



# Food is Our Medicine

*An Indigenous  
Foodways  
Learning Journey*

**Welcome Guide**



**NOURISH**

**Welcome to the Nourish**  
***Food is Our Medicine* Action**  
**Learning series. In this Welcome**  
**Guide, we'll share an overview of**  
**the *Learning Journey*, the *online***  
***resource library*, and some specific**  
**ways that you can get involved.**

## **About Nourish**

Nourish aims to use the power of food to build health for people and the planet. We are a national community of practice empowering health care leadership in climate action and health equity. We work across community, institutional, and policy scales to steward innovation to transition to a more preventative, equitable, sustainable health system.

[NourishLeadership.ca](https://NourishLeadership.ca)



# The Learning Journey

**Food is Our Medicine** invites diverse health care staff – such as senior leaders, physicians, nurses, food service directors – to embark on a personal Learning Journey. A variety of multimedia resources provide the backbone for learning, reflecting and engaging on colonization, Indigenous histories and cultures, Indigenous foodways, and steps towards decolonized food in health care.

From these personal Learning Journeys we hope to create a groundswell of decolonization of food in health care and reconciliation in action from coast to coast to coast. Highlighting Indigenous histories, voices, stories, and ways of knowing, this work honours that **our food is our medicine**.

Through this Action Learning Series, we hope to:

- Build the understanding and narrative that **Food is our Medicine**; recognizing and valuing the wisdom in Indigenous foodways and the diversity of practices
- Provide health care leaders with knowledge and tools to decolonize food in health care and use it as an organizational pathway to deepen conversations about systemic racism and reconciliation
- Inspire action, engagement and responsibility around Indigenous Foodways in health care settings

The **Learning Journey** is a five part, fifteen hour, self-paced virtual Learning Journey. Participating in the Learning Journey includes:

- Readings
- Videos
- Journaling prompts
- Certificate of completion

[Click here to sign up for the Learning Journey](#)

The online **resource library** brings together information, knowledge, tools and supports for advancing Indigenous foodways in health care. Resource themes include:

- Indigenous foods and food systems
- Traditional and country food programs
- Food sovereignty
- Indigenous ways of knowing
- Culturally mindful health care
- Food safety
- Organizational policy and toolkits

[Click here to see the online resource library](#)

## Who Should Participate

Are you a health care professional (physician, nurse, administrator, food service team, social worker, dietitian, or policy and program professional) who is:

- Interested in learning more about Indigenous perspectives, worldviews, and foodways?
- Wondering how to be more culturally mindful in the care that you provide?
- Curious about systems thinking and how to be part of meaningful change?
- Aware of the Indigenous health gap and curious about Indigenous experiences with the health care system?
- Committed to participating in reconciliation?
- Eager to learn about traditional Indigenous food programs across Canada?
- Wanting to incorporate more Indigenous foodways and programming at your organization and don't know where or how to start?

If you answered yes to any or all of these questions, this Learning Journey is for you.

## How to Participate

There are many ways to participate:

- **Sign up for the Learning Journey**  
Find allies and make a shared commitment to taking the Learning Journey together.
- **Check out our paid programming**  
Which includes FIOM Virtual Learning Circles, where participants will have access to interactive virtual sessions with Nourish's Indigenous Program Manager, exploring themes in the Learning Journey.
- **Explore the online resource library**  
Check out our library of multimedia resources.
- **Share on social media**  
Get access to messages you can copy and paste, graphics, and more.
- **Share the poster art**  
Want to encourage your colleagues to think about reconciliation and decolonization? Print and post these in your workplace.
- **Host a film screening**  
Invite your colleagues to a virtual screening of the short films, *Why Hospital Food Matters for Reconciliation* or *Miichim*.

# Why We Created the Learning Journey

The **Food is Our Medicine** Learning Journey is designed to introduce health care professionals and leaders to ways of understanding the complex relationships between Indigenous foodways, reconciliation, healing and health care. It was created in response to a gap Nourish found in the resources, practice, and literature related to Indigenous foodways in health care settings.

Nourish fields many requests from health care leaders for Indigenous recipes, but these requests can skip over a critical step: addressing the legacy of colonization and the history of systemic racism that have led to the exclusion of Indigenous foodways and wisdom from health care in Canada to begin with. Introducing traditional foods into health care is not solely the work of nutrition and food service teams, but of the whole hospital or whole health organization.

For many of us, formal education in Canada did not include learning about the history, identities, and languages of Indigenous peoples. Rarely were Indigenous voices or perspectives welcomed into the classroom. This has changed in recent years. Since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Final Report in 2015 and Canada's subsequent adoption of the Commission's 94 Calls to Action, as well as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, students in primary and secondary schools have been learning more about Indigenous communities.

This Learning Journey, which highlights and amplifies Indigenous voices to contextualize Indigenous foodways work, is our modest contribution to these national and international efforts.

We are offering this Learning Journey to cultivate a positive mindset that inspires a transition to more just and equitable futures and that inspires health care champions to (re)connect with the sacredness of food. This includes understanding the relationship of food to culture, land, and history. We hope that you will come to understand that food is a gift, alive with spirit. Revitalizing Indigenous food practices within the health care system is one critical pathway for reconciliation.

