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# ***UNDERSTANDING OUR FOOD SYSTEMS***

Prospects and partnerships for building  
Indigenous food sovereignty, food security and  
self-determination in Northwestern Ontario

**KIM MCGIBBON**

RD, PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITIONIST, TBDHU



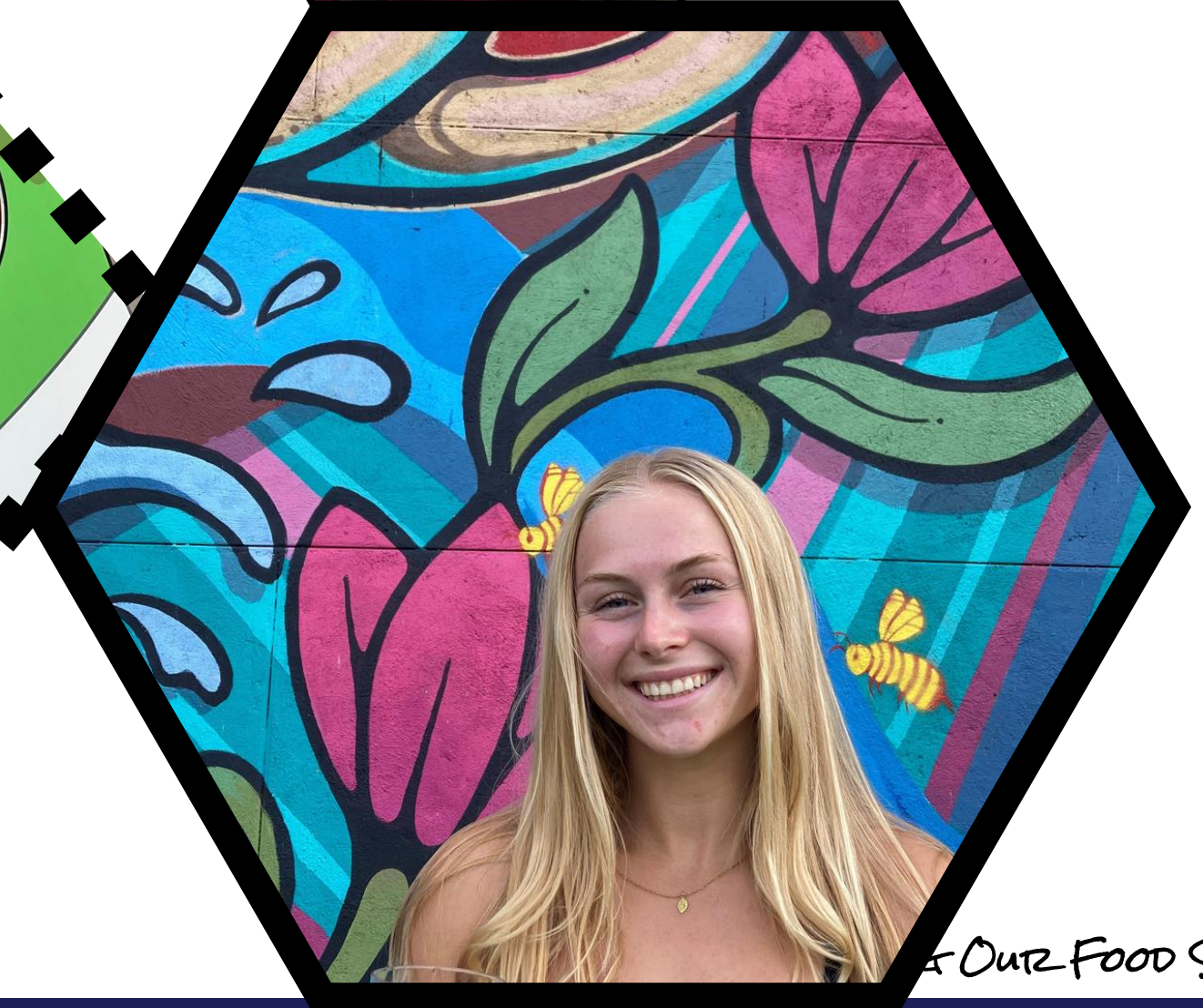


# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT






# ABOUT ME



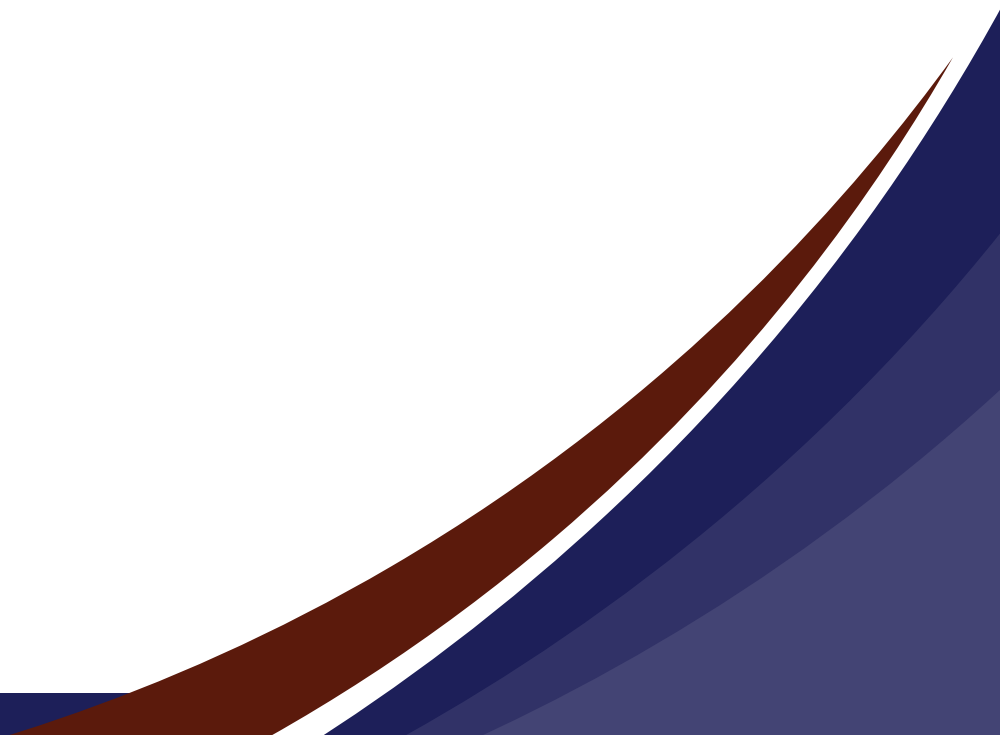


# OBJECTIVES

- 1. Increase understanding of the concept of Indigenous food sovereignty and how it might apply in your work**
  - 2. Describe the UoFs project - how it began, how partnerships were developed and the process for conducting the community food sovereignty assessment**
  - 3. Identify the projects key goals, outcomes and future opportunities to improve Indigenous food sovereignty in their work**
  - 4. Summarize the methods used to engage with the First Nations communities around food sovereignty work**
