



# Community Health Engagement Global Community Health Workshop UNESCO

Ojistoh Kahnawahere Horn, MSc, MD, CCFP

Kanonkwatseri:io “Good Medicine Clinic”

Akwesasne, Quebec, Canada

June 15, 2023

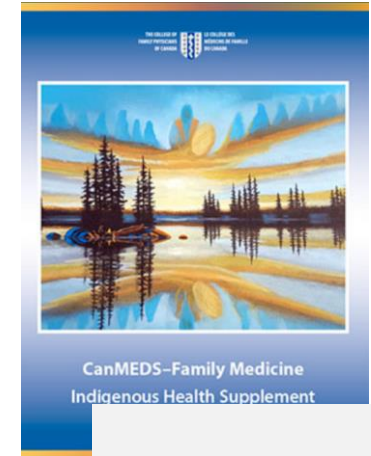


An acknowledgement of the following:

- Everything was created with its own Original Instructions
- Everything has Right to exist and carry out those Original Instructions
- Everything that we need is provided for by our Mother, *Iethinistenha Ohontsake*.
- *Onkwehonwe* – the First People, are stewards of the lands and waters, and the great balance, or homeostasis that exists
- We are grateful that our Mother, *Iethinisthenha Ohonstake*, provides for with everything we need, and we acknowledge our plant, animal, and celestial relatives

# Disclosures

- College Family Physicians of Canada *Indigenous Health Committee*
- Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada *Indigenous Women's Health Initiative Committee*
- Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada (*Board*)
- Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, (*Board*)
- Federation of Medical Women of Canada (*Board*)
- No financial disclosures





# Objectives

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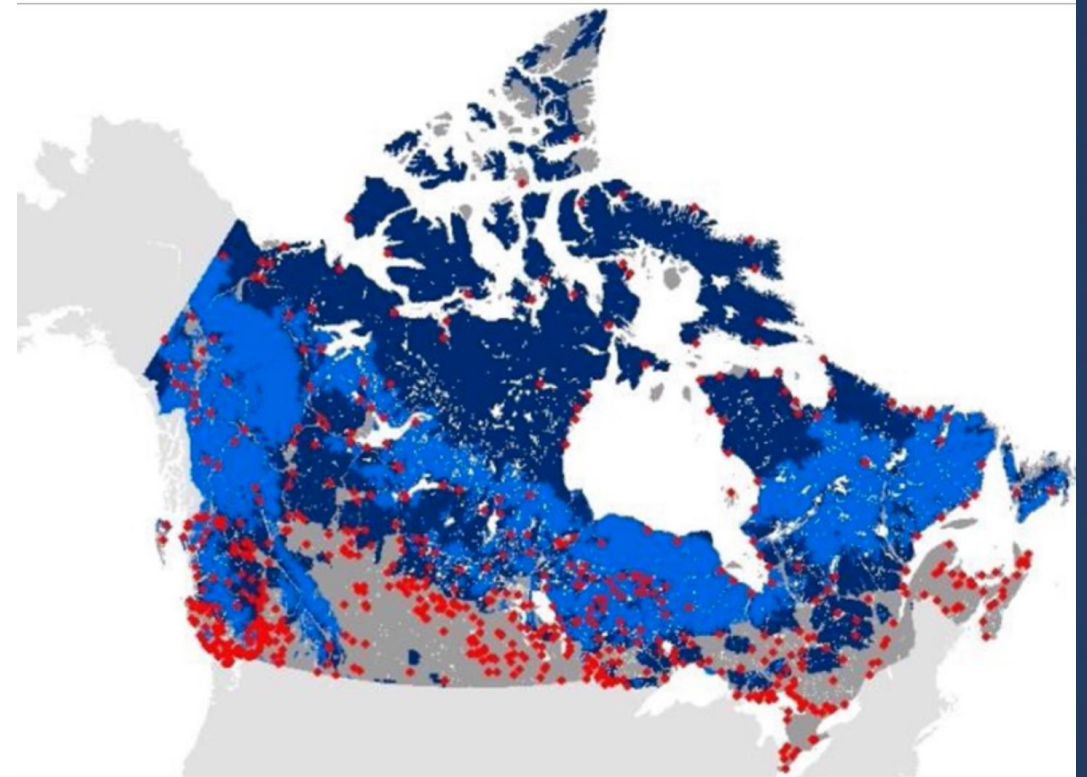
- To briefly describe Indigenous roles in the discourse of biodiversity, healthy environments, and planetary health
- To briefly describe how healthy lands are related to healthy people
- To describe the health of Akwesasne's land and people
- To demonstrate three community engagement projects



