



2019 Learning Trip Hosted by Peguis First Nation



Peguis First Nation and Peguis Education & Culture Camp
September 24-27th, 2019

Each year, representatives from our organizational partners and northern advisors of the Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, and Community Collaborative (NMFCCC) come together and visit with a community we partner with. This year we were invited to have the Learning Trip in Peguis First Nation and to learn more about the community and the Peguis Agriculture Project.

Gatherings such as this are truly a collaborative effort with many people and organizations working together to organize and host.

Many thanks to Peguis First Nation and the Peguis School Board for hosting our group. Thank you to all the community members, Chief and Council, Elders and youth who joined us at the gardens and spent time with us at Tommy's Point. It was a joy to get to meet many of you in person, a privilege to hear your stories and experiences, and motivating to feel the passion for your community.

A special thank you to Carl McCorrister and Brenda Cook for all that you did before, during, and after the gathering. Carl shared the history of Peguis First Nation and its roots in agriculture, provided guidance during some difficult discussions, and was instrumental in having so many community people involved. Brenda demonstrated so much care for all of us that were visiting, making sure everyone was warm and properly fed, and ensured that left over food did not go to waste, and shared many of her experiences and wisdom with the group. You are both 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 peoples' appreciation for the opportunity to get together as a group, to share with and learn from each other, and the openness that you all had during the gathering. Everyone who attend brought the energy, passion, experiences, and knowledge that made the gathering the occasion it was.



Front Cover: First day introductions on the shore of Lake Winnipeg
Left: Chief Glenn Hudson welcoming the group to Peguis First Nation
Middle: One of the many meals we shared together
Right: Carl McCorrister getting ready to trade his sweet grass

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Appendix: NMFCCC Theory of Change



Becky showing Jessica a beaded eagle feather



Iris, Aabir, Hilda, Brian, Amanda, and Jen building a smoke house



Visiting at the Community Garden



Donna assisting Lynda and Sarah with their moccasins

Gathering Itinerary

Tuesday, September 24th

All arrive at Peguis Community Garden
Welcome from Chief & Council and Carl
McCorrister
Introductions and Gifting
Lunch
Community Garden Visit
Settling in at Tommy's Point
Deeper introductions & welcome
Dinner
Moccasin making begins



Wednesday, September 25th

Breakfast
Looking back Session
Community Impact & Theory of Change
USC Learning Journey
Lunch
Preparing Sweat Lodge & Smoke House
Sweat Ceremony
Dinner
Trading Session
Moccasin Making & Fire



"The hard work and generosity that went into organizing this gathering stand out for me. This includes and is not limited to Julie's efforts, the food preparation, Carl's passion and presence, the land, and the vulnerability of all those present joined by their commitment to making a positive difference."

*Top: Getting ready for the sweat ceremony
Middle: Becky and Jill trading items
Bottom: Preparing the sweat lodge*



Thursday, September 26th

Breakfast

Reflecting on Looking Back

Peguis & Fisher River School Activities

- Powwow Club
- Shoreline fishing
- Medicine Picking
- Processing Deer
- Exploring Caves

Lunch

Thoughts from Northern Advisors

Breakout Sessions

- Governance
- Logo
- Membership
- Climate & Actions
- UN Paper

Dinner

William Bird Music & Closing

Friday, September 27th

Packing up and departures



Powwow Class Performing at Tommy's Point

"I have been trying to tell literally everyone who will listen about how transformative the learning trip was for me. I feel I can be a much better advocate with prospective funding partners of the NMFCCC."



Hilda processing deer meat



Bernie McCorrister talking about Colt's foot during the medicine walk

Gathering Summary

The Learning Trip started with funders, northern community members, Peguis First Nation community members and Elders, and Chief and Council gathering at the main Peguis Community Garden. We were welcomed by Chief Glenn Hudson and Carl McCorrister to the community and presented with gifts from the community. We then had the opportunity to introduce ourselves and give gifts to our hosts.