- 



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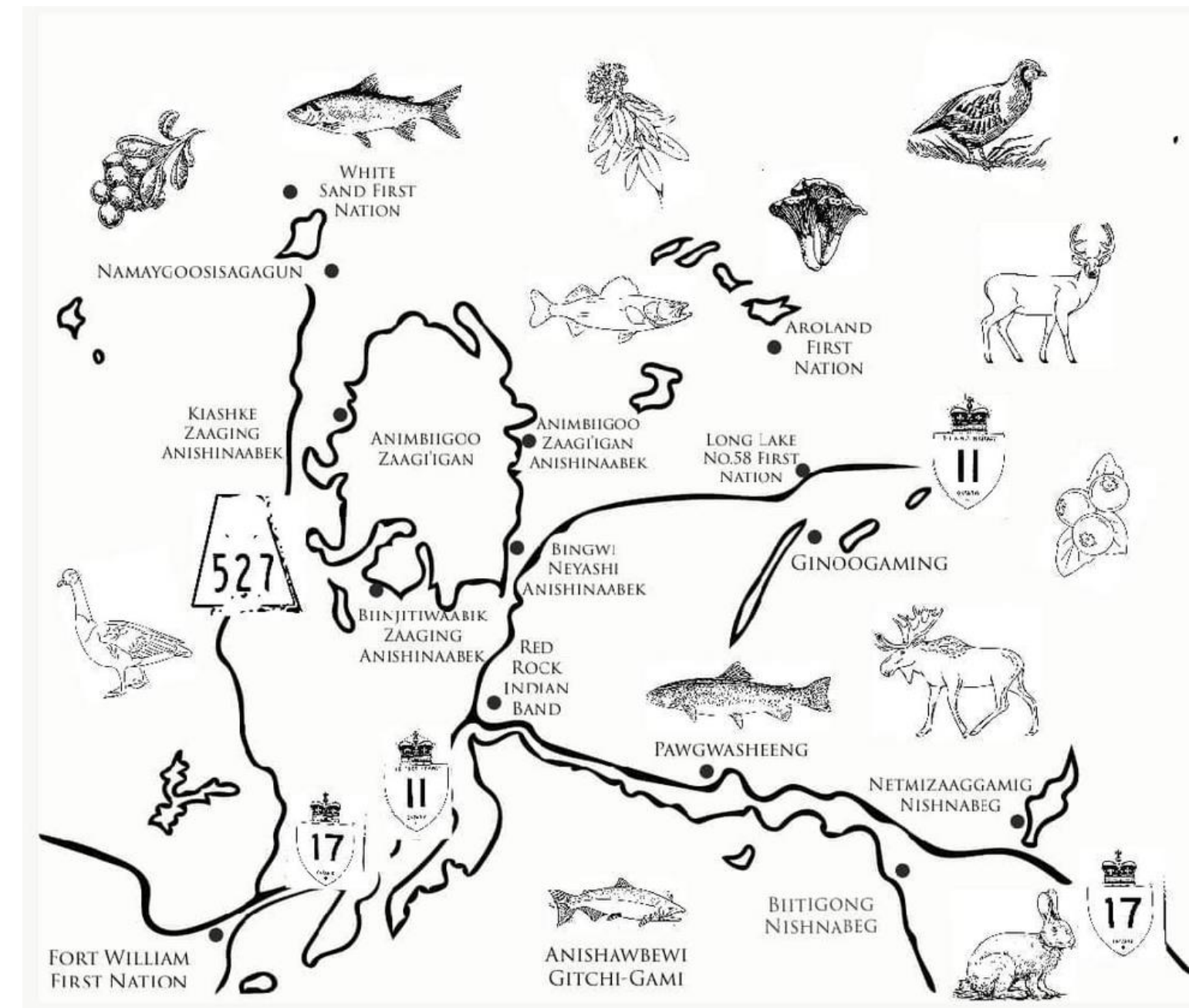




# WHAT IS UOFS?

## SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND SELF-DETERMINATION IN NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

- Across generations and cultures, everyone has the right to self-determination and healthy, culturally appropriate food
- Serving 14 communities across Northwestern Ontario
- Supporting communities to enact their own food sovereignty visions
- Fostering the sharing of wisdom and resources through collaboration





# WHO IS INVOLVED?





# INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

## FOUR KEY PRINCIPLES

- Sacred – a gift from the creator
- Participatory – based on action maintaining cultural harvesting strategies
- Self-determination – respond to own needs for healthy, culturally adapted foods
- policy – reconcile Indigenous foods and cultural values with colonial laws and policies

