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Land-Based Learning Grants to the Nourish Anchor Cohort

**Report to Frontline Fund
July - December, 2021**



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Health care and community leaders gathered in Labrador



Leaders learn about Indigenous perspectives through building a wigwam in Toronto

Background

This report was prepared by the team and collaborators at **Nourish Leadership**, which believes that food in health care is a powerful way to build health for both people and the planet, in addition to providing comfort and healing to patients, creating more resilient communities, and addressing climate change. Supporting Indigenous Foodways and fostering cultural awareness and humility in health care are an essential part of Nourish programming to support health equity and reconciliation.



Nourish calls on health care institutions to action reconciliation by advancing policies and practices recommended by the TRC, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which address the history of systemic and institutional racism that continues to harm Indigenous people. This includes developing relationships with Elders, Indigenous communities, and allies around traditional foodways. These relationships are critical in supporting health care staff to develop new levels of awareness with regards to two-eyed seeing and Indigenous worldviews in health care.

Introduction

The Frontline Fund supported the Nourish project, "Building healthier Northern and Indigenous communities through Nourish", contributing to the Frontline Fund's COVID-19 pandemic response and efforts to build back better. This report compiles the impact from land-based learning grants to the Nourish Anchor Cohort enabling them to seek out and strengthen Indigenous relationships and cultural understanding through land-based learning activities from June - December 2021. These grants complement the other Nourish work from September 2020 - June 2021 by the Frontline Fund, as captured in our earlier report, including:

1. Five \$50k Food Rx grants to mobilize community-led, innovative, capacity building projects that supported both food security and Indigenous foodways.

2. A short film exploring food security, experiences of anti-Indigenous systemic racism in health care, and the power of traditional Indigenous foodways. The film is called "Why does hospital food matter for reconciliation?" and can be viewed [here](#).

3. Food is Our Medicine, which highlights and amplifies Indigenous voices and perspectives to contextualize Indigenous foodways. This includes an online course called a Learning Journey, a multimedia resource library, and series of interactive webinars with Indigenous leaders. Together, this series aims to equip health care leaders to decolonize food in health care, and use it as an organizational pathway to deepen conversations about systemic racism and reconciliation.

Summary

Support from the Frontline Fund has made possible a series of activities as part of Nourish Leadership's project, "Building Healthier Northern and Indigenous Communities Through Nourish." An earlier report details activities from September 2020 - June 2021. This report summarizes the impact of land-based learning grants that mobilized seven teams of health care and community leaders in the Nourish Anchor Cohort to build relationships with Indigenous communities in their area, recognize the role of health care in reconciliation, and actively work towards addressing health disparities experienced by Indigenous communities.

Each of the seven Anchor Collaboratives across the country received \$7000 grants to pursue relationship-building and land-based learning activities. Working with Indigenous leaders in their community, teams participated in both in-person and online learning experiences, according to what was possible with COVID-19 restrictions. Altogether, hundreds of people were equipped and inspired over a rich diversity of experiential learning.

Land-based learning is a technique that centers Indigenous perspectives and knowledge in building cultural awareness, respect, and humility. This method recognizes the physical environment as both a teacher and a backdrop for experiential learning, playing a key part in reconciliation and decolonization (UNESCO, 2021).

LONDON: Members from St. Joseph's Health Care London & ReForest London worked with the organization Biigajiiskaan Indigenous Pathway of Mental Wellness, to organize a Land and Food Fair. This outdoor event invited over 150 health care staff to join their sustainability initiatives, in addition to providing an opportunity to learn from an Indigenous knowledge keeper and to sample traditional foods.

MONTRÉAL: Leaders from the health care authority CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de- Montréal and several community organizations came together both in person and online, to learn from Indigenous leaders, chefs, elders, and others, on the role that health care can play in reconciliation.

NORTHERN ONTARIO: Already embedded in Indigenous communities in their area, the Northern Ontario team used this opportunity to strengthen Indigenous food sovereignty work across their community of practice, which covers seven health units, 103 First Nations, and hundreds of other partnerships including the local public health unit.

SASKATCHEWAN: The Saskatchewan Health Authority, local non-profit CHEP Good Food, and the University of Saskatchewan came together in person over 5 days to learn from Indigenous leaders and participate in traditional activities, such as teepee building and ethnobotany.

