic precarity and food insecurity in 2023.

Food Banks Canada's HungerCount 2023 report⁴ gives a more recent sense of the impact of rising costs, rising unemployment, and the food and housing crisis on Canadians' food security, noting an increase of 32.1% in food bank use from 2022 to 2023.

One-third of food bank clients are children under the age of 18 and 12 per cent of food bank use was by Indigenous people even though they represent only five per cent of the general population.

Nearly half (48%) of people who are Indigenous reported having gone hungry in the previous 12 months due to lack of money for food, compared to 15% of the non-Indigenous population.

FOOD BANKS CANADA, HUNGERCOUNT 2023

Colonization has led to loss of land, knowledge, and culture (including the ability to procure local, traditional foods), and is a main driver of food insecurity for Indigenous people. Rising costs and climate change are making the problem considerably worse. More than ever, healthy food, fuel, transportation, and household essentials are priced out of reach for far too many Indigenous families. Often, the only accessible, affordable food is from convenience stores and is of poor quality, dominated by processed foods high in saturated fats and sugar.

⁴ Food Banks Canada, [HungerCount 2023](#), Aug 2023.



2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Thanks to your generosity, children and families in Indigenous communities benefitted from school meals, nutrition, and other local food systems supports.



342,775 snacks and meals were provided to **6,025** children through school food programs



4,293 food hampers were distributed to **589** households



4,081 people were trained on **nutrition, cooking and food use**



425 home, **58** community and **36** school gardens support more than **1,125** families and **1,085** students



1,024 people received **agriculture/ horticulture training** and **348** people received **supplies** such as seeds, tools, livestock



2,563 people participated in **traditional practices &/or land-based education**



13,000+ lbs. of fresh **produce** were grown in **gardens/food forests** and **488** households received harvested **food**



Food forests now cover **27.75** acres in **4 communities** and are supported by **193** community volunteers and **500** environmental stewards

Partnering with Indigenous communities across Canada in 2023



GROW: AN INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY STORY

Filmed on location in August 2023 by Eric Anaquod, a Regina-based filmmaker and member of the Muscowpetung Saulteaux Nation. This video celebrates the accomplishments of the Indigenous Food Forest Initiative 2030 – which is stimulating community engagement and promoting food sovereignty for Atikameg (Whitefish Lake First Nation) in Treaty 8 territory and Ahtahkakoop, Beardy's & Okemasis', and Muskeg Lake Cree Nations in Treaty 6 territory.



HEALTHY BODIES, HEALTHY MINDS, HEALTHY SPIRITS IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Filmed on location in September 2023 in Wolastoqiyik and Mi'kmaw territories by Carr Sappier, a filmmaker, member and resident of Neqotkuk (Tobique First Nation). *Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds, Healthy Spirits in New Brunswick* highlights the great work being done in Natoageneg (Eel Ground), Neqotkuk, Esgenoôpetitj and Elsipogtog First Nations to support children's nutrition and land-based education in schools, and to improve food security in these Indigenous communities.



NEW BRUNSWICK



ELSIPOGTOG FIRST NATION



- **96,000 meals** (breakfast, lunch or snack) were provided
- **380 youth fed** were fed through **school nutrition programs**
- **600 people** received food at **community meals** or special events

MAKING AN IMPACT

Elsipogtog First Nation reported that reliable school lunches and snacks have made a positive difference for children, improving their mental health, strengthening social connections, and inspiring their curiosity to explore new types of food. Students are developing a taste for healthier food options. Elsipogtog also reports that the quality of the food and engagement of school staff has led to an increase in student use of and satisfaction with the school food program.

ESGENOÔPETITJ FIRST NATION



- **810 people** received food at **community meals** or special events
- **180 meals** (breakfast, lunch or snack) were provided
- **105 people** trained on **nutrition** and **food use**, or **cooking**
- **101 home, school or community gardens** were established or supported
- **97 students** were supported by **school gardens**
- **60 households** were provided with **food boxes**

MAKING AN IMPACT

Esgenoôpetitj credits their community gardens as the catalyst for the most significant change in their community. The response was immediate and enthusiastic, with 75 requests for garden supplies within an hour of introducing the idea to the community. Esgenoôpetitj looks forward to witnessing the community's engagement in gardening and cultivating their own produce.



NATOAGANEG (EEL GROUND FIRST NATION)



- **39,978 meals** (breakfast, lunch or snack) were provided
- **74 youth** were fed through **school nutrition programs**
- **201 people** received food at **community meals** and special events
- **120 individuals** received **agricultural training**
- **120 students** were supported by a **school garden**
- **72 people** trained on **nutrition, food use or cooking**
- **1 new school garden** established

MAKING AN IMPACT

Natoaganeg reports that the most significant change this year was in the consistency of programs. Since there were no community-wide shutdowns in 2023, the food programs have regained traction. Student engagement is up and student mental health has improved through the stability offered by reliable school meals. Efforts to offer more whole foods for snacks has shifted students' snack preferences. The community's butcher shop has demonstrated moose butchering, sharing valuable knowledge about what cuts of meat are used in meals, and is looking forward to making sausages and jerky to share with community members.



NEQOTKUK – MAH SOS (TOBIQUE FIRST NATION)



- **804 meals** (breakfast, lunch or snack) were provided
- **100 youth** were fed through school nutrition programs
- **100 people** trained on nutrition, food use or cooking

MAKING AN IMPACT

In the 2023 school year, the school began hosting special occasion feasts for children and their families, which has fostered community bonds. These meals, which include culturally-significant ingredients like salmon and fiddleheads, showcase the school's commitment to offering children and families diverse and enriching experiences that align with Indigenous traditions. Students actively participated in preserving fiddleheads and found great joy and connection in celebrating feasts with their parents, siblings, and relatives.