\*<https://indigenousfoodsystems.org/food-sovereignty>





# WHAT WE DO

- Establishing food sovereignty **visions**
- **Developing** short, medium, and long-term **priorities** to implement food sovereignty visions;
- **Supporting** community priorities with implementation funds, workshops, trainings, and general assistance on an ongoing basis;
- Hosting **regular gatherings** to bring the fourteen First Nations communities and other partners together to learn, share and plan collaboratively;



# WHAT WE DO

- **Developing resources** to support Indigenous food sovereignty in the region;
- **Building a network** of First Nation communities and supporting organizational partners across the region;
- **Learning** among the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and non-Indigenous project team members how **to work in partnership** and support Indigenous food sovereignty and First Nations to achieve their food systems goals.





# HOW IT STARTED

2017-2018	Grant application successful Community visits Collecting what has already been done related to food
2018-2019	First gatherings held - to provide opportunity for networking, knowledge sharing and planning. Began implementation strategies related to community food sovereignty visions. 13 moons poster developed
2020	Permanent funding received from Ministry to support in-house coordination at TBDHU.
2020-2022	Novel partnerships during covid for food delivery/access Workshops in communities Videos made Virtual and in person (GZ) gathering Food Sovereignty Assessment completed
2023-2024	Braiding Food Systems partnership began Research project on Glyphosate began 3 In person gatherings held



# GUIDING VALUES

- Indigenous Centered
- Community-Led
- Shared Learning & Cultivation of Knowledge
- Relationality
- Reciprocity
- Committed & Long-Term
- Systems Lens





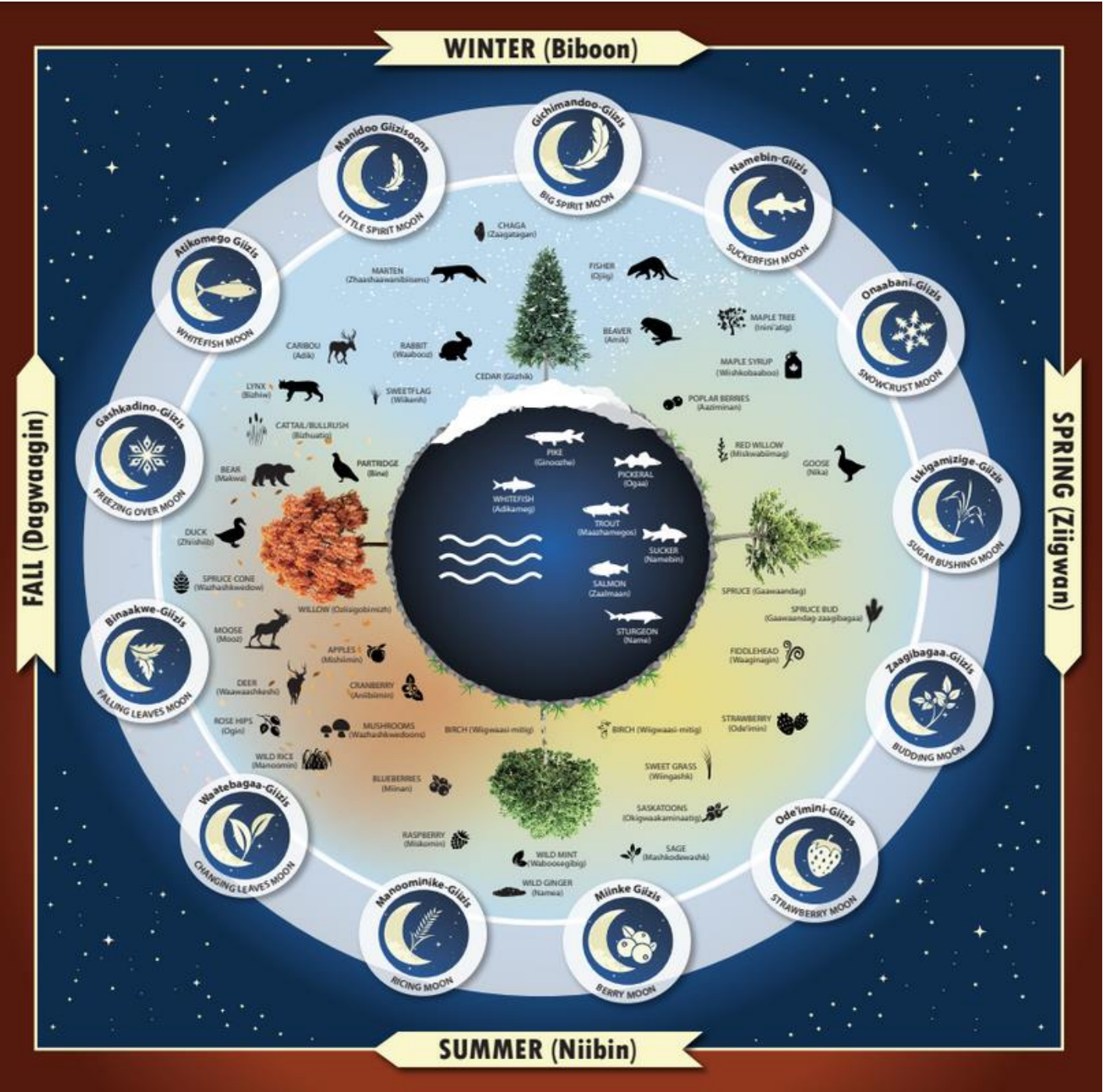
# ADVISORY CIRCLE

- Meetings - 4 times a year in alignment with the seasons
- With support from elders, knowledge keepers
- Community food champions including youth
- Updates, sharing and planning





