

DIABETES AND ABORIGINAL HEALTH

**EFFECTS OF COLONIZATION ON HEALTH
OUTCOMES AND THE PATH TOWARDS
HEALING**

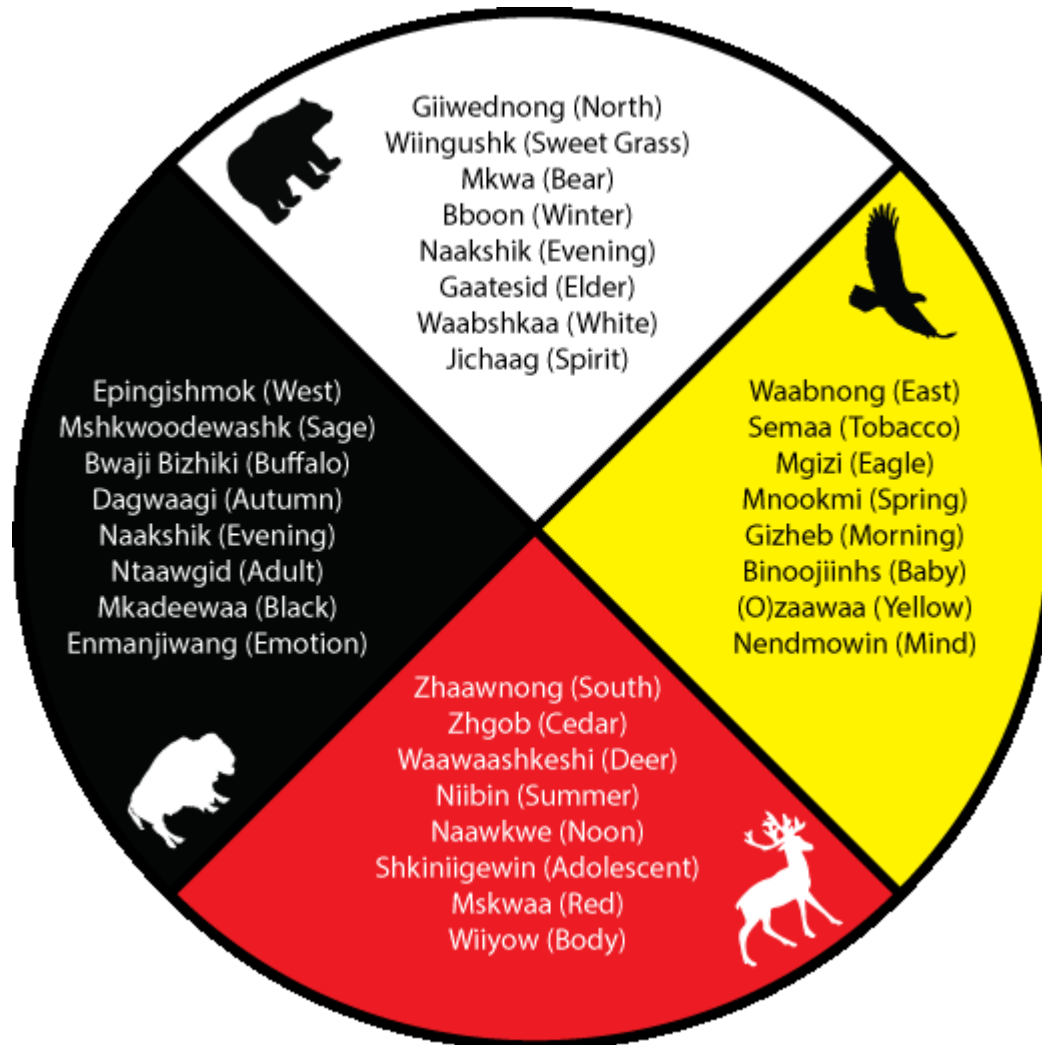
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Boozhoo!

Bonjou Benvnu !

Bonjour! Welcome!

WHAT IS HEALTH?



Medicine Wheel from Curve Lake First Nation Cultural Centre, Anishinabe

PREVALENCE

**19.7% of
First
nations**

Are diagnosed with Diabetes , This number underestimates the true prevalence by 2-3 times due to undiagnosed cases.

**3-5X
more
likely**

Aboriginal populations are at a significantly higher risk of developing diabetes in their lifetime than the average Canadian.

**54% of First
Nations**

Living on reserve experience food insecurity

PREVALENCE

Even after socioeconomic factors are accounted for, Aboriginals in Canada still have worse health outcomes than the general Canadian population

What causes this disparity?

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

TRC's calls to action #18:

“Acknowledge that current state of Aboriginal health in Canada is a direct result of Canadian policies ... to recognize and implement the health-care rights of Aboriginal people as identified in international law, constitutional law, and under the Treaties. “

BRIEF HISTORY OF COLONIALISM

Treaties saw the surrender of vast amounts of traditional land and therefore the resources that went with them.

