12 YEAR IMPACT REPORT

2014–2025



nmfccc.org

Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, and Community Collaborative

WHAT'S INSIDE

Executive Summary	3
Framing of this Evaluation	4
Methods	5
A Dozen Years in Review	6
The Journey	7
The Evolution of Foundational Components	8
Co-Creating Community-Derived Supports	16
Impacts of the NMFCCC	23
Improved Access to Good Food	24
Future Generations Carrying on the Work	27
Culturally Relevant Livelihood Opportunities	30
Replication & Adaptation of Community-Led Work	32
Inspiration & Celebration	34
Better & More Philanthropic Support	36
Takeaways	42
Appendices	44
Appendix A: Manitoba Community Partners	44
Appendix B: NMFCCC Collaborators	46
References	47

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In true collaborative fashion, this report wouldn't exist without the many hands that helped shape it.

A big thank you to Sara of **Sara Hsiao Consulting** for sifting through over a decade of data and reports, to draw out and present the impact of the Collaborative in a good way.

Gratitude to Donna of **Donna Hainstock Graphic Design** for your steady design and resource creation over the years, including this impact report.

COVER PHOTO: Calling moose during Youth Camp, Brochet



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, and Community Collaborative (NMFCCC/ the Collaborative) has been working with deep intention for over a decade. **The end of 2025 marked twelve years of NMFCCC programming** – a milestone that highlights the impacts of the Collaborative on communities in Northern Manitoba and on all collaborators and partners who have been involved.

This impact report assesses the last 12 years of work, from 2014–2025, and also includes learnings from the 2013 pilot phase. There are many other detailed resources published by the NMFCCC that articulately describe why the NMFCCC exists, its values and ways of working, its structure and the roles of its members, and the actions it takes. **This report focuses on key evidence and changes that have occurred over the last dozen years of collaboration, and how that translates to concrete impacts that are being seen in communities in Northern Manitoba and across the philanthropic sector.**

The NMFCCC's ultimate goals are that communities in Northern Manitoba are thriving, and that the Collaborative's partnerships are mutually transformative. Results show that the NMFCCC is achieving and continues to achieve their desired outcomes. The collective impact of the Collaborative has been demonstrated in the following ways:

- The NMFCCC has provided significant and growing investments into community-led local food solutions across Northern Manitoba, helping to fill a huge gap in access to resources and support, and tangibly improving access to good food for 75 communities.
- Countless local people, including youth, all across the territory are engaging with local food systems to bolster their economic systems in culturally and regionally relevant ways, and ensuring that future generations have support and empowerment to sustain the work.
- Culturally relevant livelihood opportunities are expanding in Northern Manitoba – from Northern horticulture, traditional harvesting and foods, revitalization of culture and ceremony, local infrastructure, and livestock and beekeeping – as significant investments continue to be made in the resurgence of culture, skills, and local knowledge.
- Bringing communities together to learn with and from each other, along with deliberate and ethical story sharing in many formats and inclusive of diverse community leaders, have been instrumental in catalyzing ideas, replicating and adapting projects, and inspiring community-led work and advocacy across the territory and country.
- Through thoughtful reflection, refining of processes based on learnings, and truly responding to community feedback and needs, the NMFCCC has been able to celebrate successes and share inspiration that continue to lift communities in Northern Manitoba.
- The relational, learning focused, and collaborative model of the NMFCCC has proven to facilitate deep transformations in funders, who have strengthened their commitments to reconciliation and made real institutional changes to provide better and more philanthropic support to Northern, Indigenous communities.

This report demonstrates how long-term investments in community-led solutions, local people, and shared values produce tangible impacts that communities across Northern Manitoba are experiencing. It also underscores the intentional and committed work involved in genuinely shifting power and leading by example in the philanthropic sector. **This is a celebration of the strength and achievements of communities, the steadfast support of learners and allies, and the determined actions that all partners have taken to support communities and push for more just systems.**

The Collaborative is grateful to work alongside a wide range of grassroots groups, nations, nonprofit organizations, tribal councils, funding organizations, and most importantly, community people in Northern Manitoba who lead and support this important work.

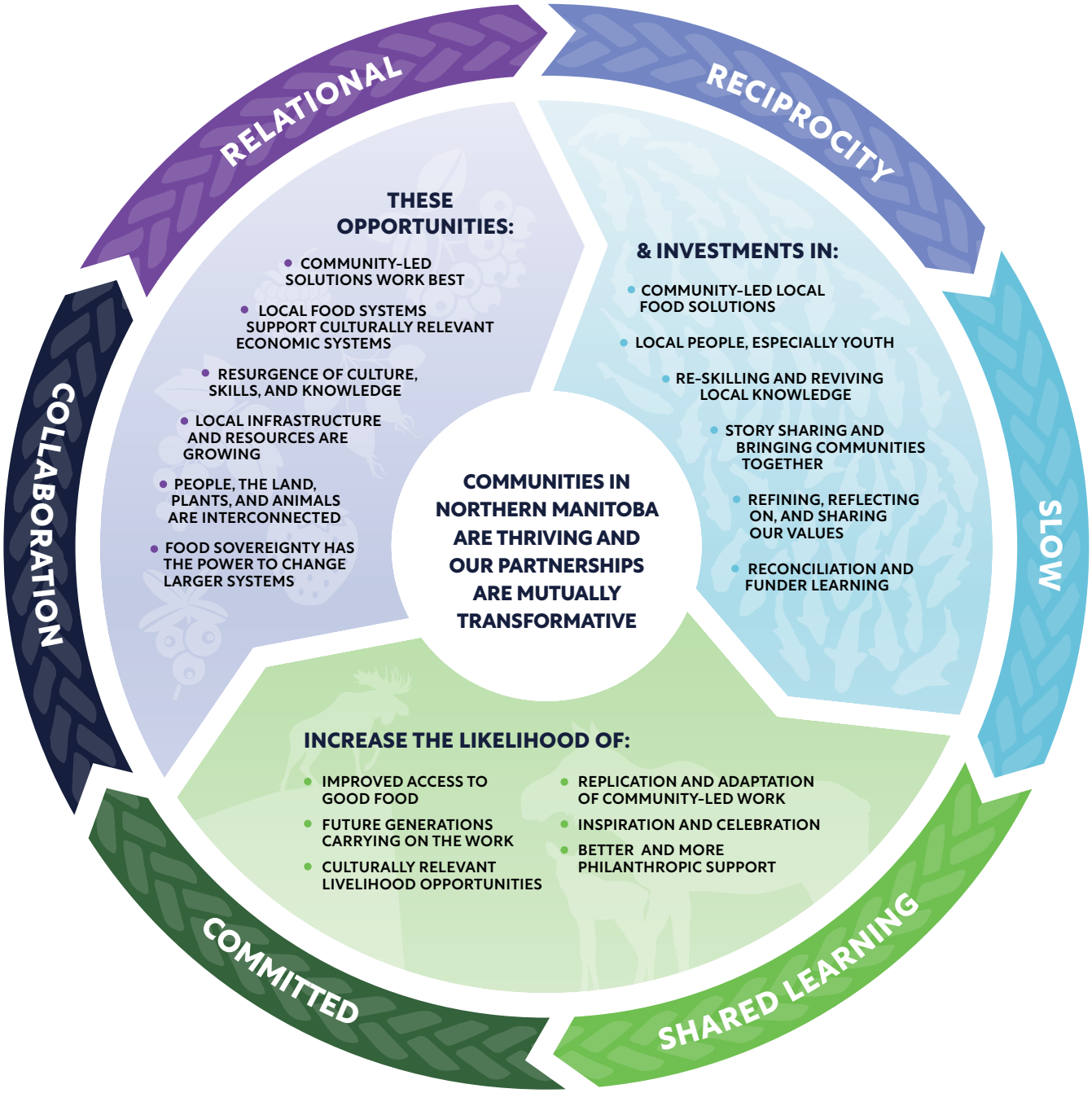
FRAMING OF THIS EVALUATION

The NMFCCC's Ways of Working (WoW) defines the values, opportunities, investments, and outcomes that guide the Collaborative. These approaches and goals have been co-created by members of the Collaborative, and are periodically reflected on and fine-tuned.

The WoW provides clear and tested parameters for this evaluation. The impacts that are detailed in this report are framed around the six intersecting outcomes of the NMFCCC, as evidence of advancement towards, and current successes in, its ultimate goals.

Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, and Community Collaborative

Ways of Working



METHODS

The NMFCCC has collected and collated a wealth of information in their 12+ years of operation. **This report uses existing NMFCCC data from 2013 to 2025. Qualitative and quantitative data have been collated, organized, analyzed, and interpreted from the following sources:**

Data Sources	Information Included
NMFCCC annual reports	• Details on what took place and the evolution of how things work • Summaries of community projects and grants • Financial reports • Testimonies from all involved
Community stories	• Story sharing booklets showcasing results from community projects • Community-Led Change Brightlights cases studies
Shareback reports	• North-to-North gathering reports • Learning trip reports
Granting documents	• All granting information for grants distributed • Decision-making process over time • Granting committee and collaborator reflections
Organizational and operational documents	• Overviews of the Collaborative and its Terms of Reference • Evaluation reports, and collated reflections and learnings • Reflections and results from Northern Advisors gatherings
External publications	• The NMFCCC website • Research papers and case studies • Articles for nonprofit and philanthropic publications

PHOTO: Youth and mentor hunting together, Moose Teaching Camp Misipawistik Pimatisimēskanaw 2019



A DOZEN YEARS IN REVIEW

The NMFCCC has been intentionally reflective and iterative in its approach to collaboration. Much change and adaptation have taken place over the last 12+ years, in humble response to listening and learning from and with communities.

To provide context and evidence to the impacts of the NMFCCC, this section reviews:

- The journey the Collaborative has gone through to become what it is today;
- How its foundational components have evolved over time to guide the work;
- How wrap-around supports have been co-created to authentically respond to community requests and opportunities.

Opaskwayak Culture and Healthy Living Initiative, Opaskwayak Cree Nation

PHOTO: Peggy & Stan, 2014
PHOTO BOTTOM LEFT: Planting Big Eddy Garden, 2014
PHOTO BOTTOM RIGHT: Patti's harvest, 2014





The Journey

In 2013, the Prairies together received approximately 3% of philanthropic dollars in Canada, with almost none of those resources ending up in Northern or Indigenous communities. Thus, the Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, and Community Collaborative was born to address two core needs:

1. Communities' request to improve access to relational, coordinated, and learning focused supports and resources; and
2. Collaborators' interest in learning and engaging in the region in more thoughtful and respectful ways, while sharing the risks and rewards.

What began as a recognition that the status quo wasn't working, and an earnest willingness to listen to communities in Manitoba, has turned into a tailor made, nationally engaged, and community-driven support system for the territory.

In the pilot year, three collaborator organizations pooled modest resources, tested a peer review and consensus granting process, and built relationships to support six community-led projects. In 2014, the NMFCCC started formally as a collaboration of Northern Advisors, community partners, philanthropic and government collaborators, one coordinator, and a host organization. By 2015, there were four Northern Advisors, 10 collaborators, and 18 communities committed to working together.