# 13 MOONS HARVESTING



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understandingourfoodsystems.com/thr

Traditional Harvesting 13 Moons Introduction & Teachings

From a regional public health authority of Canada

Copy link

TRADITIONAL / ANCESTRAL HARVESTING IN AND AROUND  
ANIMBIIGOO ZAAGI'IGAN AND ANISHINAABEWI GITCHI-GAMI  
13 MOONS HARVESTING RESOURCE

MORE VIDEOS

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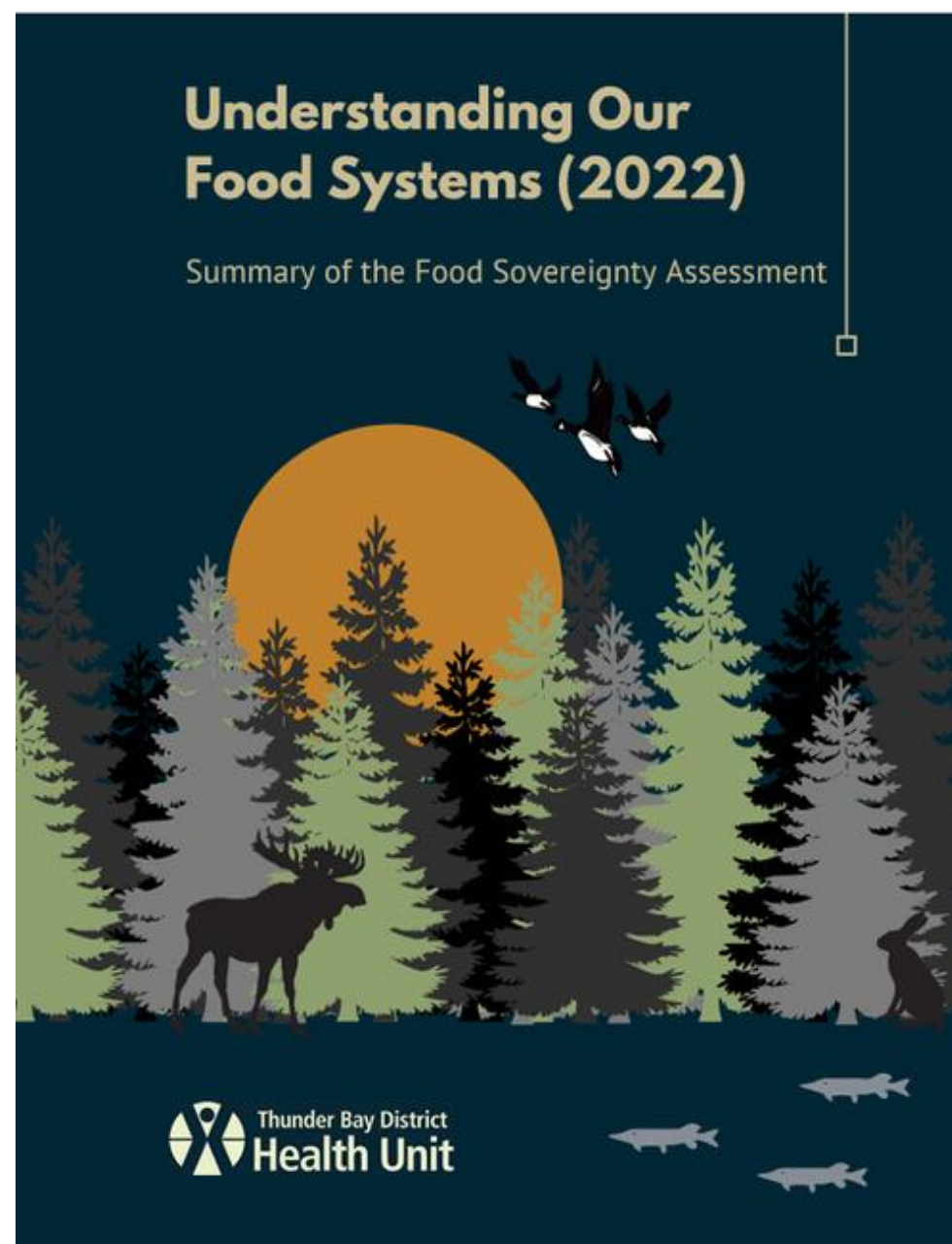
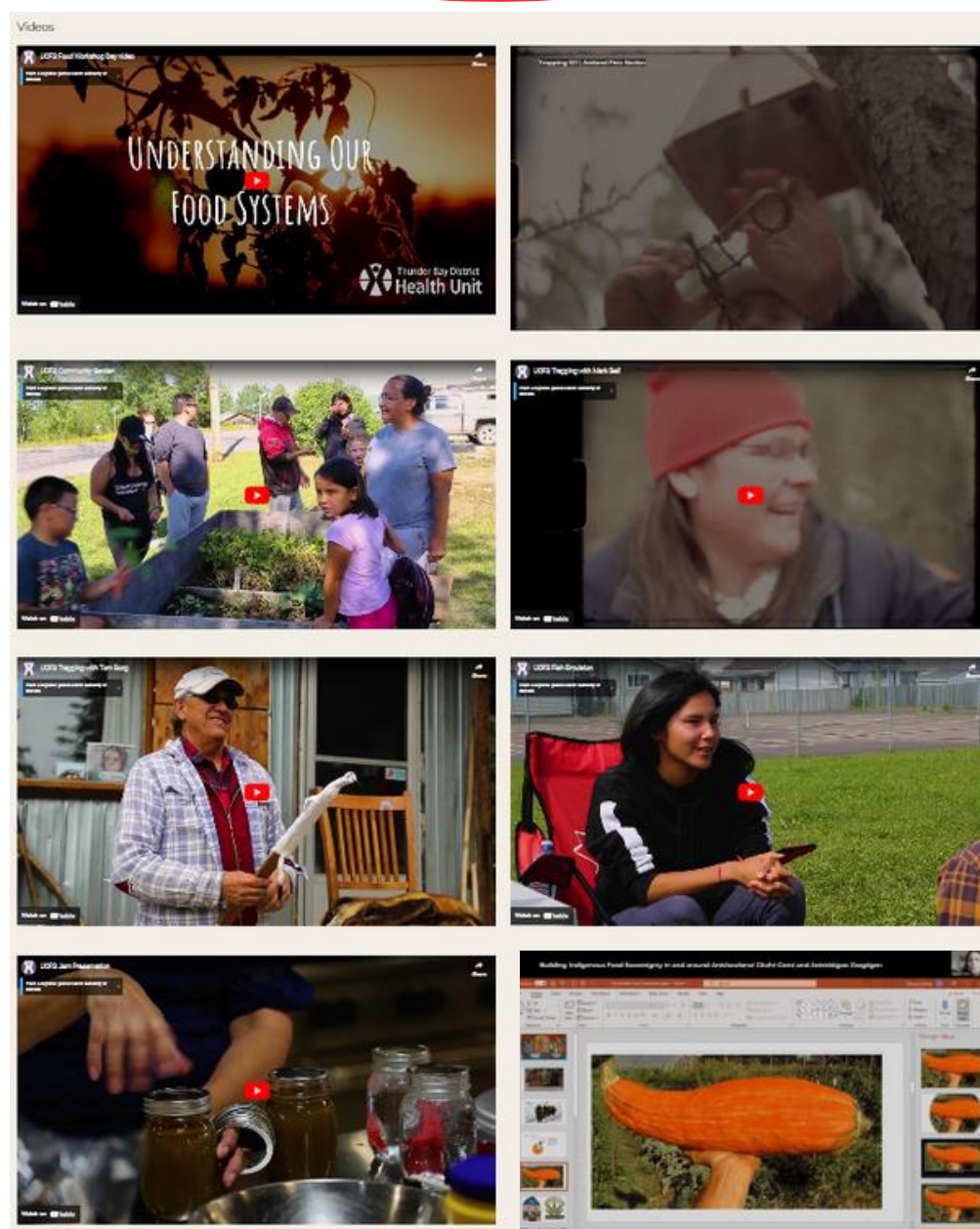
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PLEASE WATCH OUR INTRODUCTORY VIDEO BEFORE PROCEEDING TO THE RESOURCE.

