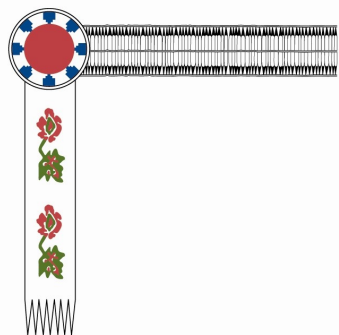


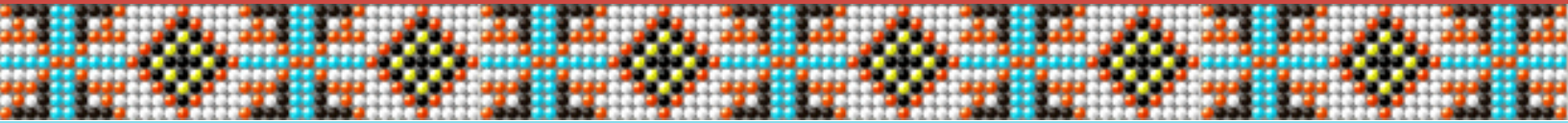
Native Women's Association of Canada

*Diabetes Self-Management Toolkit  
for Aboriginal Women*

# Healthy Living



Native Women's  
Association of Canada



## Healthy Living

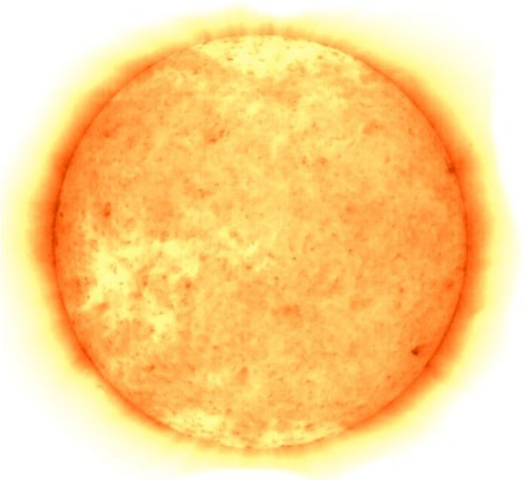
***It is said, that as we grow we change like the seasons, moving through our life cycle living and learning and expanding our understanding of life. This we share with ourselves and with others so that our learning continues into the generations to come.***

This booklet has been developed to provide you with ideas on healthy living. You'll find some practical ideas and suggestions as well as information that may help you make better use of resources in your community. Above all, and across all spectrums is the wisdom within ourselves that acknowledges the need to enjoy life and live it well. This can mean different things to different people, yet one element remains consistent, and that is to have fun doing what you are doing.

In that spirit, as you read this booklet, think of ways to make everyday activities fun. A chore may seem like just a chore if it is viewed that way, but that same chore can be viewed in many ways. For example, yard care and maintenance serves many functions, and the most obvious is the visual nature of a nice looking lawn, but consider other points such as its impact on the neighbourhood, providing a safe and clean play area for your children or grandchildren, the supply of fresh herbs, fruits and vegetables that can come from the garden, as well as the health benefits to yourself and those who assist you.

The first part of this booklet looks at more practical ways to healthy living in terms of food resources, the second part of the booklet focuses on active living and traditional activities. An attempt was made to balance the content with the space available, while providing enough information to assist you.

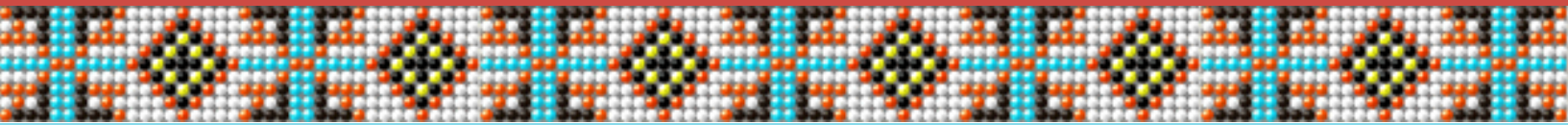
As you go through this booklet, you may think of many ways to inspire healthy living for both yourself and family as well as community. Several pages have been made available for you to record your thoughts, notes and ideas.



***“Honour the sun, that it may bless you to come another day...”***

*Quote from the book, “Honour The Sun” by Ojibwa author Ruby Slipperjack.*





# Medicine Wheel

***The Medicine Wheel is an ancient symbol of the Aboriginal peoples of North America and remains with us today.***

No discussion on healthy living can begin without first bringing into view the traditions and culture of the Aboriginal people of North America. The most common and most accepted concept is that of the Medicine Wheel. It is with this understanding that the NWAC incorporated a more holistic approach in the NWAC Diabetes Action Plan and Model.