NEQOTKUK – PERTH-ANDOVER (TOBIQUE FIRST NATION)



- **6,092 meals** (breakfast, lunch or snack) were provided
- **3,932 youth** were fed through **school nutrition programs**
- **225 people** received food at **community meals** and special events
- **188 people** trained on **nutrition**, food use or cooking
- **187 students** supported by **school gardens**
- **84 individuals** received **agricultural training**
- **1 new school garden** established

MAKING AN IMPACT

Neqotkuk – Perth-Andover reports that their school meal program has played a crucial role in supporting students with food anxiety, particularly in their low socio-economic area. The school meal program has become a cornerstone for positive learning experiences, boosting mental fitness and a sense of connectedness. The garden program has equipped students with skills for home gardening, generating excitement for the next fall harvest. Moreover, the food provided for community and school-wide activities has engaged the community and fostered a sense of shared purpose and togetherness.



Transforming Lives Through Nutrition at Elsipogtog

Christina Metcalf, a registered dietitian, plays a pivotal role at the school in Elsipogtog, a Mi'kmaq First Nation located half-way between Miramichi and Moncton on the Richibucto River.

Christina's work has changed as Elsipogtog's school nutrition and food program has evolved. Her focus is now on helping to shape the school menu, work with cooks and cafeteria staff to ensure a balanced, seasonally-varied diet, and support nutrition education of students and their parents.

The school's breakfast and lunch program addresses the community's significant food insecurity, which has grown more concerning over the last year of dramatically rising inflation and food costs. Many students rely on the food they get at school so Christina makes sure that meals are diverse and nutritious, that they include fruits and vegetables, and that they incorporate Indigenous traditional foods whenever possible.

The menu includes moose meat sourced from a staff member who is a hunter, providing a connection to Indigenous traditions and a unique culinary experience.

Christina's work sourcing and ordering food is especially critical given the rising costs that Elsipogtog's families and school food program are facing. Her priority is to minimize food waste through careful forecasting and menu planning. Any surplus is directed to the community shelter. Students or families may receive leftover items if they can use the extra support.

Scarlette, a Grade 4 student at the school, recognizes how important the school food program is for her family:



"My dad, he works on a boat, and my mom works at home. I don't really like asking my mom to do stuff because she really needs to work. So that's what I like about breakfast at school – I don't need to try to make it myself or I don't need to make my parents make it for me."



Christina Metcalfe, Dietician, Elsipogtog

As a member of the student council, Scarlett and a friend worked together to revamp how the morning and afternoon snacks could be distributed to make sure more students were able to enjoy the program. *“We had an idea that if kids had snacks that they didn’t like or they didn’t want, they could put it in the snack basket,”* she explained. Students can deposit any snacks they don’t want into the snack basket, and then it’s taken to each classroom so that whoever doesn’t have a snack can select one.

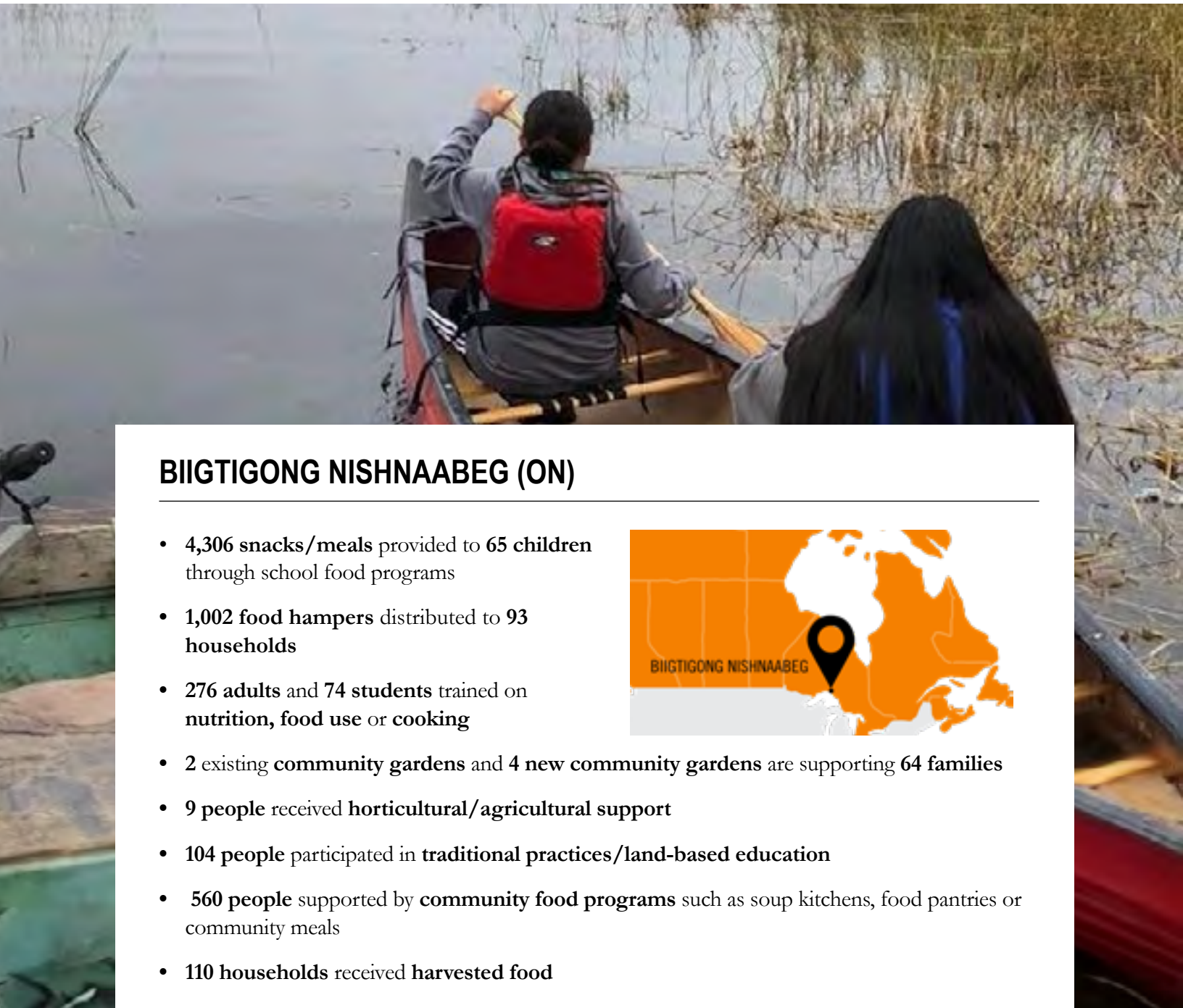
Christina emphasizes the value of involving students in the process, encouraging their feedback and ideas, and making them aware of the program’s goals. The positive impact extends beyond nutritional benefits, enhancing students’ overall well-being and academic performance.