# Background

## - Biodiversity

- There are nine Planetary Boundaries, including Biodiversity Loss and Species Extinction.
- Goals of conserving 30% of the planet's Biodiversity by 2030.
- 85% of the world's Biodiversity is under the stewardship of Indigenous people, who are 5% of the population.
- Increasing role for Indigenous people in the realm of Environmental and Planetary Health



*The red dots represent the location of Indigenous communities in Canada. The dark blue represents intact ecological areas. The light blue represents Intact Forest Layer. Image: Artelle et al. (2019).  
[doi:10.1016/j.biocon.2019.108284](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2019.108284)*

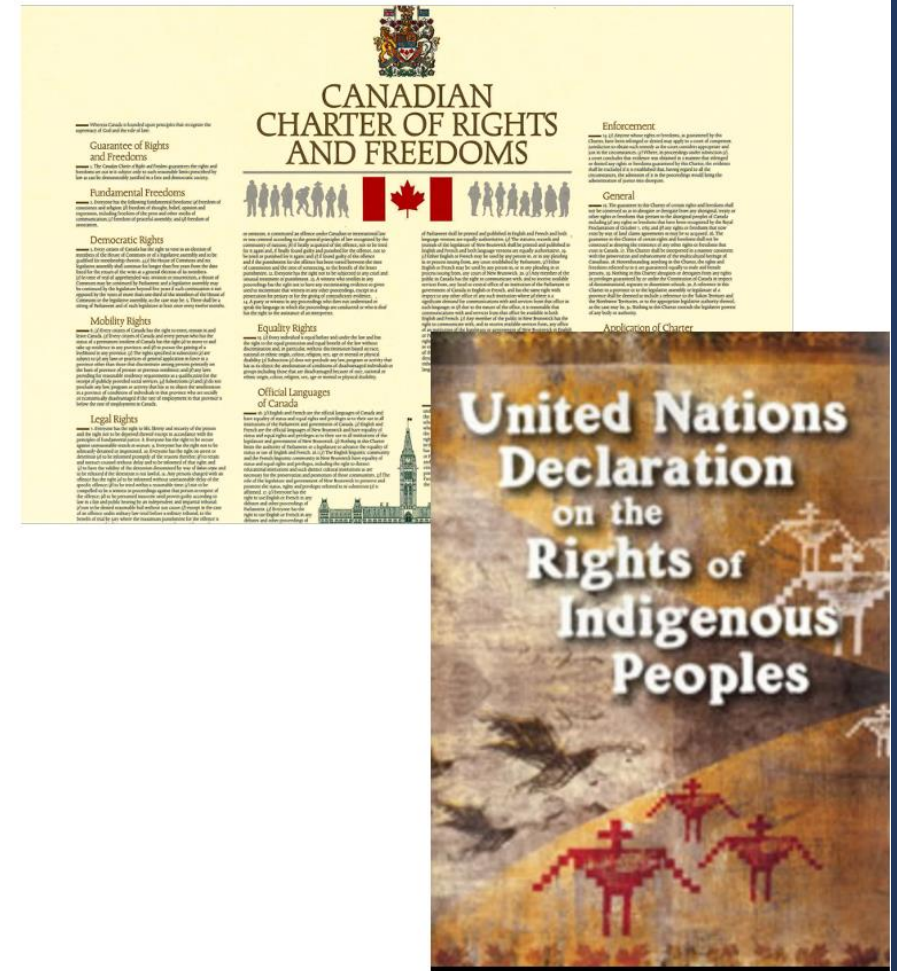
# Background

## – Laws, Acts, Declarations, Constitutions

Indigenous people are caught between the competing needs of the economy and remaining stewards of Biodiversity.

