



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE IMPACT REPORT

WHO IS MISIPAWISTIK CREE NATION?

Misipawistik Cree Nation (MCN) is located 420 km north of Winnipeg on the shores of Lake Winnipeg in the Manitoba Lowlands. Misipawistik means "Rushing Rapids" in Cree language.

Following the signing of the Treaty 5, the government of Canada assumed authority over the people of Grand Rapids through the Indian Act. Older provisions that have since been repealed, denied personhood to First Nations people across Canada paving the way for discriminatory and harmful policies aimed at breaking up families and forcing First Nations people to give up their identities to be accepted into Canadian Society. With the help of their Elders, Knowledge Keepers, alongside their elected Chief and council, Misipawistik Cree Nation is working tirelessly to restore its jurisdiction in its territory and reclaim what was taken from them.

Misipawistik



Cree Nation



WHAT IS THE PRENATAL DOULA PROGRAM?

Misipawistik Cree Nation is working towards reclamation of identity and traditional practices through the MCN Health Authority Doula program. With the support of the First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba (FNHSSM), Misipawistik Cree Nation (MCN) has piloted the Doula Program to train Indigenous birth helpers and reclaim birth traditions for new and expectant mothers.

The Doula program, through teachings, ceremony, advocacy, and community support makes way for future generations to find themselves, and stay rooted to their land, culture, and identity.

2

Weeks spent in
community of MCN

3

Planned events with
MCN Prenatal Doula
Program





RECLAIMING INDIGENOUS BIRTHING PRACTICES

WHY IS RECLAIMING TRADITIONAL BIRTH PRACTICES IMPORTANT?

1. Rooting people & children to community and their identities.

- Traditional birthing ceremonies are aimed at helping children enter the world in a meaningful way by reaffirming their cultural identity and enabling the community to care for the child. In traditional birthing ceremonies, a mother is taken care of by their home community. Births were once assisted by Grandmothers, Elders, community birth helpers, and female family members. Birth ceremonies were held in a safe, nourishing, holistic environment, and most importantly, in the home communities of the birth giver.

2. Creates a space for holistic care and ceremony.

- Since the westernization of medicine following early colonial practices, traditional birth practices have been stripped from Indigenous peoples of Canada.
- No Indigenous communities of Canada have resources for a safe, traditional, and holistic style of birthing. This means birth now happens out of community, and out of many comfort zones.
- Reclamation of birth as ceremony in home communities, will create that safe space for holistic care and ceremony.

3. Creating belonging vs. isolation.

- Reclamation of traditional birth practices would replace the heavy feelings of isolation, displacement and loneliness many expectant mothers experience, with a new sense of belonging. Belonging to their roots, to the land, to the people, to their culture, and to their identities. Viewing birth as the first ceremony of life, enables the child to enter the world in a holistic, sacred, and grounding way. It will ensure that children are rooted to their people and communities. Which creates a future full of purpose, confidence, and belonging.

Misipawistik



Cree Nation



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

initiative

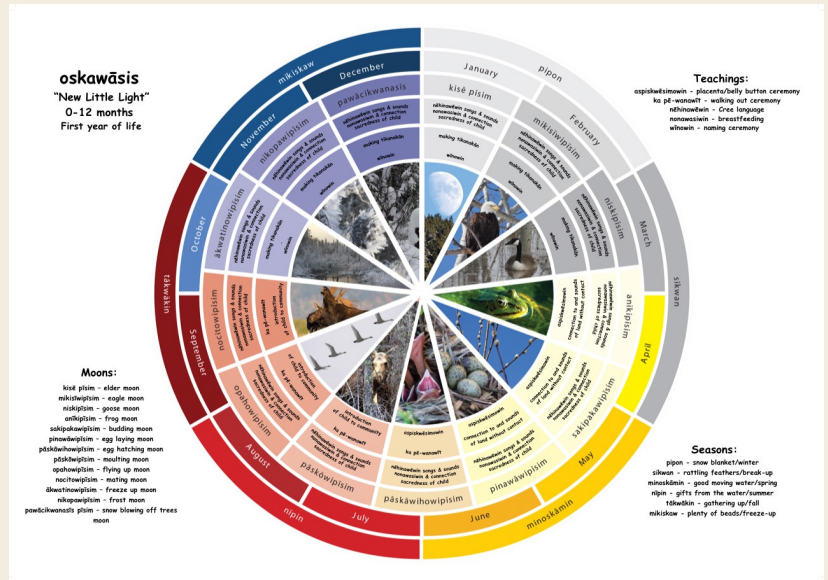
Throughout the fellowship, I made two trips to the community of Misipawistik Cree Nation. I was fortunate enough to participate and assist in the planning, preparation, and holding of three events held by MCN's Prenatal Doula Program.

The first event was the 2nd Annual Summer Solstice Camp, held by Misipawistik Cree Nation's Health Authority Doula Program. The camp was held on traditional grounds, for the mothers, children, families, and program participants to build meaningful relationships with one another and the land, attend traditional ceremonies with their children and families, while feeling supported in a holistic way by the community's birth helpers.

The second event was a cake decorating class held for the program participants to stay connected and engaged with each other.

The third and final event we held together was called a "Mommy Shower". Aimed to bring expectant mothers together, show them hospitality and care by showering them in love, laughter, food, and gifts.

While spending time in Misipawistik Cree Nation, I was able to engage with Elders, community members, program participants, and the birth helpers of the community. Through the time spent, it was clear that change begins with practice, participation, learning, observing, and listening to traditional teachings and language.



