

# Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, and Community Collaborative 2022 Immersive Learning Trip

Churchill, Manitoba  
September 12<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022



In partnership with the Churchill Northern Studies Centre, Subarctic Friendship Circle, Warrior Caregiver Program, Rocket Greens Hydroponics, and many community members.



*Subarctic Friendship  
Circle*



## Gratitude

These Immersive Learning Trips are truly a collaborative effort with many community people and organizations working together to plan, organize, and host. Many thanks to everyone in Churchill who took time to meet and share with us, especially the following organizations for inviting and hosting our group:

- Churchill Northern Studies Centre
- Rocket Greens Hydroponics
- Subarctic Friendship Circle
- Warrior Caregiver Program
- Indigenous Knowledge Keepers Group
- Churchill Health Centre

A special thank you to Northern Advisors Hilda Dysart, Becky Cook, Sophia Rabliauskas, Mervin Traverse, and Marlyn Cook. The Northern Advisors demonstrated so much care for everyone and shared their experiences and wisdom throughout the week. You are all greatly appreciated.

Last, but not least, thank you to each of you for taking the time to attend the gathering. Echoed throughout the reflections was appreciation for the opportunity to get together as a group (especially after two years), to share with and learn from each other, and the openness that you all had during the gathering. Everyone who attended brought the energy, passion, experiences, and knowledge that made the gathering the time it was.

Ekosi, Marsee, Masi cho, Chi Miigwetch, Ekosani, Mutna and Thank-you!



*Group Photo during Ithica Hike: Mervin Traverse, Wendy Carnegie, Alex Boulet, Kristy Anderson, Alex Moodie, Becky Cook, Sigrid Isford, Sarah Stern, Sophia Rabliauskas, Jasmine Teichroeb, KeunWoo Lee, Maggie MacDonald, Julie Price, Marlyn Cook, Amanda Froese, Julianne Nyasulu, Dennise Yarema, Lili-Anna Peresa, Jill Larkin, Wes Stevens, Trinette Konge, Amberly Quakegesic, Kathryn Dey, Kelly Hodgins, Jessica McLaughlin, Leanne Burton, Lauralai Burton, David Brinston. Missing: Hilda Dysart, Kim Hardy*



## Contents

Gratitude .....	2
Contents .....	3
Why Churchill?.....	4
What is a learning trip? .....	4
Relational Planning, Investment in Community, and Follow up .....	4-5
Itinerary .....	6-7
Gathering Summary .....	8-13
Discussion Takeaways .....	14
Participants .....	15
Reflections from participants .....	16



*Amberly Quakegesic learning about Dave's dogs*

**\*\*This report is for internal review. Please check in and obtain permission before using and distributing content outside your organizations, especially photographs\*\***



### Why Churchill?

Representatives from the Collaborative and our Collaborative 'cousins' were invited and hosted by three community-led programs in Churchill to learn first-hand about their work and to build and strengthen relationships with the community and each other. Typically, Churchill is not an easy place to visit, but the tourism season has a gap in September between Beluga and Bear seasons. Having the Learning Trip take place in Churchill in September provided an opportunity to support local people and businesses during this slower time. Churchill is famous internationally and has a storied history of colonization, military presence, economic ventures, dazzling wildlife, conflict and cooperation between Indigenous nations, and more.



### What is a learning trip?

Learning trips are immersive experiences that support Collaborators, Northern Advisors, NMFCCC staff, and invited guests to spend time with community partners listening and learning. Meeting people in their home community and on their own terms is an important way of building our understanding of the communities we serve and their unique realities, histories, challenges and opportunities. The agendas and experiences planned on learning trips are set by the local host groups and focus on issues and experiences that communities want their funder/partners to have in order to better understand and be an ally in the work.

Brief purpose of learning trip



*Kristy learns about Rocket Greens*

### Relational Planning, Investment in Community, and Follow up

We have been taught the importance of putting care and effort into pre and post trip supports for our community partners, and the NMFCCC intentionally invests in creating substantial community benefit for our hosts. This has become an important 'best practice' of our work.

**Pre-Trip:** NMFCCC staff Kristy Anderson and Amanda Froese spent a week in Churchill before the trip to support visioning, planning, and ensure community benefit was derived from our visit. They reinforced the importance of the community setting the agenda, and our desire to ensure the visit is deeply beneficial to the community and not extractive.

