

Rematriating Bison

Dr. Jennifer Leason, PhD

AFN School Food Summit: Growing Sovereignty



Dr. Jennifer Leason



Sexual Health Reproductive Health Maternal Health Perinatal Health Child Health Youth Health Community Health





RECLAIMING
INDIGENOUS BIRTH
Research



NCIM

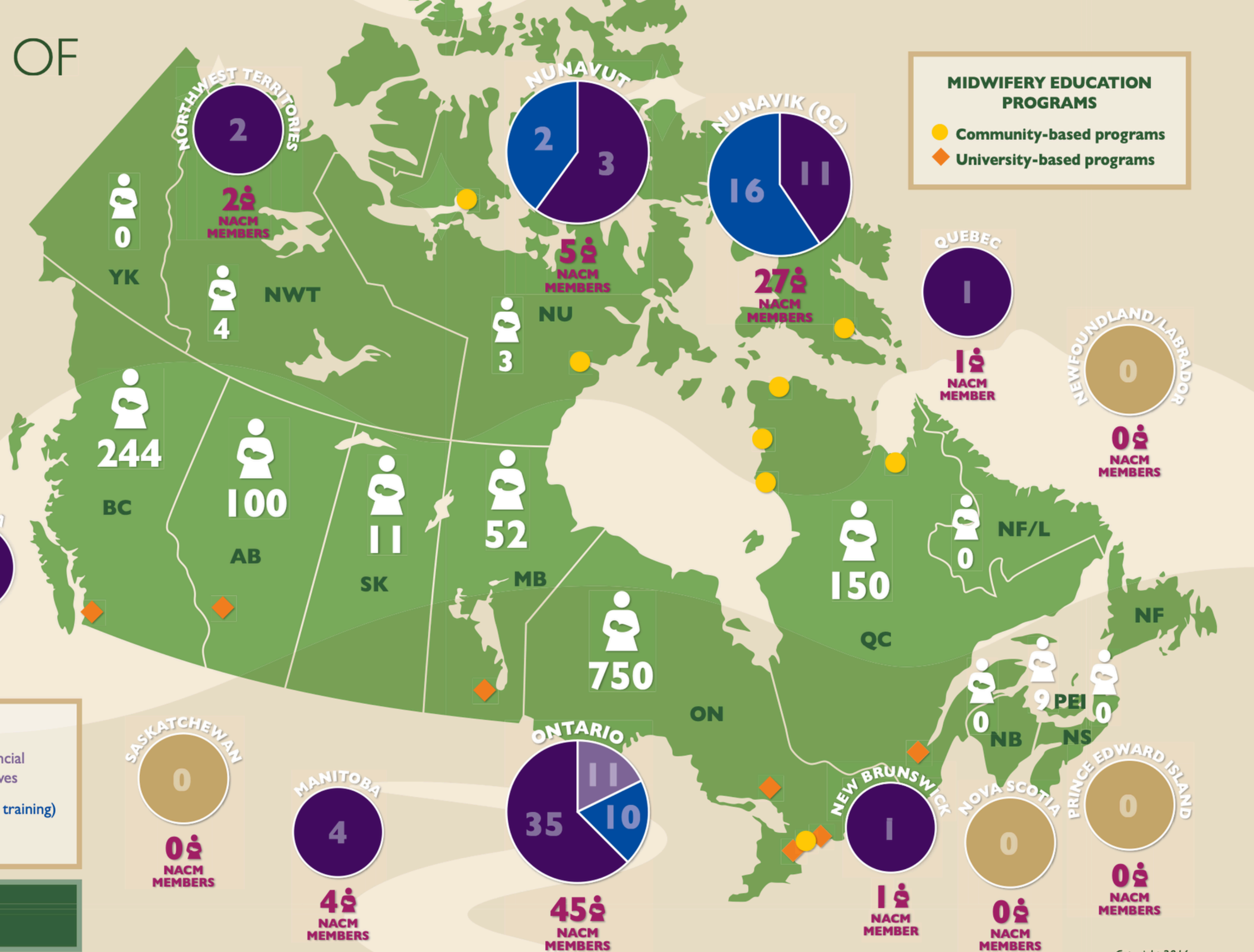
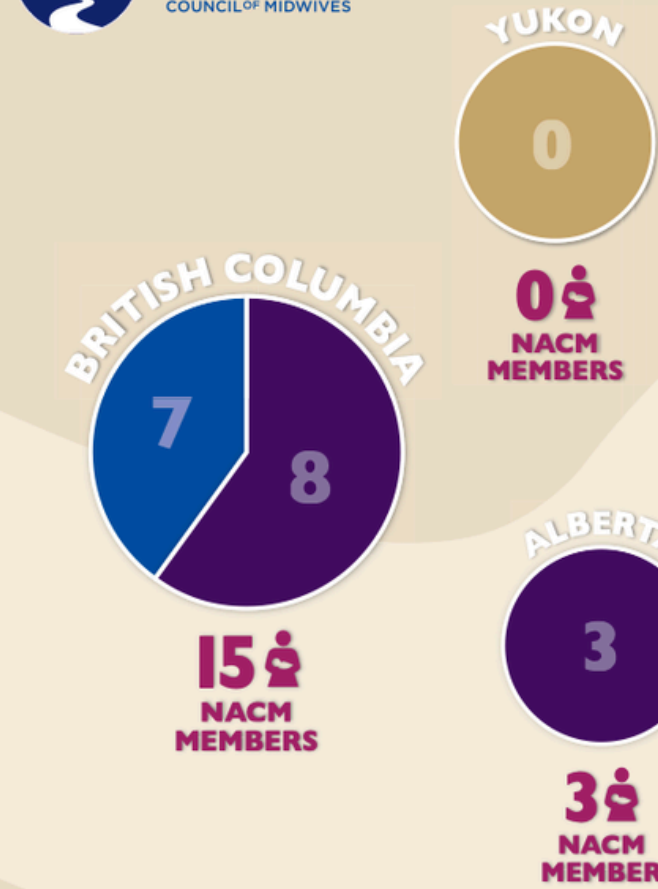
NATIONAL COUNCIL of
INDIGENOUS MIDWIVES