TORONTO: Led by professionals from Black Creek Community Farmand the Black Creek Community Health Centre, the team collaborated with Edge of the Bush, a land-based teaching organization, as well as the ENAGB Indigenous Youth Agency, to learn from elders and knowledge keepers while sharing a feast and building a traditional wigwam.

VANCOUVER: Participants from UBC Planetary Healthcare Lab, the Vancouver General Hospital, and Vancouver Coastal Health Public Health and Aboriginal Health worked with Talaysay Tours to look at the history and biodiversity of Stanley Park, ultimately laying the ground for a conversation around how health, culture, and land are connected.

LABRADOR: Leaders from Labrador-Grenfell Health and the organization Food First NL learned from knowledge keepers in Labrador and Nunatukavut while walking the snowy landscape and participating in activities such as creating sealskin crafts, and learning about Indigenous food traditions such rabbit snaring.



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Land-Based Learning

SUPPORTING HEALTHY
RELATIONSHIPS IN NORTHERN
AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES
THROUGH NOURISH

Highlights of activities across each of the seven Anchor Collaboratives, according to the seven Grandfather Teachings



Wisdom - Northern Ontario

- Bringing traditional knowledge, family, and community together to share stories and ways.
- Asking and listening to what has been done and what needs to be done.



Love - Toronto

- Asking community what they would like to see accomplished within the Anchor Cohort around food security.
- Building a wigwam for youth and community.



Respect - Montreal

- Building new relationships with Indigenous knowledge keepers and community. Contributing to economic reconciliation.
- Finding new ways of communicating and connecting during COVID 19.

Bravery - London

- Being open to hosting a brand new type of event that has never happened before. Inviting community to attend and share their gifts.
- Creating new pathways for change.



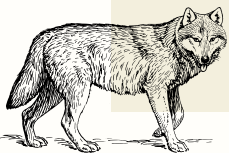
Honesty - Labrador

- Being open to building relationships and open to sharing where your comfort levels were with this process.
- Committing to hosting a 5 day event on the land with community.



Humility - Saskatchewan

- Gathering in different locations and traveling together to accomplish what is needed to strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities.
- Exemplifying thoughtfulness and kindness.



Truth - Vancouver

- Being transparent with the busy schedules that this team holds and making time to be together with Indigenous community to learn.
- Moving forward with a different way of seeing.





Background on Land-Based Learning with the Anchor Cohort

The Nourish Anchor Cohort consists of seven Anchor Collaboratives, teams of health care and community leaders working together over 2 years to tackle wicked problems like food insecurity, health inequity, and the climate emergency..

A critical part of the programming for the Nourish Anchor Cohort programming is land-based learning, facilitated by Indigenous knowledge keepers, in order to create opportunities for building new relationships, supporting economic reconciliation, and integrating Indigenous ways of knowing and relating for the Cohort. These experiences can also facilitate reflection on the legacy of colonization in Canada, and the role of participants as individuals and professionals in walking the road of reconciliation.

Land-based learning activities for the cohort were envisaged for an in-person launch retreat for the Anchor Cohort in June 2021. However, with COVID public health restrictions the launch retreat was hosted virtually, and we pivoted to providing grants for the Anchor Collaboratives to lead their own land-based learning.

Each team mapped out a plan that would best support relationships to inform their work moving forward in their place-based context. They invited Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and like-minded community organizations to participate in the activities. While COVID-19 posed challenges throughout the process, each team adapted to the circumstances and guidelines for their area, and there was a mix of in-person and virtual activities to reflect this.

What did the Anchor Collaboratives do?

LONDON: St. Joseph's Health Care London & ReForest London

- The team at St Joseph's organized and hosted a Land and Food Fair to increase awareness of local food and sustainability initiatives in the health care centre, and facilitate engagement between health care staff and these projects
- Approximately 150 participants interacted with the seven booths, which showcased local food and sustainability projects. Participants also had the opportunity to participate in a smudge, and learn about traditional medicines and teachings from an Indigenous knowledge keeper. The food served reflected those of Indigenous communities in their area, and the menu included cedar tea, and soup made from the "Three Sisters" of corn, squash, and beans. Participants also received local apples and fruit trees to take home.



