Samson Community Freezer Program: Providing Access to Healthy and Safe Traditional Foods

October 19, 2022

First Nations Telehealth Network 10:00-11:30am

# **Presentation Outline**

- Introductions
- Samson Community Freezer Program
- University of Alberta Research Team
- Topic of Concern: Chronic Wasting Disease in Alberta
- Working Together
  - Working to address issues like...
  - ... Through community programing
- Project Outcomes
- Conclusions

# Introductions

- Kacey Yellowbird
- Robbie Pots
- Hannah Cunningham

### **Samson Community Freezer Program**

Began operations in 2010, emphasizing the importance of a grassroots strategy

Provides opportunities for capacity-building, skills sharing and lessons, and access to traditional foods

#### Community freezer program provides meat, lessons for Samson Cree Nation



In 1995, Kacey Yellowbird's grandfather left him with some advice.

"Before he passed away, my grandfather told me, 'Times are going to get tough, so you have to learn how to continue with hunting.' That's the legacy he left with us," recalls Kacey, manager of the Samson Youth and Sport Development Department, a group within Samson Cree Nation.

What started out as familial counsel has now transformed a community. Eight years ago, Kacey decided to turn his grandfather's vision into a tangible mission. He came up with a plan to use the meat from hunting to start a community freezer program for Maskwacis, a community south of Edmonton that includes Samson Cree Nation.

The project, supported by an early Communities Choosewell grant, aimed to combat

# Samson Community Freezer Program -Youth Involvement



# Samson Community Freezer Program -Youth Involvement



#### **Samson Community Freezer Program - Meat Distribution**







# **University of Alberta Research Team**





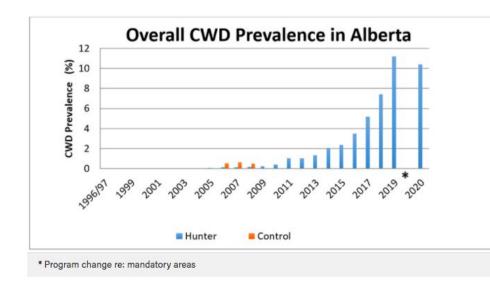
# **Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Alberta**

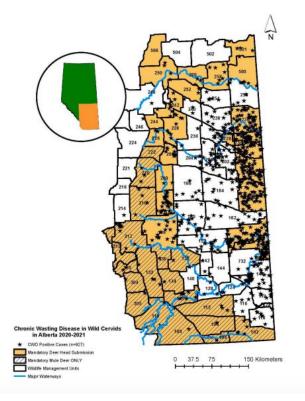
Chronic wasting disease threatens deer, elk – and maybe humans, new research says



Chronic wasting disease continues to expand westward threatening deer populations

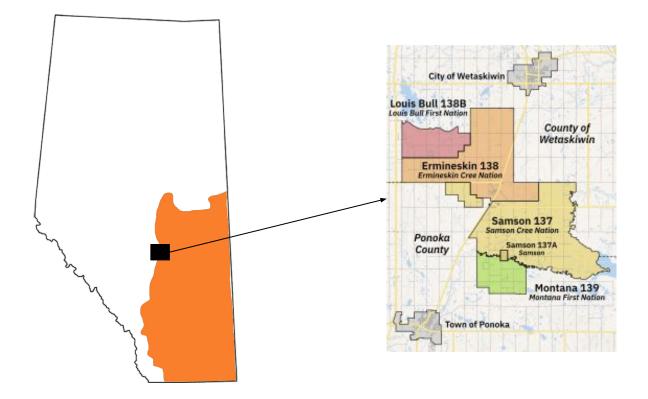
### **Chronic Wasting Disease in Alberta**





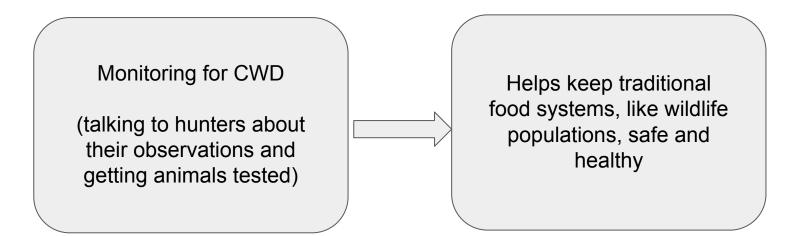
https://www.alberta.ca/chronic-wasting-disease-updates.aspx#jumplinks-3