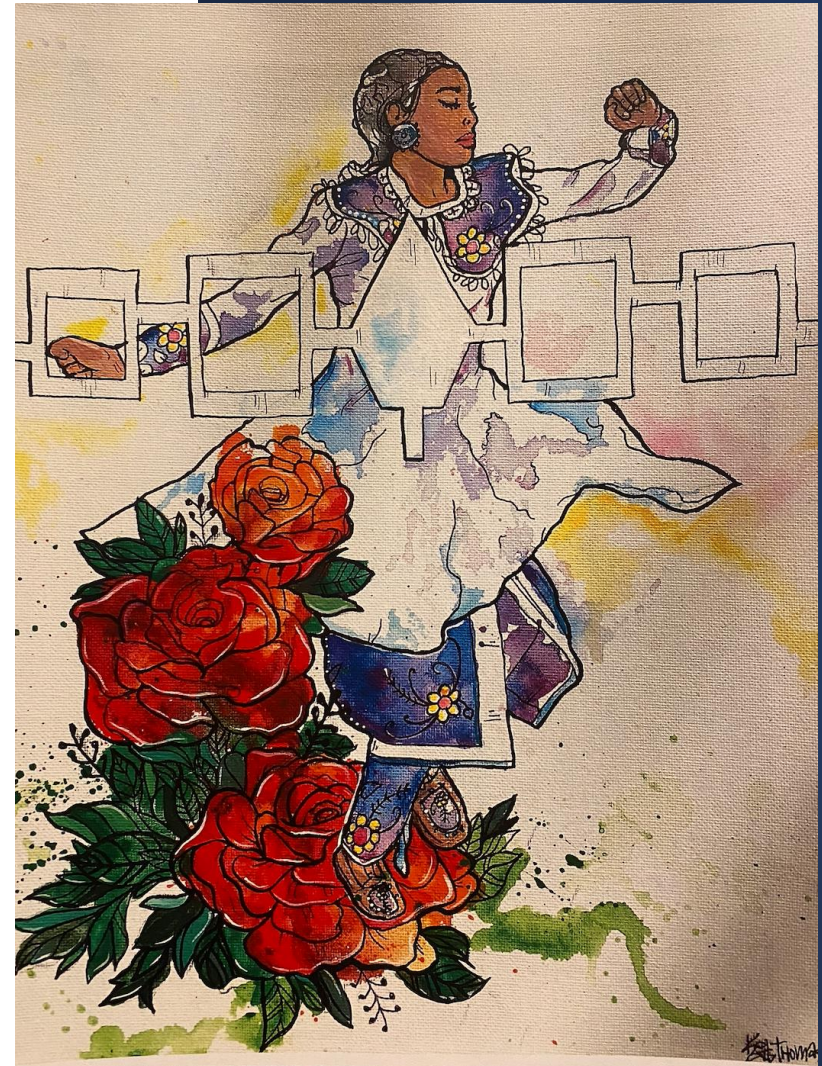
Indigenous people in Canada aim to hold their governments accountable to their own declarations and laws, including the *Constitution* and to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* (UNDRIP)

Indigenous people encounter many political stresses and personal dangers



# Background – Health

- Health requires having a healthy mind.
- A healthy mind requires a healthy spirit, or personal fire
- Healthy spirits are supported by good relationships with others and with the land, waters, and ice
- Our minds are connected to the land, waters, and ice through our language
- If the lands, waters, and ice are not healthy, then the people are not healthy