Early evaluations assessed that:

- Communities saw the relational and cooperative approach as more culturally relevant;
- Collaborators appreciated sharing the risks and benefits of pooling resources, expanding their support in the region, and gaining understanding of what drives community solutions;
- Though coordinating the Collaborative was labour intensive, it provided a refreshing and positive change to the typical grantee-funder experience for communities and collaborators;
- The model supported positive outcomes for communities, as well as facilitated reciprocal learning and trust building between all partners.

Over the years, the Collaborative has worked through learnings and challenges. Long time investments are needed to build meaningful relationships with communities across the vast geographical region. Cultural reclamation and resurgence, intergenerational connections, and wellness are all part of achieving lasting change in communities. Structural barriers continue to force the Collaborative to be creative in the ways that funds and resources are dispatched to communities. Colonial barriers continue to impede Indigenous food sovereignty. Through these challenges and pressures to revert back to dominant systems, the NMFCCC maintains a strong, community-centred, learning focus that has enabled it to grow in a meaningful way.

AS OF 2025, THE NMFCCC HAS ENGAGED:

11 NORTHERN ADVISORS

Guiding community-led approaches

75 NORTHERN MANITOBA COMMUNITIES

Engaged in collaborative work

32 COLLABORATORS

Supporting shared solutions

10 COORDINATORS

Connecting and advancing the work

$15.5M INVESTED IN NORTHERN MANITOBA SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS THROUGH:

- Granting
- North-to-North gatherings & self-representation
- Learning opportunities for all involved
- Story sharing
- Systems change work

The Evolution of Foundational Components

The NMFCCC has grown and evolved in many ways since its inception. **What stands out as foundational components of the Collaborative are its structure, people, values, and ways of working**. Aspects of these key components have been carefully co-created and articulated over the years. They have come to be guiding lights for the Collaborative, and strong models for the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors.

PHOTO: Our Traditional Ways Camp, Misipawistik Cree Nation 2024





PHOTO: Youth and Elders gathered in a Sharing Circle, Misipawistik Cree Nation

STRUCTURE

The overall structure of the Collaborative was developed in the first few years. It was identified early on that the NMFCCC was not a top-down philanthropic funder. Instead, **it intentionally co-created a strategic collaboration of engaged participants that centred community priorities and locally derived solutions**. Early collaborators co-developed a shared vision and goals, and clarified roles and responsibilities for all involved. Though there was a desire to grow, this was always tempered with the need to support communities in ways that prioritized trust building and lasting change.

The NMFCCC's structure has not changed much since those early years, as its vision has been deliberate. What has been highlighted through the experience is that **the NMFCCC structure mimics a web**, where diverse partners, relationships, sharing of information and ideas, and benefits are all connected and strengthen each other.

An important part of the NMFCCC structure has been that **it makes decisions using consensus**. To the Collaborative, this means that decision-making is: inclusive and participatory, process oriented, always seeking the good of the whole group, and part of relationship building. Difficult decisions have been made over the years. For example, funding and collaboration by foundations have been declined as acts of opposition to the harms that their associated companies have on communities in Northern Manitoba.

> ***"Being in-person with the other collaborators, Northern Advisors, community partners, and staff members was powerful. It made the whole model come to life as a web of relationships and real humans, connected on the land."*** - Learning trip participant, Kinosao Sipi 2024

PEOPLE

Northern Advisors have been central to the Collaborative, even before it formally began. These Advisors are all Indigenous people from the territory, with deep experience and connections to their communities. They guide the Collaborative in all aspects, including: setting the strategic direction, problem solving, decision-making, offering local and cultural knowledge, providing relational support to communities, guiding (un)learning opportunities, and participating in advocacy.

11 individuals have engaged as Northern Advisors over the 12 years of the Collaborative. In any one year, there are always 4–8 Northern Advisors guiding the work.

Four Advisors have been with the Collaborative since the beginning, and still engage today:

- Ervin Bighetty
- Hilda Dysart
- Jim Beardy
- Sophia Rabliauskas

Current Northern Advisors also include:

- Becky Cook
- Marlyn Cook
- Elizebeth Palfrey

Past Northern Advisors include:

- Carl McCorrister
- Moneca Sinclair
- Noel Allard
- Mervin Traverse

"I really appreciate the thought and care all NMFCCC staff and Advisors bring to their roles. I feel encouraged and valued as a [granting] committee member, which in turn increases my own sense of responsibility to the Collaborative and to communities. You have built a truly great collaborative experience!"

- Collaborator, 2022



PHOTO: First NMFCCC Learning Trip to Leaf Rapids and South Indian Lake / O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation 2014

Select Northern Advisors' responses to why they devote their time to the Collaborative, 2022:

"It makes my community healthier and shows that events are in place."

"I feel that is because of the relational way the Collaborative works. I've had a long relationship with the Collaborative. I value the relationship."

"Because I believe in it. I believe that something like this can really be helpful to the communities."



Since the pilot phase, NMFCCC has supported community-led work in 75 communities across the province (see Appendix A). Each community is unique in its rich traditions, cultures, and geography. At the same time, communities share many similarities in terms of challenges and successes. Community partners are responsible for visioning and implementing local projects with their communities. They are also encouraged and supported to share their knowledge and expertise with other communities and partners, and engage in collective learning and unlearning.

The NMFCCC has consistently engaged over 10 collaborating organizations since 2015, with an average of 14 collaborators each year, during the last 11 years. **There are currently 14 collaborators who are engaged with the NMFCCC.** Collaborators are private and community philanthropic foundations, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations. They are responsible for pooling financial and in-kind resources, engaging deeply in the granting process, taking part in immersive learning opportunities, committing to personal and organizational self-reflection, and contributing to NMFCCC's collective voice.

The NMFCCC started with the dedicated commitment of one core coordinator. As the Collaborative grew, there was need for more ongoing capacity. **There are currently six coordinators who humbly work for the NMFCCC.** They all have family ties to and live in Manitoba, and four specifically live in or are from Northern Manitoba. These coordinators work at the centre of all activities by carrying out daily coordination, contributing their expertise and



PHOTO: Northern Advisor Hilda Dysart

experience, cultivating and supporting relationship building, and documenting and sharing learnings and good news stories to support systems change.

In its first formal year, **NMFCCC members selected MakeWay Foundation (then Tides Canada Foundation) to host the Collaborative**. As host, MakeWay supports NMFCCC's needs and ways of working, including its financial accountability, charitable compliance, and human resource services. Additionally, as a collaborator, MakeWay participates in the Collaborative and ensures that its resources and networks are available to support the vision and implementation of NMFCCC's work.

PHOTO: Immersive Learning Trip group photo, Kinosao Sipi 2024



VALUES

The six values that have grounded and guided the NMFCCC are:

- **RELATIONAL**
- **SHARED LEARNING**
- **RECIPROCITY**
- **COMMITTED**
- **SLOW**
- **COLLABORATION**

These values focus on long-term relationships, mutual respect, appreciation of lived experiences, and deep partnerships. They aim to counter the ongoing impacts of colonization through dependable and consistent support, which recognizes that healing and re-skilling in communities must take place in ways and at the pace that make sense for the community.

Ongoingly, community partners have expressed appreciation for how the Collaborative truly lives its values. From visiting and highlighting community voices, believing and investing in community capacity, keeping granting accessible, being available for frequent communication, providing wrap-around supports, bringing communities together to learn and celebrate – these actions resonate with communities, and build trust and lasting change.



PHOTO: Selena shows off some pelts, Fox Lake Cree Nation

PHOTO: Daniel and his chickens, Crane River



> *"I think what I really liked about [the partnership with the NMFCCC] was that there is just belief in community capacity. I am so used to working in systems where there is a lack of belief in community capacity. In First Nations communities, we know what we need, we know how to do it, most times we have the capacity, we just do not have the capital."*
>
> - Kelly Selkirk, Fisher River Cree Nation, 2021

WAYS OF WORKING

The NMFCCC co-created a Theory of Change (ToC) with all partners throughout 2016 to **articulate its values, goals, and approach to the work**. This ToC was developed four years into the collaborative effort – once there was a stronger understanding of what made things work. The ToC is rooted in the Collaborative's values. It has been visualized, shared, and refined over the years, and has been instrumental in guiding the work. From 2022–2024, the Collaborative saw the opportunity to evolve this living document, so that its wording and design would more deeply reflect important concepts and the values of the NMFCCC.

The Ways of Working (WoW) continues to centre community voices, and empower all partners to recognize assumptions and expectations of what the NMFCCC can achieve. From the beginning, the NMFCCC has believed in centring, understanding, and supporting Indigenous ways of working. The WoW's circular model embraces a circular worldview, which highlights interconnections and continuous growth and learning. Its visuals honour the role of ceremonies, important plants and animals in the North, families, and community.



PHOTO: Nora cooking at the Annual Family Values & Traditional Teachings Camp, Wasagamack Anishininew Nation 2023



PHOTO: Jill and the Subarctic Friendship Circle's new snowmobile, Churchill

> *"When we looked at the best practices of other organizations we admired, the Collaborative was right up there. The fact that the theory of change wheel was at the centre of what they did—we adopted that as a practice."*
>
> - Collaborator, 2025

Collaborators have shared appreciation for the WoW, and for the concrete ways it is practiced. Supporting locally derived, community-led solutions; engaging in profound learning and unlearning; re-thinking philanthropic norms and barriers to change – participating in these ways continues to inform collaborators' work, change mindsets, and shift the philanthropic sector.

CROSS-CUTTING IMPACTS THROUGH THE PEER REVIEW PROCESS

The innovative peer review process, which is an integral part of the granting process, has demonstrated important impacts across many outcomes. This deep community engagement process includes orientation calls, reviews assigned thoughtfully based on the interest and experience of the peer reviewer, supportive coordination, and reflection and celebration calls. Peer reviewers have shared that the process has been very easy, holistic, and comfortable, and at the same time, inspiring, eye-opening, and connecting.

Through the peer review process, local people, including youth, are building capacity by: learning about work across the territory, exchanging knowledge about the realities of doing work in Northern Manitoba, and practicing skills in reviewing and critically thinking about projects. In this way, **investments in local leaders supports ongoing work, and the spreading of local knowledge to further support culturally relevant livelihood opportunities**.

"I was kind of intimidated at first in being part of this process. I have done proposal writing but I have never gotten to read other people's proposals. It was so helpful to take part in this."

- Peer reviewer, 2023

"This really is a step towards reconciliation and just connecting everyone and bringing people together."

