

Advancing Indigenous Food Sovereignty Through School Food Programming: Learning from Indigenous Perspectives

Presenters:

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Chair of the Elders Council, Urban Indigenous Education Centre - Toronto District School Board
Director of Indigenous Initiatives and Indigenous House, University of Toronto Scarborough Campus
Member Cowessess First Nation

Nicole Weber

Researcher and Registered Dietitian, Joannah and Brian Lawson Centre for Child Nutrition, University of Toronto



**Assembly of First Nations, National School Food Summit
May 27-28th, 2026**

Collaborative partnership between the **Urban Indigenous Education Centre (UIEC)** at the Toronto District School Board, **Indigenous House** - University of Toronto Scarborough Campus (UTSC) and the **Joanna and Brian Lawson Centre for Child Nutrition** - University of Toronto



Tanya Senk, Chair of the Elders Council (UIEC) and Director (UTSC)



Nicole Weber, Researcher and Registered Dietitian



**Empowering Kids,
Informing Policy (EKIP)
Research Team**



Beyond the Colonial Kitchen: Asserting Indigenous Food Sovereignty Jurisdiction in Public Institutions

Kôhkom - Kâpapâmahchakwêw - Kiskêyhtamowin Iskwêw



Qu'Appelle Valley

Image Source: Cowessess First Nation ([Listen, Hear Our Voices](#))

Indigenous Food Sovereignty is Not A Charity: Dismantling the Assimilation Model in Education



Re-Writing / Righting Rules: Overriding Institutional Barriers to Feed Our Youth Traditional Foods



Centering Pimatisiwin: Returning the Land and the Sacred to the Center of the School

Kâpapâmahchakwêw - Wandering Spirit School
Indigenous School Food Sovereignty Program



Intergenerational Pathways: Leveraging Public Funding to Build Sovereign Food Economies



Urban Sovereignty: Scaling Indigenous-Led Systems Within Major School Boards

7 Canopies

Canopy 1: Professional Learning

Canopy 2: Student Well-Being and Voice

Canopy 3: Community Engagement

Canopy 4: Programming, Curriculum, Implementation

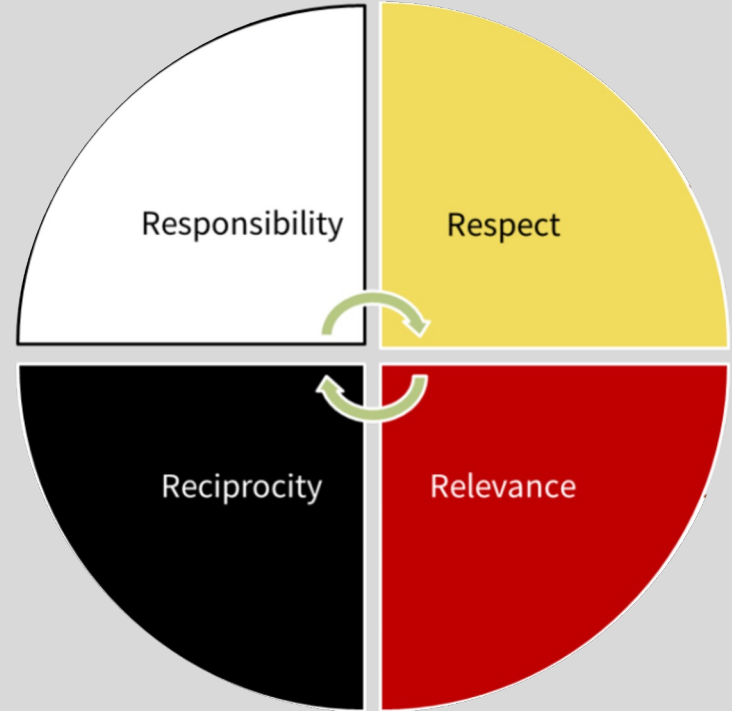
Canopy 5: Research, Development and Innovation