LANDSCAPE OF MIDWIFERY IN CANADA



MIDWIFERY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- Community-based programs
- ◆ University-based programs



- NACM General Members (midwives)
- NACM Members working under provincial exception clauses for Aboriginal midwives
- NACM Student Members (midwives in training)
- Total NACM Members

● Total Registered Midwives (including NACM members)

Current Realities and Disparities

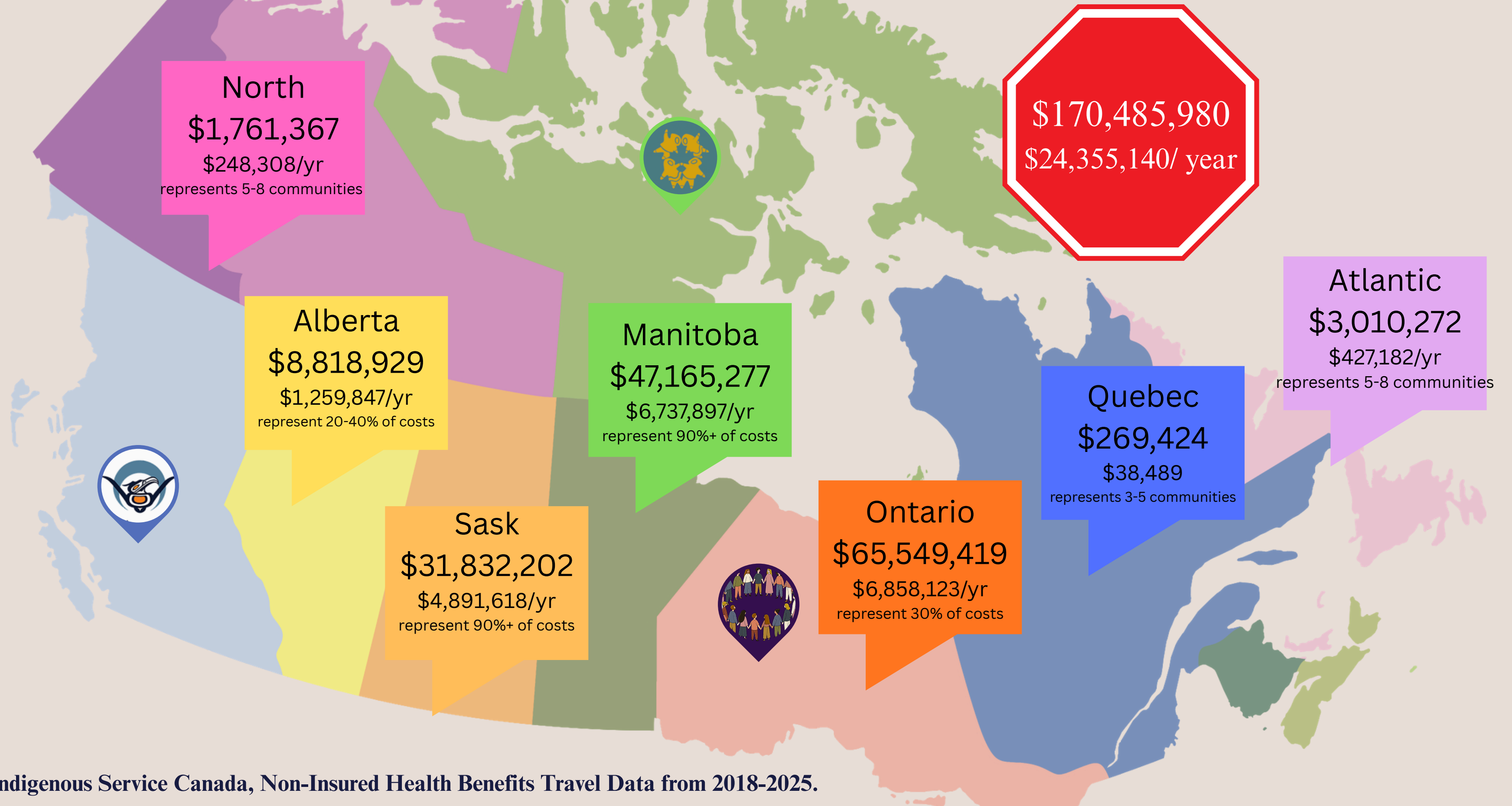
Indicator	Indigenous	First Nation	Métis	Inuit	Non-Indigenous
Perinatal Outcomes					
Preterm birth (per 100)	8.7	9	7.6	11.4	6.7
Small-for-gestational age birth (per 100)	6.6	5.8	8.3	8	8.6
Large-for-gestational age (per 100)	18.8	20.9	14.4	15.6	10.6
Stillbirth (per 100)	9	10.4	5.7	9.7	5.6
Infant death (per 100)	9.6	9.2	10.5	12.3	4.4
Neonatal death (per 100)	4.9	4.4	7.5	7.2	3.4
Post-neonatal death (per 100)	4.8	4.8	3.1	5.1	1.1
Cause-specific infant mortality rates per 1,000 live births coded according to modified International Collaborative Effort grouping, by Indigenous identity, singleton births, Canada, 2004–2006					
Congenital anomalies	2.2	1.9	3.1	x	1.3
Asphyxia-related conditions	0.6	0.4		x	0.6
Immaturity-related conditions	1.6	2.0	x	x	1.2
Infections	1.4	1.0	x	x	0.3
Sudden Infant Death Syndrome	2.0	2.2	x	2.5	0.3
Other Unexplained Causes	0.8	0.7	x	x	0.1
External Causes	0.0	0.0	x	0.0	0.1

