

INDIGENOUS

Stories of Impact

2025

NEYAASHIINIGMIING
(Chippewas of Nawash
Unceded First Nation)



Community-led solutions for disease prevention

Indigenous Peoples are embracing sustainable agricultural practices and traditional food systems – including greenhouses, community gardens, and food forests – to address food insecurity, prevent illness, and promote holistic health.

Through the Type 2 Diabetes Prevention Challenge, funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) with Impact Canada, six Indigenous communities are building year-round greenhouses to increase their access to fresh, nutrient-dense food.

At a three-day event hosted by Kinvia, delegates shared their knowledge, experiences, and ideas. They brought the group’s wisdom back to their respective communities to customize their plans to suit their Nation’s unique traditions, needs, and existing food security and nutrition programs. All are incorporating traditional growing methods supplemented by nutrition education to strengthen long-term health outcomes.

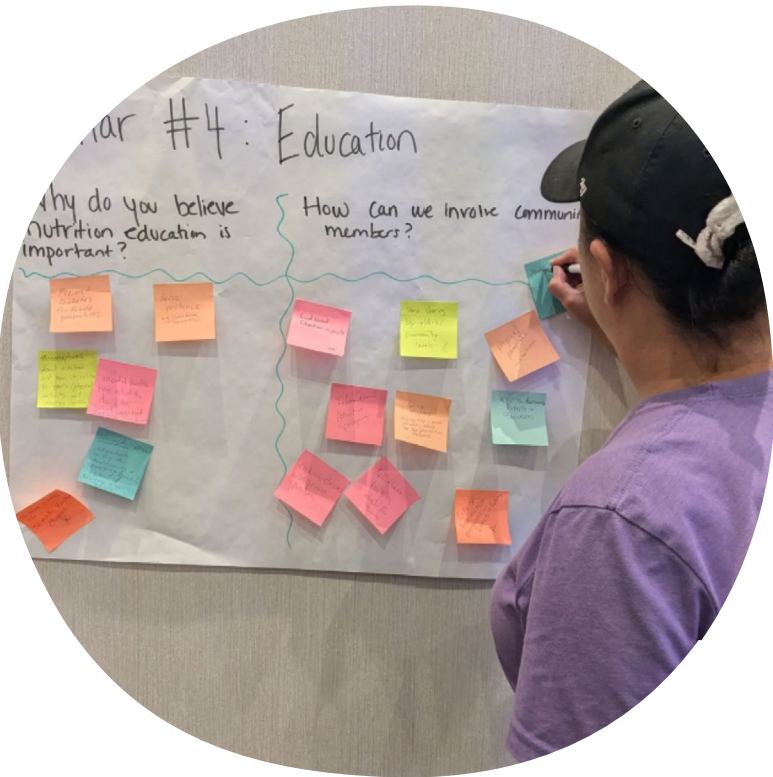
➔ **Read more:** [Communities Empowered in Prevention Efforts Cultivating Health and Growth](#)



A Red Rock Indian Band member filling the pond, part of their greenhouse’s irrigation system.



Above: Delegates from Neyaashiinigmiing (Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation), Beardy’s and Okemasis’ Cree Nation, Red Rock Indian Band (Lake Helen Reserve), Elsipogtog First Nation, Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation, and Waywayseecappo First Nation.