Highlights: Inviting new health care staff into sustainability and reconciliation work, being outside together. For more photos and a recap of the event, read the blog [here](#), and watch a short video [here](#).



MONTREAL: CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal & Le Carrefour alimentaire Centre-Sud

- While COVID-19 prevented the Montréal team from gathering in person, the funding was instrumental in allowing the team to learn from Indigenous knowledge keepers and organizations through a series of online workshops, and used remaining funds to sponsor local Indigenous food initiatives.
- Through listening to the stories of the diverse guests, including hereditary chief and residential school survivor T8aminik (Dominique) Rankin, Abenaki anthropologist Nicole O'Bomsawin among others, the team increased their understanding of Indigenous experiences of colonization and reconciliation, traditional medicines, and Indigenous beliefs around health and wellness.
- In partnership with the local food hub le Carrefour Alimentaire Centre Sud, the team invited Indigenous chef Lysanne O'Bomsawin to lead an Indigenous Food Share activity, in which meals of trout, bannock, three sisters salad and labrador tea were shared with the community through a pop-up street booth.

Highlights: Personal learning and understanding Indigenous history in Montreal.



NORTHERN ONTARIO: Northern Ontario School of Medicine & Northern Ontario Indigenous Food Sovereignty Collaborative

- The Northern Ontario team used this opportunity to build relationships within a community of practice across the large geographical region, in which there are 7 health units, 103 First Nations, and hundreds of partnerships collaborating to support Indigenous Food Sovereignty.
- The community of practice, which includes staff from public health and the regional hospitals, Indigenous practitioners, the Northern Ontario Indigenous Food Sovereignty Collaborative, gathered together on the traditional territory of Obishikokaang, in Sioux Lookout, to network, share and learn together. They visited local health centers, hosted presentations and workshops, and shared a community feast.

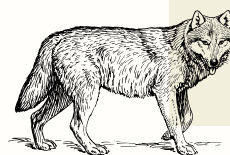


Highlights: Gathering and learning together on the land, integrating Anishinaabe Teaching Tools, including children in sessions to address intergenerational learning and relationships.

SASKATCHEWAN: Saskatchewan Health Authority, CHEP Good Food & The University of Saskatchewan

- For the Saskatchewan Anchor Cohort, the land-based learning activities offered the opportunity to come together in person for the first time, and to build relationships through ceremony and learning activities.
- Over 5 days, the team gathered in Saskatoon on the river bank for a pipe ceremony, visited Wanuskewin Heritage Park for ethnobotany teachings, and travelled to Meadow Lake to connect with communities of the area and learn about Tipi building and other traditional teachings.
- Many of the events centered around shared meals, including traditional foods such as bison, mushrooms, sweetgrass, berries, and three sisters soup.

Highlights: Building trust and relationships to support community driven, sustainable changes in healthcare, practicing patience with the process and allowing for things to unfold at the right pace. Spending time with multiple First Nations and Metis communities.



TORONTO: Black Creek Community Farm & Black Creek Community Health Centre



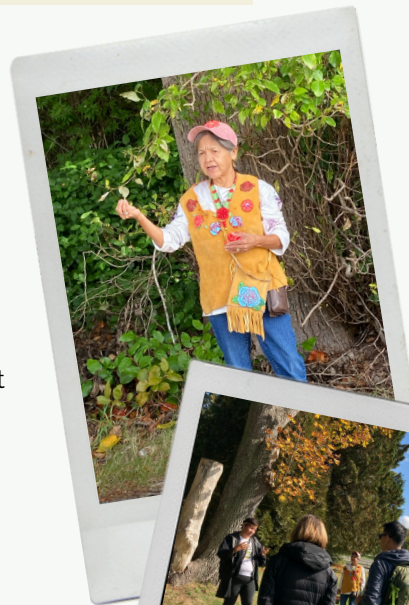
- The team collaborated with Edge of the Bush, a land-based teaching organization, and the ENAGB Indigenous Youth Agency to build a Wigwam at Memtigwaake Kinomaage Maawnjiding (Bush Teaching Gathering Space) along the Humber River.
- Over several days, and guided by elders and Indigenous knowledge keepers, they collectively built a traditional Wigwam, and celebrated by sharing a feast and participating in ceremony together.



