

Prenatal Environmental Health Education in Canada

Building Community Capacity & Advocacy on Environmental Chemicals and Environmental Justice

February 11, 2026

Webinar 2 in the PEHE-CCC *Setting the Stage for Action* webinar series



Prenatal Environmental Health Education - Collaborating for Clinical and Community Action (PEHE-CCC)

A joint initiative of the **Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE)** and the **Prenatal Environmental Health Education (PEHE) Collaboration**

PEHE-CCC is funded by the federal Chemicals Management Plan via a contribution to the **Canadian Association of Nurses for the Environment (CANE)** as lead partner.

Financial contribution:
Contribution financière :



The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada

Today's speakers and panelists

- **Sarah Vanden Hoven**, Health Canada
- **Jillian Ashley-Martin**, Health Canada
- **Jade Odiase**, Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses
- **Lynda Banning**, Anishinaabek Nation
- **Lyne Soramaki**, Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- **Theresa McClenaghan**, Canadian Environmental Law Association
- **Fe de Leon**, Canadian Environmental Law Association



The Right to a Healthy Environment under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*

Webinar: Prenatal Environmental Health Education in Canada – Building community capacity and advocacy on environmental chemicals and environmental justice

February 11, 2026



Health
Canada Santé
Canada

Canada 

Background

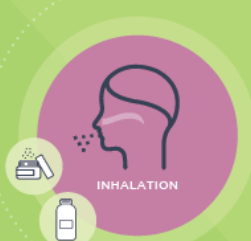
- The *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* (CEPA) is an important part of the Government of Canada's legislative framework aimed at **preventing pollution** and **protecting the environment and human health**
- Addresses risks posed by substances that may be found in food, consumer products, drugs, drinking water, air, soil, waste, and industrial releases that may enter the environment

CEPA is administered by Health Canada (HC) and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)

Prenatal and children's health are important considerations under CEPA

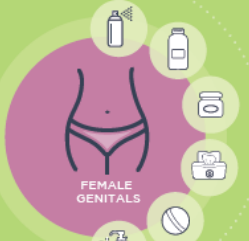
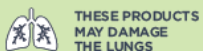
THE FINAL SCREENING ASSESSMENT OF **TALC** CONCLUDES THAT IT IS **HARMFUL** TO HUMAN HEALTH.

AREAS OF CONCERN



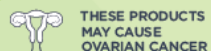
Inhalation of fine particles of TALC from loose powder products such as:

- > baby powder
- > body powder
- > loose face powder



Exposure of the female genitals to products containing TALC such as:

- > body powder
- > baby powder
- > genital antiperspirants and deodorants
- > diaper and rash creams
- > body wipes
- > bath bombs
- > bubble bath



To minimize your exposure to certain products containing TALC, you can:

- 1 AVOID INHALING LOOSE TALC POWDER
- 2 AVOID FEMALE GENITAL EXPOSURE TO TALC
- 3 CHOOSE A TALC-FREE ALTERNATIVE

If you are still concerned, speak to your doctor or health care provider.

The Government of Canada will take action to help manage the risks identified.

For more information, please visit Canada.ca/Health and search for TALC.

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of Health, 2021 Cat: XXXX ISBN XXXX Pub: XXXX

Don't use boric acid when doing arts and crafts



CANADA.CA/HEALTH

Canada

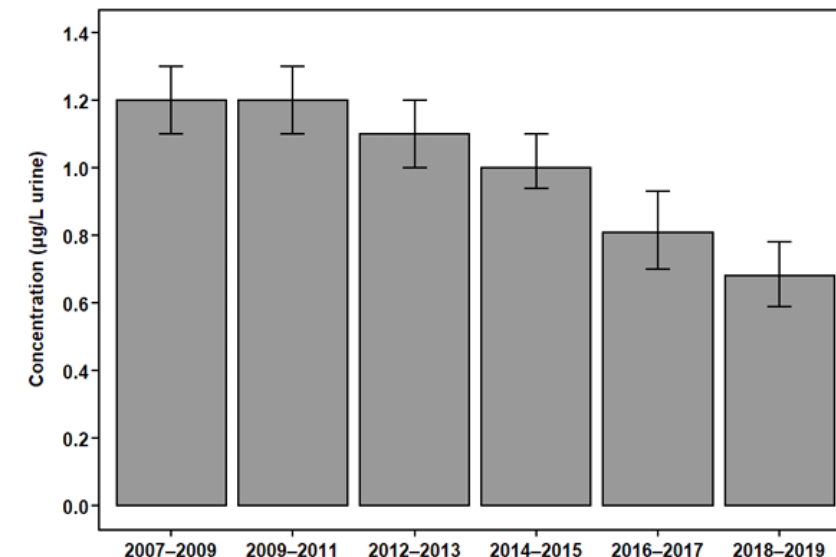
Healthy Canadians
March 3, 2023 · 🌐

Don't use boric acid when doing arts and crafts such as DIY slime. It is sometimes labeled as borax or borate. Children are particularly at risk to potential health risks from boric acid. Make your home a #HealthyHome.
<http://ow.ly/UZaQ50MnlgX>

Bisphenol A (BPA) in Canadians

Canadian population

Figure 1. BPA concentrations in the Canadian population aged 6 to 79. This figure shows the geometric mean concentrations of BPA in urine ($\mu\text{g/L}$) in the Canadian population from the CHMS (2007–2019).