Chief Glenn Hudson welcoming the group

Following introductions and sharing, we ate a delicious lunch prepared by community members and were treated to some homemade jams and preservatives. After learning about the community garden and agriculture project from Carl, and specifically talking about the importance of growing traditional tobacco, we headed to Tommy's Point to set up and settle in. We had time to sit by the lake, have deeper introductions and share our hopes and ideas for the gathering. Our first dinner together was full of sharing and starting to form relationships with many new faces. The day wrapped up with Donna Sanoffsky beginning to teach moccasin making.

After breakfast Wednesday morning, we took time to look back on the creation of the Collaborative, the requests and guidance from communities, Elders, and Northern Advisors, and how the Collaborative has evolved, and expanded over the years. Andi Sharma and Becky Cook led a discussion on the Community Impact Project and the NMFCCC Theory of Change and the process for its development (see appendix).

After lunch, Iris Vaisman, Aabir Dey, and Nicole Davies led us in a discussion around USC Canada's (now *SeedChange*) learning journey, personal learning journeys, and awareness around working and partnering with Indigenous Communities. During the discussion, some people helped and learned from Elder Robert Apetagon to build the Sweat Lodge and prepare for the Sweat Ceremony.



Later in the afternoon there was less structured time and some people went for a walk, others built a 'South Indian Lake style' smoke house with guidance from Elder Hilda Dysart, and continued working on sewing moccasins. The downtime was a good opportunity to continue building relationships and talking with each other in a less formal and structured way.

"The gathering's relatively unstructured agenda gave us time and space as individuals and as a group to connect and it felt like a true immersion in the way the collaborative works."

The Sweat Lodge Ceremony was led by Elder Robert Apetagon and was a first for many. Each participant experienced something different, learned something about themselves and about ceremony, and were grateful for opportunity and guidance of Robert.

The final activity of the day was a trading session led by Carl McCorrister. Carl explained how Indigenous Nations have always traded with each other and that this activity was part of reclaiming the practice of trade. Participants brought an array of items for trade. Liveliness, sharing, excitement, and thrill of a mutually beneficial trade filled the room as people traded beads, teas, medicines, clothes, jewelry, food, stories and ideas.



Nicole and Aabir processing the deer

Our final full day together was packed with discussions, hands-on activities, and music. Starting with a session where we reflected on the many aspects of the Collaborative and highlighted what we would like to continue, what needs more support, what we need to do more of, or need to start doing.

In the late morning we were joined by students from Fisher River First Nation and Peguis First Nation schools. The NMFCCC has partnered with the Fisher River School for three years and it was wonderful to have the chance to meet them in person. The Peguis Powwow Club shared a beautiful and energetic set of dances to start us off. Peguis school provided a deer and participants and students were able to butcher and the smoke some meat as well as share it with other Peguis Elders and community events. While one group went for a medicine walk and picking through the bush and on the shore on Lake Winnipeg, another went to explore some caves down the road from the camp.

After the students left, we gathered back together to hear reflections from the Northern Advisors on our work together and the future work of the NMFCCC. Overall there was strong encouragement and positivity from Hilda, Carl, Becky and Ervin that we need to continue on this path while staying humble and respecting the pace of community work. There were also reflections on leadership and staffing of the NMFCCC, the importance of relationships, and dedicated people who commit to this work over the long term.

After the Northern Advisors shared, community partners were also invited to share their ideas about this work and the future. During this space an incredibly important issue was raised by Jessica: Indigenous people continue to actively reclaim culture and practices, and individuals are in different places in this process. Some people are at the beginning of their journey and others are much farther along. We all need to be aware of this on-going and unfinished reclamation, and to be sensitive to it. For those of us who are settlers, we need to be helpers and ensure Indigenous people can have the opportunities to reclaim culture, and before settler folks have that same opportunity to learn. It was an emotional and extremely important point to hear and consider as a group. It was critical food for thought for every person in the room, was raised frequently in the trip reflections, and will influence our actions in the future. Chi Miigwetch to Jessica for speaking her truth. It was also appreciated that Donna shared about her own personal journey to healing, following the wisdom of her Grandfather, after the terrible realities that she and her family have endured. Ekosi Donna. This difficult

conversation illustrated some of the tensions in working cross-culturally and inheriting a colonial reality with inherent and on-going power imbalances.