– Peer reviewer, 2024



The peer review process is another way that the NMFCCC brings community leaders together and connects communities all across Manitoba. Reviewing other communities' applications spark ideas and provide uplifting examples of community-led work that can be replicated or adapted across the territory. **The safe spaces to share expertise and celebrate each other are rare opportunities to connect, build relationships, and continue to support each other and communities in the long-term.**

"I appreciate the culture of safety, respect, openness, and belonging that is present in our conversations. This is so unique of this work and I am grateful. It's such a joy to work with you!" - Collaborator, 2021

On top of this, peer reviewers contribute to collaborator learning, sharing their place-based knowledge and expertise. Conversely, community members have the rare opportunity to concretely participate in a granting process and sit at the table with funders to get insights on proposal writing and the granting process. **The collaborative peer review process helps to demystify philanthropy for Northern and Indigenous communities, and shift power from philanthropic organizations, which ultimately leads to better philanthropic support.**

"Having [peer reviewers] in the call allows us to ask questions or allows us to, in the moment, be corrected."

- Collaborator, 2023

PHOTO: Youth paddling, Misipawistik Pimatisimēskanaw



Co-Creating Community-Derived Supports

The NMFCCC began with creating a relational, low barrier granting system to support communities. Over time, supports have expanded to five main actions to improve the depth and breadth of support to community-led work. These include:

1. Flexible & Accessible Granting
2. North-To-North Gatherings & Self-Representation
3. Immersive (Un)Learning for Collaborators
4. Ethical Story Sharing
5. Systems Change

PHOTO: Bison at Round the Bend Farm near The Pas 2024



PHOTO: Ross showing Alex and the late Fred Hart how to extract honey, Wabowden

These wrap-around supports are designed to be inclusive, community-centred, celebratory, and focused on mutual learning and long-lasting change.

FLEXIBLE & ACCESSIBLE GRANTING

For the NMFCCC, granting is just one way to support communities. NMFCCC granting has always been an opportunity to disrupt the paternal and colonial power that philanthropy reinforces through its top-down decision-making and funding practices, which overall, remain inequitable and inaccessible[ii].

The NMFCCC granting process has always begun with conversation and relationship building between a community and a coordinator – funding applications are not available publicly. **This unique granting process has evolved into a multi-step, 3-month process featuring feedback and learning loops.** It includes: a call for inquiries; coordinator supported funding applications where needed; a careful and caring peer review process with dozens of Northern people involved; and granting committees who make decisions by consensus. If there are questions or concerns at any step, conversations are had with the community. The peer review process is unique, as it centres Northern wisdom, supports collaborator (un)learning, strengthens the decision-making process, builds capacity and mutual learning for all involved, and extends the network of support across communities.

"The Collaborative reinforced that it's not just about providing funds. It's about creating a process where everyone has a voice, and decisions are made equitably." - Collaborator, 2025

Guiding criteria for NMFCCC grantmaking has always been to find ways to encourage communities to achieve their vision. This has meant that the Collaborative aims to support all community-led work, projects, or programs that get in touch, whether they are funded or not. The NMFCCC has invested in a diversity of projects,

"Taking a slow pace can be a powerful move in ensuring that we are leaving no one behind."

- Collaborator, 2021



PHOTO: Grow North's Truth and Reconciliation event, Leaf Rapids

including those that are proven, innovative, and "higher risk". The aim has been to fund work with broad community benefit and support, and overall, to help build confidence in communities to further engage with potential funders and partners. Projects that are not a fit with the NMFCCC are often invited to shared learning calls and networking opportunities. Whenever possible, the Collaborative has connected inquiries and community partners to other sources of funding and support. Coordinators have even provided in-kind grant writing support to community partners to expand their work with other funders.

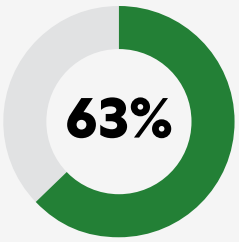
"I really enjoyed the open discussion and the mindfulness that the goal is to help everyone even when funding isn't possible."

– Collaborator, 2021

IN 12 YEARS OF GRANTING,

575 grants distributed,

$9.27M invested directly into community projects.



of the total dollar amount of grants,

≈ $5.9M have been granted through the regular granting cycle.

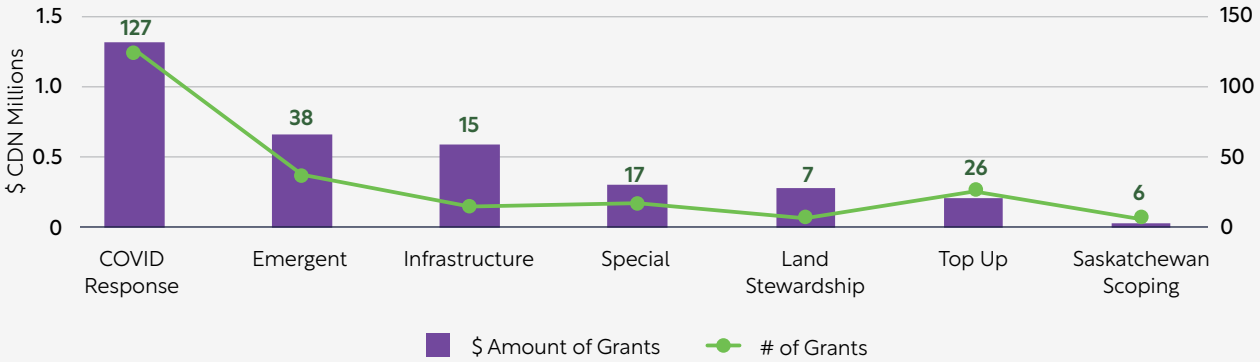
Regular grants support work that is ready to go or already exists, projects in development, and testing or building of ideas and relationships.

Flexible and accessible funding has also meant recognizing that community-led work and opportunities emerge throughout the year. **Over the years, different streams of grants have been tested and implemented to nimbly respond to community requests, outside of the regular grant cycle.**

- Starting in 2019, emergent grants supported new projects and partners that came forward mid-year. Special grants supported testing of different types of supports for communities.
- Between 2020–2023, many resources were stewarded to support COVID emergency response grants.
- In 2021, top up grants began as a way to cover unexpected costs or significantly increase momentum of already approved grants. Saskatchewan scoping work also began with grants to the territory.
- 2024 saw the beginning of infrastructure grants, which aim to increase the limited access to such funding and help fund infrastructure directly in community.
- In 2025, funding for land stewardship began.

The graph shows the distribution of these non-traditional grants, which show the iterative, time sensitive, and concrete ways that the NMFCCC adapts to meet the needs of communities. Note that COVID emergency response grants supported both emergency responses, as well as ongoing community work. For example, in Northlands Denesuline First Nation, the first year of COVID emergency response funding went to provide community food hampers, while the second year supported all families in the community to obtain a fishing net. **NMFCCC grants support both immediate community needs and long-term sustainability opportunities.**

Investments into Northern Manitoba communities via non-traditional grants show the responsiveness of NMFCCC's granting approach



NORTH-TO-NORTH GATHERINGS & SELF-REPRESENTATION

From the start of the NMFCCC, knowledge sharing between communities has been identified as critical to reviving local expertise, sharing inspiration, and rebuilding Northern networks. Community partners have been supported to recognize the value of their knowledge and see themselves as knowledge holders. In the last 12 years, **the Collaborative has supported and hosted at least 91 North-to-North opportunities**, including:

- Knowledge exchanges in communities, for and led by community partners;
- Shared learning opportunities, including networking calls, and smaller project focused group calls;
- Workshops, land-based teachings, and skill building opportunities;
- Peer review process for grant applications;
- Community celebrations and story sharing sessions.

The NMFCCC has also underlined the importance of people representing themselves and their communities in discussions and decision-making tables. **The Collaborative has supported community partners and Northern Advisors to share their stories and knowledge, in their own voices, in at least 19 different spaces across the country and internationally.** These venues have included: Indigenous food sovereignty summits, food symposiums and conferences, presentations to and discussions with funders across the country, and meetings with provincial government staff and ministers.





PHOTO TOP: Maryann softening an elk hide at the Minegoziibe Anishinabe School's Moose Camp 2023
PHOTO BOTTOM: Community and collaborators during Immersive Learning Trip, Misipawistik Cree Nation 2017

IMMERSIVE (UN)LEARNING FOR COLLABORATORS

The philanthropic sector has been created and enabled by the inequities and extractive model of the capitalist system[iii], and has played an ongoing role in reinforcing settler colonialism[iv]. Communities have gently taught these hard lessons to collaborators, since the Collaborative's inception. Early on, the NMFCCC understood that it was necessary to create spaces for collaborators to learn new ways of working, and unlearn old assumptions and habits. Collaborators have been encouraged to learn alongside one another, take the burden off of communities to educate individual funders, and learn through reciprocal and respectful exchange.



PHOTO: Youth pulling nets, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation

> ***"For collaborators to feel for themselves what being out on the land/water and at camp is like and how that is healing for people. They could start to imagine how good it must be for the community."***
>
> - Learning trip host, Kinosao Sipi 2024

> ***"The best effect for me was how the trip shaped my understanding. When I think back to my approach to the previous round of grant applications, it lacked an understanding for the specific conditions that may impact programs in Northern Manitoba."***
>
> - Learning trip participant, Garden Hill Anisininew Nation 2015

Immersive (un)learning opportunities for collaborators focus on understanding colonial history, personal reflections, and sharing and actioning lessons back into their organizations.

These opportunities centre community voices, have an emphasis on multi-directional learning, and aim to transform partnerships and the way that funders engage with communities. Key (un)learning opportunities have included:

- Annual learning trips hosted and structured by community partners;
- The deeply engaging and methodical peer review and consensus grantmaking process;
- Gatherings and events with other collaborators and community members;
- Community-led sharing and celebration;
- Collaborative meetings for orientation, reflection, and decision-making.

ETHICAL STORY SHARING

From the early years, the NMFCCC was guided to dedicate time and budget to sharing the good news coming from communities. Media attention on the challenges faced by communities often outweighs the good news stories. **Communities underscored the importance of sharing positive community stories that show the strength of communities, celebrate the work, and demonstrate what is possible.** When in-person relationship building was limited due to COVID-19 emergency protocols, the NMFCCC dedicated even more capacity and resources to sharing stories to support community connection, and for collaborators to feel connected to the work.

All stories shared aim to amplify community voices and inspire others. The NMFCCC does not share stories without permission and approval from community partners, or claim community stories or work as their own. Resources are co-created with the community partner featured, and editorial control remains with the community.



PHOTO: Learning about Indigenous history, Misipawistik Pimatisimēskanaw 2019

"Writing to tell you how pleased and proud I am of you and others who put the Garden Guide together. OCN garden members are extremely fortunate to be the yearly recipients of your gardening knowledge. The pictures of the happy OCN Elders and children working diligently in the garden showed the importance of Cree relationships. The Guide is so much more than gardening information although that was the purpose of it. To me it showed community spirit, relationships, language learning and a love of the land."

- Opaskwayak Cree Nation community member, 2020

There have been at least 65 NMFCCC story sharing resources and knowledge translation products created, published, and shared widely with communities, partners, and broad networks. These print and online resources include: beautifully designed community story booklets and case studies, a YouTube channel celebrating community-led work, annual reports, a regularly updated website and social media, publications about how the Collaborative works, a short film, a podcast, research publications, and articles.