The Medicine Wheel symbol is an ancient one, the two images on the upper right hand side is the Big Horn Medicine Wheel, located in Big Horn County, Wyoming. It is part of many sites within the area that documents over 7000 years of land usage by the Aboriginal people of the area. Across the northern part of the United States and in southern Canada, over 70 Medicine Wheels have been found.



Today, we are more familiar with the circular symbol to the left, and have incorporated many teachings around it. Some of these teachings focus on the four directions or quadrants which are often identified as: Spiritual, Emotional, Mental, and Physical.

There are variations with the Medicine Wheel symbol and its quadrants along with its many uses and teachings. Each with their own way of doing things in a good way.

The two bottom images depict Medicine Wheels that are more recent, you will note that the Sedona example shows the four quadrants, while the lower image is a combination of the old and new. Many people, even those living in urban settings have created their own Medicine Wheels in their back yards, and as special places within their community gardens, and parks. This may be something to consider for yourself and your community.



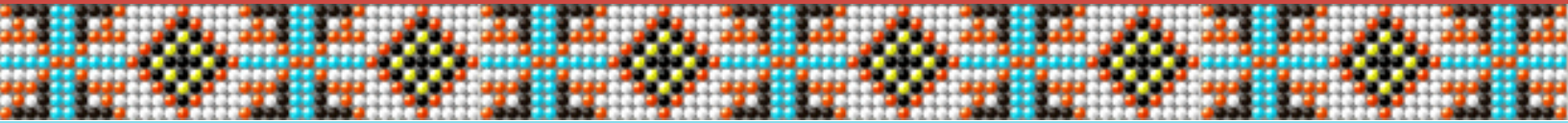
*Big Horn Medicine Wheel*



*Sedona Medicine Wheel*



*Medicine Wheel*



## Community Gardens

***Community gardens can be a great source for healthy inexpensive fruits and vegetables, and exercise while having fun and making new friends in your community.***

### **So, what is a community garden?**

Simply stated, a community garden is a group of people that come together to garden. There are no hard and fast rules on what shape and size community gardens should be. Some are large, others are small, they can be on the ground, on rooftops, in plots, in raised beds or in planters. Many community gardens are a mix of all these types.

Community gardens can be “communal” where everyone shares the work and harvest, or allow for people to have their own plot. Many community gardens are a combination of both, for example, instead of having individual plots where everyone plants 4 or 5 corn plants, a communal plot may be set up for corn as it is the type of plant that grows best in “blocks”.

### **What should be grown in a community garden?**

The beauty of community gardens, is its versatility. You are not limited to vegetables, you can grow fruit, herbs, and even flowers. Some communities recognize a need for more natural gardens and will designate space for a butterfly garden, a bird garden or a woodland garden. You can even have a garden of traditional plants, such as sweet grass, sage, and other medicinal plants.

### **What time commitment is needed for a community garden?**

In general, each gardener should spend enough time in their garden so that their plot is maintained and as weed free as possible. How much time will depend on the size of the plot, as well as organized communal tasks. Most community gardens hold a couple of group work days every year, for spring and fall clean up and improvement projects like building a seating area. Every community garden is different and will establish rules around participation, maintenance and group work days.

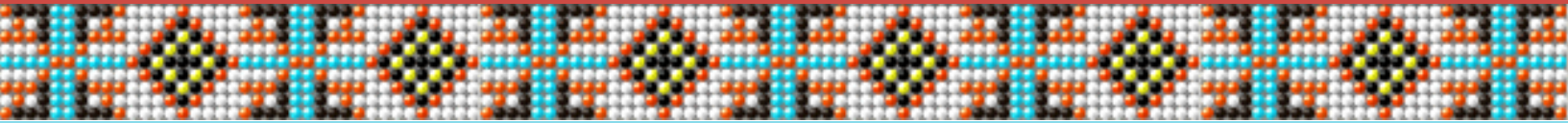


### ***Community Garden Idea***

#### ***The Three Sisters Garden***

*See page 9 in the Traditional Foods booklet for information on how to plant your very own Three Sisters garden.*





# Starting a Community Garden

## **How can I start a community garden?**

First, talk to your friends and neighbors about it. Any group of at least 3 to 5 committed people can build a community garden. They can be part of an organized group or can just be an informal group of friends, neighbors, or relatives.