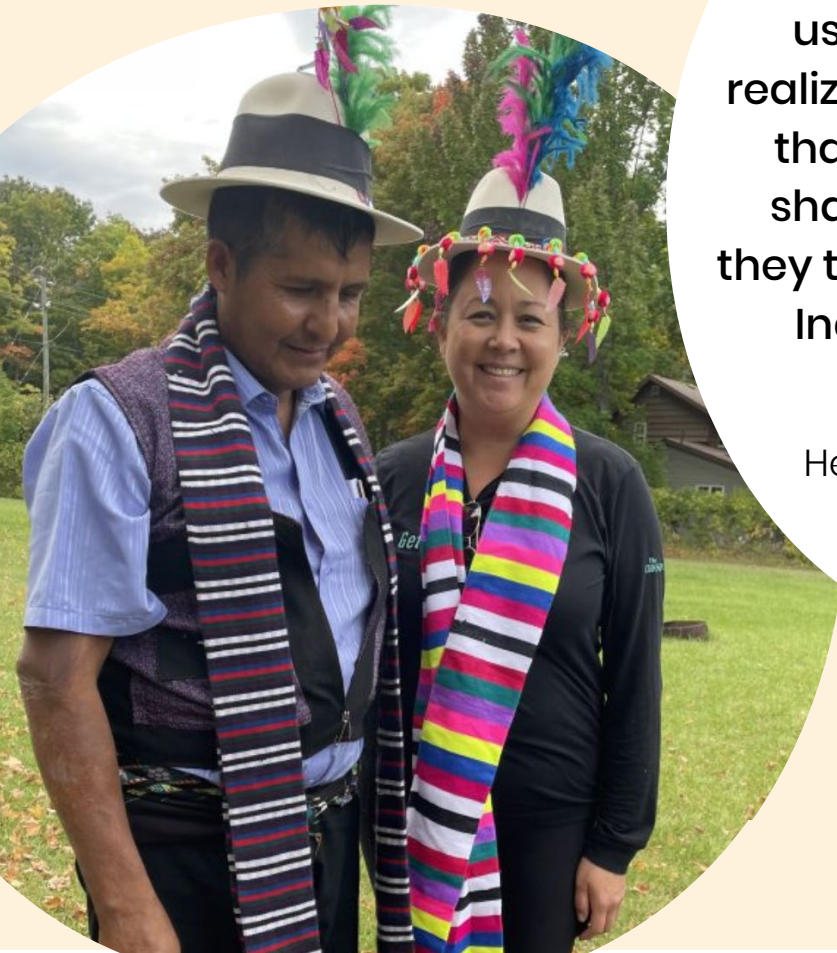
Knowledge exchange across Turtle Island

Kinvia was honoured to facilitate a knowledge-sharing exchange between members of Neyaashiinigmiing (Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation) and representatives from an Indigenous community in the Poroma district of Bolivia, including Mayor Filipe Mamani and Alejandro Barrios from our Bolivian partner IPTK.

The Bolivian group was hosted at Neyaashiinigmiing, located on the shores of Georgian Bay in central Ontario, where they celebrated their respective cultures, learned they shared much in common, and held discussions on food security and sovereignty.

“There is more that connects us than divides us. In talking, we realized there were similar challenges that the communities face. Felipe shared how, through colonization, they too lost their languages like many Indigenous Peoples in Canada.”

Dee Millar, Neyaashiinigmiing's
Healthy Living Program Coordinator



“For me, it is a huge feat and great experience to know other Indigenous siblings across the world. I felt at home, like with family. I want to bring more technology home, like I’ve seen in these school and garden programs.”

Mayor Felipe Mamani, Poroma, Bolivia

➔ **Read more:** [Preserving the Past, Shaping the Future: Indigenous Knowledge Exchange](#)



Cultivating Indigenous knowledge through food traditions

Community feasts, land-based learning experiences, Elder-to-youth collaborations, and sacred ceremonies are conduits for Indigenous knowledge sharing and cultural preservation. These practices are vital for healing and for de-colonization – they strengthen and grow community bonds and well-being at both a practical and spiritual level.

For example, Muskeg Lake Cree Nation's Fall Harvest Festival featured foods like squash and quinoa, which have historically been cultivated by Indigenous People across Turtle Island, but were new to many residents. Members learned more about their history, how to prepare them, and even about employment opportunities in food-related industries. The 2025 growing season will focus on Indigenous crops and traditional methods for growing them, such as the Three Sisters method.

“Many of the participants had never previously eaten foods [such as these] and were not aware that they originated through agricultural practices from our southern kin.”