Assimilationist policies removed aboriginals from traditional territory and enforced assimilation into Canadian population.

Reserve systems, governance and forced relocations reduced access and control of traditional lands which affected intake of healthy traditional food and connection to land

Residential schools and sixties scoop had , and still has, major impacts on the victims' health

Nutrition experiments performed in residential schools and in northern communities without informed consent

TREATIES

- “Treaties are agreements made between the Government of Canada, Indigenous groups and often provinces and territories that define ongoing rights and obligations on all sides.” (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs , 2018)
- There are 75 historic (1701-1923) and 25 modern (1973-present) treaties recognized by the Canadian Government
- Treaties were not standardized but many held the provisions for reserve lands that the crown would hold for the exclusive access of the nations they negotiated with .

ASSIMILATIONIST POLICIES

The Indian Act (1876)

- A consolidation of many colonial policies
- A paternalistic Canadian federal law that governs matters of aboriginal status, governance and land.
- Aboriginals legally became “wards of the state”

RESERVE SYSTEMS AND GOVERNANCE

Reserves

- Tracts of land designated by the crown to be held in trust for the First Nations

Governance

- Band systems were implemented by the Indian act as a way to implement “democratic” governance among First Nations
- Some Legal Authority is still under the minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs

FORCED RELOCATIONS

- 1950s-1960s
- Ahlarmiut High Arctic Relocations
- Dene Relocations in Manitoba
- Communities were relocated against will and without consent
- Inadequate supplies
- Results: Starvation and death

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS AND 60S SCOOP

- Mandatory attendance to residential schools for all aboriginal children began in 1920s
- Poor nutrition which has lasting effects on relationships to food (ex. Mush Hole)
- Sixties Scoop saw the unprecedented apprehension of aboriginal children from their homes
- By 1970s approx 1/3 of children in care in Canada were aboriginal

NUTRITIONAL EXPERIMENTS

- During the interwar years, nutrition became a topic of interest in the science community.
- After a survey of approximately 300 Nehiyawak (Cree) from northern Manitoba “ ... it is highly probable that their great susceptibility to many diseases, paramount amongst which is tuberculosis, may be directly attributable to their high degree of malnutrition arising from lack of proper foods”. (Tisdall & Kruse, 1942)
- Controlled nutrition experiments were performed on many communities and residential schools

NUTRITIONAL EXPERIMENTS

1948-1952:

- A series of 5-year studies were performed on approximately 1000 aboriginal students in 6 residential schools across Canada
- 2-year base-line maintenance
- 5 intervention schools
- 1 control school
- No informed consent obtained

NUTRITION TRANSITION

- **This phenomenon is described as,** “The concept of the nutrition transition focuses on large shifts in diet and activity patterns, especially their structure and overall composition.” **(Popkin, 2006)**
- Colonialism made traditional diets and lifestyles unfeasible and prohibited.
- Diet has transitioned from mostly whole foods to ultra-processed, refined foods designed for modern food systems.

COLONIALISM TODAY

- Land claims
- Poverty and Food insecurity
- Ecological destruction & Pollution of traditional food systems
- Intergenerational trauma

COMBATING CHRONIC DISEASE WITH TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE



Norval Morrisseau's "Shaman and Apprentice", retrieved from :

<https://www.artgalleryofhamilton.com/exhibition/norval-morrisseau/>

FIVE WHITE GIFTS

Flour – Sugar – Lard /butter – Milk – Salt

- These five items were distributed by the Canadian government to reserves in the 1960s, due to insufficient natural resources on reserve to sustain traditional food systems.
- These five items are found in large quantities in the western diet which is thought to be the root of many chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease or hypertension.

PRE-CONTACT TRADITIONAL FOODS VS. POST-CONTACT SURVIVAL FOOD

- Many foods that are associated with aboriginal culture are not necessarily traditional to the pre-contact diet.
- Many cultural foods come from the creative use of very few resources.
- Encouraging an intake of healthy traditional foods is important
- Integration of traditional recipes with market foods
- Recognition of some cultural foods as symbols of safety, community and survival





INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING

Traditional healing is an important way to acknowledge indigenous ways of knowing and encourage holistic healing for aboriginal populations.

Labrador Tea- *Ledum groenlandicum*



INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

- New research in the field of diet and nutrition confirm indigenous knowledge and practices that have existed for millennia
- Intermittent fasting or time-restricted feeding is a practice that is traditionally performed in certain seasons or times of life.
- In the spring and in the fall fasting is done to purify and give the body rest.

WORKING IN DIABETES MANAGEMENT

Take-away:

- Approach healing from a trauma-informed perspective, know that western medical model of care is not the only way to heal
- Build on aspects of resilience and strength within the individual and their community
- Be cognizant of the greater community picture and its history

Chi Meegwetch !
Thank you!