**We'll see you on the journey!**

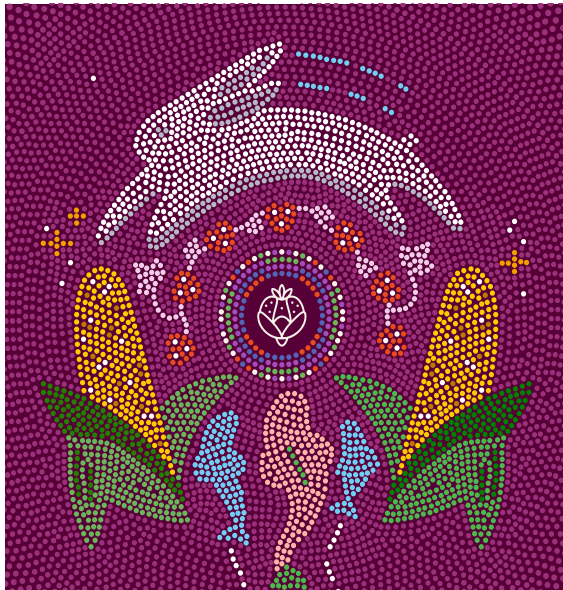
From the the Nourish Team and the Indigenous & Allies Advisory, Hayley Lapalme, Mair Greenfield, Tessie Harris, and Kelly Gordon

# An Overview of the Learning Journey

**Food is Our Medicine** is a five-part, fifteen hour, self-paced virtual Learning Journey, which you can think of as follows:

- The Introduction, Fall and Winter focus on the **WHO** and **WHY**
- Spring focuses on the **WHAT**
- Summer focuses on the **HOW**

The trajectory of this journey mimics the four seasons, which are so intricately linked to foodways. Within each season (module) are several key teachings. Here is an overview of the content within each season on the right.



## Fall: Seeing the Path (4 teachings)

- Introducing two-eyed seeing and systems thinking
- Situating yourself and the work on the land
- Looking at the impacts of colonization on the health care experiences and foodways of Indigenous peoples in Canada

## Winter: Ways of Relating (4 teachings)

- Recognizing the relational aspects of foods and foodways
- Moving toward reconciliation in health care
- Understanding and supporting cultural mindfulness in health care

## Spring: Coming to Know (4 teachings)

- Showing examples of traditional food guides, stories, and teachings
- Exploring and celebrating the diversity of Indigenous foodways
- Highlighting the essentiality of self determination, and offering examples of community driven responses to COVID-19

## Summer: Ways of Doing (4 teachings)

- Discussing current barriers to Indigenous foods in health care
- Highlighting existing traditional food programs in health care settings and examples of policies and tools
- Offering options for next steps

The seasons are meant to be completed one after the other, starting with the Introduction and moving into Fall. Each season includes:

- **Resources** that provide an overview of key themes in the history and complexities of Indigenous foodways in health care. The resources, which include videos, articles, reports, and podcast episodes, are accessed through embedded links. They can also be found in the [resource library](#) on the Nourish website.
- **Journaling prompts** will be provided after each teaching. You will need to answer these in order to complete the course.
- **Reflection questions and activities** are provided to help you further engage with what you read, see, and hear in the resources. They are provided as extra learning, and are not mandatory to complete the course.

We propose that you dedicate **approximately 15 hours** to completing the Learning Journey (the times provided for each teaching are relative estimates that reflect the number and nature of the resources you will encounter).



# Commitment to the Journey

## Certificate and Pin

Nourish worked with Brittney Gauthier of Michipicoten First Nation to design and create beaded pins. Brittney and the Nourish Indigenous and Allies Advisory held a ceremony offering smudge, song, feast and ceremony, in addition to offering thoughts, well wishes and prayers to bless the pins for the learners who earned them. These beaded pins were offered as a gift on behalf of Nourish and the Nourish Indigenous and Allies Advisory. Accepting to wear the pin represents a commitment to continue the journey to uphold Indigenous foodways and advance reconciliation and decolonization in health care.

You may see this pin being worn in health care settings. It was gifted to the first 200 learners who completed their Learning Journey!



*Photo courtesy of RallyRally.*

## Artist Statement

### **Brittney Gauthier**

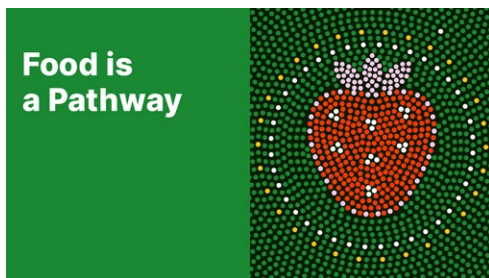
Beadwork Artist

Aanin, Brittney deshnicaz. Michipicoten First Nation doonjibaa. North Bay doondaa. Anishinaabe kwe ndow.