1-5% Higher Rates of Preterm Birth

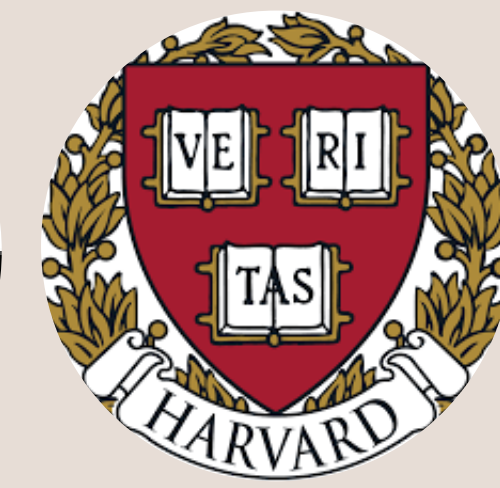
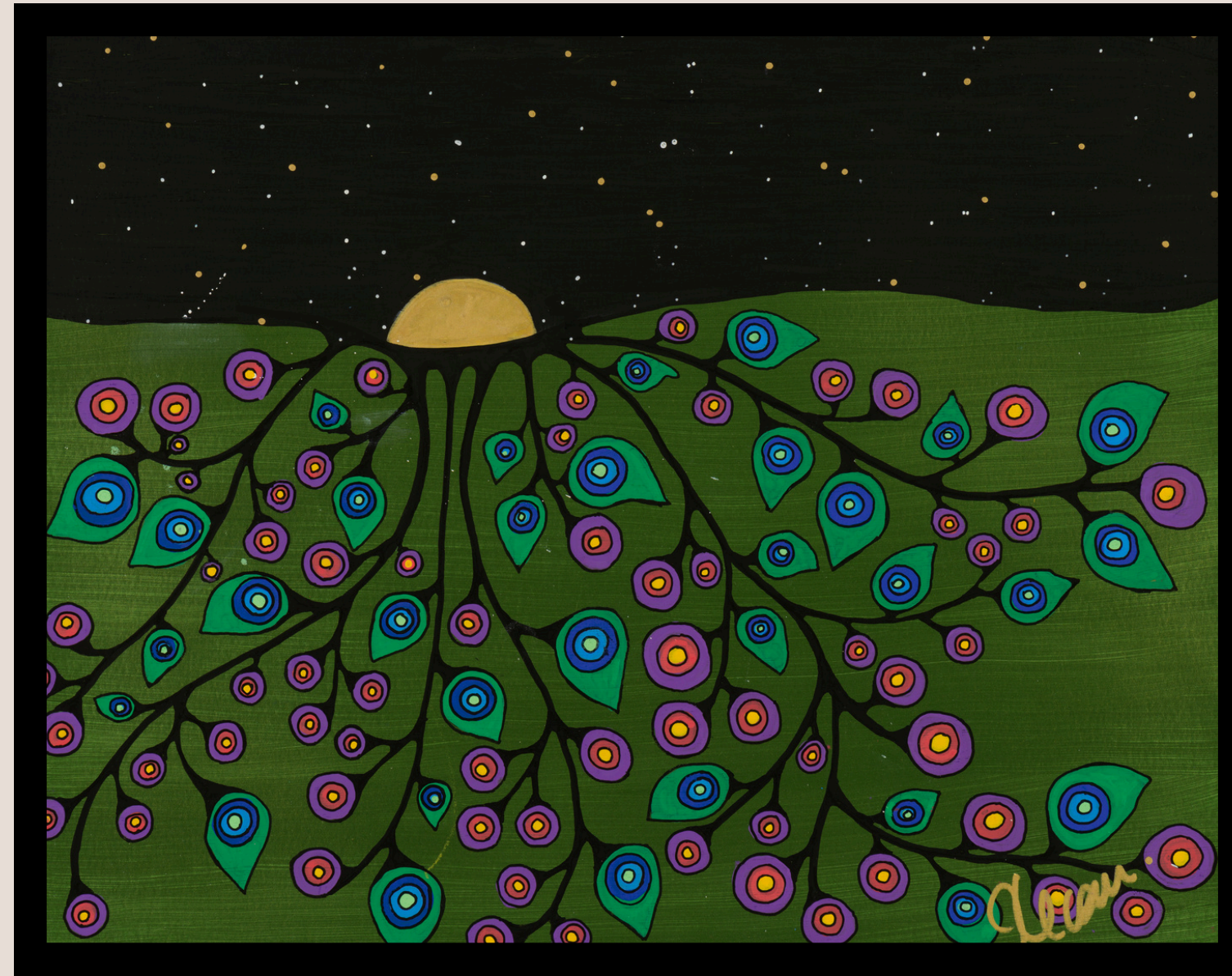
2-3 X Higher Rates of Infant Death