The NMFCCC has also supported communities in creating, publishing, and sharing their own resources. These have included: two traditional knowledge-themed calendars; a planting, harvesting, and cooking guide; Elder stories of life at residential schools; and an annual program report.



PHOTO: Setting decoys

SYSTEMS CHANGE

The NMFCCC is often the first philanthropic funder for approximately 75% of community-led projects. This shows how philanthropically underserved Northern Manitoba communities are, as well as the gaps in knowledge and relationships that funders have in engaging with Northern Manitoba communities. **The NMFCCC recognizes inequity and power imbalance**, and therefore takes on the responsibility for: sharing lessons and unlearnings to demonstrate better ways of working; creating spaces for hard and important conversations to take place; and standing with communities in allyship.

The NMFCCC's systems change work starts at home – the Collaborative continually reflects on, refines, and evolves its own systems as partners learn together. For example, in 2024, the Collaborative updated their own granting system to continue pushing back on colonial models of philanthropy. Peer reviewers were invited in as grant committee members to further bring local knowledge to the process, and build further confidence in the funding decisions made. The first oral application was also piloted to honour the oral culture of Indigenous people.

The NMFCCC's story and approach has been a model for building good relationships and working with communities in a good way. The Collaborative has coached, mentored, and facilitated other groups to learn from their collaborative model and in some cases, replicate the model in their own territories. Adjacently, **the NMFCCC has been a relationship broker to many partners**: match-making funders to capable helper organizations; catalyzing connections between organizations, funders, and communities.

From the early days, **the NMFCCC has worked to elevate community voices through collective voice to influence changes in the philanthropic and governmental funding sectors**. The Collaborative has shared learnings with all levels of government; commissioned thought pieces; contributed to academic research projects, conferences, book chapters, podcasts, webinars, and more. The NMFCCC was also an active member in a consortium of Indigenous-led and -serving partners to engage influential groups to learn about systemic barriers and the opportunities to change policies, programs, and perspectives.



In 2020, the NMFCCC was asked by community partners to facilitate a joint letter about the proposed Food for All Challenge Prize. A strong letter, deep discussions, and a conversation with the Deputy Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations contributed to the Province of Manitoba cancelling the Challenge Prize. **A collective voice committee formally began in 2021, evolving from the COVID committee, to continue focusing on influencing system changes prioritized by communities.**

PHOTO: Potatoes from a 2018 harvest at the Meechim Farm in Garden Hill Anisininew Nation

IMPACTS OF THE NMFCCC

There is much concrete evidence that show how the key outcomes of the NMFCCC have already been, and continue to be, achieved. Data, stories, and analyses are presented in this section to demonstrate key ways that impacts are being seen through the deeply collaborative work of the NMFCCC.

The 6 impact areas, consistent with the Ways of Working, are:

1. Improved Access to Good Food
2. Future Generations Carrying on the Work
3. Culturally Relevant Livelihood Opportunities
4. Replication & Adaptation of Community-Led Work
5. Inspiration & Celebration
6. Better & More Philanthropic Support



PHOTO: Kelsey School Division students ice fishing

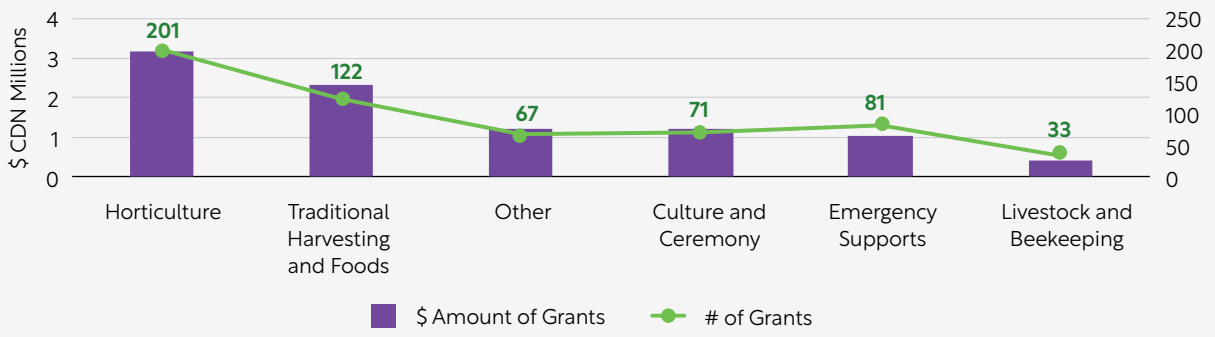
Improved Access to Good Food

Local food solutions have focused on land-based activities that increase access to local and culturally appropriate foods. Community-led work has been categorized into five main categories at this time:

- Horticulture
- Culture and ceremony
- Traditional harvesting and foods
- Livestock and beekeeping
- Emergency supports

Of the 575 grants over the last 12 years, **horticulture and traditional foods have been particularly important community-led local food solutions**. The largest number of grants and the largest amount of investment have gone into supporting horticulture work – 201 grants, and over $3.1 million. 122 traditional harvesting and foods grants have been supported with a total grant amount of over $2.3 million. Culture and ceremony have also been key to local food solutions, and have received almost $1.2 million in support. The graph shows the number of grants distributed for each category of project, and the total investment into each solution.

Horticulture and traditional foods have been key community-led local food solutions in Northern Manitoba







"We cannot call ourselves a Nation if we cannot feed ourselves."

- Carl McCorrister, Peguis First Nation

PHOTO LEFT: Heaps of beans, Poplar River First Nation **PHOTO RIGHT:** Meechim Farm located in Garden Hill Anisininew Nation 2016



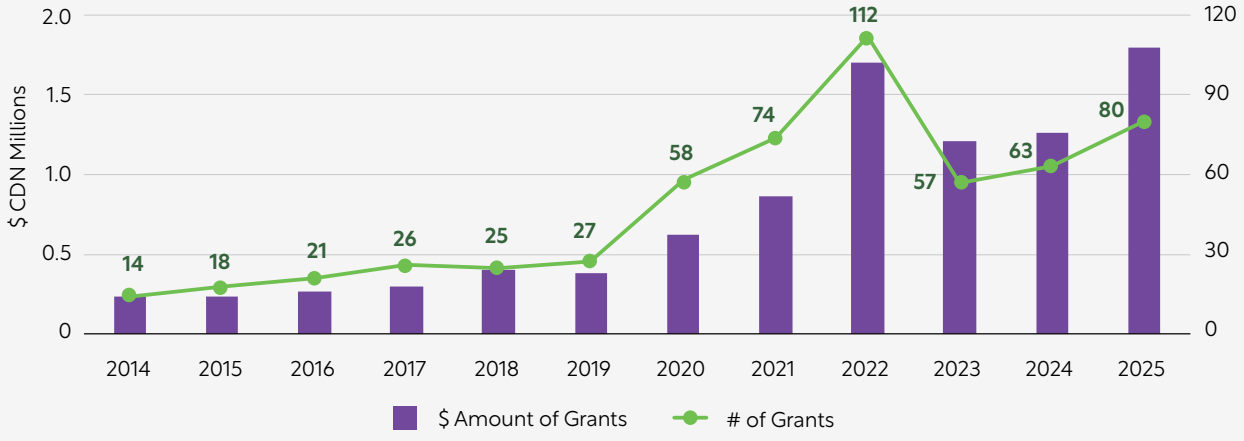
PHOTO: Grade 3 students, Annabelle and Kaleb, harvest at HBOIERC, Norway House Cree Nation

Of course, there are community solutions and thus projects, which do not fit specifically into one category. This reflects the foundational community idea and value that everything is connected. In particular, many solutions focus on horticulture and traditional foods, such as growing crops and berry picking; traditional food harvesting, such as having a moose hunt, always incorporates culture and ceremony. There are so many ways that food is inseparable from culture.

Additionally, **"other" grants include community work that fall outside the five main categories, and grants that support the overall goals of the Collaborative**. In particular, 11 partnership grants have been distributed to close allied partners in Manitoba who directly support communities in accessing grant funding, which they would otherwise not be able to do because of systemic barriers. Some requests for funding, such as a film making project, event participation, and an Indigenous food sovereignty study, are brought to the granting committee to make decisions on behalf of the Collaborative. Projects like the food buying co-op, cooking classes, land stewardship, lunch programs, and housing emphasize how food access, culture, the land, and overall wellbeing are all connected.

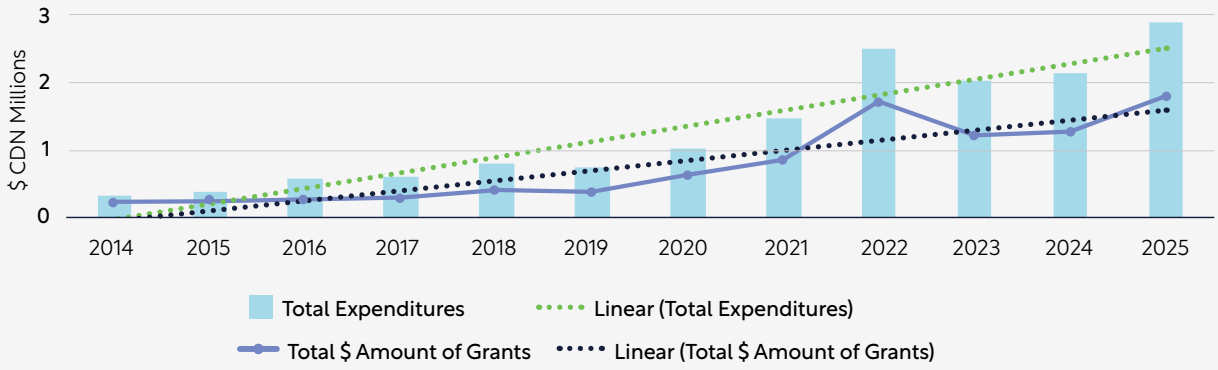
The graph shows how $9,274,071 in grants directly to community-led work have been distributed. **The number and dollar amount of grants over 12 years show that there has been a clear increase in investment into local food solutions in Northern Manitoba through the NMFCCC.** Starting with just over $231,000 worth of grants in 2014, to more than $1.8 million in 2025.

Over the last 12 years, overall investment into local food solutions in Northern Manitoba has increased because of the NMFCCC



In total, there has been $15.5 million spent by the NMFCCC to support local community-led solutions in Northern Manitoba. There are increasing trendlines in both the total expenditures of the NMFCCC and the dollar amount of grants distributed, as seen in the graph below. **Up to 75% of the total annual budget has been used for direct investments (i.e., grants) into local solutions**; grants have ranged between 47-75% of the annual budget, with an average of 58%.