Hello, my name is Brittney Gauthier. I am an anishinaabe/Ojibway woman from Michipicoten First Nation and I currently reside in North Bay, Ontario. I have been beading (sewing & painting) for about 9 years now and have been cultivating my talents as a traditional Indigenous Artisan who runs “BrittNAYs Beaded Beauties”, instagram handle: [@BrittNAYsbeadedbeauties](https://www.instagram.com/BrittNAYsbeadedbeauties). I incorporate the sacred medicines when I bead and it is very important to me to include spirit beads within my work so I will share a spirit bead teaching here. Spirit beads are a concept that use a single (or multiple) beads that are purposefully misplaced that may occur outside the pattern or ‘look like it does not belong’ but serves an important function. Spirit beads are placed to be recognized and act as an important reminder that everything is a spirit inhabiting a being, body, plant or animal. A spirit bead is also placed as part of the seven grandfather teachings including; honesty, courage, love, respect, humility, truth and wisdom. Humility means to remember where you come from, who taught you the skills that you have, and to recognize that you are never perfect and should not hold yourself above other spirits, which is why you place a spirit bead outside of the pattern to keep yourself humble. Spirit beads also recognize other spirits in our beadwork. When your beadwork depicts an image that takes the form of a spirit, it can look like a person, an animal, a plant etc. and that visual depiction brings that spirit into the beadwork through the placement of a spirit bead.



# Imagery



## Artist Statement

**Mariah Meawasige**  
Designer/Illustrator

I am an Anishinaabekwe / settler from the northern shores of Lake Huron (Genaabajing [Serpent River First Nation] and Elliot Lake) but I've been working out of Toronto since graduating from OCAD University.

Food is a pathway between past and future ancestors and a critical part of staying well and feasting our spirits. Food, knowledge, and stories are cyclical and so the elements that came together to form our symbols and imagery are as well. I appreciate the thoughtfulness and introspection involved in beadwork, so it was both a pleasure and a learning opportunity to weave these connections through digital beadwork.

Joining with Brittnay Gauthier, RallyRally, and Nourish on this project has been a tremendous opportunity for me to reflect on what it means to take part in nourishment. My hope for the imagery we've shared is that it evokes the same within you.

# Acknowledgements

Food is Our Medicine emerged as a vision of the Nourish Indigenous & Allies Advisory and was developed by the Nourish team in collaboration with many partners. It is a heart-driven collaboration between many Indigenous and settler leaders, health care professionals, knowledge keepers, and advocates. In addition to all the authors and media-makers whose work is featured in the Learning Journey and online resource library, we offer our gratitude to all those who contributed their time, energy, perspectives and knowledge:

## Writers

Terrelyn Fearn, Glooscap First Nation (Turtle Island Institute)  
Melanie Goodchild, Biigtigong Nishnaabeg First Nation (Turtle Island Institute)  
Mair Greenfield, Kebaowek First Nation (Nourish)  
Tessie Harris, European settler (Nourish Indigenous & Allies Advisory)  
Hayley Lapalme, French-Canadian settler (Nourish)  
Elisa Levi, Chippewas of Nawash First Nation

## Nourish Indigenous & Allies Advisory

Shelly Crack, Northern Health  
Jenny Cross, Haida Knowledge Keeper  
Margaret Edgars, Haida Elder  
Kelly Gordon, Kanyen'keha (Mohawk), Six Nations Health Services  
May Henderson, Métis Elder  
Kathy Loon, Slate Falls First Nation, Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre  
Maurice Mathieu, Métis, Saskatchewan Health Authority  
Meeka Otway, Inuk Knowledge Keeper  
Charlotte Pilat Burns, Métis, Saskatchewan Health Authority  
Laura Salmon, Nak'azdli First Nation, Yukon Hospitals

## Additional Contributors

Kaylee Alton  
Laura Blakeman  
Jenn Chow  
George Couchie, Nipissing First Nation, Redtail Hawk  
Suzanne House  
Marshal Johnson  
Kitty R. Lynn Lickers, Six Nations of the Grand River  
Adrienne Lickers-Xavier, Six Nations of the Grand River  
Be Marshall  
Jared Qwustenuxun Williams, Cowichan Tribes  
Yellowhead Institute, an Indigenous-led research and education centre based in the Faculty of Arts at Toronto Metropolitan University

## Creative Team

Briteweb, Digital Agency  
Dimitra Chronopoulos, Editor  
Brittney Gauthier, Michipicoten First Nation, Beadwork Artist  
RallyRally, Design Studio  
Mariah Meawasige, Anishinaabekwe/settler from the northern shores of Lake Huron (Genaabajing (Serpent River First Nation) and Elliot Lake, Designer/Illustrator

## Nourish Team

Rachel Cheng, Communications Manager  
Mair Greenfield, Kebaowek First Nation, Program Manager  
Hayley Lapalme, Co-Director  
Jennifer Reynolds, Co-Director

## Funders



## Contributor



# Chi-miigwech, Nya:wen, Haawa, Mahsi Cho



Get in touch if you have further questions about the initiative, or if you'd like to learn about getting more involved with Nourish and the *Food is Our Medicine* Learning Journey.

[IndigenousFoodways@nourishleadership.ca](mailto:IndigenousFoodways@nourishleadership.ca)