## **Community Garden Location**

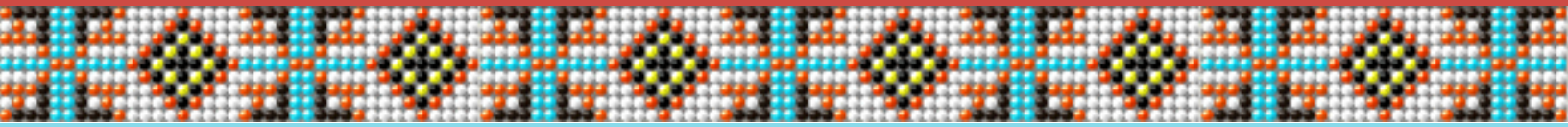
If you live in an urban area, contact your municipality for information on community gardens, you may be pleasantly surprised that many have established community garden start-up information kits on how to go about selecting a location for your community garden. Ideally, you'll need an agreement to use the land for at least five years, public land such as parks, service centres, schools, apartments, or churches can be good choices. Regardless of the location, the garden should be close to the gardeners who will maintain it.

## **Making It Happen**

Gardening is not complicated, but it's a good idea to have some experience. Read up on how to start a garden and on the type of plants that will be in your garden. Once your group has a plan, a location and some knowledge of gardening, you will need materials, tools, fertilizer, seeds and/or transplants. Ask around for materials, some community gardens are able to exchange "advertising" services for materials. For example, a plant nursery or hardware store may "trade" materials for advertising on your community garden signage, newsletter, website blog, or community garden social network site (i.e., facebook, twitter).

Once the garden is in place, production is fast. Most garden plots need about an hour of maintenance per week. Plan to spend a few hours for planting crops each season, and at harvest time anticipate spending 1 hour per week reaping the fruits of your labor. Enjoy, have fun, and plan for next year!





# Good Food Box Programs

***Eating nutritiously, preserving the environment and staying within a budget is no easy task, but Good Food Box Programs can make it easier to reach those goals!***

## **What are Good Food Boxes?**

Most people have heard of Food Banks and may have used them, but surprisingly few have heard about Good Food Box programs that are available in many communities. The Good Food Box is a non-profit program for families and individuals who want to purchase high-quality, fresh, local produce at a lower price than grocery stores. Each box usually contains the same mix of food, with the contents changing depending on the season and harvest.

## **How Food Boxes Work**

Most food box programs operate like large buying clubs with centralized buying and coordination. Twice a month, or weekly, people place orders, usually with a volunteer coordinator. These orders are by the box size and sized according to the number of people per household. These orders are picked up by the people at a neighborhood location, some programs offer home delivery.

## **Benefits of Food Boxes**

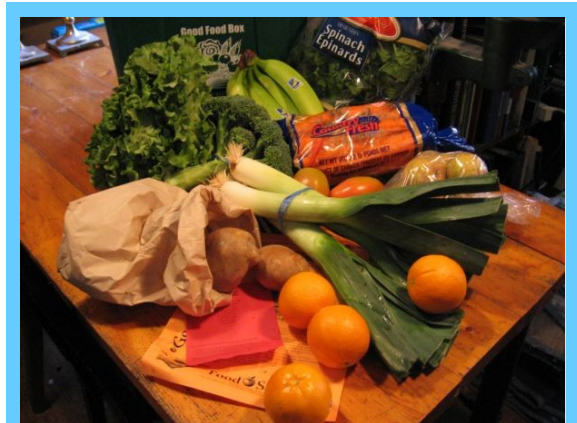
You and your family can enjoy a box filled with fresh, local and in-season produce on a regular basis at drastically reduced prices compared to the local grocery store. Most Good Food Box programs buy local produce which means that you and your family are receiving produce that is locally grown, making your meal plans better for you!

## **Good Food Box Programs In Your Area:**

Phone your local municipality or go online to your favorite search engine and type: "good food box *your community*"  
Or Visit: [www.foodshare.net/train13.htm](http://www.foodshare.net/train13.htm)

## **How to Start A Program In Your Community:**

Free PDF Download available at:  
[www.foodshare.net/publications\\_04.htm](http://www.foodshare.net/publications_04.htm)



*Example of Good Food Box in Ottawa, On.*

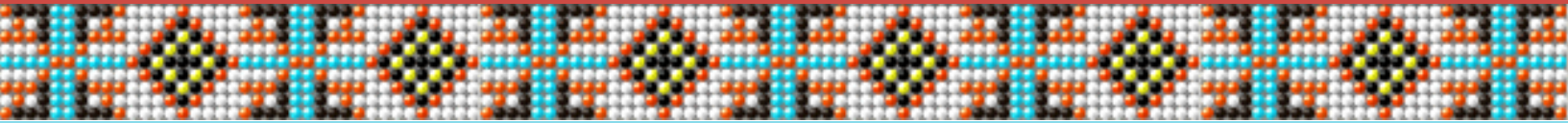
### \$10.00 Box Contains:

- Potatoes, 5lbs \*
- Onions, cooking, 1lbs \*
- Carrots, 1lbs \*
- Cauliflower, 1 \*
- Pumpkin, 1 \*
- Lettuce, romaine, 1 \*
- Apples, Spartan, 6 \*
- Leeks, 1 \*
- Green Pepper, 1 \*
- Pears, Bartlett, 4
- Banana's, 3
- Pink Grapefruit, 2
- Avocado, 1
- Tomato, 1

Contents may vary depending on season and harvest.