Program manager,
Muskeg Lake Cree Nation

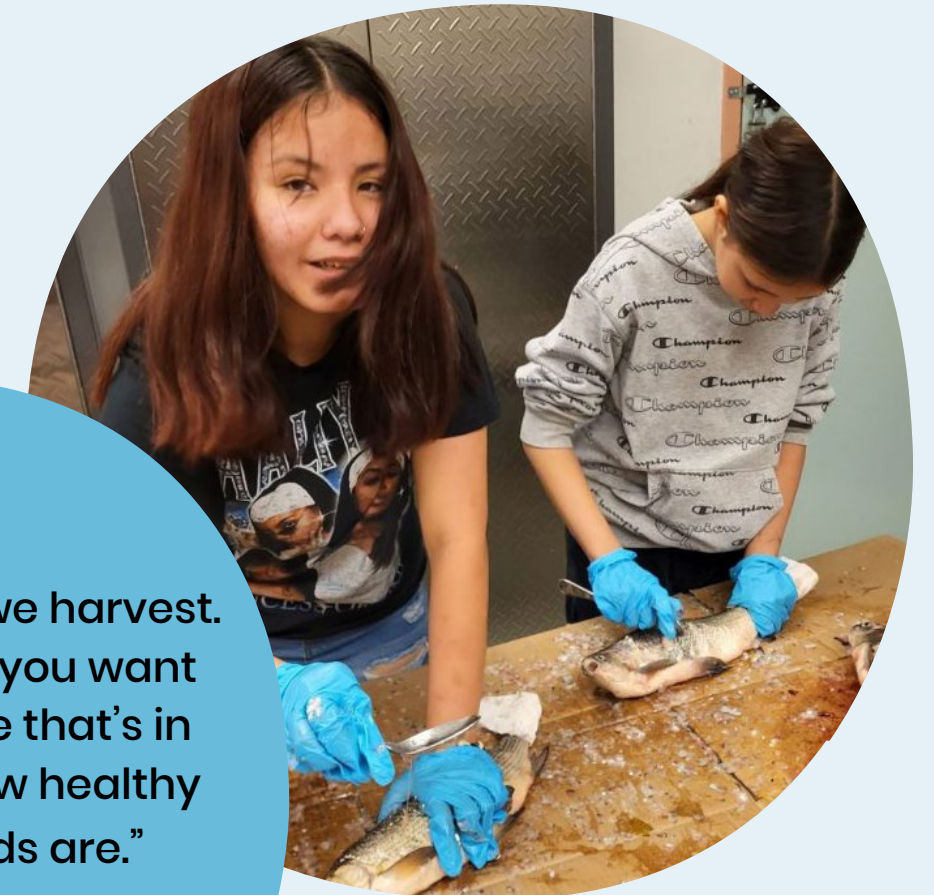


An example of a Three Sisters garden – corn, beans, and squash – a traditional method of growing. (Photo from Wisahkotewinowak, an Indigenous urban garden site near Six Nations of the Grand River, Ontario)

Atikameg's (Whitefish Lake First Nation) land-based learning program is an integrated outdoor and classroom-based education initiative. Students engage deeply with their natural surroundings and ancestral traditions while learning essential skills for sustainable living. Hands-on experiences in hunting, trapping, fishing and food preparation offer not only sustenance but also the opportunity for detailed study of anatomy, habitat, ecosystems, and their relationship to Indigenous food traditions and health.

“We cook everything we harvest. I'll ask [students], ‘do you want to taste the medicine that's in it?’ and talk about how healthy the traditional foods are.”

Daryl Fors,
Land-based Learning Lead,
Atikameg



➔ **Read more:** [Learning from the Land](#)

Spaces for healing

Gathering places designed intentionally around Indigenous values and ways of being – like food forests and community gardens – offer both physical and spiritual places for growth and healing for youth, for families, for Elders, and for communities.

“We want our students, staff, and community members to connect back to the earth and to tap into their ancestral knowledge and develop their gifts in this area. Every time I see a student developing a love for growing, I feel that it helps to undo the harms of this knowledge being taken from us by residential schools and colonization.”

Terri-Anne Larry, Principal, Natoageneg
(Eel Ground First Nation)

“This [food forest] is important to our future, to our kids and to the next generation. ...It’s important, as people, as Nehiyawok [Cree people], to work together. It’s important that we learn, that we teach one another and that we are there for one another too. We’re on our way to break this cycle of intergenerational trauma. And it’s a good place to do this, in this kind of environment and out in nature.”

Audrey Eyahpaise,
Elder & Knowledge Keeper,
Beardy’s & Okemasis’ Cree Nation



Read more: [Food Forests: A Space for Growth and Healing](#)



Empowering youth with food and knowledge of how to grow it

In First Nations across Turtle Island, educators are bringing land-based learning into the classroom – and taking classes out onto the land. Integrating traditional teachings within the public-school curriculum offers opportunities for skills- and confidence-building, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and deeper connections for students with their ancestors and the world around them.