Looking ahead, Christina envisions a future where the program can expand beyond breakfast and lunch. Despite current funding constraints, she hopes to reintroduce initiatives like the school garden to *“get the kids excited again about the process of producing their own food.”* The long-term goal is to enhance students’ connections to healthy living.

Thanks to your ongoing support, the dedicated students, staff and families in Elsipogtog are creating sustainable change for children.



ONTARIO



BIIGTIGONG NISHNAABEG (ON)

- **4,306 snacks/meals** provided to **65 children** through school food programs
- **1,002 food hampers** distributed to **93 households**
- **276 adults** and **74 students** trained on **nutrition, food use or cooking**
- **2 existing community gardens** and **4 new community gardens** are supporting **64 families**
- **9 people** received **horticultural/agricultural support**
- **104 people** participated in **traditional practices/land-based education**
- **560 people** supported by **community food programs** such as soup kitchens, food pantries or community meals
- **110 households** received **harvested food**



MAKING AN IMPACT

Biigtigong Nishnaabeg ran another successful summer camp for 40 students in 2023. One focus was on cooking skills for healthy meals; another taught older students basic survival skills with some traditional outdoor cooking. The community maintained three gardens – an Elders' garden, a greenhouse, and a natural bush garden for traditional medicines. Elders and youth continue to cook together with a renewed focus on healthy alternatives and on traditional food. Biigtigong Nishnaabeg held two outdoor trips for Elders and youth, however an unseasonably warm fall and winter meant moose was scarce and the delayed freezing of the ice made land-based education unsafe.



NEYAASHIINIGMIING (CHIPPEWAS OF NAWASH UNCEDDED FIRST NATION)

- 40,220 snacks/meals provided to 83 children through school food programs
- 720 food hampers provided to 260 people
- 45 adults and 65 students trained on nutrition, food use or cooking
- 1 community garden supports 100 families
- 1 school garden supports 68 students
- 45 families maintain home gardens and received inputs such as seeds, tools, plants
- 41 people received horticultural/agricultural training
- 130 people participated in traditional practices/land-based education
- 400 people supported by community food programs such as soup kitchens, food pantries or community meals



MAKING AN IMPACT

The thriving community garden continues to be the heart of the Neyaashiinigmiing community. People look forward to working together in a good way as new life springs up around them. Inflation and the high cost of living has made it difficult for many households to make ends meet, so Neyaashiinigmiing continues to support youth, families and the community by making a variety of fresh produce and healthy foods available. There is a growing appreciation of the value and richness the garden offers. It is making an impact on many who may struggle economically or personally who find working in the garden healing, as well as a way to access needed food and give back to others.



RED ROCK INDIAN BAND



- **6,058 meals/snacks** provided through schools to **308 children**
- **1,047 food hampers** distributed to **302 people**
- **114 individuals** participated in **traditional practices/land-based education**
- **2,000 individuals** supported by **community food programs** (soup kitchens, pantries, community meals)
- **118 households/individuals** received **harvested food**

MAKING AN IMPACT

RRIB appreciates the flexible funding CFTC has been able to offer, which has allowed them to provide “grab-and-go” meals to high school students, many of whom went without lunch since the high school cafeteria closed. In 2023, RRIB was able to provide food for older students while continuing its morning breakfast program in its two elementary schools. RRIB is also using funding from CFTC donors to provide good food boxes to community members who are finding it increasingly difficult to provide essential fresh foods and produce for their families due to rising costs.

A photograph showing a woman with a dark scarf and a young girl in a blue plaid shirt watering a garden box with a purple watering can. Other children are visible in the background, some looking at a small book or paper. The garden box is filled with dark soil and has red string lines for planting. A chain-link fence and trees are in the background.

“The pride that we see in the children at the garden, the work that they’re doing, rolling up their sleeves, tending to the garden, they get to take the produce home and they are so happy. They tell me, ‘My grandma is going to be so happy.’” DEE MILLAR, coordinator
Healthy Living Program, Neyaashiinigmiing

Restoring native species, reviving native knowledge

Neyaashiinigmiing continues to empower youth through Anishinaabe cultural traditions and intergenerational knowledge. This important education starts in local public schools where each class harvests and maintains garden boxes. These necessary skills engender confidence in the children as they learn to produce their own food.

Children become “*champions for change*,” who play a pivotal role tending to the central community garden weekly. The leaders of the garden project have partnered with community programs to help grow and expand the community garden. This has been successful for the community in a number of ways, as youth, Elders, and community members have all been engaged to participate in the gardening activities. They have not only gained skills but they have been able to connect with each other and with their Anishinaabe food and growing traditions.

The community garden has become “*a safe gathering space*,” according to Dee Millar, Neyaashiinigmiing’s Healthy Living Program coordinator. It’s also provided some relief from the effects of inflation. Garden produce such as potatoes, tomatoes and cucumbers have been welcome supplements to the food available to families.

The school and community gardens are building deeper connections of kinship and ancestral knowledge among members of the community, helping them to advance food security and food sovereignty for their Nation.

Neyaashiinigmiing is not only promoting traditional ways of harvesting food but also harvesting other materials, such as black ash. Before European contact, many First Nations used black ash to create baskets, canoes, snowshoes, and fish traps.

Learning about the history, value and importance of black ash is imperative and timely, as black ash is under threat by invasive species. Elders and Knowledge Holders, working together with the community's Species-at-Risk program, are finding ways to encourage and support the growth and sustainable harvesting of black ash and other native species upon which the people of Neyaashiinigmiing have historically relied. They are offering workshops, storytelling, and teachings on the black ash harvesting tradition.