Canopy 6: Partnerships

Canopy 7: Reconciliation and Relationships



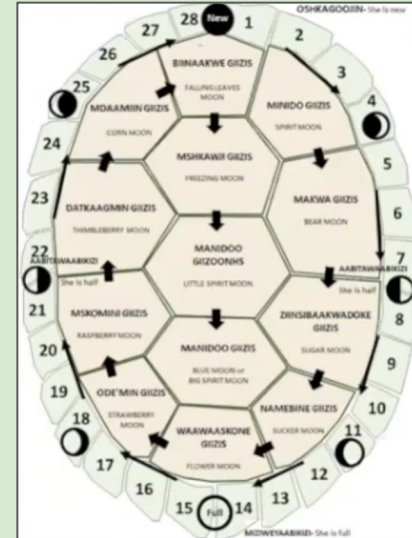
4 R's Framework



Reclaiming Self-Determination: How Traditional Foodways Fuel Nation-Rebuilding



Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action / United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



13 Moons

wahkohtowin



7 Sacred Teachings

Love
Respect
Honesty
Humility
Courage
Truth
Wisdom

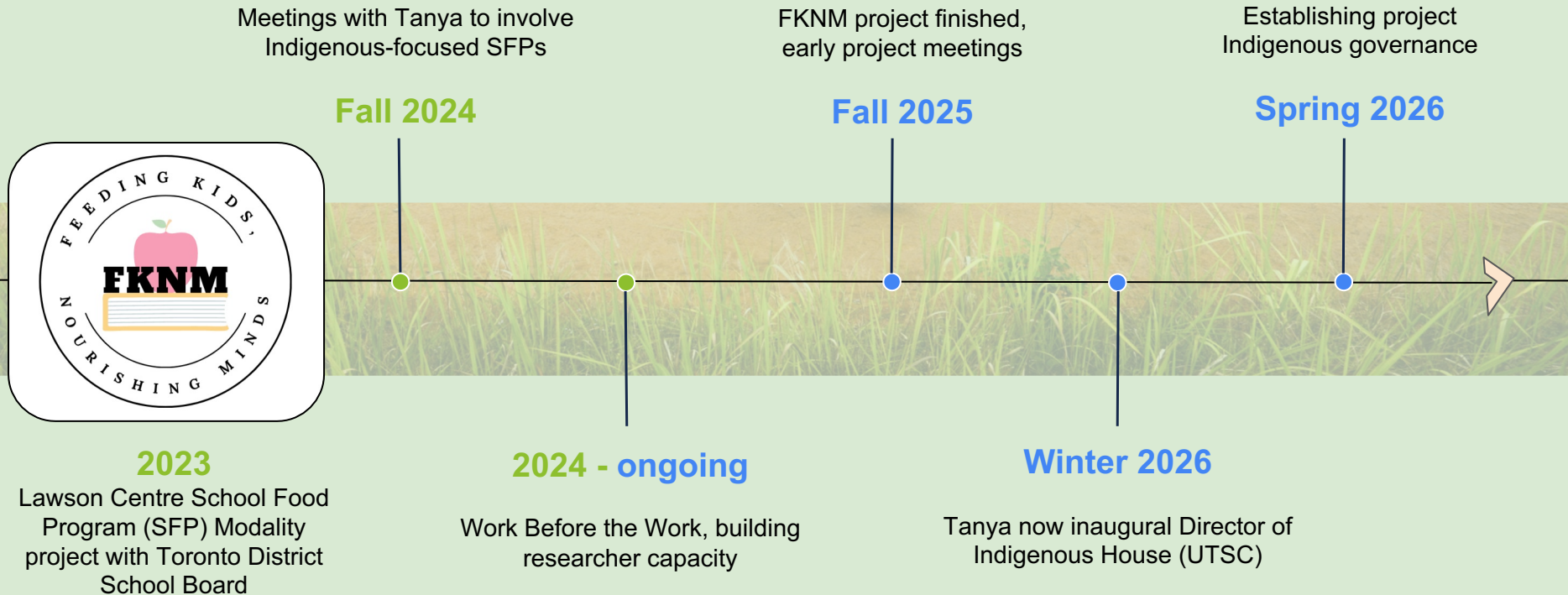


Indigenous House - University of Toronto Scarborough

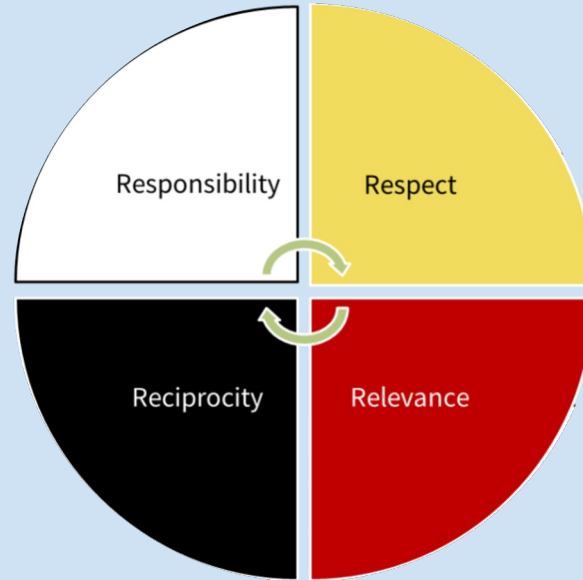


Advancing Indigenous-Led School Food Program Research

"Moving at the pace of right relations" and "Walking the moccasin trail together" - Tanya Senk in interview



Relational Accountability and Cultural Humility



Tanya's story, family history, and vision are the heart of the IFSP and this work

"...learning to unlearn to relearn..."



Joannah & Brian Lawson Centre for Child Nutrition
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

The dark history of Canada's Food Guide: How experiments on Indigenous children shaped nutrition policy

Zoe Tennant - Posted: Apr 19, 2021 3:52 PM EDT | Last Updated: July 5, 2021



Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942–1952

Ian Mosby