\* = Locally Grown Produce





## Food Banks

***In Canada today, there is a growing gap between rich and poor, with the richest 10% of families earning 75 times more than the poorest 10%. Food insecurity and poverty is a real issue that every day people must deal with.***

### **Food Banks**

Food banks can differ from community to community, but most will provide a household with a basket of food on a bi-weekly or monthly, as-needed basis. Generally, the amount of food provided will be no more than a few days worth and the nutritional value is low. This is because perishable food items, like fruits, vegetables, fresh meats and dairy, cannot be included.

Most food banks acquire food from individual or corporate donations. You may have noticed that many major grocery shopping chains provide donation bins for your local food bank.

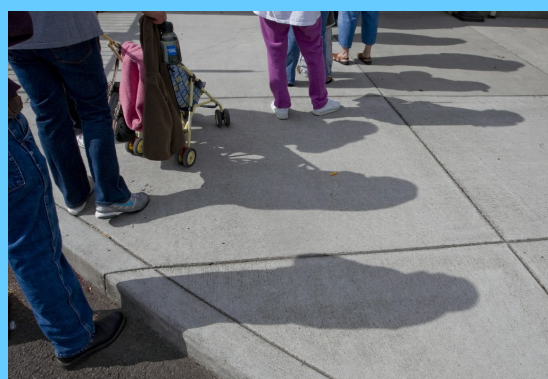
While food banks do provide a very necessary service, they are not a long-term solution. In fact, since the conception of food banks in the 1980s, the problem of food insecurity has more than doubled and more people are trying to access these services. This trend is likely to continue as the gap between rich and poor grows.

Being food secure means that a person can obtain food in a manner that maintains human dignity. Many people who use the services of food bank, despite the provision of food, cannot ever fully absolve food insecurity seeing as the use of a food bank can be very stigmatizing.

### **Food Banks Canada**

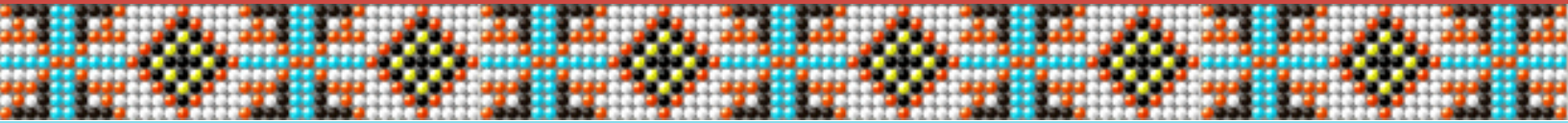
This is a national organization that represents the food bank community across Canada. Food Banks Canada's mission is to reduce hunger in Canada by enabling an effective food bank community that addresses the short term need for food and longer term solutions. Visit their website for more information and ways to become active in your community.

Website: [www.foodbankscanada.ca](http://www.foodbankscanada.ca)



### ***Food Bank Statistics***

- *85% of people access food banks nation-wide*
- *In an average month in 2009, close to 800,000 different people used food banks, 37% were children*
- *Recent immigrants and Aboriginal people make up a significant percentage of individuals assisted by food banks*
- *12% of Aboriginal people in Canada use food banks, regional and provincial differences can vary substantially*
- *In Saskatoon, 62.5% of persons assisted by a food bank were Aboriginal*
- *Number of food banks in Canada: 884 and 2,906 affili-*



## Breakfast Programs

*We've all heard it before, that breakfast is the most important meal of the day! It is what gets us going and gives us the energy needed to start the day right.*