A black ash harvest is set for spring 2024 when youth and community will take part in the clearing of trees, collection and storage of black ash. Dee will be sharing the teachings of the black ash baskets, as she was taught: *"The weavers may have holes or may not be always perfect, but they are always used because they tell a story of the current circumstance and time."* She remains hopeful that black ash and its traditions will survive. *"We will get through this, we will re-plant, we will come into a new season,"* she says.

**Thank you for supporting
Neyaashiinigmiing to remain resilient
and provide the next generation with the
cultural practices and wisdom to carry on
their traditions.**



MANITOBA

GARDEN HILL FIRST NATION



- **1,020 meals** provided through food hampers to **6 households**
- **7 existing community gardens** support **20 families**
- **6 new home gardens** established and supporting **6 families**
- **The Meechim farm** is growing **37 varieties of plants** including beans, carrots, lettuce, cucumbers, potatoes and tomatoes and supports a **poultry program** (chickens and turkeys)
- **15 students** received **training on nutrition, food use or cooking**
- **6 people** received **agricultural inputs** (e.g., seeds, tools, plants, livestock)
- **5 people** received **agricultural/horticultural training**
- **30 people** participated in **traditional practices/land-based education**

MAKING AN IMPACT

Garden Hill reports that the most significant change this year has been the transition in project leadership at the main farm site. Previously overseen by a remote farm manager, the role has shifted to a collective farm crew comprised of local community members. This shift aligns with the project's goal of building local capacity and reducing reliance on external expertise. The local farm crew now takes the lead in coordinating on-site operations, emphasizing community empowerment and sustainability.



O-CHI-CHAK-KO-SIPI FIRST NATION

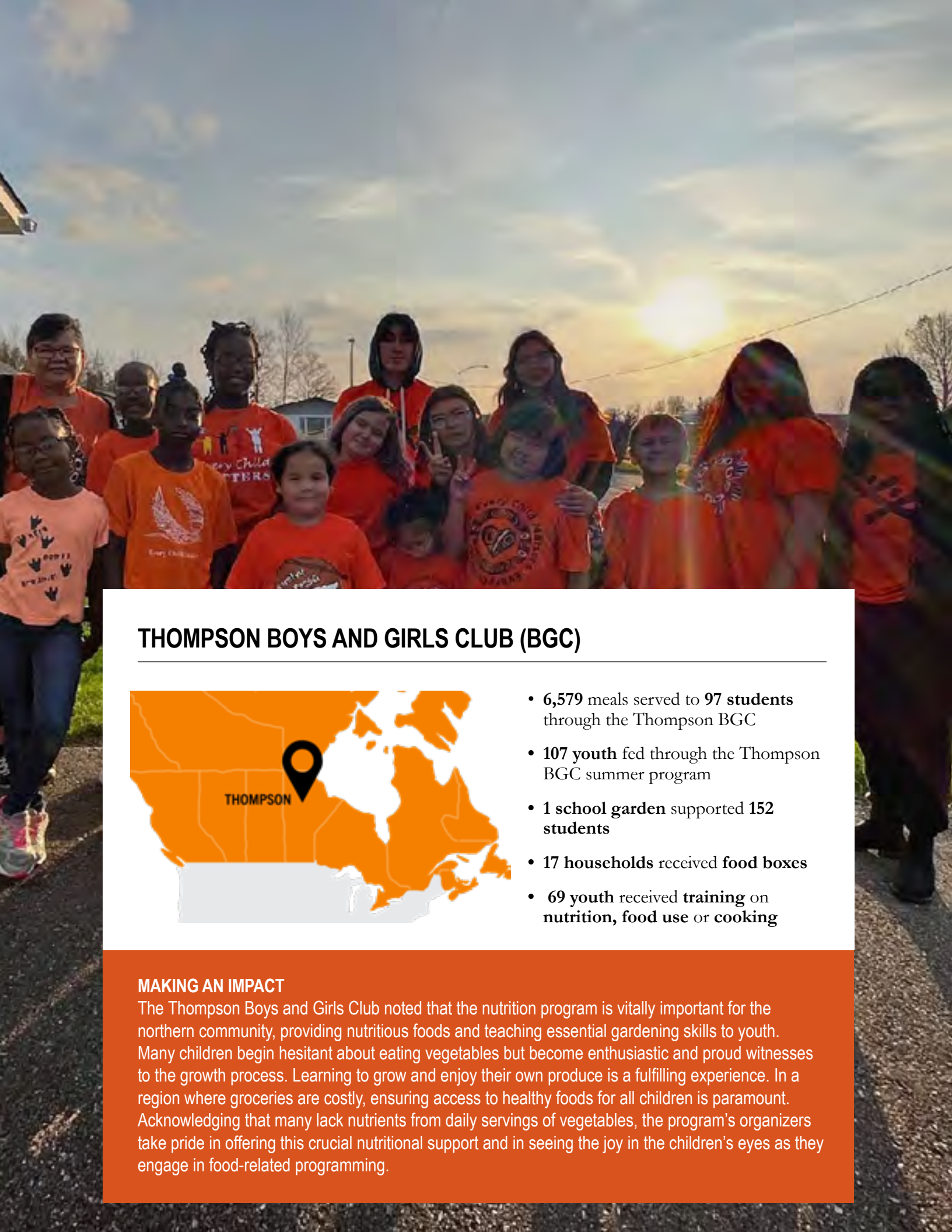


- 16 school gardens supported
- 120 youth received **breakfasts** and **lunches** in schools
- 130 youth and 14 adults participated in **traditional practices/land-based education**

MAKING AN IMPACT

O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi reports that the school food program gives children “the opportunity to learn without the barrier of coming to school hungry. Students are eager to come to school knowing they will get a proper and healthy lunch. You can see the changes in attitude of the kids. They seem to be less disruptive and stay focused on their work. The kids know they will not go hungry and [their] expressions when served fresh, healthy food say it all.” The Nation also notes that the school food program has alleviated the burden of rising food costs for families.