**Post-Trip:** NMFCCC staff Julie Price and Amanda Froese stayed 3 extra days to debrief with community partners, have follow up meetings about partnership opportunities, to deepen friendships and to of course enjoy the community. During the post-trip visits we were able to identify and delivery 2 separate 'covid food security grants' to the community. We also spent time visiting community partners at their homes, work and places of leisure to get to know people better and learn about how we could improve for future learning trips.



*Stacey's Churchill Chickens!*

## Investment in Community

- Hiring a local chef, renting the legion for a dinner (diversified catering and rental contracts)
- Funding/supporting community feast. Includes support for Elders, ceremony, catering, and local drum group participation
- Visiting during the 'off season', creating employment opportunities
- Inviting community partners to all meals and sessions
- Renting the Metis building for meeting space
- Screening a community-access movie including supporting theater rental and concessions
- Providing 'top up grants' to community partners that co-hosted the Learning Trip (\$5,000 per partner)
- Video creation for Warrior Caregiver: ceremony protocols and programming
- Employment of bear guards, yoga instructor, boat drivers, and bus tour guides
- Supporting Elder Wally Chartrand to travel to Churchill to provide programming for our group and his continued stay to provide a sweat for the Warrior Caregiver group and a community sweat
- Gifting! personalized gifts for all community hosts (in addition to honoraria or fees)





## Gathering Itinerary

### Day 1: Monday, September 12

Flight from Winnipeg to Churchill  
Arrival in Churchill and settling at CNSC  
Lunch  
Welcoming & Introductions  
Dinner  
Generational trapper sharing by Stanley Spence

### Day 2: Tuesday, September 13, 2022

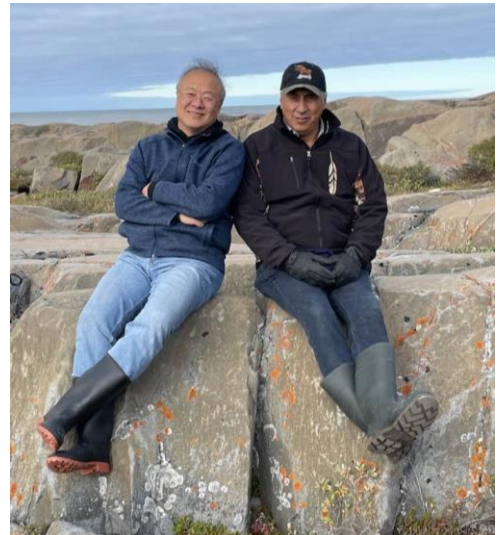
Sunrise Yoga / outdoor walk  
Breakfast  
Reflections on previous day  
Collaboratives and Collective Voice Panel  
Lunch  
CNSC Project Sharing and Rocket Greens Visit  
Bird Cove and Ithaca Hike  
Dinner  
Food for the Rest of Us Documentary

### Day 3: Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Sunrise Yoga / outdoor walk  
Breakfast  
Discussion Breakout Groups & time on the Churchill River  
Lunch  
SAFC Project Sharing and Community Tour  
Dinner  
Sayisi Dene Sharing by Florence Hamilton



*Display of Stanley Spence's Furs*



*KeunWoo Lee & Mervin Traverse - Ithaca Hike*



*One of the many murals in Churchill - by Kal Barteski*

**Day 4: Thursday, September 15, 2022**

Sunrise yoga / outdoor walk

Breakfast

Wapusk Adventures with Dave Daley, Metis Dog Musher

Lunch

Sweat Lodge Ceremony

Community Feast

Trading Session & Gifting

CNSC Farewell

**Day 4: Friday, September 16, 2022**

Breakfast

Check out

Closing ceremony & sharing circle

Goodbyes & departure from Churchill



*Marlyn Cook, Kristy Anderson, and Julianne Nyasulu on a Wapusk Adventure*



*Becky Cook and Jess McLaughlin on the shore of Hudson Bay*

*"Bringing people together in a non-formal way allows people to connect and interact in a different way. It's not all "business," but when it is the conversations feel more relaxed."*

## Gathering Summary

### Day 1



*Aerial views of Northern Manitoba Enroute to Churchill*

*Close-up of Churchill area flora*

The Learning Trip started with our group gathering at the Winnipeg International Airport. A buzz of energy filled the gate as people reconnected and met new friends. During the 2-hour flight from Winnipeg to Churchill, the landscape changes from mostly farmed fields then dense boreal forest and muskeg, crisscrossed by lakes, rivers, and streams, to the tundra spotted with thousands of tiny lakes, and only very small (and very old) windswept coniferous trees surrounded by large patches of bright green lichen.