A student learning how to tend the plants in Waywayseecappo's school garden.

“[Students] getting their hands dirty in a garden, raising animals, or learning traditional food preparation methods makes learning more active and engaging. Knowing their efforts contribute to a larger goal – food security, environmental sustainability – provides a strong sense of purpose and motivation.”

Patrick Loewen, Education Director, Waywayseecappo First Nation

Beardy's & Okemasis' Cree Nation



“We’re not just growing food. We’re growing a future where our children know how to care for themselves, their families, and the land.”

Jennifer Cameron, Food Security Coordinator, Beardy's and Okemasis' Cree Nation



Read more: [Growing Solutions: How Three Indigenous Communities Are Transforming Food Access Through Year-Round Greenhouses](#)



Two students take part in the land-based learning program at Atikameg.

On the path to food sovereignty

Indigenous Peoples are countering the long-standing and wide-ranging impacts of colonialism by returning to traditional practices for land, water, and resources management, and by re-invigorating cultural practices that pass knowledge from one generation to the next. Each step that advances self-determination is progress towards food and economic security, environmental protection, and fully-realized food and cultural sovereignty.

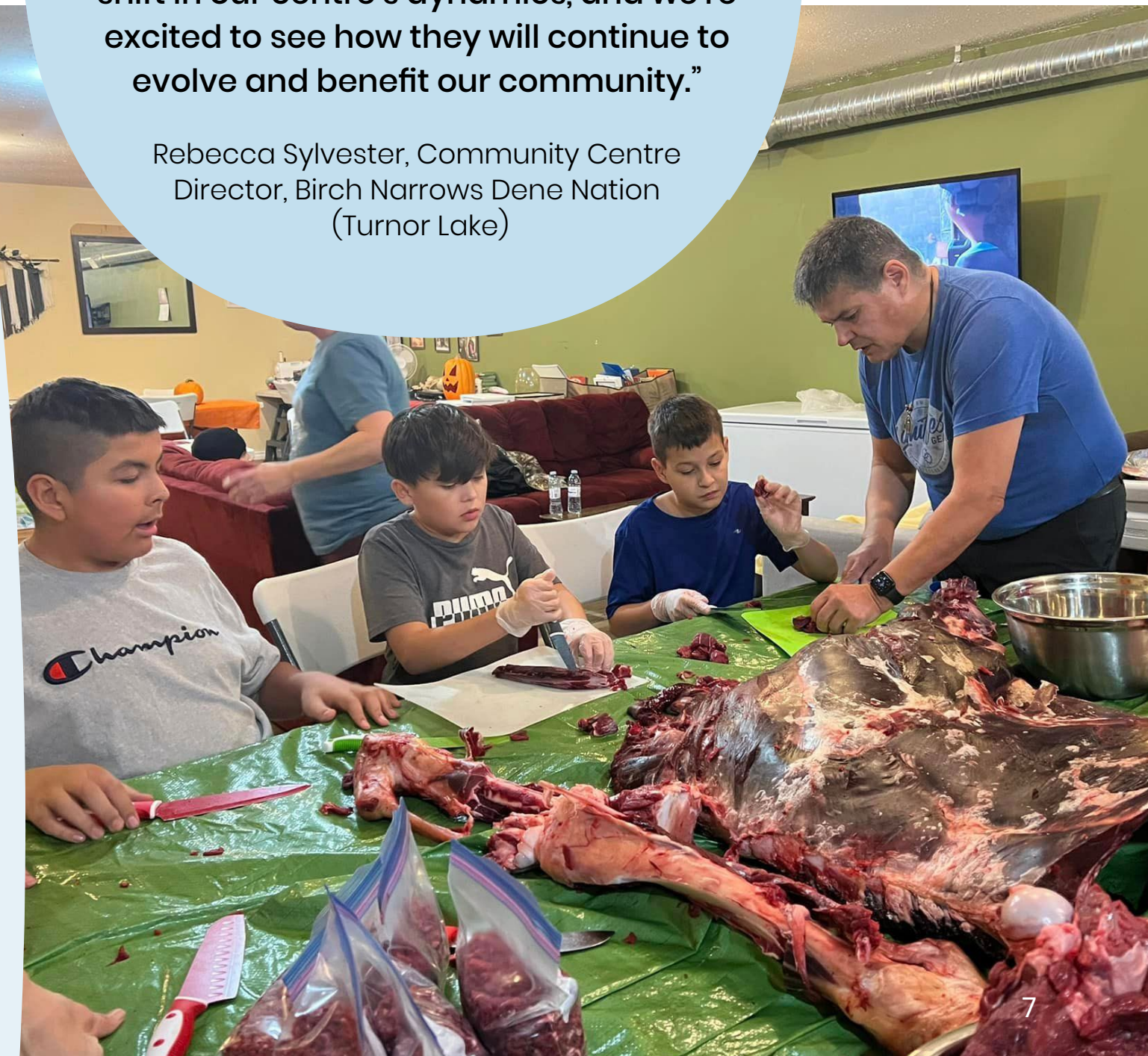
“Seeing our program start to make change within our community for our youth and families is the greatest highlight. Community members are excited about the food forest, the community garden, and a planned greenhouse. They are getting a deeper understanding of what food sovereignty is. They see it has the potential to provide a healthier future for everyone.”