There was a statistically significant decreasing trend ($P < 0.001$) in BPA concentrations in the Canadian population aged 6 to 79. Concentrations declined by 43% between 2007–2009 and 2018–2019.

CEPA Amendments

- CEPA was amended in June 2023 to include the:
 - recognition that every individual in Canada has a **right to a healthy environment**, as provided for in CEPA, subject to reasonable limits;
 - requirement to uphold related principles, such as **environmental justice**, non-regression and **intergenerational equity**; and
 - requirement to develop an **implementation framework** to set out how the right to a healthy environment will be considered **in the administration of the Act**.



The [implementation framework](#) was published in July 2025

The Right to a Healthy Environment & Equity

- The framework provides guidance for HC and ECCE to consider in their decision-making under CEPA to support protection of the right. In relation to equity, it emphasizes the importance of:
 - **Access to Information:** supporting people in Canada in their ability to make informed decisions about their and their communities' health and environment, understanding how government decisions are made, and holding governments accountable for those decisions
 - **Participation in Decision-making:** providing interested parties, including Indigenous peoples, with the opportunity to influence the decisions under CEPA that may impact them
 - **Indigenous Rights:** respecting rights under section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982, including the inherent right of self-government, and for the Government's legislative and policy commitments to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis
 - **Environmental Justice:** seeking to advance the fair and equitable protection of all people in Canada from disproportionate environmental or health risks and to advance their equitable access to meaningful participation in decision-making under the Act
 - **Intergenerational Equity:** emphasizing that it is important to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

Examples of upcoming work under CEPA

- Upcoming opportunities to participate in decisions that may be of relevance for prenatal/children's health:
 - Draft risk assessments from the Plan of Priorities* where potential endocrine and/or reproductive effects have been flagged (e.g., nano-scale zinc oxide, bisphenol A analogs/alternatives, organic flame retardants)

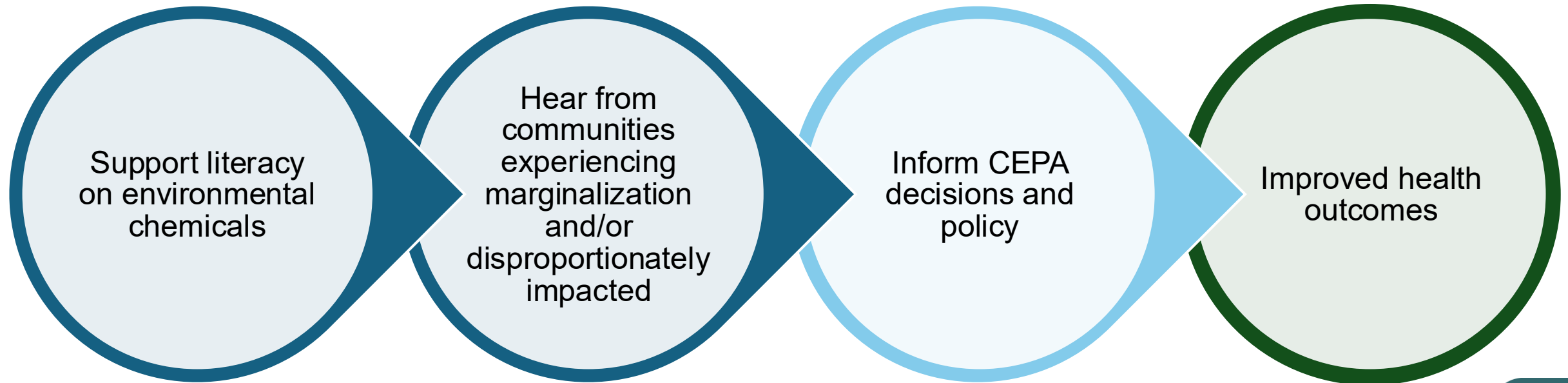
Ways to get involved:

- Subscribe to the CMP Latest News to receive emails when consultation periods begin: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/chemical-substances/subscribe.html>
- Submit a request for a substance to be assessed: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/chemical-substances/canada-approach-chemicals/request-assess-substance-canadian-environmental-protection-act-1999.html>

*The Plan of Priorities identifies substances for assessment, and other activities that support the management of substances in the coming years

Key Messages

- Prenatal/children's health has long been a priority under CEPA
- With the new lens of a right to a healthy environment, it will be important for HC and ECCC to build relationships and collaborate with groups who have expertise and networks that can help us:



Key Resources

- Healthy Home: Common household chemicals and pollutants, health effects, minimizing exposure and keeping safe (<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/healthy-home.html>)
- Right to a Healthy Environment Portal to access information on actions and decisions under CEPA, including opportunities to participate in decision-making (<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/canadian-environmental-protection-act-registry/publications/right-healthy-environment-portal.html>)
- Plan of Priorities: A multi-year, integrated plan for the assessment of substances in Canada, as well as other activities that support the management of substances (<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/canadian-environmental-protection-act-registry/implementing-modernized-cepa/plan-of-priorities-landing-page/plan-of-priorities.html>)

For questions related to the right to a healthy environment under CEPA, please email:
HealthyEnv-EnvSain@ec.gc.ca.