It was recognized by the staff, the Northern Advisors, and most of the participants that it would have been ideal to have held a sharing circle on the final morning of the gathering to unpack some of the critical teachings shared, and to support each other in healing and love to move forward in a good way. The biggest regret of this gathering is that we were not able to hold a final sharing circle guided by the Northern Advisors. NMFCCC staff have been considering if we can undertake some of this work in a conference-call cross-Canada sharing circle with participants of the gathering. We will seek guidance from the Northern Advisors on this topic.



Brian and Sarah exploring the caves

The final discussion time was dedicated to breakout groups supporting Collaborative governance, membership and potential criteria, climate and environmental issues, and a recently published UN paper that includes the NMFCCC. Each group brought ideas, suggestions, actions, and items to follow up on as we continue to improve and strengthen the Collaborative together.

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.

We had once last delicious meal from Gerralyne Cochrane and her helpers Chris and Jesse. Iris led a thank you for our group to Gerralyne and her team for all their time and energy cooking for us during the week.

A wonderful evening surprise from Carl was the gift of hearing William Bird. On the final evening Carl invited his nephew, Will, to share and sing for us. His songs of love, hardship, colonization, and healing were a fitting reflection of the week we spent together; learning and unlearning, sharing, challenging, and processing all we experienced.



Peguis First Nation: As long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow, the circle of life will continue.

Spending time with the Northern Advisors was an essential and irreplaceable part of the Gathering.

Breakout Groups Takeaways

Climate and Environmental Change

- Policies and regulations that we can support or support community leaders to make change
- Be aware of impact on fish, water, land, animals, future generations
- Connecting with Indigenous Climate Action already taking place
- Support other communities by sharing knowledge, skills, and resources
- Building and using local resources such as soil, skills, seeds and self-reliance



Medicine walk and picking

Membership

- See what other orgs are doing and develop screening process and contract
- Ensure community involvement in decisions – northern advisors
- Dirty money spends the same as clean – money is needed now, if its available why not
- Requirements for partners clear – involvement, direct investment in community, learning opportunities

United Nations Paper

- Share with governments, institutions, and potential donors as proof of concept
- Community leaders and members already know what paper shared, this is just academic validation
- Paper discusses colonization but doesn't mention underlying trauma as a continuum

Governance

- Not wanting this to be hierarchical or bureaucratic
- Sub-committees to support work in key strategic areas
- Host Northern Advisor gathering to discuss many items including governance
- Review what similar orgs are doing with governance and how to involve academia



Sewing Together



Shore of Lake Winnipeg

Participants

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Dave Allen	Guest		



Back Row: Brian Trewin, Jerome Linklater, Catherine Carpenko, Becky Cook, Piyali Chakraboti, Jessica Mclaughlin, Ervin Bighetty, Joanna Kerr, Carl McCorrister, Joey Chubb

Middle Row: Laura Arrell, Donna Sanoffsky, Nicole Davies, Aabir Day, Jen Reynolds, Amy Buskirk, Jill Falloon, Hilda Dysart, Brenda Cook, Andi Sharma

Front Row: Julie Price, Nicole Arrell, Sylvia Moose, Iris Vaisman, Sarah Stern, Amanda Froese, Erika Bockstael

Missing: Robert Apetagon, Lynda Kuhn, Jake Freeman, Russell Pierce, Dave Allen

Reflections

Memories that stand out

- all the wonderful people and building relationships
- generosity of the hosts, community members, and elders
- the trading session and sharing of stories
- meals and sewing together
- being on the land and ceremony

What we learned and unlearned

- history of Peguis First Nation
- colonization and its continuing impact
- awareness of space we take up and our place
- so many people working towards same goal

Challenges

- rustic accommodations
- heaviness of discussions and stories shared
- hardships community members endured and continue to endure

Opportunities and Strengths

- meeting new people and building relationships
- involvement of community members
- being on the land and by the lake
- personal learning
- peoples' willingness to be open
- time to discuss the Collaborative

How learning experience has informed our thinking

- prioritizing infrastructure and community support
- deeper understanding of the Collaborative
- to not assume we have all the knowledge; still much to learn
- better understanding of what kind of support is good