Total NMFCCC expenditures, year over year, show the direct investments into community-lead food solutions that are improving access to good food



There are so many stories and testimonies from communities of how their access to good food has improved because of their partnership with the NMFCCC. Traditional foods programs, for instance – like **O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation's Ithinto Mechisowin Program** and **Nisichawayasihk Country Foods Program** – have enabled respectful harvest and sharing of wild foods, including fish, meat, berries, and medicines. These programs are being sustained by communities and have incredible rippling impacts on local food security. These programs improve physical and mental health through improved diet and connection to land, provide capacity building for youth, build local economies, and reduce household expenditures on imported foods.



PHOTO: Harvesting medicines, Nisichawayasihk Country Foods Program

Future Generations Carrying on the Work

Over the last 12 years, **there have been 75 communities in Northern Manitoba who have engaged with the NMFCCC**. This number gives a small glimpse at the number of local people, including Elders, parents, teachers, youth, children, and many more, who have been involved in community-led work.

When asked why the work is important to communities, community partners consistently say it is for the youth, for future generations. In Indigenous communities where colonial oppressions have wielded unimaginable, lasting harms, investing in young people to feel valued, supported, and seen as part of the community is vital.

"We are the generation of changemakers. More so than ever before, today's youth are seen fighting for equality, freedom, and social justice... The projects in [the Youth Voices] book showcase that we are not 'tomorrow's' leaders, we are leaders now, and this is the future."

- Michaela de Hoop (Opaskwayak Cree Nation), Alanna Disbrowe and Malcolm Disbrowe (Barren Lands First Nation), 2021



"Our children are our future. That's why when I see people working with our youth, I know we are going to keep our goals alive, our teachings, our knowledge. That's what's so amazing."

- Community partner, 2018



PHOTO: Elm oyster mushroom harvest, Grand Rapids School 2019

Youth are so essential to communities – they are often the focus of the work, and they inform community work. Communities recognize that everyone has wisdom to give and learning to do. Listening to and elevating the voices of youth ensure that their passions are nurtured, and that they gain skills and knowledge that support communities to rebuild sovereign nations and communities, and carry-on sacred traditions. From on the land harvesting and learning, horticulture, beekeeping, livestock raising, culture camps, preserving and cooking, and so much more – youth have grown with the work of their communities, and significantly contributed to their long-term successes.

PHOTO LEFT: Brook trout ready for smoking

"The garden project has created meaningful job opportunities for the young people in the community. They are looked up to as role models and it builds their confidence."

- Cassandra Bighetty, Barren Lands First Nation, 2016

Of the 575 grants that have been distributed by the Collaborative, at least 96 grants have been implemented by schools, education centres, or youth programs. This accounts for 17% of the total number of grants distributed. In terms of the dollar amount of grants, **over $1.4 million has been invested directly towards youth and school focused projects**. Many projects that are not implemented by educational partners also engage youth, so these numbers are conservative estimates of the proportion of projects that focus on building capacity and interest in younger generations.

Northern and Indigenous people are leading the way in decolonizing education systems and reclaiming land-based education[v]. Hands-on, land-based learning is informed by Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers and includes traditional teachings, language, survival skills, and many harvesting and food skills. Specific schools in Northern Manitoba – including Fisher River First Nation School, Hollow Water/Wanipigow School, and Chief Charles Audy Memorial School – have been engaging their students in wild rice harvesting, trapping, survival classes, tree tapping, gardening, and language over many years. The Frontier and Kelsey School Divisions, which encompass the majority of Northern Manitoba, have invested more in land-based education over the last 3–5 years, creating classes, camps, gatherings, and outings that allow students to earn credits, while also providing education models for schools in and beyond the region. The Collaborative has supported the investment in land-based teachings and places where students can build skills, hope, and a sense of self-pride. **This learning and healing are foundational for communities to be able to address food security.**

Communities have been taking unique and innovative approaches to addressing food security and building locally relevant food systems. The is no "one size fits all" when reclaiming and building up food systems, local economies, and culture. For instance, the **Bayline Food Buying Co-op** was a response to the high costs and excessive time it takes to buy groceries for remote communities along the Bayline Railway. Over the course of five years, communities conducted thorough research and planning, and launched their program, which orders and delivers a larger selection of good food to communities. This important service has increased availability and access of healthy foods in communities, increased overall household budgets, and strengthened opportunities for the community to work and build together.

PHOTO: Healing Hearts, Bodies, and Minds clearing space for a healing camp near Leaf Rapids, 2024



In 2022, youth involved in the Collaborative were invited to the Northern Advisors gathering for the first time, to directly inform discussions and planning. It was a special opportunity for the Northern Advisors and youth to meet, share ideas and actions from their home territories, and provide guidance to the NMFCCC.

Because of the determined perseverance of communities, **local champions and youth continue to step into and lead the work to strengthen and heal their communities**. Many community projects focus on intergenerational knowledge transfer, mentorship, and supporting community members to believe in their individual and community capacity.

The Northern Advisors are a diverse collection of Northern Indigenous knowledge holders and sharers. Ervin Bighetty is the youngest Advisor, and joined the Collaborative as a youth, in the NMFCCC's first year. Over the course of a decade, Ervin contributed to the Leaf Rapids Grow North Program, was elected mayor of Leaf Rapids, and received the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal for outstanding public service. Ervin has grown with the Collaborative, shared his visions for healthy communities, and continues to contribute to positive change in Northern Manitoba and far beyond.



PHOTO: Ervin and Sarah with Minister of Agriculture, April 2019

"Grow. It's the most important thing you can do for yourself. Your family. Your friends. If you do not grow, the challenges in front of you will always be bigger than you."

- Ervin Bighetty, Leaf Rapids, 2026

Learning trip participants, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation 2018:

"I think that the intergenerational knowledge transfer is hugely important. Most of the project leaders highlighted youth engagement as a point of success – speaking to the joy it brought to know that their hard work and knowledge will continue to benefit community members in future generations."

"I am deeply grateful for this beautiful experience. Thank you for bringing the young leaders on board. The whole event becomes much more meaningful and hopeful when we see young project leaders sharing their passion for food production and gardening and much more."

Culturally Relevant Livelihood Opportunities

Re-skilling and reviving local knowledge and culture have been central investments for communities to advance culturally relevant livelihood opportunities. Many communities consider teaching, learning, and sharing traditional cultural knowledge and practices a priority, and as part of healing and cultural revitalization. Learning about cultural food ways has been shown by communities to be intertwined with diverse cultural knowledge, including knowing the land, language, arts, medicines, and ceremony.

Of the 110 North-to-North (N2N) and self-representation opportunities that the NMFCCC has hosted or supported, **78% of the N2N opportunities have focused on community-to-community knowledge exchange and skill building.** Approximately 30% have included celebrations and gatherings, which often also include knowledge sharing and peer learning.

"What I liked about the event is when we were out in the actual First Nations community in the North. It is very rare that any conference is held up North on a reserve. The amount of information that the Elders had about the lands and hunting was beyond what I was expecting. We know we are starting our program, so this meeting was helpful."

- Participant of the Country Foods Learning Exchange, 2016

Youth reflections during Misipawistik Pimatisimēskanaw:

"I want to learn more traditional things. To get my family interested in traditional ways of life."

"I will keep trying to use the medicine when needed, pick medicine for my grandparents when needed."



PHOTO: Raising chickens in Sherridon

Additionally, **71 grants, equal to $1.2 million, have been distributed specifically to support culture and ceremony in Northern Manitoba.** Since 2024, culture and ceremony grants were approved for projects that were not specifically centred around food, for example: snowshoe and moccasin making workshops, a women's conference, star blanket and beading workshops, and a healing camp. **The NMFCCC has recognized that communities will thrive as they continue to reclaim, practice, and share their cultures, ceremonies, languages, and knowledge.**

"All our futures are affected by what we are taught and learnt along the way. Future generations will benefit as they have opportunities to engage with land, water, and traditional learnings. This is an important foundation that all youth need for their own self-worth, health and wellness, self-respect, and the understanding of the world around them from their local culture and history."

- Caroline Sanoffsky, Wabowden



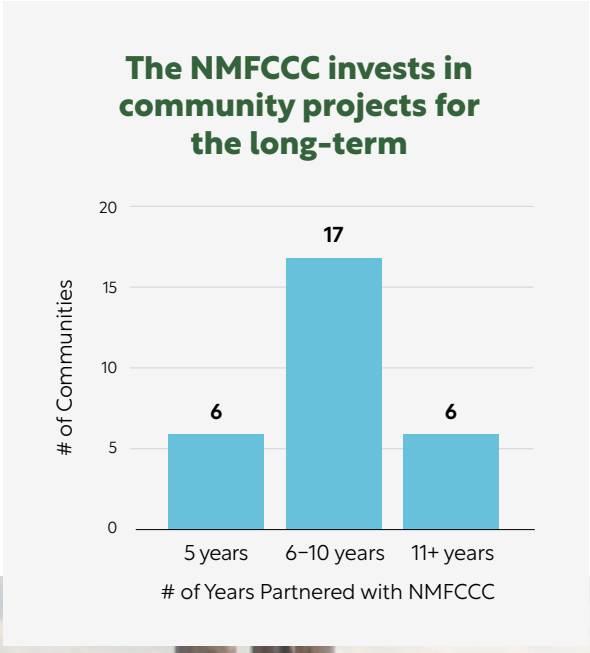
PHOTO: nintāwīwēw aski – The Land Will Heal Youth Gathering, Frontier School Division 2025

Amidst the gross inequities and challenges of the pandemic, the deep strength of Northern communities shone through. Beyond supporting each other through the early years of the pandemic, regular food and medicine sharing, and adapting to challenges, Northern Manitoba communities continued to activate their visions for large scale work, including: root cellaring, greenhouse operations, and establishing new country foods programs. **The pandemic emergency response period was a strong motivator to scale up community programs and initiate new ones, in order to work towards community self-sufficiency.**

Wild harvest and emergency food support were two predominant responses taken by communities to address the pandemic emergency. They had the same effect of increasing access to good foods. Emergency food support (e.g., hampers, bulk purchase, community food banks) also demonstrated caring and sharing in communities and evoked community pride and spirit. Wild food harvesting also typically included capacity building for young people, and procurement of equipment that will last for many seasons into the future. **Most community partners that undertook COVID emergency response work have continued to partner with the NMFCCC to sustain livelihood opportunities and build up their local food systems.**

Replication & Adaptation of Community-Led Work

There have been 29 communities that have partnered with the NMFCCC for 5 or more years. This does not fully capture the length of the relationship that communities have had with the NMFCCC, but it gives a glimpse of the way that local infrastructure and resources have been invested in by the Collaborative over the long-term. The wrap-around supports offered by the NMFCCC have supported local capacity to grow, adapt, and strengthen the diverse work. Communities engaged in multi-year funding have evolved and strengthened their work, and also undertaken different projects. **The critical factor has been that communities have been able to rely on committed support from the NMFCCC, which allows them to focus on building the work, rather than on sustaining volatile funding.**



"How proud everyone was as they presented their projects... you do all this work because you love it and to help others, but you feel alone... This gathering helped me to know about all the others out there."