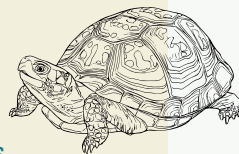
Highlights: Building something together facilitated meaningful connection and strengthened the partnership, having elders teach about respect for the land and the importance of ceremony. Watch their [video here](#).

VANCOUVER: UBC Planetary Healthcare Lab, Vancouver General Hospital, Vancouver Coastal Health Public Health and Aboriginal Health

- Vancouver's cohort team connected with a local Indigenous cultural and eco-tour company, Talaysay Tours, to spend time together in iconic Stanley Park and learn about the history and biodiversity of the land.
- Traditional healers and knowledge keepers shared stories and cultural and ecological teachings, connecting participants to the history and gifts of the land.



Highlights: Deepening the understanding of the interconnections of land, culture and health. Seeing a familiar place with a new lens → deeper appreciation and respect for the land.



LABRADOR: Labrador-Grenfell Health & Food First NL

- Labrador's team connected on the land with Knowledge Keeper, Pauline McKay to learn about rabbit snaring, including how to set up a snare trap
- Sherry Penny (Nunatukavut), sharing her teaching and creating sealskin ornaments
- The team enjoyed a Healthy Waters Tour on Birch Island with Tammy Lambourne
- Enjoyed traditional foods, which included smoked char



Highlights: This team is spread out across Labrador, so getting together on the land and building relationships was important for them.



Key learnings

- Across the Anchor Collaboratives, **the Land-Based Learning activities catalyzed relationship building** between the health care and community teams and Indigenous partners and knowledge keepers.
- Teams recognized the intrinsic value in being together and that time together without a rigid agenda is meaningful and necessary to facilitate relationship building. Participants shared that, **particularly after the isolation of COVID – being together felt healing**, and that gathering in a good way is an expression of culture.
- The teams were invited to **experience Indigenous pedagogy of learning** from being on the land, recognizing the land, and spending time with people who are connected to and steward the land. One participant shared her reflection of “looking to the land for answers” as a key shift in thinking.
- These initiatives exemplify **paradigm shifts in action: moving from theory to practice on embracing and incorporating Indigenous approaches to wellness into healthcare**, as well as reframing the way that “work” is defined in Western settings.
- Teams emphasized learning and appreciating that relationship comes before trust, and trust comes before meaningful collaborative work. Additionally, **trust and relationships are foundational to reconciliation** and collaboration for meaningful change in health care.
- The initiatives showed that, at the grassroots, community level, there are big shifts in approaches to work and keen interest in engagement with Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. However, there remains **a need to shift priorities and make space within senior leadership for Indigenous perspectives and ways**.
- Teams reflected that working slowly, intentionally, and respectfully is the way forward. There is a need to **let go of western structures** of measurable outcomes, rigid work plans, hierarchical decision making, and western values of efficiency, predictability, and productivity.
- Each team engaged in **authentic experiences that were unique to their communities** and circumstances. This shows that providing an open and flexible granting structure allowed teams to create something meaningful that reflects the needs of their team and community.
- Indigenous ways of doing and being within healthcare remain the exception and not the norm; people are finding the loopholes to create space for Indigenous foodways in health care facilities. For example, teams make amendments or exclusions to food service contracts to be able to purchase local and/or traditional foods. This demonstrates the ongoing need for advocacy to **make policy more inclusive, and traditional/local foods more accessible**.
- Understanding and experiencing connections with **the land is fundamental to Indigenous Knowledge and well-being**, and is often missing from health care planning and approaches.



Conclusion

The project "Supporting healthy relationships in Northern and Indigenous communities through Nourish," supported by the Frontline Fund, brought together communities and leaders from across Canada to strengthen food security and food sovereignty, celebrate Indigenous ways of knowing, and increase understanding of Indigenous realities in health care. The Land-Based Learning grants augmented these efforts and enabled the seven Nourish Anchor Collaboratives to co-design unique learning experiences that focused on relationship-building, Indigenous pedagogy, and the values of working slowly, intentionally, and respectfully.

These learnings will guide the Anchor Collaboratives to further integrate Indigenous perspectives and approaches into their respective projects as they each continue to work across community, institutional, and policy scales to steward innovation, transitioning towards a more preventative, equitable, sustainable health system.

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