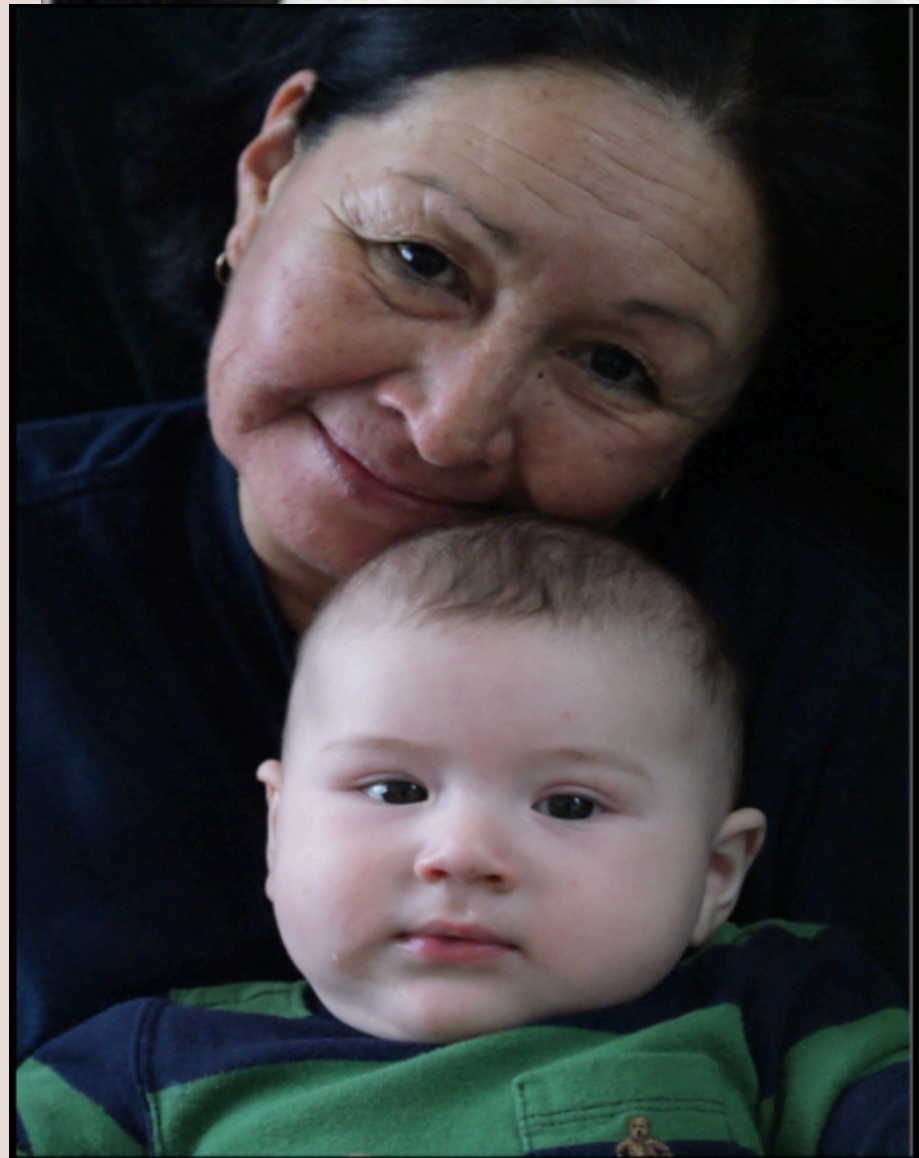
Higher Rates of Cause-Specific Infant Mortality: SID

Travel Costs for Birth, Obstetrics/Midwifery, Prenatal and Postpartum Care among First Nations and Inuit Peoples by Region from 2018-2025.



What I do... it's not who I am & Where I Come From







Abinooji-Bimaadiziwin Gagwewin

Umbilical Consciousness:
A Theory of Matriarchal Governance

Jennifer Leason

In Anishinaabemowin, there is no single word equivalent to ‘umbilical cord.’ Instead, it is described relationally.