THOMPSON BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB (BGC)



- **6,579** meals served to **97 students** through the Thompson BGC
- **107 youth** fed through the Thompson BGC summer program
- **1 school garden** supported **152 students**
- **17 households** received **food boxes**
- **69 youth** received **training** on **nutrition, food use or cooking**

MAKING AN IMPACT

The Thompson Boys and Girls Club noted that the nutrition program is vitally important for the northern community, providing nutritious foods and teaching essential gardening skills to youth. Many children begin hesitant about eating vegetables but become enthusiastic and proud witnesses to the growth process. Learning to grow and enjoy their own produce is a fulfilling experience. In a region where groceries are costly, ensuring access to healthy foods for all children is paramount. Acknowledging that many lack nutrients from daily servings of vegetables, the program's organizers take pride in offering this crucial nutritional support and in seeing the joy in the children's eyes as they engage in food-related programming.



WAYWAYSEECAPPO FIRST NATION



- **1,722 snacks/meals** provided to **21 children** through schools
- **60 meals** provided through food hampers to **26 households**
- **21 students** were **trained** on **nutrition, food use** or **cooking**
- **2** existing **school gardens** support the school
- **120 people** received **agricultural inputs** (e.g., seeds, tools, plants, livestock)
- **21 people** received agricultural / horticultural **training**
- **29 people** participated in **traditional practices/land-based education**
- **150 people** were supported by **community food programs** such as soup kitchens, food pantries, or community meals

MAKING AN IMPACT

Waywayseecappo First Nation ("Wayway") has seen an increase in student engagement and in their participation in their culture. School attendance has improved and there has been a noted decrease in behavioural issues requiring disciplinary action. Wayway's Off-Campus School – the focal point for land-based, cultural education – has become a flagship for the community. Other schools in the division are following Wayway's lead in offering similar programs to connect with students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Several have started offering meals and activities related to land-based practices after seeing the dramatic effect that Wayway's efforts have had on student success, school climate, and a generally improved sense of belonging among staff and students.



Garden Hill's journey to food sovereignty

In the heart of Garden Hill First Nation, a fly-in Oji-Cree community 475 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg in Treaty 5 territory, a food sovereignty initiative has sparked transformative change for its members.

The change started to take root thanks to a collaboration between Aki Foods – an innovative, Indigenous-led social enterprise – and Garden Hill First Nation. The collaboration sought to address a variety of social and economic problems plaguing Garden Hill, which included extremely high rates of poverty, severe food insecurity, and rates of Type 2 diabetes that were 400 to 500 times the national average.

These issues stemmed from the complex multi-generational trauma and loss of traditional ways of knowing and being brought about by colonization and the residential school system.

Meechim (which means “food” in the Oji-Cree language) initiated a healthy food market, a healthy food canteen, and a thirteen-acre farm, which has grown into *“a flourishing small-scale farm producing hundreds of pounds of organic food annually. This self-sufficiency empowers residents and fosters a deep sense of accomplishment,”* says Rodney Contois, Director of Aki Foods Inc.

In 2023, the community established the Meechim Farm Crew, a group selected from local community members to learn about agriculture and livestock management in the challenging northern environment. Guided by Manitoba's organic farmers, the crew has learned about horticultural and agricultural best practices – not just cultivating food but also cultivating knowledge.

During a tour of the garden, children were surprised when the farmer leading the tour picked and ate a pea pod off one of the plants. They were delighted to learn that what they ate came from plants that sprang from the ground. Soon, these children had spread across the fields and were picking and eating pea pods.



“The farm site ... is a place for shared labour, agricultural knowledge exchange, and intergenerational connection. This pride isn’t just sentimental; it fuels positive change. Volunteers [are] inspired by the project’s impact, young people see a future rooted in food security and environmental stewardship, and the broader community rallies for the project, ensuring its continued success.”

RODNEY CONTOIS, Director, Aki Foods Inc. (partner with Garden Hill First Nation)

Stories like these demonstrate how the farm is more than just a food producer. It’s a way to teach children about where food comes from, spark a love of fresh fruits and vegetables and healthy eating, inspire their interest in learning new skills, and create connections between youth and Elders. Through the Meechim farm, community members are drawing on traditional knowledge to learn what it is possible to grow in northern Manitoba.

By supporting initiatives like the Meechim farm, the CFTC donor community is walking alongside the people of Garden Hill as they make real progress towards food sovereignty.

Thank you for being part of Garden Hill’s journey, supporting them as they cultivate not just crops but a sustainable, self-determined future for generations to come.

SASKATCHEWAN



AHTAHKAKOOP



- **140 families** supported by **4 community gardens**
- **33 people** received agricultural / horticultural training
- **45 people** participated in **traditional practices/land-based education**
- **175 people** were supported by **community food programs** such as soup kitchens, food pantries, community meals
- **8,000 lbs of fresh produce** were grown in community gardens and in the food forest

MAKING AN IMPACT

Ahtahkakoop reports an increased interest in the community garden and food forest since they've been relocated. A cabin/office, gazebo, and outdoor kitchen offer places to gather, cook and work, and for Elders to share traditional teachings. There is a natural habitat for medicine picking, berry picking, and nature walks.

People are excited and feel a sense of accomplishment. More people are volunteering with seeding and harvesting. They appreciate the variety of vegetables grown, many they didn't know could grow in their area. People stop by to pick what they need, which supports better food security and nutrition, and there has been an increased interest in starting home gardens.

The larger, more accessible space is giving people a greater sense of sovereignty over their land and food systems. The garden and food forest are also engaging youth in a positive, constructive activity in their community.

BEARDY'S & OKEMASIS' CREE NATION



- **17,280 meals** distributed to **340 people** via **720 food hampers**
- **82 children** fed through **school food program**
- **67 community members** trained on **nutrition, food use** or **cooking**
- **2 existing community gardens** supported **118 families**
- **8 new home gardens** and **33 existing home gardens** supported **41 families**
- **183 people** participated in **traditional practices/land-based education**
- **one food forest** is thriving and community members are engaged
- **20 individuals** supported by **community food programs** such as soup kitchens, food pantries, community meals

MAKING AN IMPACT

Beardy's & Okemasis' land-based education program has gained solid traction over the past three years, and is now a notable contributor to the entire community's physical, cultural and emotional health and wellbeing. Teaming up with the Nation's Prevention department, the CFTC-supported program co-hosted a youth elk camp in August and a youth moose camp in September. Twenty-five youth and adults attended each camp, with their food expenses covered. Each youth received a survival backpack and took home four large freezer bags of meat – a welcome supplement of traditional food for their families to enjoy!