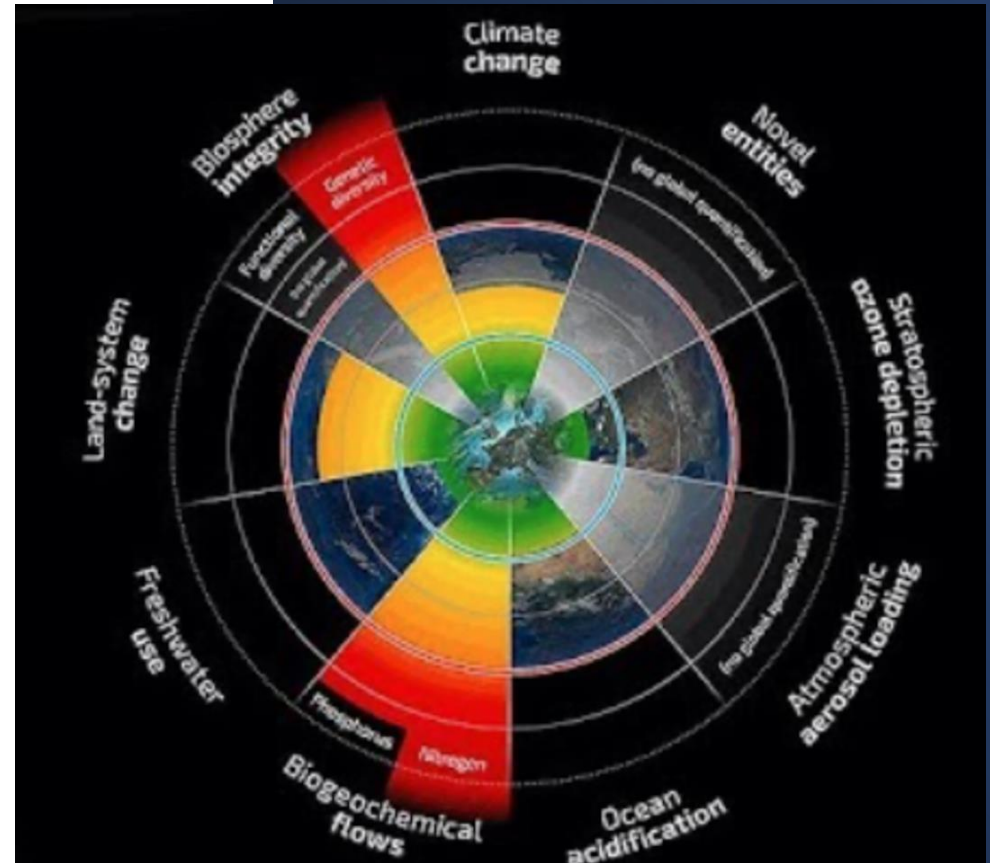
*Kat Thomas, Akwesasne*



# Background

## - Planetary Boundaries

- Canada recently recognized that Canadians have a legal right to a healthy environment
- Having a healthy environment requires the protection of biodiversity
- Biodiversity is one of the nine planetary boundaries.
- Biodiversity stewardship happens at the community level, by people who best know the local environment
- Individuals can place their efforts effectively at the community level

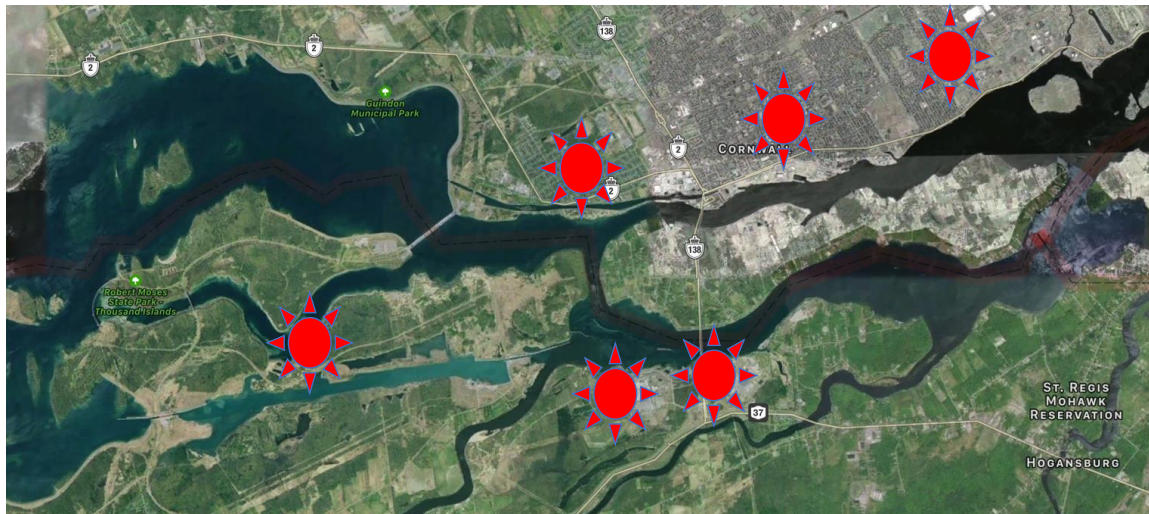


# Akwesasne


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- 1 of 7 Kaniienkehaka (Mohawk) Communities (Akwesasne, Ganienkeh, Kahnawake, Kanehsatake, Ohsweken, Tyendinaga, and Wahta)
- Of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy
- Community bisected by the Canada-United States International border