Histoire sociale/Social history, Volume 46, Number 91, Mai-May 2013, pp. 145-172 (Article)

Published by University of Toronto Press
DOI: 10.1353/his.2013.0015

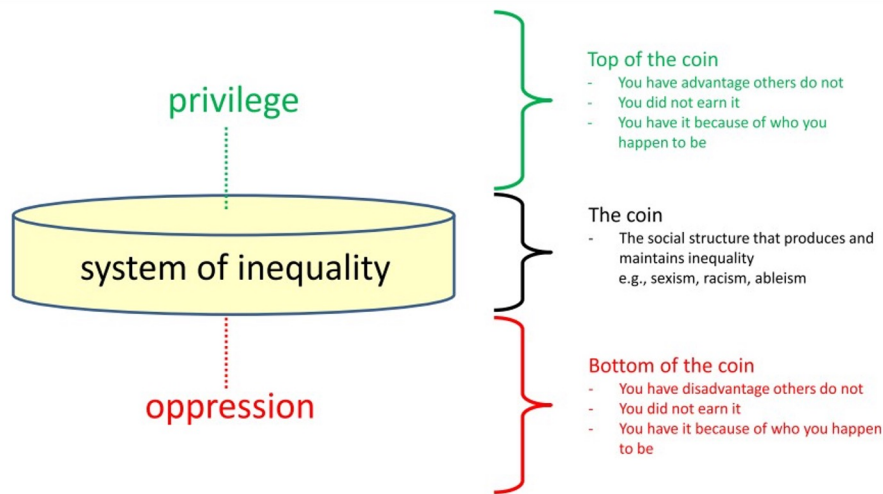


Fig. 1 The coin

Relational Accountability - The Work Before the Work



Source: [Working in Good Ways \(UofM\)](#)



Source: [FNIGC](#)



Emerging Project Overview: Nourishing Indigenous School Food Ways

- Learning and documenting promising practices of the IFSP
- Indigenous-led, grounded in community priorities ("for and by"), Indigenous ethics and methodologies
- Strengthens the food sovereignty of Indigenous students and their communities



Project Future Directions and Momentum

**Indigenous Project
Advisory Circle &
Indigenous governance**

**Indigenous youth
pathways & mentorship**

**Institutional learning
and relationship-building**

**Knowledge sharing
across communities**

*Ekosani / Wopida / Marsee / Marci Cho /
Miigwech/Meegwetch*



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“It’s already made a significant impact. It’s one of hope, it’s one of love, it’s one of respect, kindness. And all of those teachings that we grew up with as First Nations people.”

- Chief Erica Beaudin, Cowessess First Nation (Buffalo return to Cowessess First Nation marks historic moment)