BIRCH NARROWS DENE NATION (TURNOR LAKE)



- **300 adults** and **155 students** trained on **nutrition, food use** or **cooking**
- **1 existing community garden** supports **50 families**
- **65 existing home garden** support **families**
- **60 people** received **gardening inputs** like seeds, tools, plants
- **400 people** participated in **traditional practices/land-based education**
- **200 households** received **harvested food**

MAKING AN IMPACT

The community exuberantly describes the impact of their gardening and land-based programming: "We grow!! We planted a garden as a group and had our school join us in the harvest. Our traditional programs are running successfully and we are able to show [mining and other interests] coming into our territories that we use this land not only part-time but all the time. These programs allow us to do that. I have many times felt alive [because of this program]. From watching the kids pull potatoes and carrots out of the garden to harvesting their own moose and fixing fish. How do you describe that feeling; you just have to be there to feel the happiness that these things bring to our community."





MUSKEG LAKE CREE NATION



- **50 children** fed through **school food program**
- **70 adults** and **275 students** trained on **nutrition, food use** or **cooking**
- **3 community gardens** and **one food forest** are established
- **600 lbs** of **fresh produce** grown in gardens and well-established food forest
- **50 people** received a **horticultural/agricultural training**
- **100 people** supported by **community food programs** such as soup kitchens, food pantries, community meals
- **60 households** received **harvested food**

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

The food forest in Muskeg Lake – the pilot program and benchmark for the three food forests established in Saskatchewan and one in Alberta – continues to be the most significant influence on growth, change, and food security in the community. Seven staff now work in the food forest and in food security programming, enabling the Nation to expand its reach and provide more opportunities to community members. The food forest offers a hub for students to learn about food systems and engage in land-based education guided by Elders. There has also been an increase in overall community engagement through events, workshops, and education opportunities. Muskeg Lake is committed to the food forest and related activities as a long-term project whose impact will grow along with the food forest itself.



At Muskeg Lake, food security and hope is growing with every tree that's planted

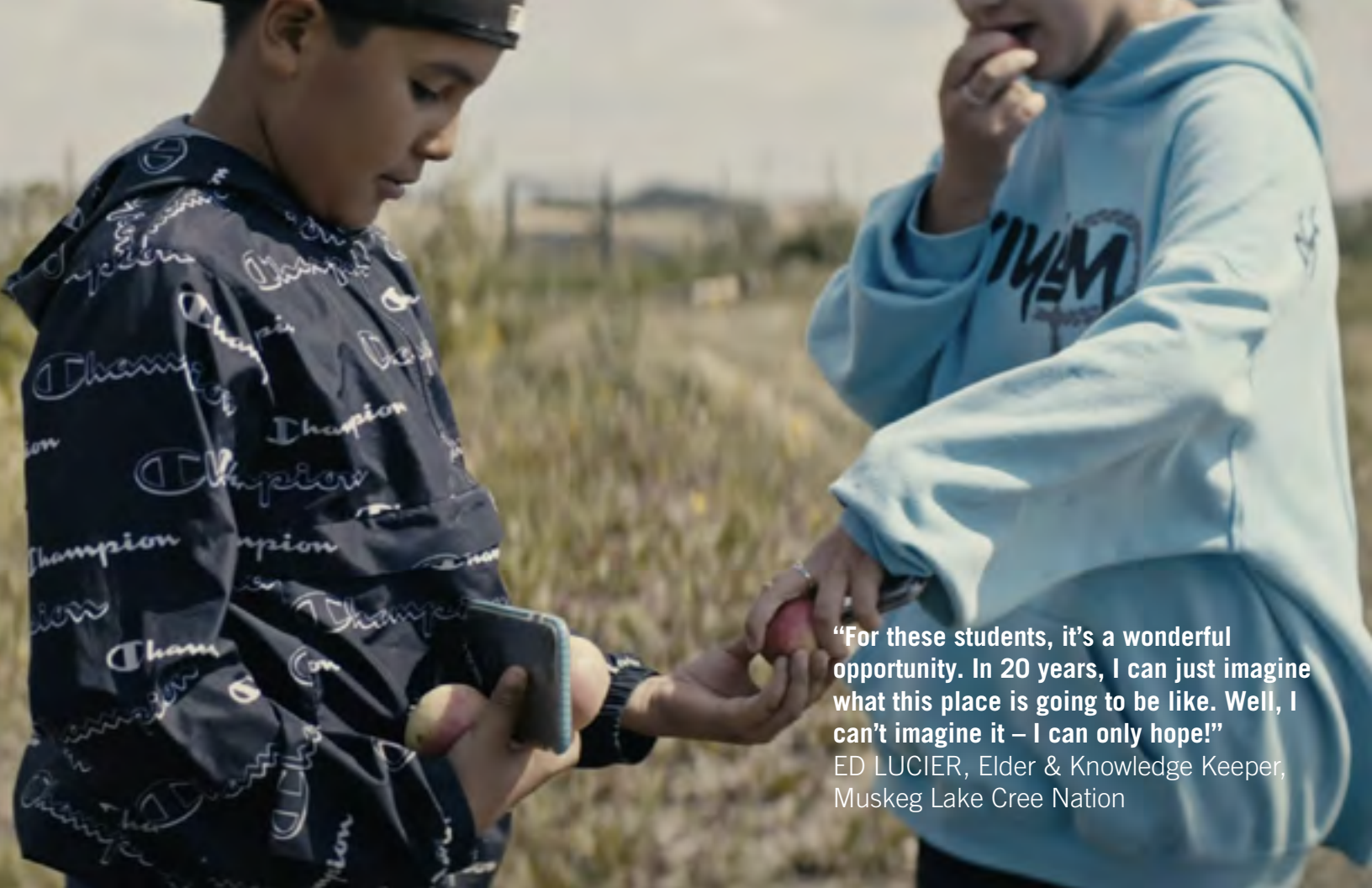
Ed Lucier, Elder and Knowledge Keeper in Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, says the community's thriving food forest has become a hub of learning and growth.