IMG\_6372 (1).jpg ^ IMG\_5468.jpg ^ IMG\_5429.jpg ^ IMG\_6364 (2).jpg ^ August Retreat P....pdf ^ Show All x



# RESOURCES





# UOFS REPORT: 2021-2024

## Understanding Our Food Systems

BUILDING INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY  
IN NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

2021 - 2024 REPORT



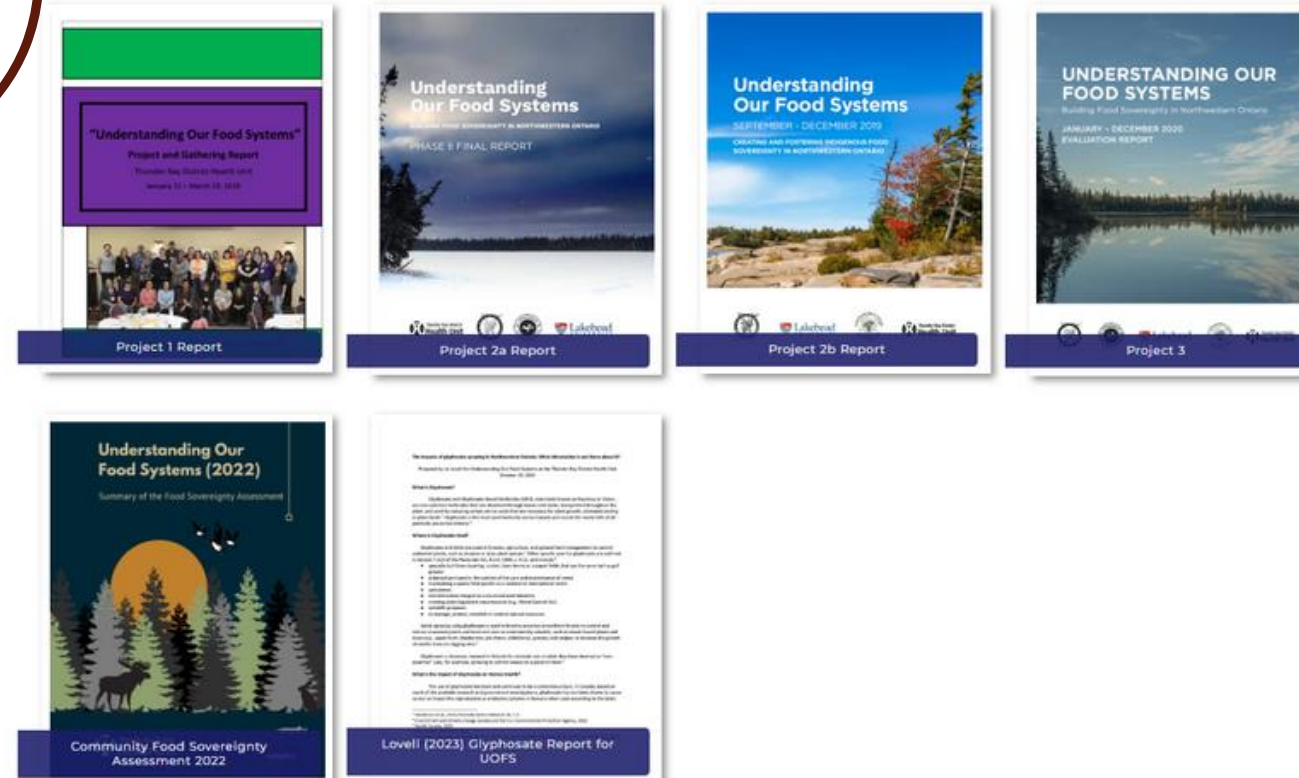
PADDLING THROUGH WILD RICE, PHOTO BY CHAD KIRVAN