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**MACLEAN'S** 

**ENVIRONMENT**

# An island unfit for man or beast

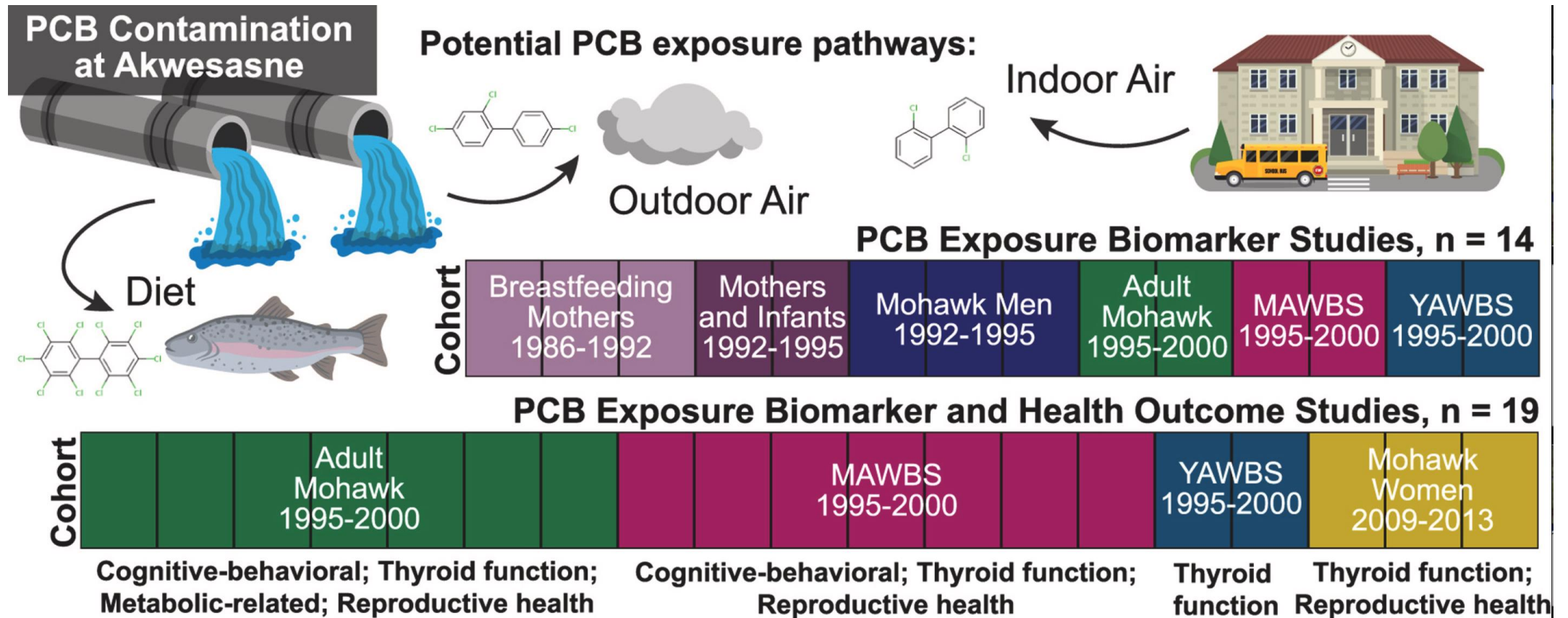
**JULIANNE LABRECHE JUL 30 1979**

*(Background text from the article is partially obscured by the article title and other elements)*

# An evidence map of polychlorinated biphenyl exposure and health outcome studies among residents of the Akwesasne Mohawk Nation

Chelsea A. Weitekamp<sup>a</sup>, Rachel M. Shaffer<sup>b</sup>, Catheryne Chiang<sup>a</sup>, Geniece M. Lehmann<sup>a</sup>  ,  
Krista Christensen<sup>b</sup>



# Summarizing the study's findings

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*By contaminating our food chain, including mother's milk, with toxic compounds such as PCBs, dioxins, DDT and many others, corporate society has removed from us our very ability to feed ourselves, our families, and our communities...*

*Exposure to toxic contaminants in the environment (air, water, soils, local food, fish, wildlife, and mother's milk) has resulted in a rapidly changing epidemiology among many Native peoples*