### **Chronic Wasting Disease in Alberta: Maskwacîs**

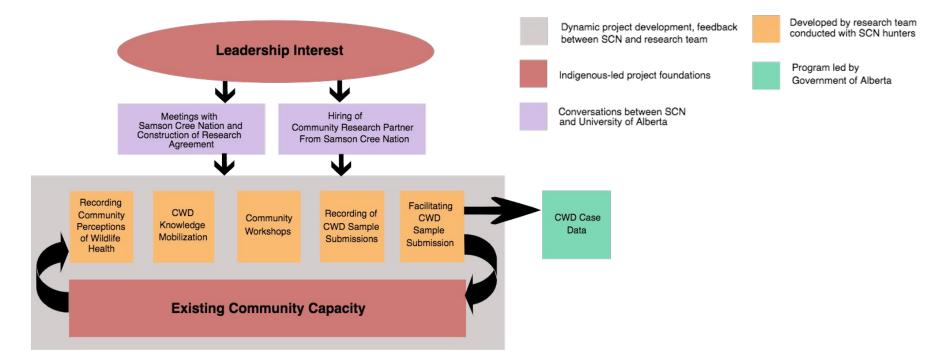


# **Health Implications of Chronic Wasting Disease**

No current evidence showing that it can spread to humans, BUT still need to be careful because other diseases like this have spread to humans after long periods of time



# **Working Together**



# Working to address issues like...

- Local food security
- Accessibility of both:
  - Hunting areas
  - Access to information
- Cultural and knowledge gaps in conventional wildlife disease management

# ... Through community-oriented programming

- Working with local hunters to promote hunting as a cultural activity that's a key aspect of wellbeing
- Raising awareness about CWD through the creation of educational materials that address community concerns and feature community voices
- Sharing how community members can become involved in the monitoring and research of local wildlife health populations

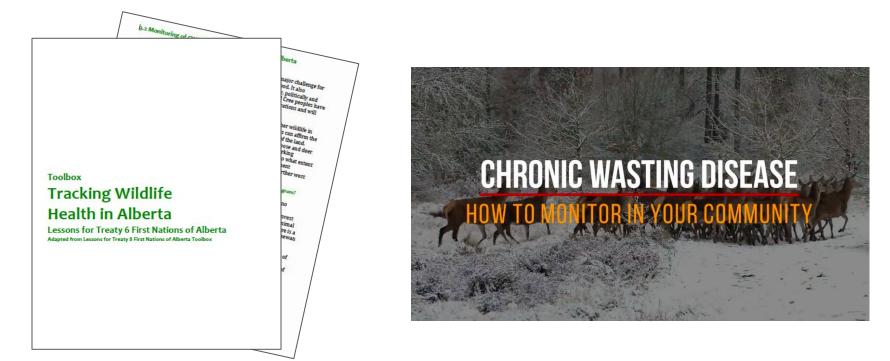
# **Project Outcomes**

Facilitating communication between Samson Cree Nation and government-led monitoring programs

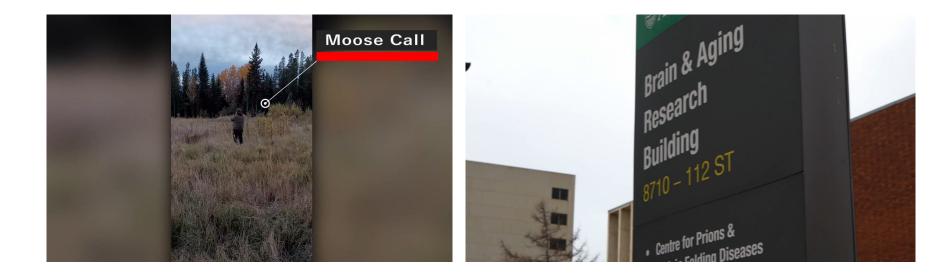
- Assistance with delivering heads to lab in Edmonton, especially when drop-off freezers not available
- Beginning conversations about cultural knowledge gaps surrounding things like sample submission



# **Project Outcomes**



# **Project Outcomes**



### **Future Projects**

- Working with Samson Cree Nation on maps of CWD in the area
- Measuring deer density of the Maskwacîs area to inform decisions around local CWD monitoring and management
- Continue to create new and adapt existing educational material catering to the needs and concerns of the Nations of Maskwacîs



### **Future Projects**

• Community Freezer Program and CWD Program fall workshop with hunters



# Conclusions

- CWD is a threat to Indigenous traditional food systems because of its potential risk to human health, and its contribution to existing accessibility issues to hunting areas
- Community-led programs that address issues like food security paired with moving towards more participatory resource management creates opportunities for community members to directly engage with maintaining a healthy traditional food system

# **Thank you! Questions?**