<https://www.understandingourfoodsystems.com/resources>

### Reports

#### Understanding our Food Systems

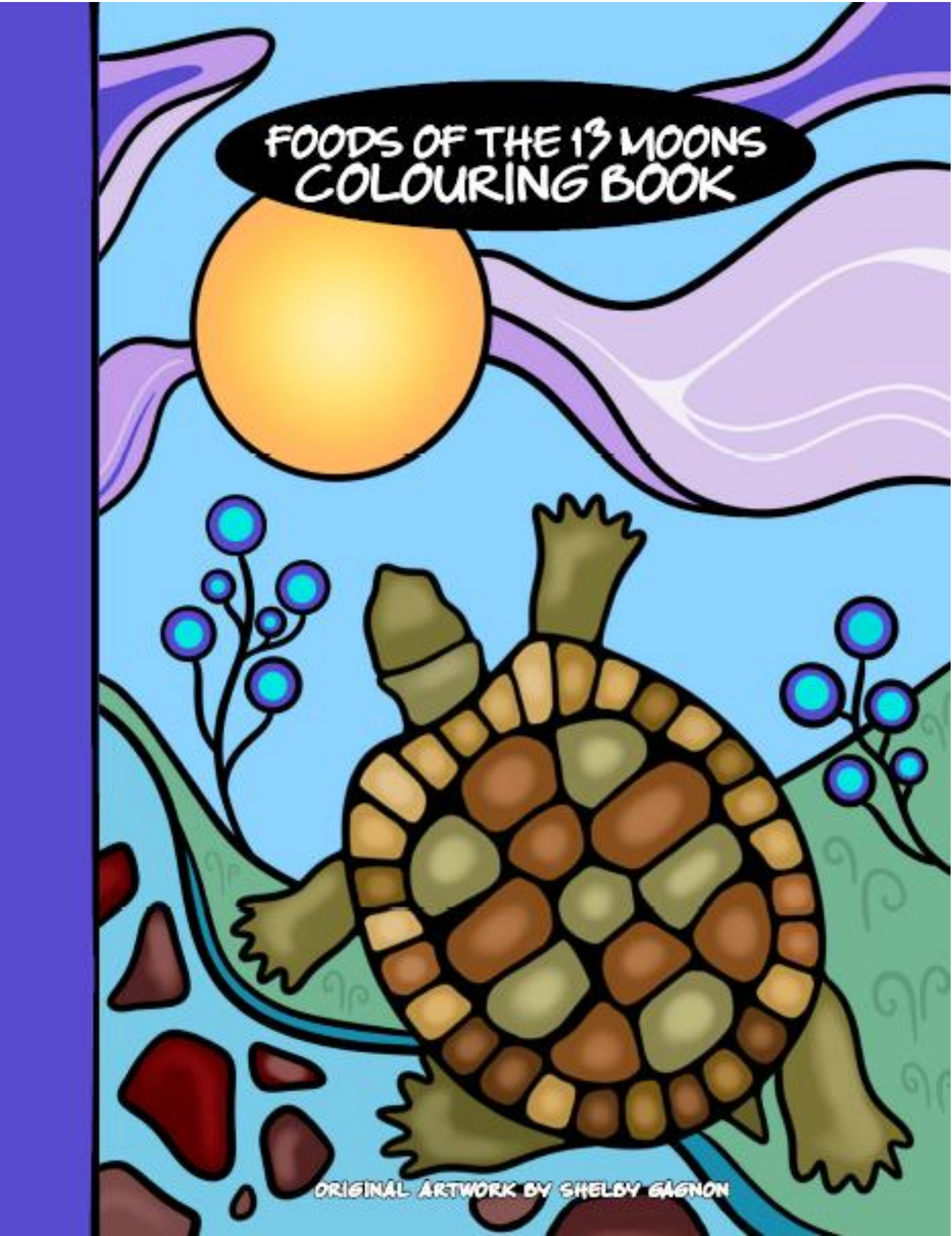


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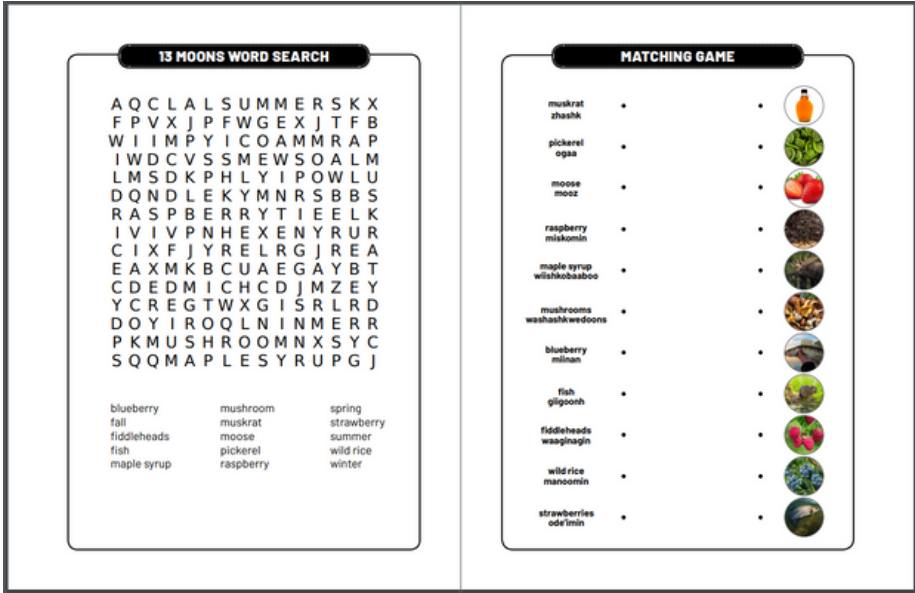
UNDERSTANDING  
OUR FOOD SYSTEMS