Ideas for future gatherings

- stories and learning from community
- community building, dealing with challenges, solutions
- learning and unlearning experiences
- First Nations Governance, colonization, policy change discussions
- involving academia and discussion about climate change
- more discussion around Collaborative
- a more northern/remote location
- improved pre-trip preparation for all participants, with specific focus on settler participants. Should include example scenarios and could include both the orientation call and a 'things to remember' hand out

****based on reflections received after the gathering****



Joanna and Lynda making breakfast



Peguis Tobacco



Sarah and her finished moccasins

Participant Quotes

I've been to a few learning trips now and I'm coming out each time feeling so much better about the collaborative and how the funders can relate to us.

This experience has encouraged me, to be persistent and know that there are others who see the challenges and are making efforts to improve the conditions in the north.

All in all, a wonderful, enriching, informative experience. I am so grateful to be part of it and for the openness of our hosts and community partners.

To me the gathering was amazing but would have been improved by interacting more with the community outside of the camp.

Having young, middle aged, and older participants from the North and South was a real strength.

I wanted to get into more of a group discussion around where MFCCC is heading, priorities, how to increase impact, pace of progress (is it the right pace?).

It was a lot of emotions to process. I feel like I would have benefitted from more sharing circles.

I think the strengths of the gathering was people's efforts at open heartedness.

We must continue to move forward and keep a much-needed part of community alive that can help secure a better future for All. Food Security is a vital part of community and a nation; we must regain and rebuilt it together.

Having the opportunity to work physically as a team was a gift and created time and space for good conversations.

I hope that we can continue to talk about current actions that are perpetuating/exacerbating colonialism so that there is continued learning/understanding of what is causing hardship, with the mindset of discussing together what actions can be taken to stop or mitigate the effects of the negative action.

I always find it hard to put in words what the experience means to me and how it shapes my work and actions, but something shifts every time.

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

Links and Resources

Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, and Community Collaborative - www.nmfccc.ca

William Bird – Peguis Song www.youtube.com/watch?v=BazTeU0LsAU

Building Sustainable Local Food Solutions Paper - https://unsse.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/183_Sumner_Building-Sustainable-Local-Food-Solutions_En.pdf

Building Sustainable Local Food Solutions Webinar - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UP_c-0GIwI&t=2s

St. Peter's and the Interpretation of the Agriculture of Manitoba's Aboriginal People - http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/18/manitobaaboriginalagriculture.shtml

Seven Ways to Stand Beside Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Created by many hands, but with gratitude by Tabitha Robin. *"This is a starting point. We hope to continue to change and add over the years."*