- Learning trip participant, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation 2018

"These food gatherings tend to make me emotional. Bringing our past to life is momentous for me. Being so far up North and seeing how the people up here are hanging on tight to their traditions gets me right in the heartstrings. Bringing home more lessons for our children. Bringing home some more motivation."

- Participant of Traditional Teachings and Traditional Foods Gathering, 2019

PHOTO: Original garden builders, Peguis First Nation 2012, L to R: Sherry, Thomas, Carl, Ernie, Janice, John, Darlene, Marilyn



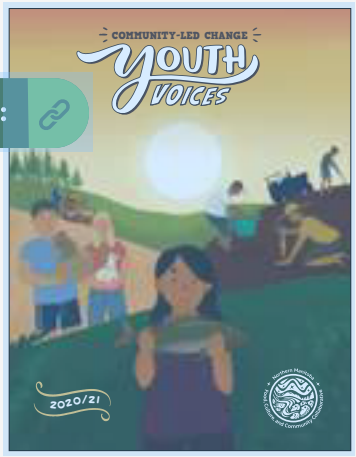
The **Peguis First Nation's Community Garden Project** started in 2011 with the aims of regaining their heritage and culture of community agriculture, and supporting community members to grow their own food into the future. The NMFCCC has supported this project for 12 years, and seen how inspiring it is locally and to other Nations who are also reclaiming their food systems. In its 15 years of operation, the project has developed 3 multi-acre garden sites, harvested and shared tonnes of vegetables, and worked to develop seeds adapted to the Peguis community. The community garden also ongoingly supports more than 60 households with their own gardens, and employs a dozen community members in the height of the growing season. This project has been recognized for its excellence through awards, inquiries, visits, and partnerships.

In 2024, the **Meadow Portage Community Council** received a NMFCCC grant to support households in purchasing equipment to further their food sovereignty. Households purchased canning equipment, freezers, irrigation and gardening tools, chickens, fruit trees, and more. The project was very successful in engaging community members and building the community infrastructure to increase food security. A group of neighbouring communities that work together – Crane River, Spence Lake, Rock Ridge/Salt Point – heard about Meadow Portage's household supports and loved the idea. They applied to the NMFCCC in 2025 for a similar project to empower their community members to determine the food sovereignty work they wanted to focus on.

Bringing communities together has been a critical component of supporting sustainable change. North-to-North sharing, learning, and celebration opportunities are vital to inspiring communities and creating spaces for communities to learn directly from each other, gather tangible knowledge and skills, and build connections. The importance of learning from leaders in the North, in their own territories, and with one's own hands, is an immersive and experiential experience that cannot be replaced. The NMFCCC has supported many learning exchanges, conferences, and workshops that have catalyzed the knowledge and skills of community members, particularly in the areas of Northern boreal horticulture and country foods programming.

The sheer number of story sharing resources produced by the Collaborative – over 65 in 12 years – has shown the deep value in story sharing. Story sharing booklets and annual reports are often a source of inspiration for communities, where they can learn about who else is doing similar work, and find pathways to connect.

READ ONLINE:



The Youth Voices story sharing booklet is a great example of a resource that has had a big impact. The booklet features 37 youth stories, illustrations from three Indigenous artists, and many examples of youth leadership. Youth involved were very excited to see themselves, and the work they do, in print. They felt pride in showing the results of their efforts to their families and friends. Though Youth Voices was published in 2021, it continues to be passed around and more copies continue to be requested by community members, as well as funders and federal government decision-makers.

Inspiration & Celebration

When the NMFCCC first started partnering with communities in Northern Manitoba, the focus of support was on increasing access to sustainable, sovereign food sources. Community-led food solutions included caribou hunts, gardening and greenhouses, chicken raising, fishing, and country foods programming. Many of these programs continue to this day, and are about so much more than just food. **Communities have shown that everything is connected – food, culture, and community.** Collaborators in particular, have shared how they have gained understanding of how food projects are connected to: land access, sharing cultural knowledge, healing intergenerational trauma, and a more holistic way of viewing health and wellness.

> ***"As an exclusive food funder, I still see this project as a natural extension of celebrating community and inspiring pride."*** - Collaborator, 2022



PHOTO: Sundance in Opaskwayak Cree Nation

The relational value that grounds the NMFCCC is at the centre of supporting sharing, inspiration, and celebration. **At least 30% of North-to-North and self-representation opportunities that have been hosted and supported have been dedicated to community gatherings and celebration.** These have included community feasts and gatherings, youth and Elders' gatherings, sun and round dances, sharing and celebration calls, and much more.

Gatherings are crucial in maintaining healthy community relationships. The loss of opportunities to gather because of COVID-19 precautions had a large effect on project momentum, community engagement, and community relationships. Having community members come together on the land, to share food, and to celebrate successes builds mutual support and contributes to community togetherness and wellness. Sharing traditional teachings and community values, teaching young people, honouring Elders, promoting healing, and engaging in ceremony are all part of celebrating the resilience of communities.

> ***"It was just a tremendous opportunity to see these things that I understood in theory, but to see them in real life. You can say that you know, and you can put it in a pretty diagram if you want, but to be able to really experience just how interrelated all those pieces are, was grounding."***
>
> - Learning trip participant, Churchill 2022

"It is also a way of reconciliation where our people have come through so much in terms of colonization; this reconciling must be with all parts of our society to rebuild new relationships and develop a vision together. I see this gathering [with NMFCCC] doing this; as I stated, I am a residential school survivor and appreciate the healing and understanding from the sharing these gatherings bring."

- Community partner and learning trip participant, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation 2018



Misipawistik Pimatisimēskanaw was a land-based learning program to help **Misipawistik Cree Nation (MCN)** students reconnect with their culture, rebuild connections to their ancestral land, promote healthy living, and provide education. This work has been an inspiration to multiple communities and schools over the years. Today, a culture camp site is in development near Wabowden, after a grassroots group doing land-based teachings was directly inspired by their visit to MCN's culture camp site.

Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation's (NCN) country foods program has also been an inspiration to many communities who are at various stages in their country foods programming. The NCN's country foods program has provided mentorship to other communities and shared their knowledge with at least a handful of communities.

PHOTO: Grade 7 youth learning to butcher moose at Misipawistik Cree Nation Culture Camp

Better & More Philanthropic Support

"The more I learned about what effective, relationship-centered, and impactful grantmaking looks like, the more I realized that many of the recommendations I was encountering are things NMFCCC is already doing."

- Kelly Hodgins, McConnell Foundation, 2023

Collaborators have had self-described life-changing learning experiences with the NMFCCC, which have improved their ability to be good partners, and increased the effectiveness of their philanthropy. The unique and deeply involved grantmaking process, consensus-based decisions, immersive learning trips, story sharing, and a commitment to centring community needs have been at the core of these personal and institutional changes. These experiences have come with challenges and tensions, questioning one's place in the work, and deep emotional labour. The NMFCCC has offered a model of engagement that has enabled collaborators to do the hard work of (un)learning in a supportive environment, while at the same time, supporting Indigenous and community-led change.

Collaborators and learning trip participants, Peguis First Nation 2019:

"I continue to learn that I need to continue to learn and unlearn. If I am not a part of the solution, I am a part of the problem. There is no neutral."

"These immersive learning trips are transformative – personally, professionally, and everything in between. I never leave as the same person that showed up."



PHOTO: Quinn of Diamond Willow Club prepping fish, Opaskwayak Cree Nation

The results of collaborators' (un)learning and commitments have meant that collaborators have actioned both deeper personal commitment and professional responsibility for a more equitable philanthropic sector. **Key grantmaking changes that collaborators have reported for their own granting include:**

- Multi-year funding commitments;
- More funding for Indigenous-led work (in Manitoba and beyond);
- More inclusive, accessible, and human grant processes;
- Engaging in adaptive and trust-based funding to ease burdens on communities and truly support them.

Collaborators also credit the Collaborative with prompting changes in organizational governance practices to focus on relationship-centred approaches, consensus-based decision-making, and ensuring community voices are heard.

Approximately 40 opportunities for (un)learning have been provided for collaborators since the first year of the NMFCCC. Eight immersive learning trips have been hosted and planned by communities, with substantial support from NMFCCC staff, pre- and post-trip. These learning trips have been co-designed to bring together collaborators, Northern Advisors, and coordinators to spend time with communities, build understanding of community realities and opportunities, and to strengthen relationships. Learning trips are also important, additional ways to invest in the community – hiring community members as cooks, guides, and drivers for example; while honouring knowledge keepers and hosts, sharing food, holding feasts, and celebrating the local community and their culture.

LEARNING TRIPS

Leaf Rapids and O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation/South Indian Lake	2014
Garden Hill First Nations	2015
Opaskwayak Cree Nation & Sherridon	2016
Misipawistik Cree Nation	2017
Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation/ Nelson House	2018
Peguis First Nation	2019
Churchill	2022
Kinosao Sipi/ Norway House Cree Nation	2024

"One thing I will take away [from the granting process] is how we can make our reporting processes more accessible and have people be able to apply better. Our organization provides a stipend at the end, once people have done a report, and recognizing the work that it takes for our systems."

- Collaborator, 2024

"The Collaborative gave me the tools to challenge outdated practices in my organization and push for changes in governance and grantmaking... I've learned a lot of things I didn't know before, and it built a foundation for me to seek my own learning... The Collaborative taught me principles of reciprocity, being relational, and moving slowly—those are ideas I now use in all my work."

- Collaborator, 2025

PHOTO: Immersive learning trip participants visit community garden, Churchill 2022



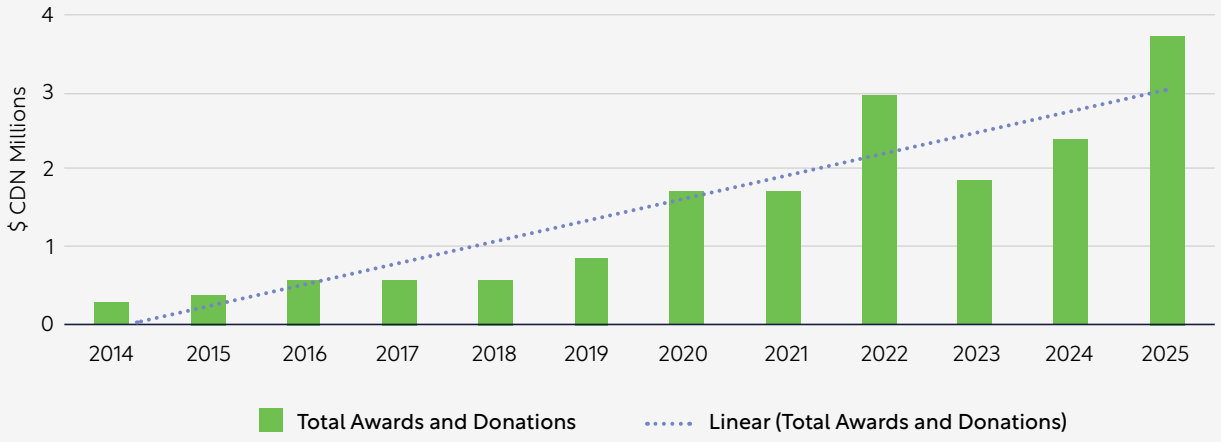
"Learning for me has been incredible. Seems to me that no one should be part of the Collaborative unless they have been to one of these [learning trips]. Otherwise, there could be a lot of damage done."