### **Breakfast Statistics:**

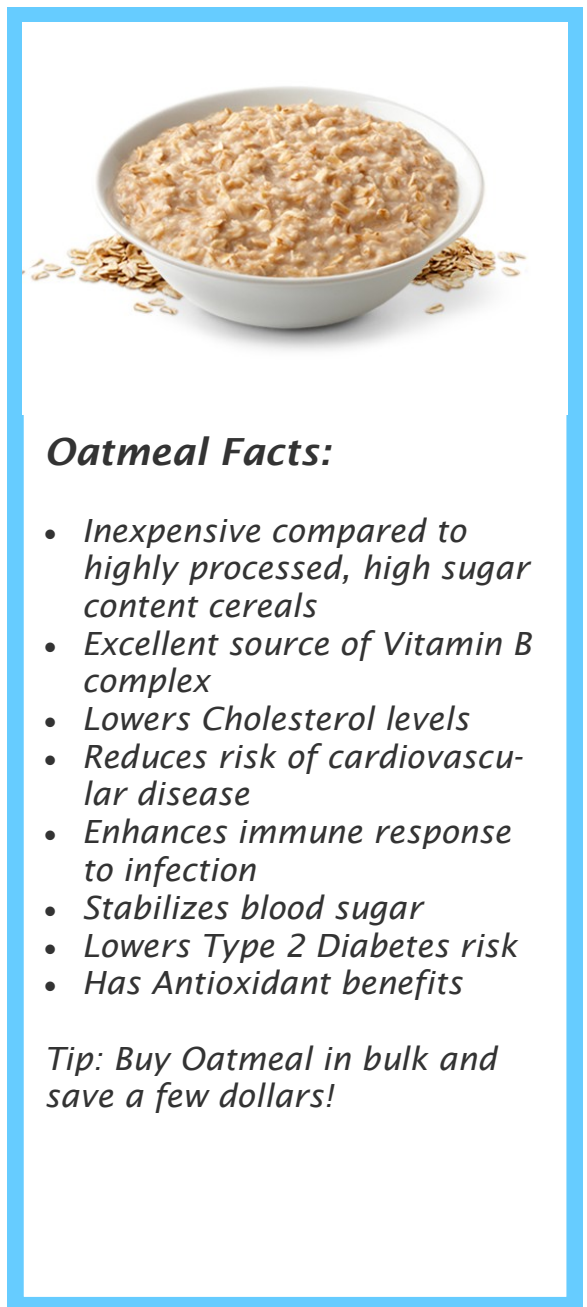
One in 10 Canadian children (10%) live in poverty and are at risk of starting their day on an empty stomach. For Aboriginal children on-reserve, one in 4 children (25%) live in poverty, and 40% of off-reserve Aboriginal children live in poverty.

One of the recommendations arising from Aboriginal women regarding the development of this Toolkit was the need to emphasize the importance of breakfast. And where, issues such as poverty make breakfast a challenge, they suggested the use of breakfast programs in schools. Check to see if there is a breakfast program in your child's school, if there isn't one, inquire about starting one. Talk to other parents about whether they have an interest in starting a breakfast program, talk to the school, call the school board. We have supplied on the following page, two sources that fund breakfast programming for school age children.

### **Benefits of Breakfast:**

Our children deserve the best, and of all the meals we can provide for them, breakfast is the best! In fact many of us, may have heard our parents tell us that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. This fact remains true, and in the case of people with diabetes, it is crucial in maintaining blood sugar control.

Our children are naturally inquisitive. They will ask "why is breakfast important?" You can tell them that a good breakfast fuels you up and gets you ready for the day, breakfast is brain power! Without it, you may feel tired, restless or irritable. Plus, breakfast helps with weight control, studies have proven that people who don't eat breakfast often consume more calories throughout the day!

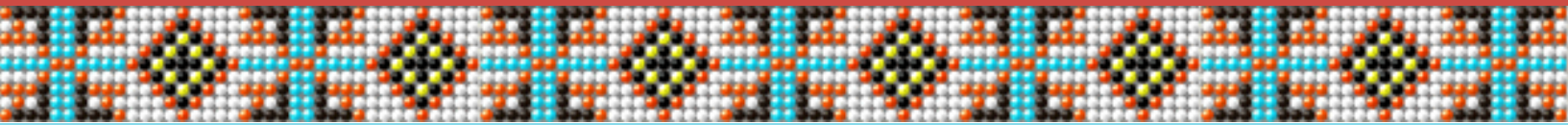


### **Oatmeal Facts:**

- *Inexpensive compared to highly processed, high sugar content cereals*
- *Excellent source of Vitamin B complex*
- *Lowers Cholesterol levels*
- *Reduces risk of cardiovascular disease*
- *Enhances immune response to infection*
- *Stabilizes blood sugar*
- *Lowers Type 2 Diabetes risk*
- *Has Antioxidant benefits*

*Tip: Buy Oatmeal in bulk and save a few dollars!*





## **Breakfast for Learning**

Website: [www.breakfastforlearning.ca](http://www.breakfastforlearning.ca)

Breakfast for learning is a national non-profit organization solely dedicated to child nutrition programs in Canada. Visit their website to discover how to start a breakfast program in your school, applying for grants in your province or territory, and other valuable information. The resource page has free downloads for you to use: Start Up Kit, Expense Summary, Breakfast for Learning's Menu Planner Template, and Monthly Tracking Form. Other resources include, Sample Menu Plans and recipes.