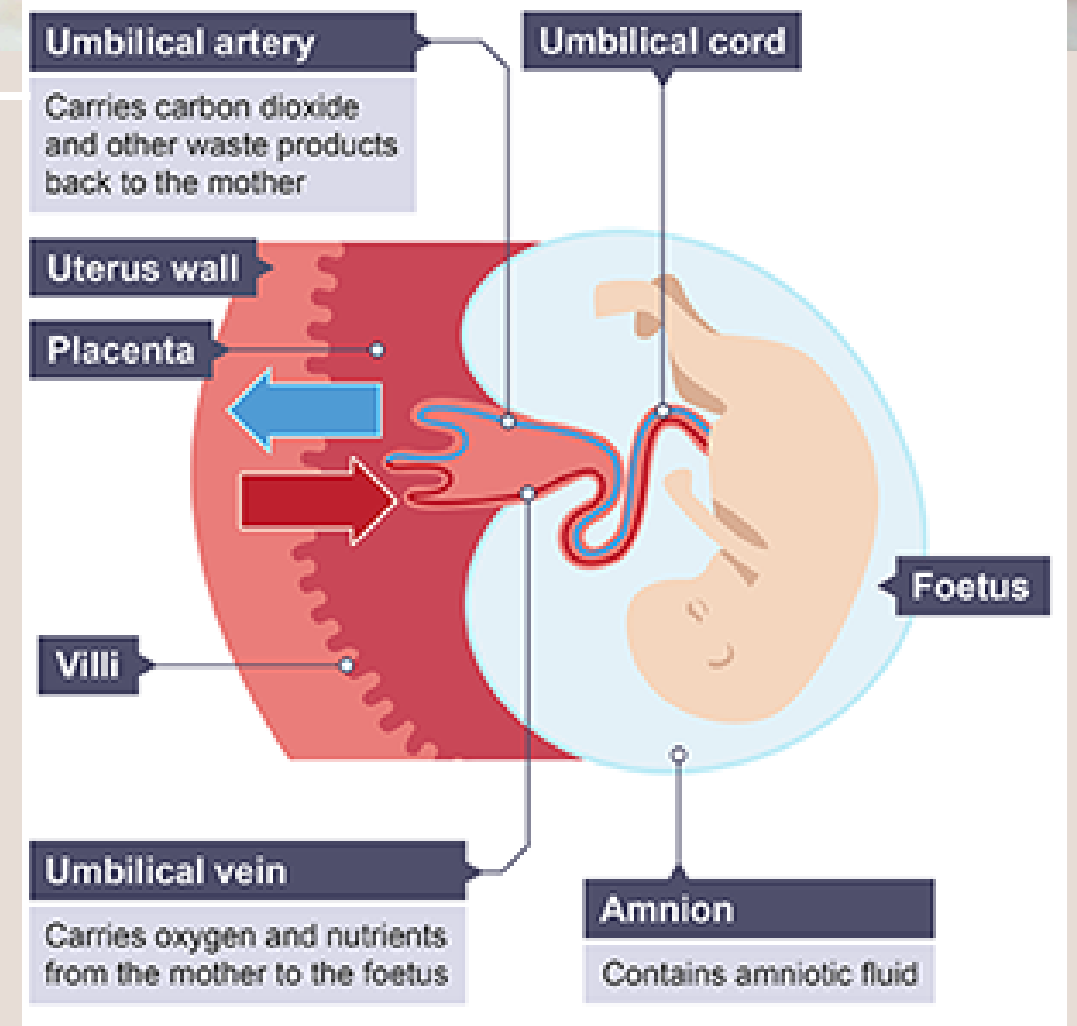
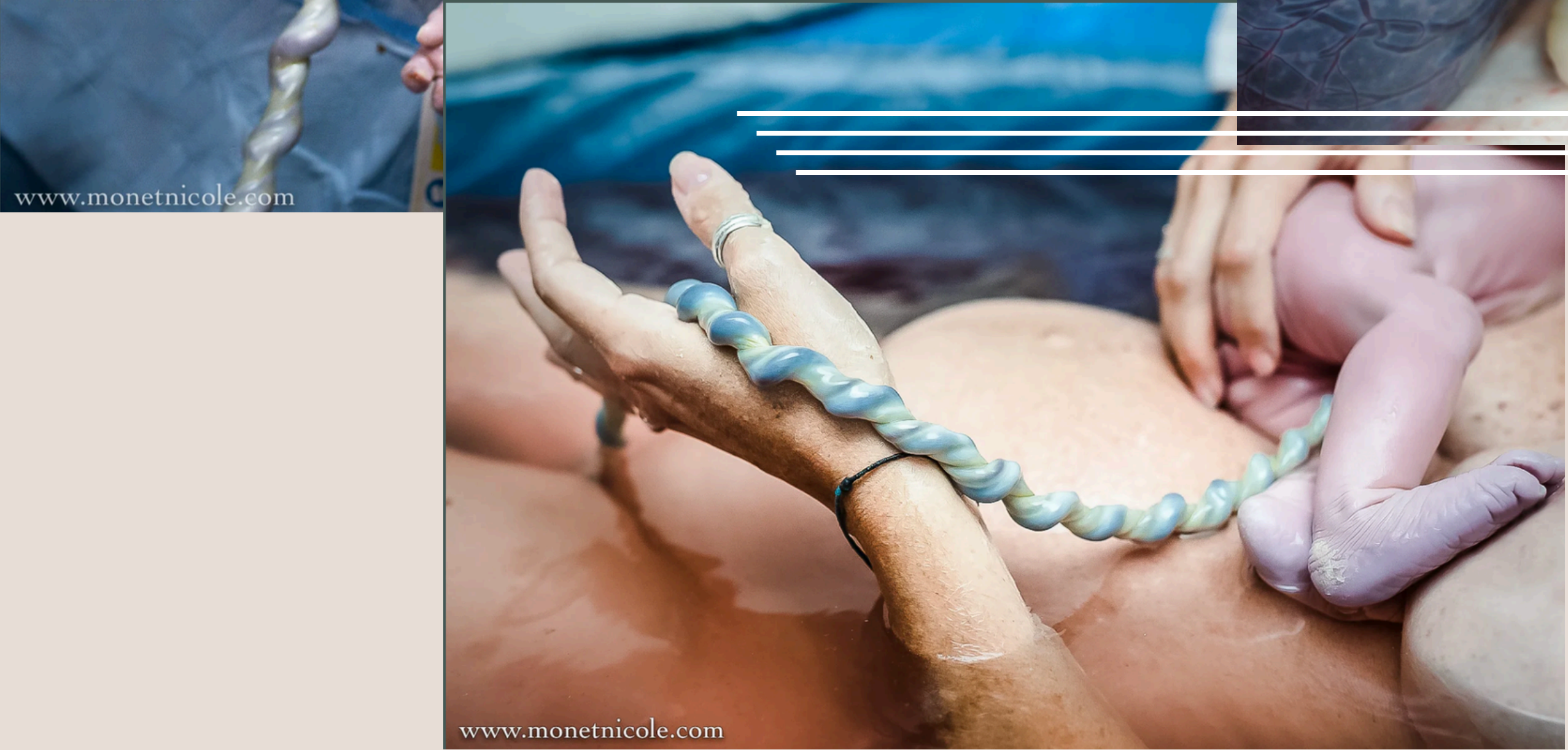
Abinooji-bimaadiziwin gagwewin

Aabinooji (baby/child)

Bimaadiziwin (life, living well)

Gagwewin (something that holds or connects).