<http://www.nmfccc.ca/uploads/4/4/1/7/44170639/7waystostandposterfinal.pdf>



Wayne Manningway showing Sarah how to process deer



Powwow Club dancing



Brian with bone tool



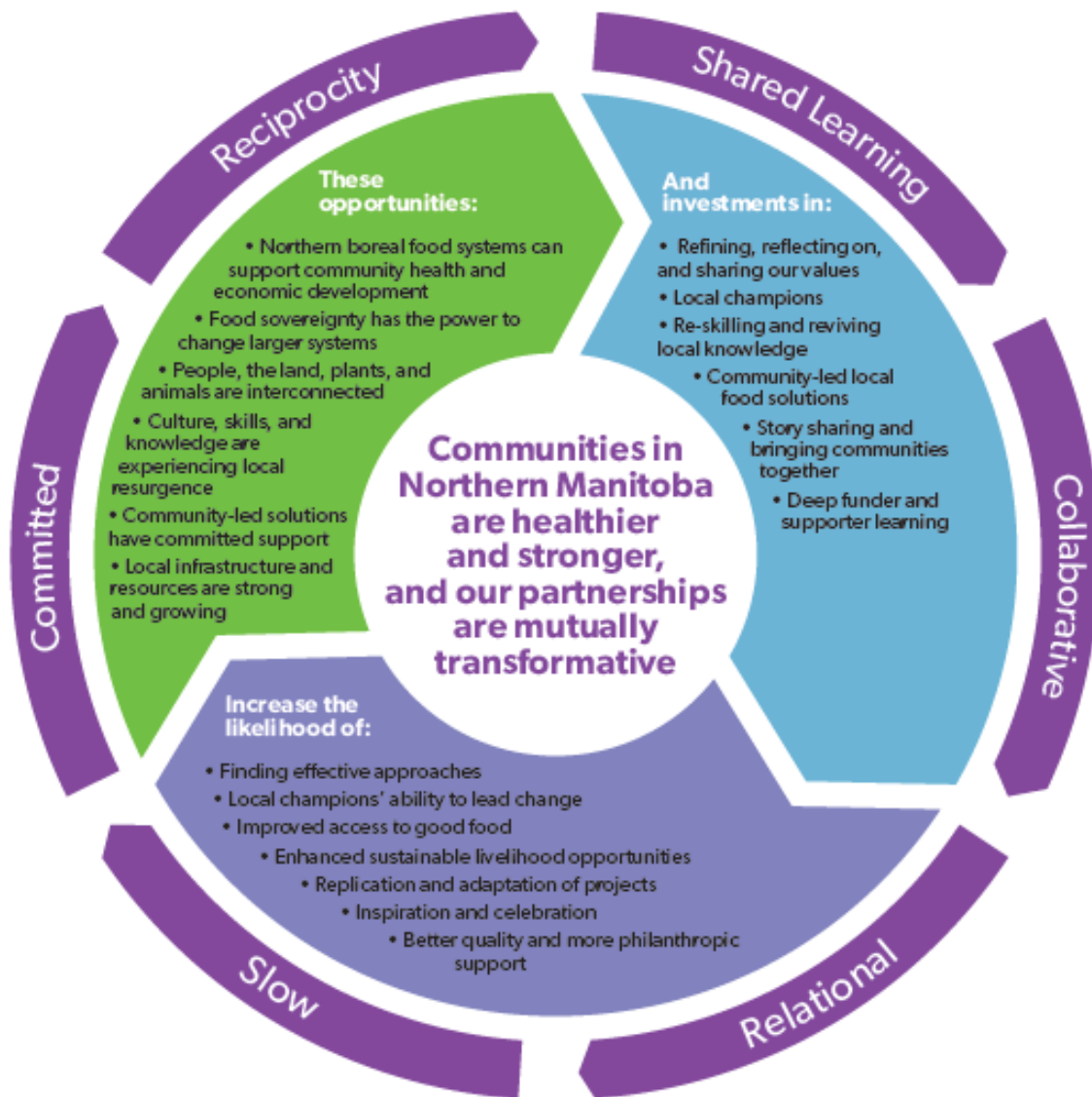
William Bird sharing about his songs

Appendix: NMFCCC Theory of Change



Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, and Community Collaborative Theory of Change

The NMFCCC theory of change is rooted in our values, uses an opportunities-based lens, and embraces a circular worldview that aims to show our continuous growth and learning. It took nearly 4 years of practice and learning, and the involvement of community partners, Northern Advisors, and funders to create.



Our Values

Reciprocity

Participants (funders, community people, northern advisors, support organizations) give in return to each other's efforts. This principle is rooted in a mutual respect for what each other has to give.

Relational

The nature of this collaborative is not transactional, but relational. We approach relationships in an interpersonal and interactive way and they are developed through conversations, community visits, and story sharing. Our relationships are not bound by project timelines or granting periods, and we build relationships for the long-term.

Shared learning

We all have wisdom to give, and to work together we have to understand each other. We can all grow when we listen to each other and understand each other. No one person/group has all of the answers and our understanding can always become deeper.

Slow

We recognize the impacts of history, and that healing and re-skilling will take a longer time horizon than most governments or funders typically consider. We recognize that slow but steady pacing will allow for communities and their local infrastructure to evolve in a sustainable and rooted way. Despite the urgency, fast may not be the best path, and may result in more damage than healing.

Collaborative

We work in partnership by pooling and sharing resources, knowledge, networks, and ideas. Rooted in the belief that we are stronger and have more potential when we work together.

Committed

We seek to demonstrate to communities that we will extend support in a dependable and steadfast way as long as the partnership is sought. This could include grants, networking, problem solving, friendship, story sharing, and more. We value the commitments that community members make to each other and their work.