### Contact Information:

Breakfast for Learning National Office  
164 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 400  
Toronto, Ontario. M4P 1G4

Telephone: 416-487-1046    Toll-Free: 1-800-627-7922    Fax: 416-487-1837

## **Breakfast Clubs of Canada**

Website: [www.breakfastclubscanada.org](http://www.breakfastclubscanada.org)

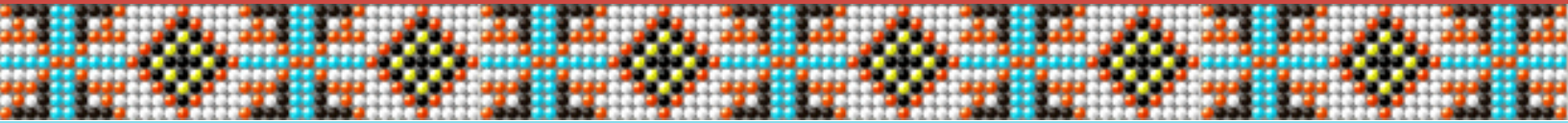
Breakfast Clubs of Canada is a national non-profit organization dedicated to providing services and funding to school breakfast programs. Visit their website to review program standards, admissibility criteria and so much more. The Breakfast Program Grant Application form is also available on the website.

### Contact Information:

Josée Desjardins at 1-866-794-4900

## **Setting a Good Example, and Eat Your Oatmeal!**

All children, young and old imitate the behavior of the adults around them. If they see you eating a healthy breakfast, they too will want the same. In fact, children who observe their parents making healthy food choices grow to make healthy food choices. A good, cheap breakfast choice at home is oatmeal, a long time favorite for many families. Choose the “real stuff”, the plain oat flakes, not the “instant” version that is often flavored and contains sugars and other additives. Oatmeal is a good source of soluble and insoluble fiber, and nutrients including vitamin E, zinc, selenium, copper, iron, manganese and magnesium. It is also a good source of protein



## Active Living & You

*Exercise and staying fit need not be a chore, in fact it can be very fun! Why do push-ups when dancing in the sunset is just as good for you!*

### Enjoying Life

Sometimes we need to be reminded that all work and no play makes for a boring day, which can lead to inactivity, which can, over time lead to obesity, which can increase your risk of diabetes. With diabetes, we are often told to get more active, exercise, lose weight, and get fit. You may have even been told that doing household chores and yard related tasks is getting exercise, this can be true, but doesn't that sound like work?

Leading an active life, and enjoying it does not necessarily mean traditional types of physical exercise, such as push-ups, sit-ups, or lifting weights. It can mean so much more, and contribute to a healthier state of mind, making you feel better about yourself and your life.

Reflect on activities that are fun, things that you enjoy doing and find within those activities ones that also incorporate movement and physical control. Chances are these are activities that your family and friends would enjoy as well.

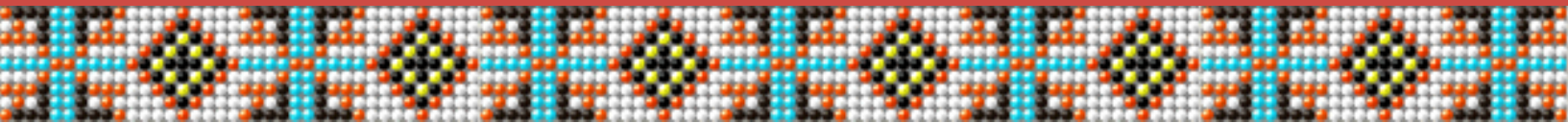
### Active Ways To Enjoy Life

Several suggesting for you to consider:

- Horseback Riding
- Bicycling
- Canoeing
- Hiking
- Dancing, Jigging
- Jogging
- Swimming
- Team Sports







### **Active Living**

As with many things, variety is the spice of life! If you've made the decision to be active every day you'll want to have a variety of activities, some you can do yourself, others are better suited to a group or a partner. Chances are you'll know someone who wants to make lifestyle changes, too, recruit them as your "activity buddy". Having an activity buddy has many benefits, from keeping you company, to safety, and of course, there may be a day when you're not in the mood to be active but your buddy will encourage you to get moving, and vice versa. Have an alternative activity if your buddy is unavailable, don't let that impact your routine!

Speaking of moods, a wonderful side effect to physical activity is that it boosts your mood as well as your metabolism. You will perk up after the activity, and feel more alive, happier. This is a good thing and will help you live life in a good way. .