*View from the CNSC*



*Stanley & KeunWoo setting off traps*



*Stanley showing group traps*

At the Churchill Airport, we were welcomed by staff from the Churchill Northern Studies Centre (CNSC) who took the group by bus to our accommodations to check-in and have lunch. Verna Flett and Georgina Oma with the Indigenous Knowledge Keepers Group welcomed us in an opening ceremony. This included orientation to the territory and sharing circle with introductions. After spending some time getting to know each other, the group toured the CNSC building which is a state-of-the-art LEAD certified building which includes a research centre, classrooms, gift shop, commercial kitchen/cafeteria, shared sleeping quarters for up to 80 people in over 20 rooms equip with bunk beds, composting toilets, and Rocket Greens Hydroponics.

After dinner, generational trapper, Stanley Spence shared stories and skills with the group. Stanley spoke about of his life as a trapper on the tundra, demonstrated the traps he uses, and walked us through everything it takes to be able to be a trapper. A good reminder that to access land takes time, means of transportation, and the right tools and knowledge.

*“Experiences like this really help me to understand organizations on a different level. It's important for funders to truly understand the work they are supporting and learning how they can do more.”*

## Day 2



*Sunrise from CNSC*



*Morning Walk with Rhonda Reid*



The CNSC is in polar bear territory, meaning the group could not freely explore the outdoor surroundings (for both human and polar bear safety). The opportunity to experience the tundra, move our bodies, and ground us for the day was provided by two CNSC organized morning activities: sunrise yoga with local Erin Greene, and morning walks with local expert, Rhonda Reid, and bear guard, Brian Gulick (just in case).

Following a group reflection on the previous day, the group engaged in a panel discussion about Collaboratives. A panel featuring the NMFCCC, Gaagige Zaagibigaa, and NWT On the Land Collaborative discussed differences and similarities in approaches, ways we work towards reducing barriers for, and build relationships with, communities, and support food sovereignty and community development. It was a good way to ground us in the work for the rest of the week.

Next, the group learned about the Rocket Greens Hydroponics program which has been a project partner of the NMFCCC since 2019. The project grows leafy greens in a hydroponics unit for members in town who sign-up to receive weekly shipments. Greens are also used in CNSC cafeteria, donated to local events, and sold in the local store. People had the opportunity to go into the unit, see greens in action, and learn about the other research taking place at CNSC.



*Fiona leads tours of the Rocket Greens Project*

Timed for low tide was an afternoon hike to Bird Cove on the shores of the Hudson Bay. Guided by CSNC and with observant bear guards, Jill and Wes from the Warrior Caregiver Program, the group enjoyed connecting, exploring, learning, and making our way through the puddles to the abandoned ship Ithaca.



*Hiking at Bird Cove and exploring the Ithica*

After the beautiful walk on Bird Cove, we headed into the town of Churchill for the first time. Dinner was at the Legion and prepared by a celebrated local chef. Dinner feature arctic char or caribou for those who couldn't eat fish. After dinner, we supported a community open access screening at the local movie theater in the Town Complex featuring Ithinto Mechisowin Program in South Indian Lake and a documentary called *Food for the Rest of Us* - complete with popcorn from locally run canteen.



*"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."*



## Day 3



*Morning Hike with Rhonda Reid*

After morning activities, we journeyed into the town of Churchill for group discussions and the chance to see wildlife. Each group had a different NMFCCC topic that they discussed in depth to further our work. Topics include 1) evolving the Theory of Change 2) finalizing the Terms of Reference and 3) Enhancing NMFCCC granting processes. See ‘discussion summary’ section for detail. While not in discussion, groups got a Churchill River and Hudson Bay boat tour, where many belugas swim. It was a magical and humbling experience for all. The belugas were so numerous, curious, and would swim along side the boats. We learnt about the waters, life that surrounded us, the livelihoods that are sustained through tourism and trade, and more about the history of the Hudson Bay. Each group was also gifted the presence of polar bears on the distant shore.