# FOODS OF 13 MOONS COLOURING BOOK

The beautiful foods of the 13 Moons colouring book is now available on our [website](#) to download and use! This resource is a way to expand on the learning of Indigenous food systems and the 13 Moons by bringing the teachings to children in the communities around our region and beyond.





# NEW LOGO



- Consultation with Advisory Circle
- Local Indigenous artist/designer
- Drafts created and sent back – discussion of representation, including look and colour
- New ideas shared with designer and agreement on final logo



# 13 MOONS TRADITIONAL HARVESTING CURRICULUM

The TBDHU has funded an education resource informed by the Ontario curriculum (2022) that provides units of learning related to the 13 moons. Enclosed are lesson plans, activities, templates, resource links, recipes, and more! The content for these wonderful resources was provided by the knowledgeable and talented, Shy-Anne Bartlett, the Manager of Indigenous Education at Superior-Greenstone District School Board.





# GLYPHOSATE PROJECT



The impacts of glyphosate spraying in Northwestern Ontario: What information is out there about it?

Prepared by Liz Lovell for Understanding Our Food Systems at the Thunder Bay District Health Unit  
October 19, 2023

## What is Glyphosate?

Glyphosate and Glyphosate-Based Herbicides (GBH), commonly known as Roundup or Vision, are non-selective herbicides that are absorbed through leaves and stems, transported throughout the plant, and work by reducing certain amino acids that are necessary for plant growth, ultimately ending in plant death.<sup>1</sup> Glyphosate is the most used herbicide across Canada and counts for nearly 54% of all pesticide use across Ontario.<sup>2</sup>

## Where is Glyphosate Used?

Glyphosate and GBHs are used in forestry, agriculture, and general land management to control undesired plants, such as invasive or toxic plant species.<sup>3</sup> Other specific uses for glyphosate are outlined in Section 7.1(2) of the Pesticides Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.15, and include:<sup>4</sup>

- specialty turf (lawn bowling, cricket, lawn tennis or croquet fields that use the same turf as golf greens)
- arboriculture (used in the context of the care and maintenance of trees)
- maintaining a sports field specific to a national or international event
- cemeteries
- exterminations integral to a structural extermination
- meeting other legislative requirements (e.g., Weed Control Act)
- scientific purposes
- to manage, protect, establish or restore natural resources

Aerial spraying using glyphosate is used in forestry practices in northern forests to control and reduce unwanted plants and trees not seen as economically valuable, such as broad-leaved plants and trees (e.g., paper birch, blueberries, pin cherry, elderberry), grasses, and sedges; to increase the growth of conifer trees on logging sites.<sup>1</sup>

Glyphosate is, however, banned in Ontario for cosmetic use or what they have deemed as "non-essential" uses, for example, spraying to control weeds on a person's lawn.<sup>5</sup>

## What is the Impact of Glyphosate on Human Health?

The use of glyphosate has been and continues to be a contentious topic. In Canada, based on much of the available research and government investigations, glyphosate has not been shown to cause cancer or impact the reproductive or endocrine systems in humans when used according to the label.

<sup>1</sup> Henderson et al., 2010; Pesticide Action Network UK, n.d.

<sup>2</sup> Environment and Climate Change Canada and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2022

<sup>3</sup> Health Canada, 2020

<sup>4</sup> Government of Ontario, 2023

<sup>5</sup> Canadian Environmental Law Association, 2022; Boulet et al., 2014; Patterson et al., 2023; D.G. Thompson, 2011

<sup>6</sup> Government of Ontario, 2023

Lovell (2023) Glyphosate Report for UOFS

## Research Updates

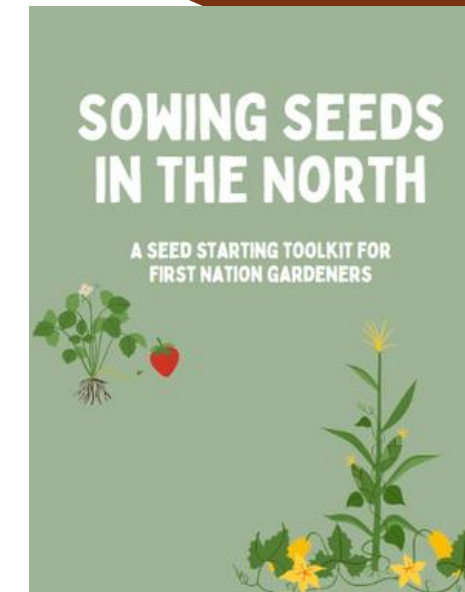
**Glyphosate** and Glyphosate-Based Herbicides (GBH), commonly known as **Roundup** or **Vision**, are non-selective herbicides that are absorbed through leaves and stems, transported throughout the plant, and work by reducing certain amino acids that are necessary for plant growth, ultimately ending in plant death. Glyphosate is the most used herbicide across Canada and counts for nearly 54% of all pesticide use across Ontario.

- New project partnership with AZA and Lakehead University's Liz Lovell and Dr. Charles Levkoe (Sustainable Food Systems Lab)



# SEED RESEARCH WEBSITE

“AT THE HEART OF EVERY SEED LIES THE FUTURE OF OUR FOOD SYSTEMS.”