- Learning trip participant, Opaskwayak Cree Nation & Sherridon, 2016

Because of dedicated collaborators and supporters, **there has been $17.8 million donated to support the NMFCCC's work in the last 12 years**. The data show that there is a clear increasing trendline in the amount of donations year over year. There have also been large increases in donations in particular years – 2016, 2019, 2020, 2022, and 2025 – where there was more than a 40% increase in donations compared to the previous year.

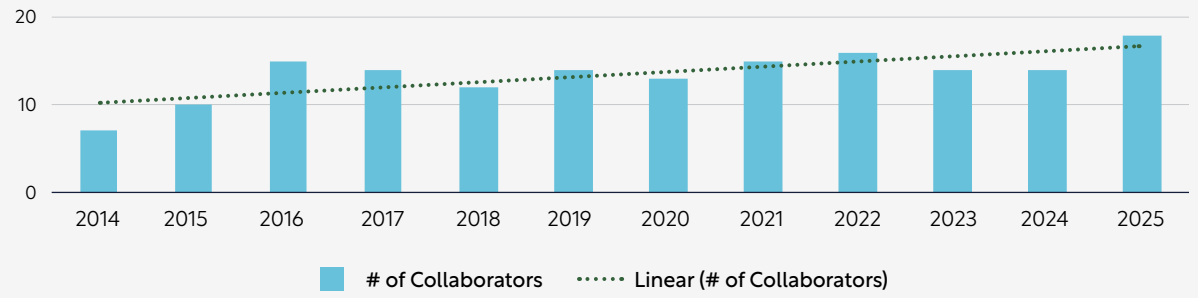
Overall, there have been significantly more donations from 2020 onwards. **The NMFCCC's connections and relationships in the territory affirmed their unique position in being able to deliver funds and create networking opportunities to communities, as they responded to the pressures of the pandemic emergency responses.** Similarly, in 2025, the Collaborative supported emergency wildfire response across the territory.

Significant increases in philanthropic funding to support the NMFCCC over the last 12 years affirm their unique position and their successful model



There has also been an **increasing trendline in the number of collaborators who engage with the NMFCCC each year**. Manitoba's Northern Healthy Foods Initiative was a founding collaborator, and has continued to be a backbone support to the Collaborative over the last 13 years. The McConnell Foundation, an anonymous donor, and MakeWay, have been involved since 2014 – engaging with deep commitment for 12 years. The Sprott Foundation, the Harbinger Foundation, and the Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security have also engaged intentionally for the last decade. See Appendix B for a full list of collaborators over the lifetime of the NMFCCC.

The increasing number of collaborators over the years reflect more philanthropic support to Northern Manitoba



The number of collaborators does not necessarily relate to the amount of donations in one year, as some collaborators provide in-kind services and resources. What is important to highlight with these increasing trends in donations and collaborators is that **relationships have been strengthening with collaborators, which have facilitated more philanthropic support from any one collaborator and across networks of supporters**.

> *"I am so appreciative of NMFCCC and your role as intermediary, so that community partners experience less harm from us as settlers who are at the beginning of our learning journey. While you amplify and fund so much important work in community. Thank you for the privilege of being in this collaborative."*
>
> - Learning trip participant, Kinosao Sipi 2024

PHOTO: Community Kitchen, Opaskwayak Culture and Healthy Living Initiative



Though the NMFCCC has been doing this work for over 12 years, there have been many other organizations who have been committed to supporting communities in Northern Manitoba for a long time. **Other collaborators who do not provide funding to the Collaborative, but who are invaluable partners and connections to communities, and do critical work for Indigenous food sovereignty include:**

- Bayline Regional Roundtable
- Food Matters Manitoba
- Four Arrows Regional Health Authority
- Frontier School Division
- Northern Association of Community Councils
- People's Food Institute

The NMFCCC has been foundational in creating a movement to better support Indigenous communities through a decolonized philanthropic practice. Its insights and learnings have been ongoingly shared with emerging collaborative networks. Different groups have had various levels of engagement with the Collaborative, from mentorship, facilitation, sharing learnings, to scoping and co-creation. Diverse actors have adapted the NMFCCC's ways of working and learnings to meet their goals and the needs of their communities. **To date, the NMFCCC's collaborative model has been replicated and adapted in five different territories across Canada. These include:**

- The Ontario Indigenous Youth Partnership Project
- The NWT On the Land Collaborative
- Gaagige Zaagibigaa
- The Right Relations Collaborative
- The Sîhtoskâtowin Program







PHOTO TOP: Elder cleaning beans, Peguis First Nation
PHOTO BOTTOM: The late Elder Annie Spence standing by her pot garden

PHOTO: Susan displaying her canning from the local community garden U-pick, Barrows

"It was an intuitive choice to support the NMFCCC in the long term because of the clear impact of the work. This can be seen in the commitment of the Northern Advisors, the long relationships held in dozens of communities across the North, the dedication of the team to providing unconditional support, and the growth of initiatives that build cultural connection and traditional food access. The NMFCCC has directly alleviated the lack of philanthropic support for Northern communities and has done so in a way that honours community knowledge and brings collaborators along for the journey.

Our advice for funders interested in partnering with the NMFCCC is to fully participate and exercise intense curiosity. Be open to being wrong and be willing to support in the ways communities are asking to be supported."

- Merryn & Sarah, The Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security, 2026

PHOTO: Canoeing at the mouth of the Limestone River



TAKEAWAYS

COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN MANITOBA ARE HEALING AND BECOMING STRONGER, AND PARTNERSHIPS ARE TRANSFORMING HOW WORK HAPPENS AT ALL LEVELS (INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNITY, ORGANIZATIONAL, SECTORAL).

1

Significant and growing investments into community-led local food solutions are improving access to good food in Northern Manitoba. Results show how long-term investments have supported communities to increase their food production, have more food independence, and exercise their food and land sovereignty. Diverse community projects have focused on growing and raising food, harvesting and gathering food on the land, processing and cooking food, and strengthening infrastructure to store and share food. Culture and ceremony have been shown to be intimately tied to local food solutions, and have also been critical in connecting communities to each other and the land. Unique and community-driven food solutions are having deep impacts on communities' food security, while also improving physical and mental health, strengthening community capacity and connectedness, and building local economies.

2

Local people all across Northern Manitoba are finding partnership opportunities with the NMFCCC, and engaging with local food systems to bolster their economic systems in culturally relevant ways. This has meant that communities are embracing traditional and cultural knowledge, and applying that knowledge to produce, harvest, process, and share food within and across communities. Local champions with diverse experiences and expertise, including youth, are envisioning healthy food systems and taking concrete actions to do the hard work. **Youth are the central motivation for much of the community work that takes place, and they have shown their willingness and readiness to step into and carry on the work for themselves and their communities.**

PHOTO LEFT: Karen and Sarah prepare a meal for Elders during 2017 Learning Trip, Mispawistik Cree Nation
PHOTO RIGHT: Grow North team - Chris, Howie, Ervin, Anthony, Leaf Rapids 2017





3 **Culturally relevant livelihood opportunities are expanding in Northern Manitoba as significant investments continue to be made in the resurgence of culture, skills, and local knowledge.** These supports towards community-to-community knowledge exchanges, shared learning, and skill building strengthen the capacity of individuals and communities to participate in and guide their local food systems. Culture and ceremony are indelibly intertwined with the wellbeing of communities, and resurgence of cultural pride and celebration have an even more profound impact in the era of reconciliation.

4 NMFCCC investments into Northern Manitoba communities are strengthening local infrastructure and resources, at household and community levels. At least a third of partner communities have received long-term funding, which support the growth and adaptation of their work, year over year. **The learnings and successes of communities have been instrumental in catalyzing ideas, replicating and adapting projects, and inspiring community-led work across the territory.** Story sharing and bringing communities together to learn from and with each other, build supportive networks, and celebrate, have been key to these impacts.

5 Communities have shown the NMFCCC how food, culture, and community are all connected. Being grounded in its six values, the Collaborative has shown how it continues to reflect on its processes and refine its actions to better meet the needs of communities. Different refinements happen every year, and are proudly shared with all partners, as a responsibility to share and learn together, even through the difficult moments. **Through learnings – at community, Collaborative, and sectoral levels – the NMFCCC has been able to celebrate successes and share inspiration that continue to lift communities in Northern Manitoba.**

6 The increase in philanthropic funding to Northern Manitoba over the last 12 years has been significant. The number of collaborators and funders involved in the NMFCCC, especially those who have engaged consistently for a decade or more, show the strength of relationships that have been built and stewarded. Collaborator unlearning and transformation has been a unique support and overarching goal of the NMFCCC, and testimonies from collaborators show how these experiences have been personally life-changing. **The relational and collaborative model of the NMFCCC has proven to facilitate better and more philanthropic support, which benefits both communities and larger systems.**

O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation, 2016, student land-based learning
PHOTO LEFT: Elder Robert Dysart shows how to prepare moose nose **PHOTO RIGHT:** Nora Spence demonstrates goose plucking