Established in late 2017 as a pilot program, the success of Muskeg Lake's food forest led to the creation of CFTC's Food Forest Initiative 2030, which envisions food forests in at least 10 communities across Canada by 2030.

With his many years of teaching experience, Ed recognizes the food forest's potential as an educational tool, *"not just for children but also for older people, or people who are gardeners, for people who are working within our community, on lands, on governance. Everybody has something that they can learn from the food forest."*

Ed sees the value of the hands-on education that the food forest offers, which helps engage youth and Elders in learning and sharing Indigenous ways of knowing and growing founded on traditional principles. On the practical side, Ed sees how helpful the food forest can be as a way to teach academic subjects like science and math as well as essential life skills to youth.

Ed describes the food forest's crucial role in addressing food security and promoting self-sufficiency among Muskeg Lake's residents. He emphasizes how important it is for people to learn sustainable practices to grow their own food, especially in the face of challenges like inflation and climate change. He says the food forest and the related programming *"is a big part of a value system that we want to encourage. We*



“For these students, it’s a wonderful opportunity. In 20 years, I can just imagine what this place is going to be like. Well, I can’t imagine it – I can only hope!”
ED LUCIER, Elder & Knowledge Keeper,
Muskeg Lake Cree Nation

were once a very self-sufficient people. We lived off the land and I think that, to a certain point, we can use those traditional values to do the same thing moving forward.”

Ed sees the food forest as a dynamic environment that has broad reach, benefits, and impact. “It changes not only by the season, but sometimes week by week ... [depending on] the temperature, on the weather, on the moisture. So many things are involved. Our ability to find answers to those problems depends on our understanding. The more we understand, the more we become knowledgeable about the weather, about climate change, about the ability to create a business based on the food that we’re growing here, the better it’s going to be.”

Steven Wiig, Muskeg Lake’s Food Security and Climate Change Coordinator, concurs. He says that “the less we can rely on our global food system, the more reliant we need to be on our local food system. That’s one of the biggest climate-change related benefits of what we’re doing here. We’re going to be reforesting a lot of the reserve, creating habitat for all kinds of traditional food sources; local, reliable food sources and our ‘family’ – the birds and the bees and the deer and the moose. All these little changes we’re making to improve the land will make the land more resilient and therefore the people more resilient.”

Thanks to the generous family of CFTC supporters, this work is already well underway. Both Ed and Steven see a bright future as the food forest grows food security and hope with every tree that’s planted.

ALBERTA



ATIKAMEG (WHITEFISH LAKE FIRST NATION)



- **55,500 meals** (breakfast, lunch or snack) served to **200 students** through the school food program
- **20 adults** and **220 students** trained on **nutrition, food use** or **cooking**
- **2 existing** and **1 new community garden** support **120 families**
- **50 existing** and **27 new home gardens** support **97 families**
- **5 school gardens** support **130 students**
- **2,500 lbs** of **fresh produce** grown in gardens and food forest
- **147 people** received **horticultural/agricultural training**
- **20 people** received **garden inputs** like seeds, tools, plants, including **livestock** like chickens
- **794 people** supported by **community food programs** like soup kitchens, food pantries, community meals
- **624 people** participated in **traditional practices/land-based education**

MAKING AN IMPACT

Atikameg reports that students are actively involved in the food and nutrition program. Students have a desire to help those around them, and are strengthening their relationships with community Elders and fellow students. The food systems program – which includes the food forest, nutrition education, and a thriving poultry program – is stimulating students in many ways: they are gaining knowledge, a sense of mastery and self-sufficiency, and tangible life skills by raising chicks. These lessons transfer over to their academic subjects, such as science. Darrell Fors, Land-based Learning Lead at Atikameg, says that “In my opinion, chicken therapy is better than horse therapy: children name them and raise them, learning life lessons. They build connections and come out of their shells.” Food-related initiatives at Atikameg have become a cornerstone for relationship-building, community cohesion, trust, and connection.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES



HAMLET OF TULITA

- **8,455 snacks/meals** provided to **89 children** through the school food program
- **170 adults** and **70 students** trained on **nutrition, food use** or **cooking**
- **69** existing **community, school and home gardens** support **251 families**
- **31 people** received **gardening inputs** like seeds, tools, plants
- **245 people** received **horticulture** or **agricultural training**
- **273 people** participated in **traditional practices/land-based education**
- **440 people** took part in **community food programs** such as soup kitchens, food pantries, community meals



MAKING AN IMPACT

The Tulita program is helping the entire community, with the biggest impact seen among their Elders. They have been included in workshops and gardening initiatives which have offered them not only access to fresh food, but also the opportunity to learn about food budgeting and healthy cooking. Most importantly, it has provided them with closer connections to other community members and students. This has led to the transfer of traditional agricultural knowledge to younger generations who, in turn, have begun and maintained successful gardens of their own.

Tulita grows more food and more food security

The community of Tulita – which means “where the waters meet” in the local Indigenous language – is a small village located at the junction of the Great Bear River and the Mackenzie River in the Northwest Territories. Canadian Feed The Children has been supporting Tulita’s land stewardship, school food, and local food systems development to boost food security since 2020.

In that time, Tulita’s residents have made significant progress. In 2023, they established three more community gardens, for a total of 35 private gardens, an indoor school garden, and nine greenhouse gardens that allow all-season growing.

These initiatives have created many opportunities for learning, growth, and sustenance. The local school has expanded their gardens for students, school staff, and the broader community. This makes fresh food more available and offers the opportunity to teach students, parents, and Elders about food use, healthy cooking, and food preservation.