*Katsi Cook*

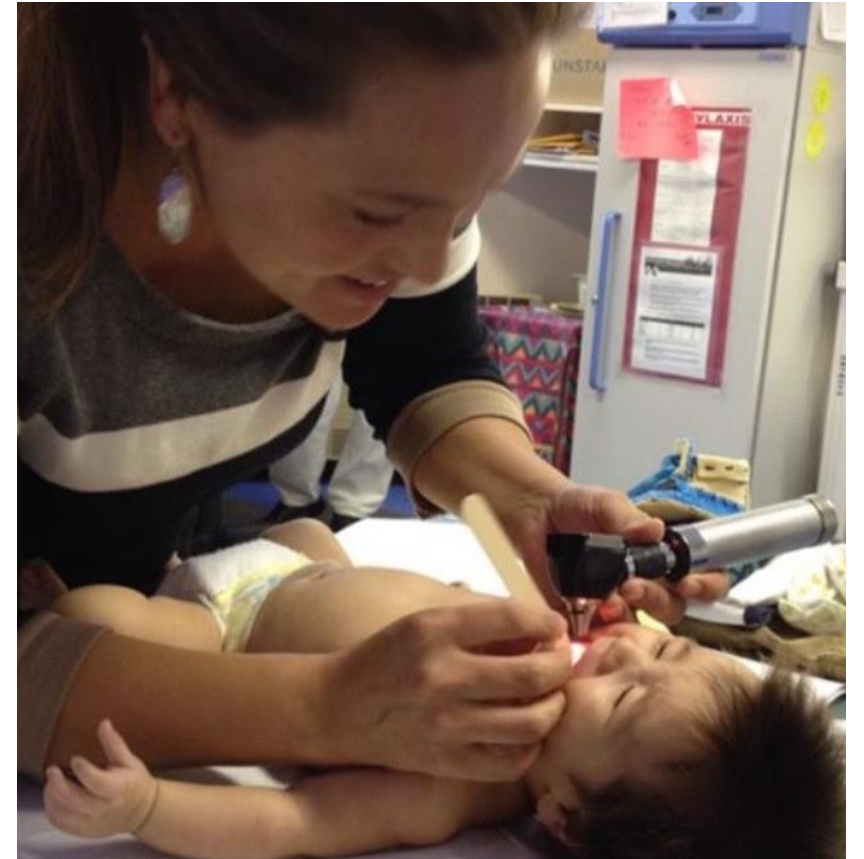
*Midwife, Akwesasne*



# Kanonkwatseri:io “Good Medicine Clinic” Akwesasne Kanienkehake (Mohawk) community

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- Anecdotally, high prevalence of:
  - Diabetes
  - Depression, Dementia, Dysthymia
  - Autoimmune disease
  - Thyroid disease
  - Cancers





# WHAT MAKES CANADIANS SICK?

50%

## YOUR LIFE

- INCOME
- EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
- DISABILITY
- EDUCATION
- SOCIAL EXCLUSION
- SOCIAL SAFETY NET
- GENDER
- EMPLOYMENT/WORKING CONDITIONS
- RACE
- ABORIGINAL STATUS
- SAFE AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD
- HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS
- COMMUNITY BELONGING

25%

## YOUR HEALTH CARE

- ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE
- HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
- WAIT TIMES

15%

## YOUR BIOLOGY

- BIOLOGY
- GENETICS

10%

## YOUR ENVIRONMENT

- AIR QUALITY
- CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE



THESE ARE CANADA'S SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH #SDOH

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PDF [83 KB]

## Health in global biodiversity governance: what is next?

[Liz Willetts](#) • [Liane Comeau](#) • [Neil Vora](#) • [Ojstoh Horn](#) • [Marie Studer](#) • [Keith Martin](#) • et al. [Show all authors](#)

Published: January 26, 2023 • DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(23\)00130-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)00130-7) • Check for updates

- Biodiversity and environmental stewardship need to be better integrated into local health systems, such as through radical listening methods,<sup>15</sup> nature prescribing,<sup>16, 17</sup> regaining human awareness of interconnectedness within nature,<sup>11</sup> and intergenerational learning practices,<sup>18</sup> and by directly funding interdisciplinary biodiversity–health work in communities.





## Baskets & Beetles

- The Ash borer beetle killing Ash trees used for basket making
- Resurgence of basket making and teaching
- Seed collection, storage, teaching younger people, replant in 30 years
- Beetle can fly 1 km, had been thinking of island refuge... No funds.