- The umbilical cord is a fetoplacental vascular conduit that facilitates bidirectional exchange between the fetus and the placenta.
- More than a biological structure. It is, in Indigenous terms, an embodied relation between two persons and the world they share.
- This is not a metaphor; it is an epistemic orientation.
- This balance of taking in what sustains life and releasing what must be held elsewhere is not accidental. It is governance.
- Indigenous epistemologies understand knowledge in much the same way the umbilical cord understands life: as something that flows through relationship, not something extracted, owned, or isolated. Knowledge moves between generations, between birthing persons and children, between land and body, between past and future.





REMATRIATING
BiSON



Chris Chipak

Red Pheasant Creek Nation, SK



REMARIATING BISON PROJECT

NOURISHING GENERATIONS WITH
LOVE, LAND, AND TRADITION

Rematriating Bison: MATRIARCHY

- Matriarchy is a system of governance organized around the protection and continuation of life itself.
- Leadership and responsibility are tied to protection. What sustains life must be protected, and what burdens life must be carried with care.
- It is not exposed. It is not rushed. It is held gently until the child is ready to breathe, to digest, to be in the world.
- The lifeline is not cut until the child is prepared to live without it. To cut it too soon would cause harm. To sever it without readiness would be violence.
- Life-giving and life-sustaining is a living circuit between bodies, ancestors, generations, land, and a better future for all.

AFN School Food Summit: Growing Sovereignty

What inspired us to build a sustainable food system in our community?

From Farm- To Distribution-To School-To Child



Who We Are...