### **Being Consistent**

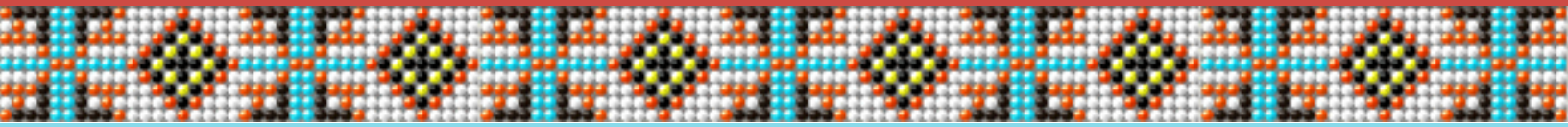
Consistency is vital to getting results from any activity you do. Being active two days this week and one day next week is good, but it won't peel away the pounds. To see results, you must be consistently active, but do so gradually, start at 30, 60, or 90 minutes a day and maintain this time, adjusting when necessary, but whatever your goal is, try to be active most days of the week.

Some people find that scheduling activity time is a good way to be consistent. Included in this toolkit is an activity tracker, you may find this quite useful. Remember as with all things, consult your health care professional before beginning any physical program or activity.

### **TV Time Can Be Physical Time Too**

We all do it don't we? Watch TV? According to Statistics Canada, Canadians watch an average of 22.7 hours per week of TV. You may watch more, you may watch less. This does not matter, what does count is what you do while watching TV, which doesn't have to be a sedentary activity. In fact, you can get double the reward by watching your favorite programs and working out, too.

This is where more common types of exercise activities can be worked into your daily schedule. Why not put your stationary bike or treadmill near the TV, and work out on it during a half-hour TV show, building up to an hour-long show. Do sit-ups, push-ups, and jumping jacks or jog in place during commercials instead of heading to the kitchen. Make it fun, let different family members lead activities during commercials. Rotate at every commercial break so that everyone gets a turn. In any case, have fun being active!



## Traditional Activities

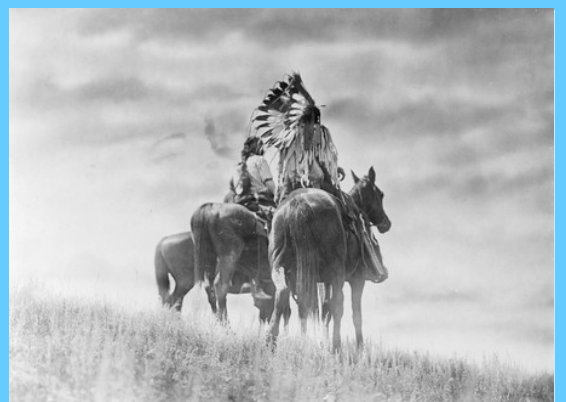
***Traditional activities among Aboriginal people are as diverse as the people themselves, but all functions served both community and family.***

The Aboriginal people of Canada have traditionally lived on the land as was given to us by the Creator. Each Nation of people have both similar and different types of traditional activities. Very often these activities relate to the lands upon which they lived and travelled on, such as hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering. Differences from region to region were mainly due to differences in land and terrain. For example, fishing on the West coast can be very different than fishing in the North or in the inland regions of the boreal forests.

In the so-called “modern” world, the use of the land in a traditional fashion may have changed for some Aboriginal people. This is especially so, as more Aboriginal people move into urban settings; the high rate of socio-economic challenges and poverty can limit their ability to return to their traditional lands, resulting in lost skills. For example, our youth today may know more about video games and navigating city transit systems than they do about snaring a rabbit, cleaning it, starting a fire and cooking it.

This is concerning for many Aboriginal people. Due to the potential of lost skill, diminishing cultural and traditional knowledge, many First Nation communities are now organizing traditional activities that are out on the land, away from communities and cities. While others have designated special traditional areas within their territories specific to these activities. In response to the many Aboriginal people living in urban centres, more and more Aboriginal organizations have included traditional activities within their programming.

As an individual, your choices will vary with your experience, location and abilities. These can be enhanced by the people in your community. Start a conversation today, about how to include more traditional activities into your day!