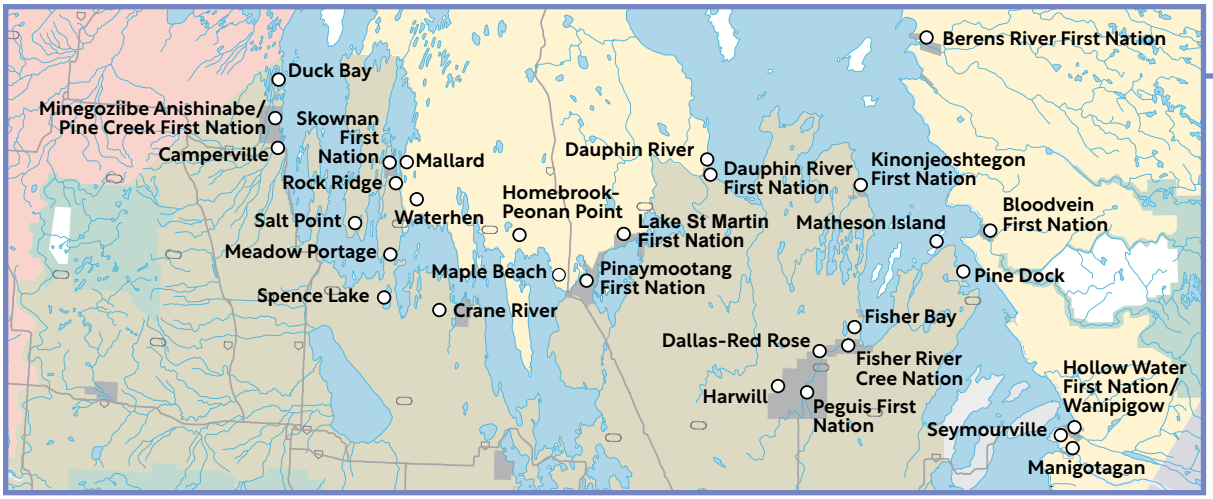


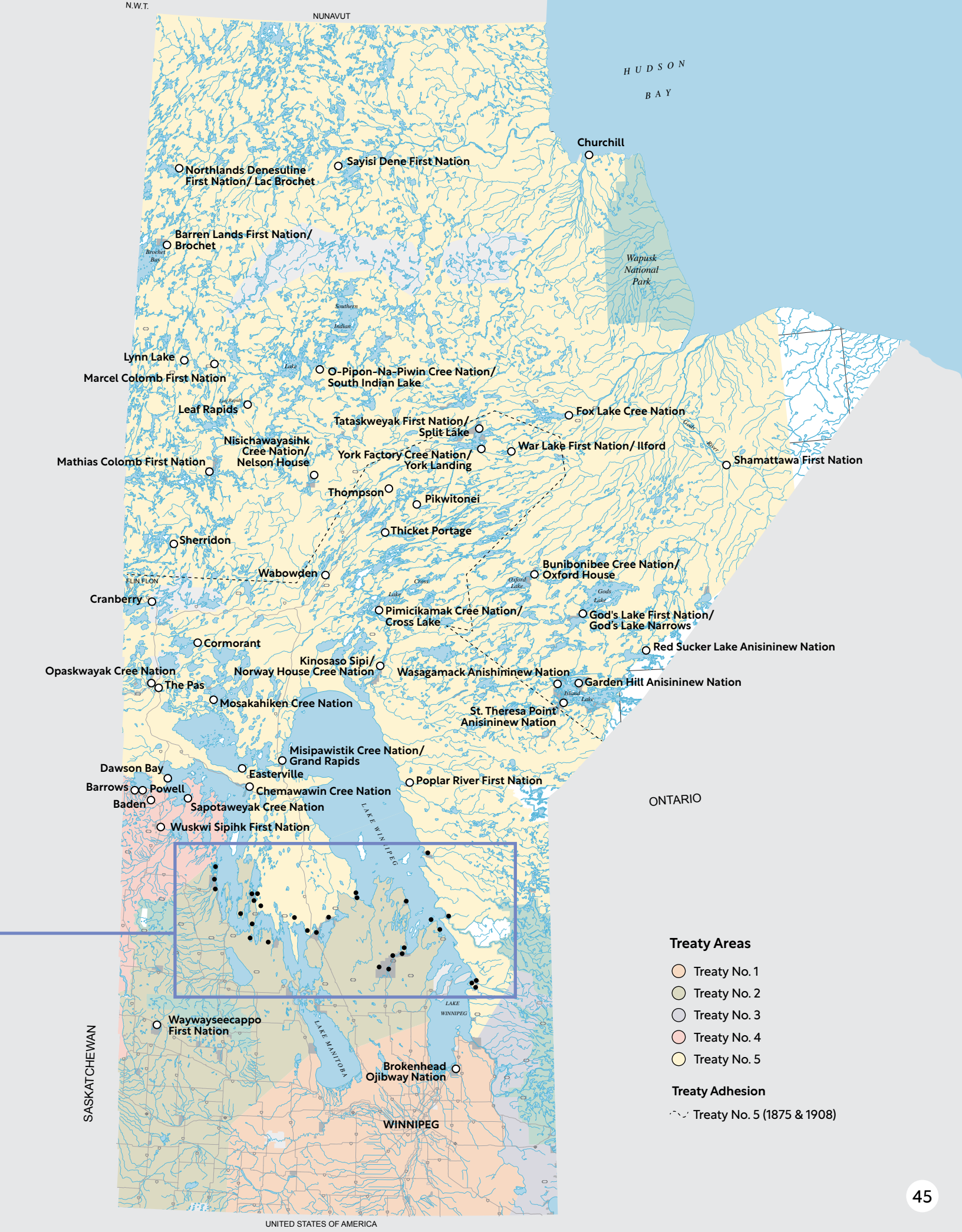


Appendix A: Manitoba Community Partners

NMFCCC has engaged with 75 communities over the past 12 years.

Baden
Barren Lands First Nation/ Brochet
Barrows
Berens River First Nation
Bloodvein First Nation
Brokenhead Ojibway Nation
Bunibonibee Cree Nation/ Oxford House
Camperville
Chemawawin Cree Nation
Churchill
Cormorant
Cranberry
Crane River
Dallas-Red Rose
Dauphin River
Dauphin River First Nation
Dawson Bay
Duck Bay
Easterville
Fisher Bay
Fisher River Cree Nation
Fox Lake Cree Nation
Garden Hill Anisininew Nation
God's Lake First Nation/ God's Lake Narrows
Harwill
Hollow Water First Nation/ Wanipigow
Homebrook-Peonan Point
Kinonjeshtegon First Nation
Lake St. Martin First Nation
Leaf Rapids
Lynn Lake
Mallard
Manigotagan
Maple Beach
Marcel Colomb First Nation
Matheson Island
Mathias Colomb Cree Nation
Meadow Portage
Minegoziibe Anishinabe/ Pine Creek First Nation
Misipawistik Cree Nation/ Grand Rapids
Mosakahiken Cree Nation
Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation/ Nelson House
Northlands Denesuline First Nation/ Lac Brochet
Kinosaso Sipi/ Norway House Cree Nation
Opaskwayak Cree Nation
O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation/ South Indian Lake
Peguis First Nation
Pikwitonei
Pimicikamak Cree Nation/ Cross Lake
Pinaymootang First Nation
Pine Dock
Poplar River First Nation
Powell
Red Sucker Lake Anisininew Nation
Rock Ridge
Salt Point
Sapotaweyak Cree Nation
Sayisi Dene First Nation
Seymourville
Shamattawa First Nation
Sherridon
Skownan First Nation
Spence Lake
Tataskweyak Cree Nation/ Split Lake
St. Theresa Point Anisininew Nation
The Pas
Thompson
Thicket Portage
Wabowden
War Lake First Nation/ Illford
Wasagamack Anishininew Nation
Waterhen
Waywayseecappo First Nation
Wuskwi Siphik First Nation
York Factory First Nation/ York Landing




N.W.T.
NUNAVUT
HUDSON BAY
Churchill
Sayisi Dene First Nation
Northlands Denesuline First Nation/ Lac Brochet
Barren Lands First Nation/ Brochet
Brochet Bay
Wapusk National Park
Southern Indian Lake
Lynn Lake
Marcel Colomb First Nation
O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation/ South Indian Lake
Leaf Rapids
Fox Lake Cree Nation
Tataskweyak First Nation/ Split Lake
Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation/ Nelson House
War Lake First Nation/ Ilford
Mathias Colomb First Nation
York Factory Cree Nation/ York Landing
Shamattawa First Nation
Thompson
Pikwitonei
Thicket Portage
Sherridon
Bunibonibee Cree Nation/ Oxford House
Wabowden
FLIN FLON
Cranberry
Pimicikamak Cree Nation/ Cross Lake
God's Lake First Nation/ God's Lake Narrows
Cormorant
Red Sucker Lake Anisininew Nation
Kinosaso Sipi/ Norway House Cree Nation
Opaskwayak Cree Nation
Wasagamack Anishininew Nation
Garden Hill Anisininew Nation
The Pas
Mosakahiken Cree Nation
St. Theresa Point Anisininew Nation
Misipawistik Cree Nation/ Grand Rapids
Dawson Bay
Easterville
Poplar River First Nation
Barrows
Powell
Chemawawin Cree Nation
Baden
Sapotaweyak Cree Nation
ONTARIO
Wuskwi Sipihk First Nation
LAKE WINNIPEG
LAKE MANITOBA
Waywayseecappo First Nation
Brokenhead Ojibway Nation
SASKATCHEWAN
WINNIPEG
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Treaty Areas
Treaty No. 1
Treaty No. 2
Treaty No. 3
Treaty No. 4
Treaty No. 5
Treaty Adhesion
Treaty No. 5 (1875 & 1908)

Appendix B: NMFCCC Collaborators

The following are the 32 collaborators who have engaged with the Collaborative over the last 12 years.

All One Fund

Anonymous Donor I

Anonymous Donor II

Anonymous Donor III

Arrell Family Foundation

BHP Foundation

Blennerhassett Family Foundation

Breakfast Clubs of Canada

Definity Insurance Foundation

Donner Canadian Foundation

Google.org

Harbinger Foundation

Heifer Canada/International

Lake Winnipeg Foundation

Leading4Impact (formerly Health in Common)

LUSH

MakeWay Foundation
(formerly Tides Canada Foundation)

Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security

McCall McBain Foundation

Nature United

NoVo Foundation

Province of Manitoba

Right to Food
(formerly Community Food Centres Canada)

Schad Foundation

Silver Dollar Foundation, hosted by SeedChange
(formerly USC Canada)

Tamalpais Trust

The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security

The Lawson Foundation

The McConnell Foundation

The Sprott Foundation

The Winnipeg Foundation

Thomas Sill Foundation

PHOTO LEFT: Gardeners Julius and Kelly hosting visitors Leon, Julie, and Carl, Poplar River First Nation **PHOTO RIGHT:** Bees working hard





REFERENCES

[i] Philanthropic Foundations Canada, 2015. Assets & Giving of Canada's Top Grantmaking Foundations: Snapshot of 2013. https://pfc.ca/documents/snapshot-of-foundation-giving-in-canada-in-2018-and-trends-2013-2018/

[ii] Allaby, M., 2025. Northern Manitoba shows philanthropy how to move from transaction to transformation. The Philanthropist Journal. https://thephilanthropist.ca/2025/09/northern-manitoba-shows-philanthropy-how-to-move-from-transaction-to-transformation/

[iii] Moseley, W.G., 2015. The dark alliance of global philanthropy and capitalism. Aljazeera: https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2015/12/1/the-dark-alliance-of-global-philanthropy-and-capitalism/

[iv] Foxworth, R., 2022. Philanthropy's Role in Reinforcing Settler Colonialism. The Centre for Effective Philanthropy: https://cep.org/blog/philanthropys-role-in-reinforcing-settler-colonialism/

[v] Wilson, A., et al, 2021. Queering Indigenous Land-Based Education. Queer Ecopedagogies (pp 2019–231). https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-65368-2_11

PHOTO: Country Foods Program staff setting up fishing nets, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation



Communities in Northern Manitoba are Thriving and Our Partnerships are Mutually Transformative

MakeWay

Hosted by MakeWay Foundation
makeway.org

/NMFCCC @nmfccc @nm.fccc nmfccc.org

PHOTO: Kristy (NMFCCC) and Rachel (farmer) in front of squash garden, Barrows 2024



PLEASE SHARE THIS IMPACT REPORT WITH OTHERS