*“Sharing magic together allow for an enhanced ability to think about the hard topics.”*

After discussions and the boat tour, the Subarctic Friendship Circle led us on a Sharing and Community Tour by foot and bus. We visited many spots in this vibrant town including:

- Duke of Marlborough school breakfast program
- Community Garden, with flower and veggie tasting
- inaugural performance by youth drum group **Thunderstorm** at the Flats
- Churchill River park and historical fort
- Mural tour
- Infamous ‘Miss Piggy’ downed plane
- The ‘polar bear jail’ with Rhonda’s colourful anecdotes
- Parks Canada building to hear Heather Spence-Botelho’s story of ‘Seven Generations in Churchill’. It was a powerful moment of honoring ancestors, owning stories, and inspiring youth.
- Rhonda spontaneously stopped at the graveyard and site of Camp 10. She shared personal experiences in learning and unlearning about this tragic and reprehensible local history of the forced relocation of Sayisi Dene.





*Marlyn and Kristy at Community Garden; Thunderstorm drum group at the Flats; Florence and Julie; the port*

Back at CNSC, we enjoyed a delicious meal of the biggest pork chops anyone had ever had. The busy day ended with a powerful story sharing. Sayisi Dene First Nation member, Florence Hamilton, shared her own story and history of her nation. *Night Spirits: The Story of the Relocation of the Sayisi Dene* had been listed as a required reading before the learning trip. Florence spent time reminding us of the strength and independence of the Sayisi Dene before the impacts of colonization, and that, despite the focus on the forced relocation, Sayisi Dene are much more than that. She also shared her helicopter journey of the day that supported her to find artifacts from her ancestors. Masi Cho Florence.



## Day 4

The fourth day continued to be full of activity and experiences. It was the last day to enjoy the morning outdoor walk and sunrise yoga. The group visited Dave Daley at Wapusk Adventures. Dave is a Dog Musher and Metis Cultural Speaker and shared his own story of growing up in Churchill. Everyone enjoyed sitting in wagons and getting a 2km ride from a team of enthusiastic sled dogs. Lunch was at the Pioneer Gallery in the Town Complex followed by a Sweat Lodge Ceremony at the Warrior Caregiver Sweat Lodge: Led by Elder Wally Chartrand and the Warrior Caregiver Program. NMFCCC staff contracted local videographer Roy Mexted to create two videos: one trip video to summarize the Learning Trip are use as a sharing back our tool; and a second video as a gift for the Warrior Caregiver program of Elder Wally's teachings. The second video will support Warrior Caregiver to share their

program and community-building approaches locally and with those outside of Churchill that express interest in the program. Our final full day ended with the community feast at the Town Complex! It was a delicious meal of stew, Bannock, and salad. The Knowledge Keepers opened the event in ceremony and song with the drumming of Thunderstorm (their second-ever performance!). It was a full house with lots of community members attending and having a good time. NMFCCC promoted and led a local trading session at the feast, introducing this fun way to meet people, trade items, and learn more about each other and the place we are in. The trading session was also a beautiful way to honor Elder Carl McCorrister who has taught us to take this practice when we come together. This felt like a great way to conclude the week in Churchill. Back at the CNSC later that evening there was a farewell wine and cheese, more gifting and celebrating, some memorable mc'ing by Amanda, and the chance to reflect on the week.

*“We are so much more than polar bears. We are so much more than wildlife. I like to give people the perspective of the feeling of community that this place has that no one else has.”*

- Rhonda Reid, Churchill and Area Local Expert



*“The feast was beautiful and made me feel grounded, all that led up to that moment made these connections and grounding possible.”*

## DAY 5

Friday was departure day. Before leaving we took the time to gather together at CNSC and hold a closing teaching and ceremony supported by Elder Wally Chartrand, and a facilitated sharing circle that offered people the chance to process, grieve, share love and respect for the community and each other before heading to the airport and dispersing across the country. As often happens, the plane was delayed due to weather, but eventually it departed and even offered a brief stop in Gilliam before arriving in Winnipeg. It is ironic that Hilda and Alexandria, the two trip participants who live closest geographically to Churchill had to undertake a 12-hour drive to get home!