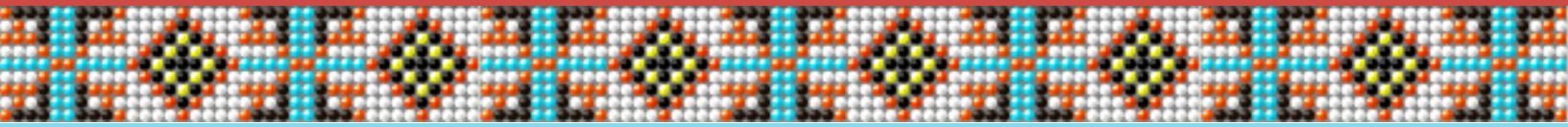
### ***Some Traditional Activities include:***

- *Hunting*
- *Fishing*
- *Trapping*
- *Gathering*
- *Ceremonial*
- *Sacred Uses*
- *Birch bark Basket Making*
- *Making Snowshoes*
- *Dogsled Construction*
- *Paddle Making*
- *Tanning Hides*
- *Tipi Construction*
- *Building a Sweat Lodge*

### ***Benefits can include:***

- *Increased self-esteem*
- *Cultural pride*
- *Cultural continuity*
- *Revival of Indigenous languages*
- *Pro-social behavior*
- *Community empowerment and mobilization*





### **Traditional Games**

All Nations across Turtle Island incorporated fun into their traditional activities, resulting in skill-building games and competitions that reinforced and taught elements required in day to day living. These games helped bridge the transition to adult activities. As an example, small children played hunting games with small bows, arrows, and spears, which helped develop hand-eye coordination and other skills needed to hunt and survive. Other types of games such as the cup and ball (or ring and pin), various string games, hand shadow games, and games of strength and endurance, helped develop eyesight, agility and creativity.

Traditional games such as lacrosse were viewed as a gift coming from the Creator as a means to teach its participants courage, honour, respect, generosity and fair play. Regardless of what type of traditional games were played, emphasized in each activity are skills that benefitted the community and individual.

### **Community Fun**

Increasingly, there is a move by Aboriginal communities to address incidents of obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases through the use of traditional activities and games. Some host several communities for a period of days in what may be called a mini-Olympics based on selected activities and games. Friendly competitions between communities and within communities can foster a greater sense of belonging to a proud and strong Nation. Other communities many hold numerous smaller events geared around identified needs, such as increasing language skills that involves Elders and youth coming together for game playing.

Regardless of what types of activities or “games” that are played, the emphasis should always be around good safe fun. Talk to your community about starting something up, all it takes are a few people to attract more people, and you’ve just started something new and exciting to do!



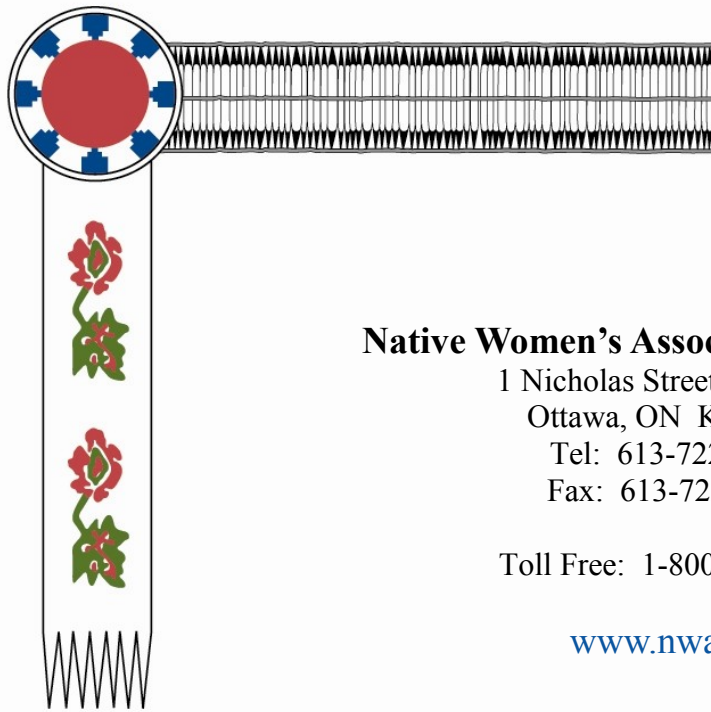
### ***Some Traditional Games Include:***

- *Lacrosse, also known as “Tewaarathon”*
- *Long Ball (similar to baseball)*
- *Double Ball (played by women and girls)*
- *Archery*
- *Pole Push*
- *Snow Snakes*
- *Bone Toss*
- *Canoe & Kayaking Races*
- *Snowshoe Races*
- *“Sacred Run”*









## **Native Women's Association of Canada**

### **Native Women's Association of Canada**

1 Nicholas Street, 9th Floor

Ottawa, ON K1N 7B7

Tel: 613-722-3033

Fax: 613-722-7687

Toll Free: 1-800-461-4043

[www.nwac.ca](http://www.nwac.ca)

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

**This toolkit was designed to supplement information and resources related to diabetes prevention, awareness and management. It was not designed to replace the valuable insight, care and treatment provided by your Health Care Professional.**

**Always consult your Health Care Professional**