# "Tsiktsikó:wa"

## Children, Elders, Language, Tech, and the Shoreline

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- In 1985, the health of the water and land was deemed not safe
- Limits to fish consumption, home gardening and farming, and recreational activities such as swimming
- Diminished interactions with the land and water
- In 2022, Carleton University researchers (Dr. K. Horn-Miller, Dr. R. Ingram, and Ryan Ransom) in association with the Native North American Traveling College did a novel project
- Modification of the cultural mentor/apprentice approach, Elders were paired with teens
- Using remote earth observation technology (drones), they looked at areas in the community which were once fishing sites, camping areas, and swimming holes, describing their place names in our language, telling stories about the past





# Indigenous Midwifery

Decolonizing birth and reclaiming body sovereignty

Started with one midwife, community champion, with the support of the National Indigenous Council of Midwives (NICM)

Information and care flow between obstetricians, family physicians, and nurse practitioners.

*Owisokon Lahache, Kahnawake*

# Community Health Board

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- Community members who:
  - have returned from colleges and universities
  - have 'borne witness' to history of imposed colonial institutional violence
  - have traditional medicine knowledge
- Have come together to form a community health board, with a core group carrying increased research literacy, working towards meaningful solutions
- Ensuring data sovereignty, meaningful participatory relationship building, and using Indigenous methodologies such as the Kaswentha (Two-Row Wampum) and Indigenous Futurism (the Coming Faces)



# Concluding Remarks

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- Indigenous peoples have world views that include strong relationships with the land, water, and ice, and all the beings that they support
- These relationships are epitomized by the practice of reciprocity, keeping the great balance.
- Indigenous people have a profound mistrust of those who have the mandate to protect, for instance the government, the police, and in many cases, their own community elected officials
- When Indigenous people hold governments and corporations accountable to agreements and laws, they are often met with resistance or are gas lit



*Monique Bedard, Oneida, Mo-Thunder.com*

# Concluding Remarks

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- Indigenous people are being asked for their knowledge to mitigate biodiversity loss
- Engagement will have to be organized with a careful evaluation of responsible representation.
- Community representation will have to *explicitly* maintain accountability to the land, the community, and future generations.
- Individuals selected by non-grassroots risk losing their community legitimacy
- We all have an interest in securing the future of organized life on the planet. We want to leave our children with opportunities and lives that are fulfilling, wholesome, and based in healthy relationships



Monique Bedard, Oneida Mo-Thunder.com

# References

- Slide 1: Akwesasne from International Bridge, [www.akwesasne.ca](http://www.akwesasne.ca)
- Slide 2: Ohenton Kariwatehkwen, Akwesasne TV, 2016
- Slide 3: downloaded logos CAPE, FMWC, IPAC, CFPC, SO)GC
- Slide 4: Katsi Cook, [provensustainable.org](http://provensustainable.org), personal and family photos
- Slide 5: painting by Monique Bedard, [Mo-Thunder.com](http://Mo-Thunder.com)
- Slide 6: Artelle K. et al., Supporting resurgent Indigenous-led governance: a nascent mechanism for just and effective conservation. Policy Analysis. *Biological Conservation*.240 (2019): 108284
- Slide 7: The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, The Canadian Press; The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, [kairoscanada.org](http://kairoscanada.org)
- Slide 8: painting done by Kat Thomas, Akwesasne
- Slide 9: Planetary Boundaries: Stockholm Resilience Centre, [www.stockholmresilience.org](http://www.stockholmresilience.org)
- Slide 10: Google Maps photoclick

- Slide 11: Moses Saunders Power Dam, [www.opg.com](http://www.opg.com); Labreche J, An island unfit for man or beast. Macleans July 30, 1979
- Slide 12: Weitekamp et al., An evidence map of PCB exposure and health outcome studies among residents of the Akwesasne Mohawk Nation, Chemosphere, 306 (2022) 135454
- Slide 13: Katsi Cook, Running Strong for American Indian Youth
- Slide 14: personal photo
- Slide 15: What makes Canada sick. Homeless Hub: infographic SDH Canadians: [homelesshub.ca](http://homelesshub.ca)
- Slide 16: Health in Global Biodiversity Governance: What's next? Opinion. Willetts et al, The Lancet, Jan 26, 2023.
- Slide 17: personal photo, ash borer beetle: [invasivespeciescentre.ca](http://invasivespeciescentre.ca), baskets: Indian Craft Shop
- Slide 18: [mohawkatlas.org](http://mohawkatlas.org), drone photo of participating group 2022
- Slide 19: painting by Owisokon Lahache, Kahnawake
- Slide 21 /22: painting by Monique Bedard, [Mo-Thunder.com](http://Mo-Thunder.com)