# Discussion Takeaways

## Collaboratives Panel

- communities know what they need
- direct support to families is a resource gap
- de-mystify ways of accessing granting & support while also removing obstacles
- seek and support community led sharing back and metrics
- colonialism is all encompassing, any change in this system is a difficult thing to track
- need for long-term funding
- responsibility of philanthropy is to shift power to the people on the ground who are the ones creating the impact
- go slow, go together

## Theory of Change Evolution

- inclusive to everyone involved
- TOC is a framework that privileges philanthropy's needs and views
- define what "Healthy MB" means, including the holistic view (mental, spiritual, physical, etc.)
- be more supportive rather than creating another dependency
- missing the name colonial/erasing the truth of colonialism
- speaking/naming that we are ON INDIGENOUS LAND
- change the title to resonate with communities rather than just collaborators
- TOC has been a tool to guide philanthropic work but is also using language that is not clear for many community partners



## Granting Discussion

- the assessment questions bring out the strong food projects, less on the community/culture side
- in other areas (NWT): go through applications as a group, and community advisors are there to vet the applications
- include *italicized examples in* application
- include next generation, youth into application questions
- add an option to participate in peer review option question right in the application
- include a timeline to inform the applicant on internal review process and what to expect at the end of the application form

## Terms of Reference

- the highly visual and plain language approach is appropriate
- This is a term of reference that communities would understand and see themselves in
- Discussion around the role of collaborators in holding the NMFCCC space. Question for reflection: What is the difference between collaborative and a community collaborative?
- What is the appropriate way to socialize this document with the whole NMFCCC?
- Recommend small group to take up the work and present a final draft for review, discussion, and potentially approval at NMFCCC business meeting



## Participants

Kristy Anderson	NMFCCC Staff
Amanda Froese	NMFCCC Staff
Julie Price	NMFCCC Staff
Alex Moodie	NMFCCC Staff
Trinette Konge	NMFCCC Staff
Becky Cook	Northern Advisor
Sophia Rabliauskas	Northern Advisor
Marlyn Cook	Northern Advisor
Hilda Dysart	Northern Advisor
Mervin Traverse	Northern Advisor
KeunWoo Lee	MakeWay Foundation
Chanel Best	MakeWay Foundation
Leanne Burton	MakeWay Foundation
Lauralai Burton	Leanne's daughter
Sigrid Isford	Anonymous Donor/HRJ
Kathryn Dey	Anonymous Donor/HRJ
Jasmine Teichroeb	Province of Manitoba

Kelly Hodgins	McConnell Foundation
Lili-Anna Peresa	McConnell Foundation
Margaret MacDonald	McConnell Foundation
Julianne Nysaulu	Breakfast Clubs of Canada
Dennise Yarema	Breakfast Clubs of Canada
Wendy Carnegie	Province of Manitoba
David Brinston	NWT On the Land Collaborative
Amberly Quakegesic	Gaagige Zaagibigaa
Jessica McLaughlin	Gaagige Zaagibigaa
Alex Boulet	Gaagige Zaagibigaa
Kim Hardy	MakeWay Foundation & Right Relations Collaborative
Sarah Stern	Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security

*"I appreciate all of you. What a fulfilling trip, I am grateful for being given a seat at the table and do not hold my responsibility to share this knowledge lightly. I am grateful."*



## Reflections from Participants

### Memories that stand out

- being with everyone, sharing laughs and struggles
- learning about Churchill in a meaningful way
- time on the land, sweat lodge, feast, trading session, and seeing polar bears and belugas
- the Elders and Knowledge Keepers and how they taught and cared for the group

### What we learned and unlearned

- ceremony, respect and wisdom
- negative first impressions of others (unlearned) and importance of building relationships slowly
- personal unlearning to work on
- colonization, its impacts on people and communities, and how it manifested in Churchill
- healing takes time & connecting with the land and culture is a different journey for all
- a welcome learning experience for some, was also a time when people were experiencing moments that were not okay

### Challenges

- I was not sure of my place
- sleep & shared rooms
- the privilege of nice accommodations, warm shower, guides, etc
- packed schedule

### Opportunities and Strengths

- meeting new people & building relationships with intentionality in person
- generosity and honesty from the hosts
- reflecting, sharing knowledge and learning together
- the planning of the trip, ease of travel and balance of touristy activities

*I feel more convinced that what I am advocating for is valid and I'm on the right path. I feel energized.*