Jennifer Cameron,
Food Security Coordinator,
Beardy's & Okemasis' Cree Nation



“Cultural programs that involve Elders are growing not only helping to preserve our cultural heritage but also fostering intergenerational connections and a sense of community pride. Overall, these changes reflect a positive shift in our centre's dynamics, and we're excited to see how they will continue to evolve and benefit our community.”

Rebecca Sylvester, Community Centre
Director, Birch Narrows Dene Nation
(Turnor Lake)



School nutrition programs nourish minds, bodies, and spirits

School nutrition programs significantly improve children's health, learning, and well-being. Meals and snacks offered in schools, along with nutrition education, food preparation, and other activities that take place in school gardens or during organized fishing, foraging, and food gathering trips connect students with each other and with the food traditions that nourish their minds, bodies, and spirits.

"Those are the days that feel special. Students get to enjoy meals that connect to our culture. [It's not] just about eating but also about learning – seeing students excited to try traditional food and reminding them that it's more than just nutrition but also part of who we are."

Andrew Spence, Principal,
O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi
First Nation



"I never could have imagined that many years ago starting out with a school garden could we have grown to what we have now."

Terri-Anne Larry,
Principal, Natoageneg



"I envision this as a place that students and teachers can gather and learn about health. So not only is it going to be a space where we can grow our own food, but it's going to be a space where we can come together and talk about those things."

Ryan Saunders, Gr 6 teacher,
Elsipogtog First Nation



School nutrition programs offer families economic relief

Inflation has placed an extraordinary burden on Canadian families, but its impact on Indigenous Peoples has been particularly acute. For First Nations families on reserve, who already experience the highest rates of poverty among any group in Canada, the rising costs of food exacerbates an already challenging situation. School nutrition programs often provide a lifeline, alleviating the costs families face and ensuring children are well-fed and nourished, and able to attend and learn in school.



Preparing lunch at
O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi.

“With the price of everything going sky high, there are families that struggle with food, especially those with more than two children. Our school nutrition program is a way of helping out families in the community who struggle in providing support to their family.”

Andrew Spence, Principal,
O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi



“[Families] rely on our program to feed their children breakfast, lunch and a snack. The peace of mind they get from knowing their children are supported this way has been a weight lifted off their shoulders as food security is a huge issue in our community.”

Educator, Neqotkuk – Mah Sos
(Tobique First Nation)



Read more: [School Nutrition Programs Take the Edge off High Costs for First Nations Families](#)

Kinvia, previously known as Canadian Feed The Children, works in solidarity with communities as they build local, self-determined, sustainable systems to provide food for their children, youth, and families across generations.

Our core belief is that food and nourishment is a human right. Together with our donors, we are committed to community-driven solutions that address the unique needs of children, youth, and their communities by:

- advancing food security and working towards food sovereignty
- focusing on school nutrition and quality education
- embedding climate action and gender equality

We now reach close to 270,000 people in 133 communities in five countries.

We remain steadfastly committed to financial transparency, accountability, cost efficiency, and social impact, and have been recognized as a Top 100 Rated Charity by Charity Intelligence for nearly a decade, most recently in 2024.

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Atikameg (Whitefish
Lake First Nation)

Thank you for joining us as we work together toward our vision of a world in which children, youth, and their communities thrive, realizing their full potential.