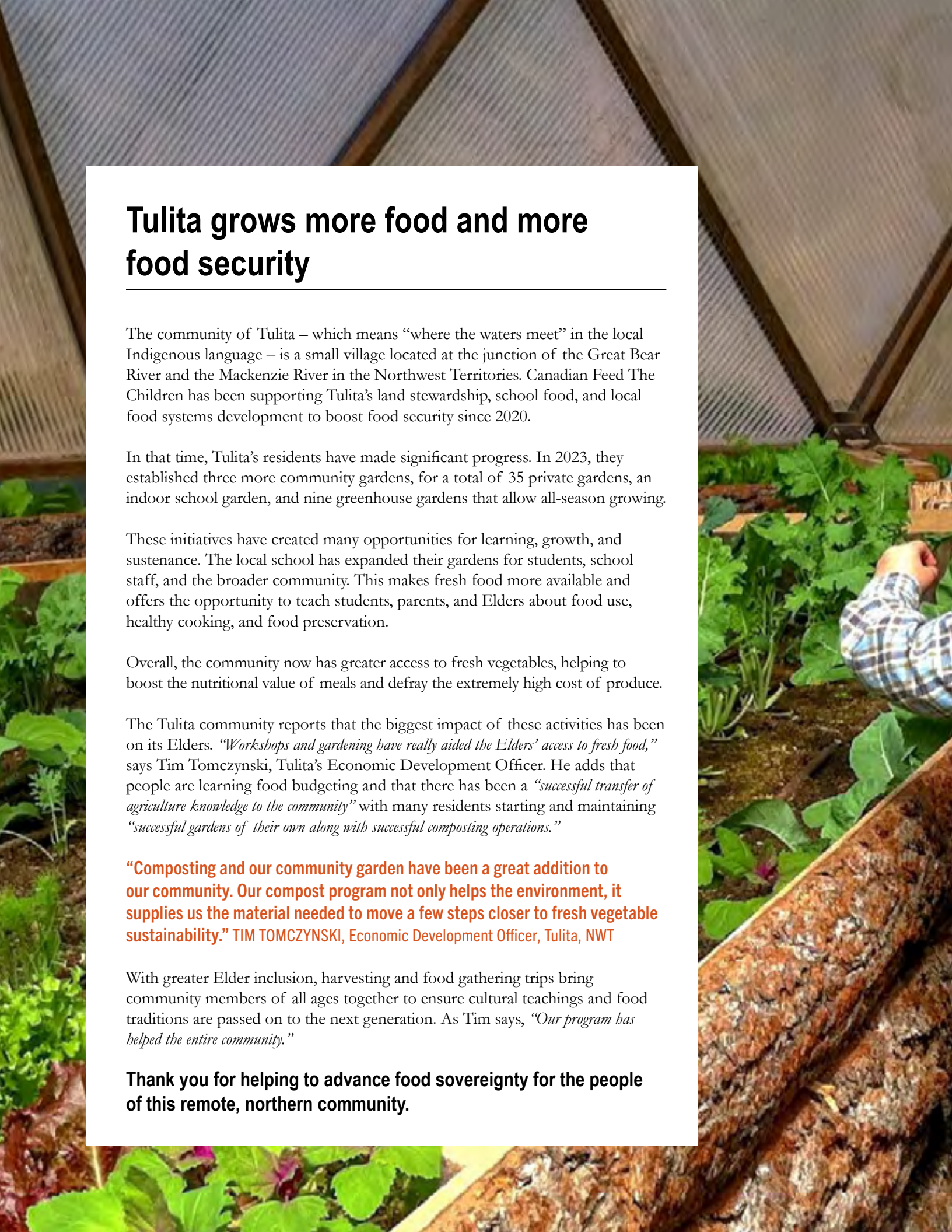
Overall, the community now has greater access to fresh vegetables, helping to boost the nutritional value of meals and defray the extremely high cost of produce.

The Tulita community reports that the biggest impact of these activities has been on its Elders. *“Workshops and gardening have really aided the Elders’ access to fresh food,”* says Tim Tomczynski, Tulita’s Economic Development Officer. He adds that people are learning food budgeting and that there has been a *“successful transfer of agriculture knowledge to the community”* with many residents starting and maintaining *“successful gardens of their own along with successful composting operations.”*

“Composting and our community garden have been a great addition to our community. Our compost program not only helps the environment, it supplies us the material needed to move a few steps closer to fresh vegetable sustainability.” TIM TOMCZYNSKI, Economic Development Officer, Tulita, NWT

With greater Elder inclusion, harvesting and food gathering trips bring community members of all ages together to ensure cultural teachings and food traditions are passed on to the next generation. As Tim says, *“Our program has helped the entire community.”*

Thank you for helping to advance food sovereignty for the people of this remote, northern community.



BRITISH COLUMBIA



STEIN VALLEY NLAKEPAMUX SCHOOL (LYTTON FIRST NATION)



- **6 existing school gardens** support **85 students**
- **85 people** received horticultural/agricultural training

MAKING AN IMPACT

Since the fire that razed Lytton in 2021, housing development has increased significantly, resulting in strict limits on the amount of water that Stein Valley Nlakapamux School (SVNS) can use. The school installed drip irrigation to water their garden boxes and raised chickens from chicks – both offering water conservation benefits. Produce and chickens were also used in the school's breakfast and lunch program. The gardening and chicken projects allowed teachers to have conversations with their students regarding climate change, being water-wise, and self-sufficiency. SVNS notes that both projects link to Nlakapamux culture, connecting them to the land and their culture's way of being. While there are still significant challenges to fully recover from the fire, SVNS is looking ahead to the many ways they can build on these two programs and they are excited for the future.

MORE THAN 35 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE FEEDING CHILDREN

Central to CFTC's mission is to create a world where children have what they need to grow and thrive.

This requires an integrated, holistic approach that knits together the essential strands of a healthy childhood: from better access to and availability of food in climate-challenged remote and rural areas, to sustainable and diverse income sources for parents and caregivers, to the direct provision of healthy food in schools and at home.

CFTC has a strong track record of success and trusted partnerships in Bolivia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Uganda and Indigenous communities in Canada.

We were among the first to achieve Imagine Canada Standards Accreditation and our commitment to financial transparency, accountability, cost efficiency and social impact has been recognized as a Top 100 Rated Charity by Charity Intelligence in successive years, most recently in 2023.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to unlocking children's potential through community-led action in Canada and around the world.