## Braiding Food Systems

This three year project collaborates with First Nations communities to build and re-localize seed systems in Northern Ontario, for food security and food sovereignty. Working with seed producers, seed keepers, community growers, and University researchers, Indigenous produced heritage and landrace varieties will be selected, grown, saved, owned by communities, enhancing local capacity for food growing and processing (cooking and preserving).

The Braiding Food Systems (BFS) project is a collaboration between Red Rock Indian Band, Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg and Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek.

<https://seedsresearch.ca>


[HOME](#) [ABOUT US](#) [WHY SEEDS?](#) [BRAIDING FOOD SYSTEMS PROJECT](#) [BLOGS & STORIES](#) [NEWS & MEDIA](#) [GALLERY](#)




**Braiding Food Systems: Co-constructing Indigenous Seed Systems in Northern Ontario**

The Braiding Food Systems (BFS) project is a collaboration between Red Rock Indian Band, Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg and Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek. The BFS project is funded by Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) and the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance.


The project aims to collaborate with First Nations to co-develop and re-localize seed systems in Northern Ontario and to support food security and food sovereignty.




Some members of the BFS research team worked with community members and an Elder to build raised garden beds at Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (Rocky Bay First Nation). The BFS research team is very grateful and honored for the opportunity to work with and learn from the community.



Geese, an Elder from Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (formerly known as Rocky Bay First Nation), graciously prepared meals for the community and visiting researchers involved with the BFS research project. The BFS team is deeply grateful to Geese for his support and kindness.



Professor Silvia Sarapura (on the left), the Principal Investigator of the BFS research project, is presenting tobacco to Anna Gugelyk (on the right), a community elder and knowledge keeper from Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg (Pic Mobert First Nation). The BFS research team deeply appreciates Elder Anna's kindness and support in the project.



Dr. Paul Benalcazar, a postdoctoral fellow with the BFS research project, and Corina Thompson, a knowledge keeper and community representative, are at the Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (Rocky Bay First Nation) community garden, discussing and planning about plants. Corina, an avid gardener with extensive experience in keeping Indigenous seeds, is a community champion for the project.







# FUNDING

Communities purchased:

- Butcher supplies
- Canning materials
- Community food order (ex. Christmas hampers)
- Composters
- Cookware sets
- Dehydrator
- Fridge
- Garden towers
- Gardening equipment
- Induction burners
- Yard carts





# WHAT WE LEARNED

- Relationships make this work
- Work is grounded in place and context specific
- Strength based approach
- Continue to share and expand regional connections
- Work is slow because its long term
- Listening, learning and stepping back are important
- Food offers good starting point and allows engagement on other topics – people love food!
- More learning, unlearning and confronting hard truths





# FUTURE GOALS



- **Sharing** the work – knowledge translation and continuous learning
- Purchasing **Materials** – for growing, harvesting, food preservation
- Offering **training** and workshops – including land based harvesting camps and events
- Creating spaces for **networking and sharing** of knowledge
- Offering courses and **certifications** – Safe food handling, firearms
- Sharing **recipes and traditional food knowledge**
- Improvements in community **food infrastructure** – butcher shops, outdoor kitchens, greenhouses, food storage



How UOFS Can Help

**COMMUNICATION**

- Facilitate communication within and between communities through platforms like Facebook groups or websites

**MONEY**

- Provide funding for essential resources

**PLANNING**

- Facilitate both community planning and logistical planning processes

**STAFF**

- Increase staff capacity to help implement these priorities

**EDUCATION**

- Share knowledge and facilitate training in traditional practices

**NETWORKING**

- Organize gatherings and networking opportunities

**TRANSPORTATION**

- Provide transport to and from events to ensure that all community members can easily participate

**SUPPLIES**

- Provide essential supplies, such as knives or materials to build community kitchens

**RESOURCES NEEDED**

**PRESERVATION**

- Pressure cookers
- Canning equipment
- Glass cutting boards
- Big pots

**TRAVEL**

The necessary resources to ensure that all community members can easily access gatherings:

- travel accommodations
- accessible transport

**PEOPLE**

- Support from leadership
- Qualified individuals
- Greater community involvement
- Involvement from our Elders

**SUPPLIES**

- Butcher equipment
- Stove/propane
- Electrical outlets
- A greenhouse/grow dome
- Gardening supplies
- A water pump
- Garden towers

**SPACE**

- Community kitchens
- Harvest stations
- Accessible locations within the community for gathering, growing, and distributing food

**MONEY**

- Consistent and reliable funding

**KNOWLEDGE**

- Programs to engage youth in hands-on learning
- Teaching community members about food systems
- Educating community members on managing gardens
- Plans to address community-dog related destructions to gardens



**PRIORITIES**

**FOOD ACCESS**

- Community hunt camps
- Access to freshly grown foods
- Community gatherings

**SPACE**

Creating shared spaces including:

- Community gardens
- Community kitchens
- Gathering sites

**PEOPLE**

- Actively involving youth in cultural practices such as gardening and ice fishing
- Increasing the number of staff and volunteers

**SELF-DETERMINATION**

- Communities coming together to support one another and helping families to access and utilize available funds

**SUPPLIES**

Acquiring community tools including:

- Fishing nets/huts
- Soil
- Firearms
- Larger greenhouses

**PRESERVATION**

- Using traditional preservation methods including canning and proper food storage

**TRAINING AND TEACHING**

Offering traditional teachings and workshops such as:

- Safe Food Handling course
- Gun Licenses
- Physical activity programming
- Promoting sugar friendly recipes



# MIIGWECH & THANK YOU



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OUR FOOD SYSTEMS**



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