Final Output

The purpose and significance of the final output is to provide a calendar wheel of oskawāsis (first year) traditional Cree teachings for the MCN Health Authority Prenatal Doula program. The calendar was built off teachings and context shared by community knowledge keepers, Elders, and community members. It reflects all shared resources from the kiwētōtētan working group members.

Thank you:

Endless gratitude to the entire community of MCN and to Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness for providing this beautiful opportunity.

Misipawistik



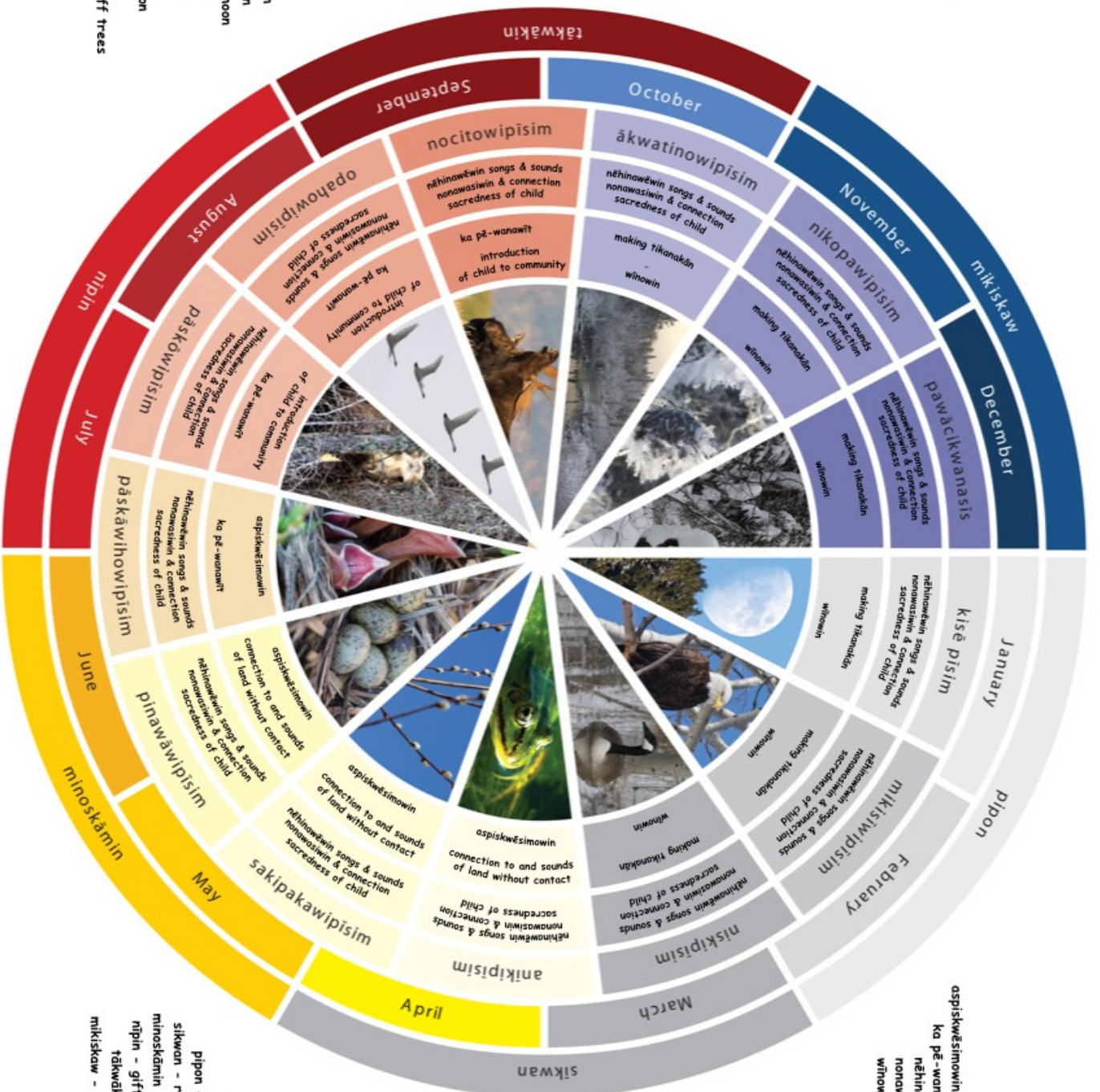
Cree Nation

oskawāsis

"New Little Light"

0-12 months

First year of life



Moons:

- kisē pīsim - elder moon
- mīkīstīwipīsim - eagle moon
- mīskīpīsim - goose moon
- ankīpīsim - frog moon
- sakīpakawipīsim - budding moon
- pīnawāwipīsim - egg hatching moon
- pāskāwīpīsim - mouthing moon
- opahowipīsim - flying up moon
- nocitowipīsim - mating moon
- ākwatinowipīsim - freeze up moon
- nikopawipīsim - frost moon
- pawācīkwānāsis pīsim - snow blowing off trees moon

Teachings:

- aspiškewēsimowīn - placenta/belly button ceremony
- ka pē-wānawīt - walking out ceremony
- nēhinawēwīn - Cree language
- nonawasiwin - breastfeeding
- wīnowīn - naming ceremony

Seasons:

- pīpon - snow blanket/winter
- sīkwān - rattling feathers/break-up
- mīnoskāmin - good moving water/spring
- nīpīn - gifts from the water/summer
- tākwākin - gathering up/fall
- mīkīskaw - plenty of beads/freeze-up