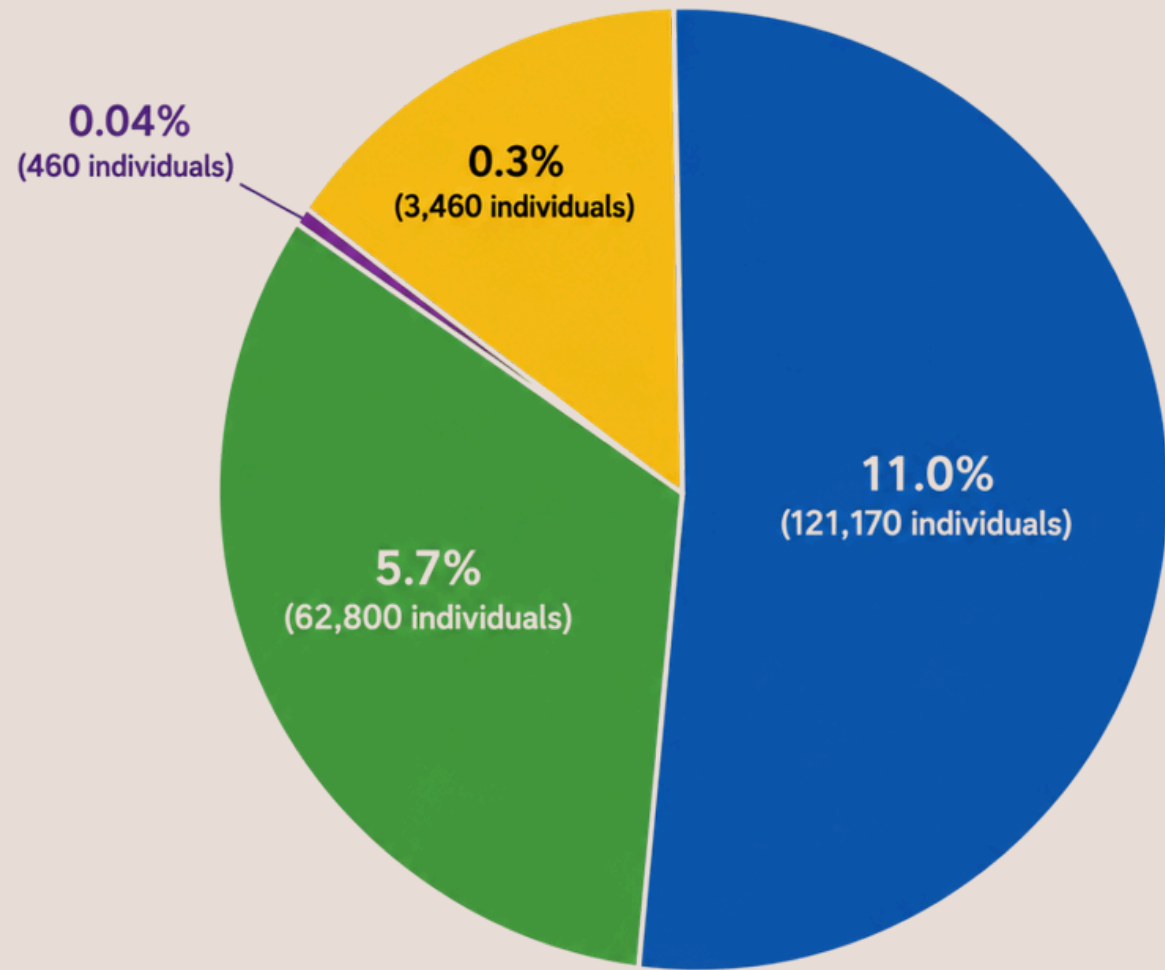
Matriarchal Circle



Goals

1. Feed People
2. Give back



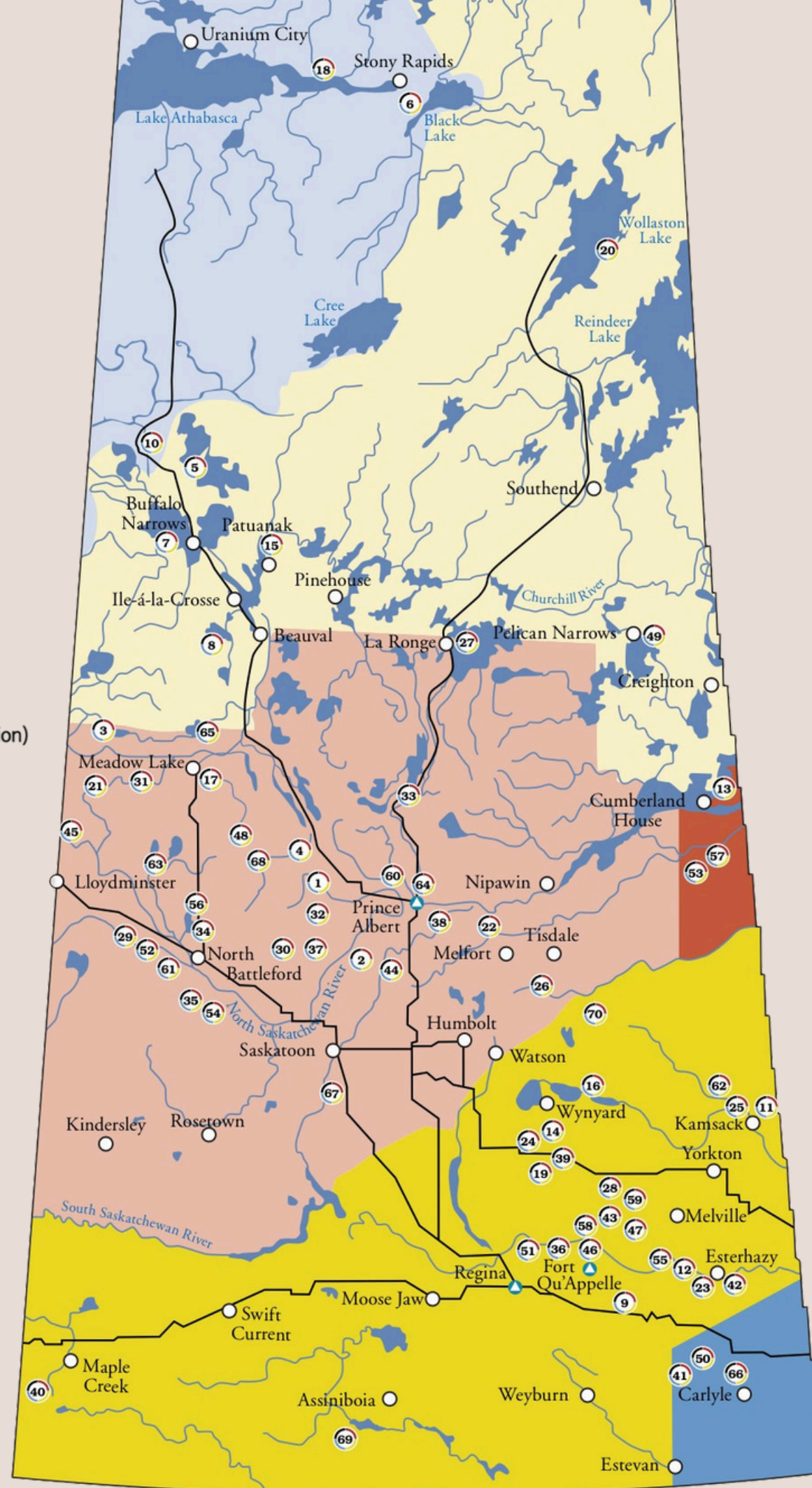


■ First Nations (North American Indian): 121,170 individuals (11.0% of the provincial population)
■ Métis: 62,800 individuals (5.7% of the provincial population)
■ Inuit: 460 individuals (0.04% of the provincial population)

Saskatchewan's Indigenous population is 187,890 people (First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and other Indigenous identities combined).

About 33% to 37% of Indigenous households in Saskatchewan experience food insecurity.

Using those estimates, roughly 62,000 to 70,000 Indigenous people in Saskatchewan may experience some level of food insecurity.



Current national and Prairie-region data suggest:

Approximately 41% of Indigenous children aged 1–14 live in food-insecure households.

Among First Nations children living off reserve in the Prairies, the rate rises to 49%.

35% of Métis children experience food insecurity.

