

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Thunder Bay District
Health Unit**

Food Self-Determination for First Nations: An Interactive workshop to support the Implementation of Community Food Plans

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit will be hosting a gathering, Understanding Our Food Systems, for fourteen (14) road accessible First Nations and invited guests from January 22nd to 24th. The three-day event will explore food security and food self-determination as part of a project to support First Nations' to establish and implement community food plans. The gathering will build long-term support networks and host interactive workshops and knowledge sharing activities.

"[This event aims to support First Nations in creating and leading self-determined community food projects. These projects are a way to use food to address the social and economic conditions that impact individual and community health]," says Silva Sawula, Manager of Health Living from the Thunder Bay District Health Unit. Indigenous food-self-determination uses food as a tool for reconciliation and resurgence by creating the space to reclaim and weave Indigenous knowledge into the region's food systems. The gathering will also welcome supporters from across Northern Ontario and Manitoba including Tides Canada, the Indigenous Food Circle, Roots to Harvest, Lakehead University, the Local Food and Farming Coop Network, the Northwestern Ontario Women's Association, the Thunder Bay Good Food Box and the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre. Rich Francis, Chef and Owner of Seventh Fire Hospitality Group, will serve as a keynote speaker and cater the gathering utilizing traditional food from the region.

The gathering will be held at the Regional Food Distribution Agency (RFDA). Day 1 will involve the preparation of traditional foods and participants will be encouraged to meet other guests, engage with traditional food preparation techniques and share their community's stories.

The second day of the gathering will include discussions about Indigenous Food Sovereignty, Pathways of Resilience and improving traditional food access for Urban Indigenous Peoples along with other collaborative sessions. An invitation only session will be held on Day 3 during which the First Nations communities will work to implement their food plans with organizations led by and supporting Indigenous food self-determination in the region "We decided to hold two types of events, one for public attendance and one only for the communities and supporting partners, to ensure we created prosperous discussions to develop the community plans regarding transportation, growing food in the North and other relevant topics" says Jessica McLaughlin, event coordinator.

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit engages in many healthy eating projects including the Understanding Our Food Systems Project which is a funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care through the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program. The project has been supporting

fourteen (14) First Nation Communities in Northern Ontario to further develop and implement strategies that will determine their community food systems, while providing a regional scan of probable solutions and methods to develop regional approaches for Northern communities and its encompassing organizations and their food system goals.

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For more information:

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