14% of Indigenous children experience severe food insecurity, including missed meals and reduced food intake

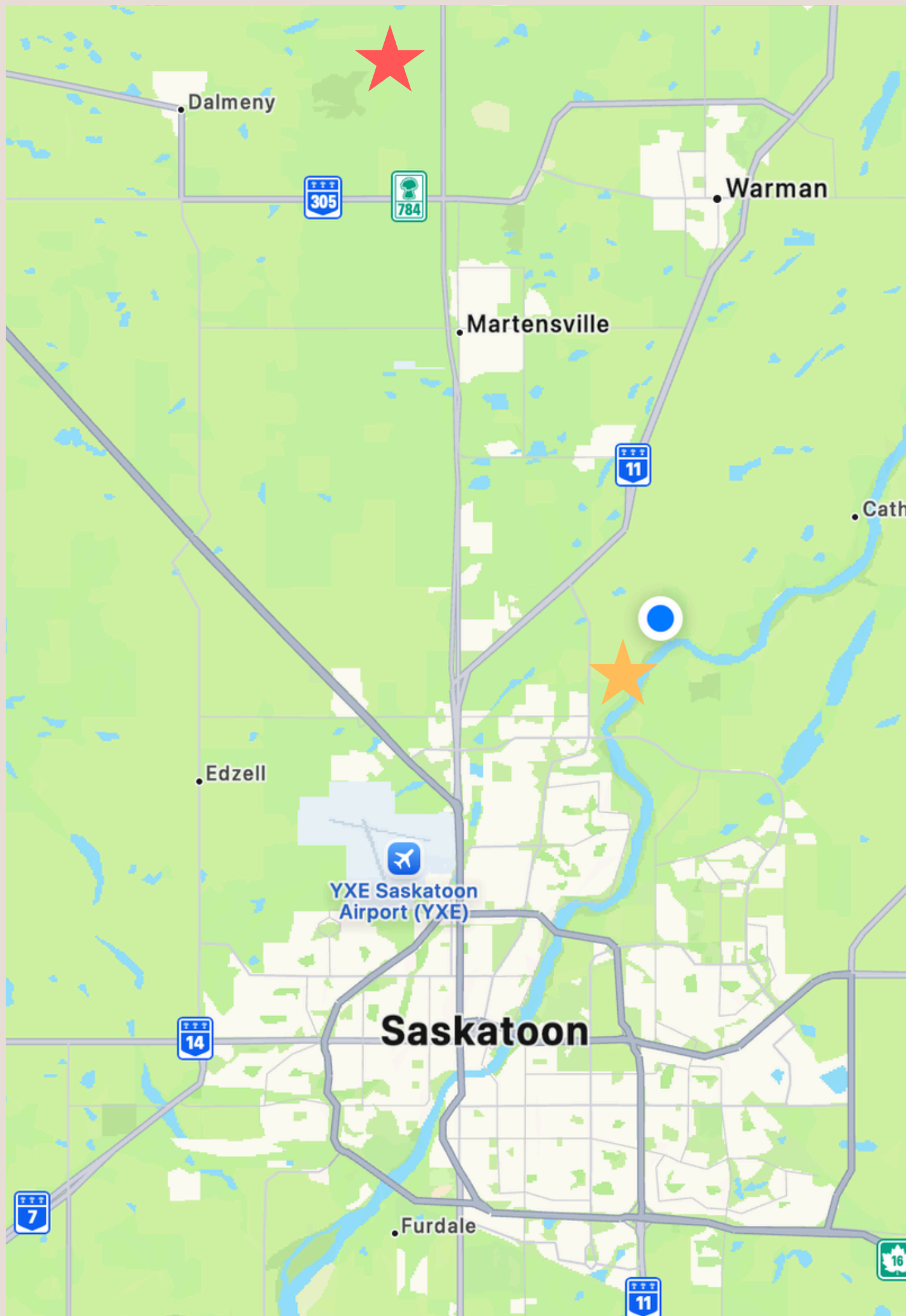


URBAN INDIGENOUS

There are at least 82,000 Indigenous people living in Saskatchewan's major urban centers. Folks may not have access to lands, waters, traditional foods, gardens, harvesting or medicines.

During the 2021 Census, 187,890 residents of the province self-identified as Indigenous, and over 44% of that population (more than 83,000 individuals) resided in cities

- **Saskatoon: 34,890**
- **Regina: 24,520**
- **Prince Albert: 18,135**



May Long Weekend 2026: Garden is Planted



What we're up to...

September, 2025: Removed Old Fencing





**November, 2026:
Fenced 60 Acred**



7 yearlings arriving: July 15, 2026

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NOURISHING GENERATIONS WITH LOVE, LAND, AND TRADITION

Rematriating Bison supports the return of bison to Indigenous lands through Indigenous-led, relationship-based approaches.

REMATERIATE (VERB)

To return land, life, knowledge, authority, and responsibility to their original, life-holding relations often carried through women, kinship systems, and Earth-centred law, after disruption by extraction or severance.





Rematriating Bison is an Indigenous women-led, community-rooted initiative aimed at improving food security, maternal-child health, and food sovereignty among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit families in Saskatchewan.

By distributing culturally appropriate Good Food Boxes that include bison meat, traditional foods, and fresh produce, this project addresses systemic challenges of food insecurity and health disparities.

Rooted in Indigenous matriarchal governance, the initiative revitalizes traditional food systems, promotes community wellness, and restores dignity and autonomy to Indigenous families.





- 1. Meat for Mommas**
- 2. Good Food Garden Boxes**
- 3. Egg a Day Program**
- 4. Land Based Learning & Connection**
- 5. For consideration: School Food Program- Procurement**

Get in touch...

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<https://www.rematriatebison.ca>



From Farm- To Distribution-To School-To Child



REMATRIATING
BiSON



Miigwetch!
Thank you.

Chris Chipak

Red Pheasant Creek Nation, SK