Reimagining Research: Towards a community-centred approach to health research on environmental chemicals

PEHE-CCC Webinar: Building Community Capacity & Advocacy on
Environmental Chemicals and Environmental Justice

Jillian Ashley-Martin & Jade Odiase

Feb 11, 2026

The “Reimagining Research” feasibility study

Our Goal: To explore how to make longitudinal biomonitoring research more inclusive, relevant and without harm for communities who may experience marginalization and have been typically underrepresented in research



We conducted roundtable discussions and knowledge sharing conversations.

- **Communities:**
 - Hamilton
 - Ottawa
- **Roundtables with community service providers**
 - 75 participants from 24 agencies
- **Knowledge Sharing Conversations with community members**
 - 69 participants

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

LEARN...
about toxic chemicals/pollution in our neighbourhoods, homes, workplaces and everyday products

SHARE...
your concerns about pollution, toxic chemicals and health impacts

EXPLORE...
ways that environmental health research studies can be more inclusive and beneficial for communities

BUILD: TRUST BEFORE NOT DURING



Consistent presence

Pre-engagement created safety and openness

Establish relationships

Extractive < Collaborative

SHARE: CURIOSITY & CONCERN

Participants connected environmental chemicals to family, home, and daily life

Curiosity grew when participants could question researchers directly

Peer learning and shared stories deepened understanding and confidence

“We learn from each other. And we have the experts here. That’s very nice of you coming and giving us all this information and we’re looking forward to get more sessions.”



“How can I know how many chemicals I have in my body? ...Get rid of it, by eating healthy, don’t use [chemical]. I know how to get rid of it, but I want to know how many chemicals I have.”

SHARE: ACCOUNTABILITY & ACTION

Shaping next steps, not just data collection

Follow-up and informal feedback sessions

Accountability means staying engaged after the session ends

“So for me...if I wanna correct something, or if I wanna help something, how can I do it from above?”

“Doing it [participating in a study] is not a problem. [But] what is the solution? Because if I know that I have it [chemicals], how am I going to get rid of it? If I don't get rid of it, I feel worried. So, I am not going to [participate]. If you have the solution, I'll do it. ”



EXPLORE: MINIMIZING BARRIERS & CO-CREATING MOTIVATORS

Engagement worked best when timelines and formats adapted to community realities

Language-accessible materials and discussion supported inclusive and meaningful participation

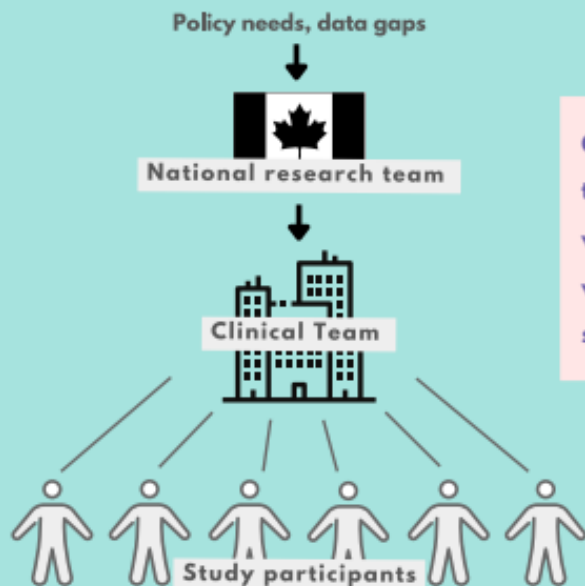
Honorariums signaled community time and knowledge were valued

Sessions were hosted in trusted, familiar spaces, not institutional settings



Reimagining Environmental Health Research

Conventional (top-down)



Going from a top-down model to a collaborative approach where participants and researchers work together toward societal and community goals.

Community centered



“I feel like when you get updates, when you’re part of an activity, when you get constant feedback on how the study is going, it’s motivating. I feel like I’m making a difference and ...I’m contributing.”

Co-Principal Investigators

Jillian Ashley-Martin EHSRB Health Canada

Erica Phipps Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and the Environment, University of Ottawa

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Collaborators and Co-Investigators

Hamilton Public Health: Erin Fuller

Hamilton Immigrant Working Centre: Wasan Mohamad, Rosemary Aswani, Ben Kofi

Hamilton Community Legal Clinic: Gachi Issa, Gopal Banerjee, Clare Freeman, Dodji Ousmane

Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses: Beth Tooley, Carla Thür, Mohamed Sofa, Jade Odiase

Ottawa Public Health Karim Mekki, Birgit Isernhagen, Kristen Coté, Hanan Atwy

Sandy Hill Community Health Centre Gerald Dragon

Community Development Framework Tammy Corner

Health Canada: Robin Shutt, Ammanie Abdul-Fatah

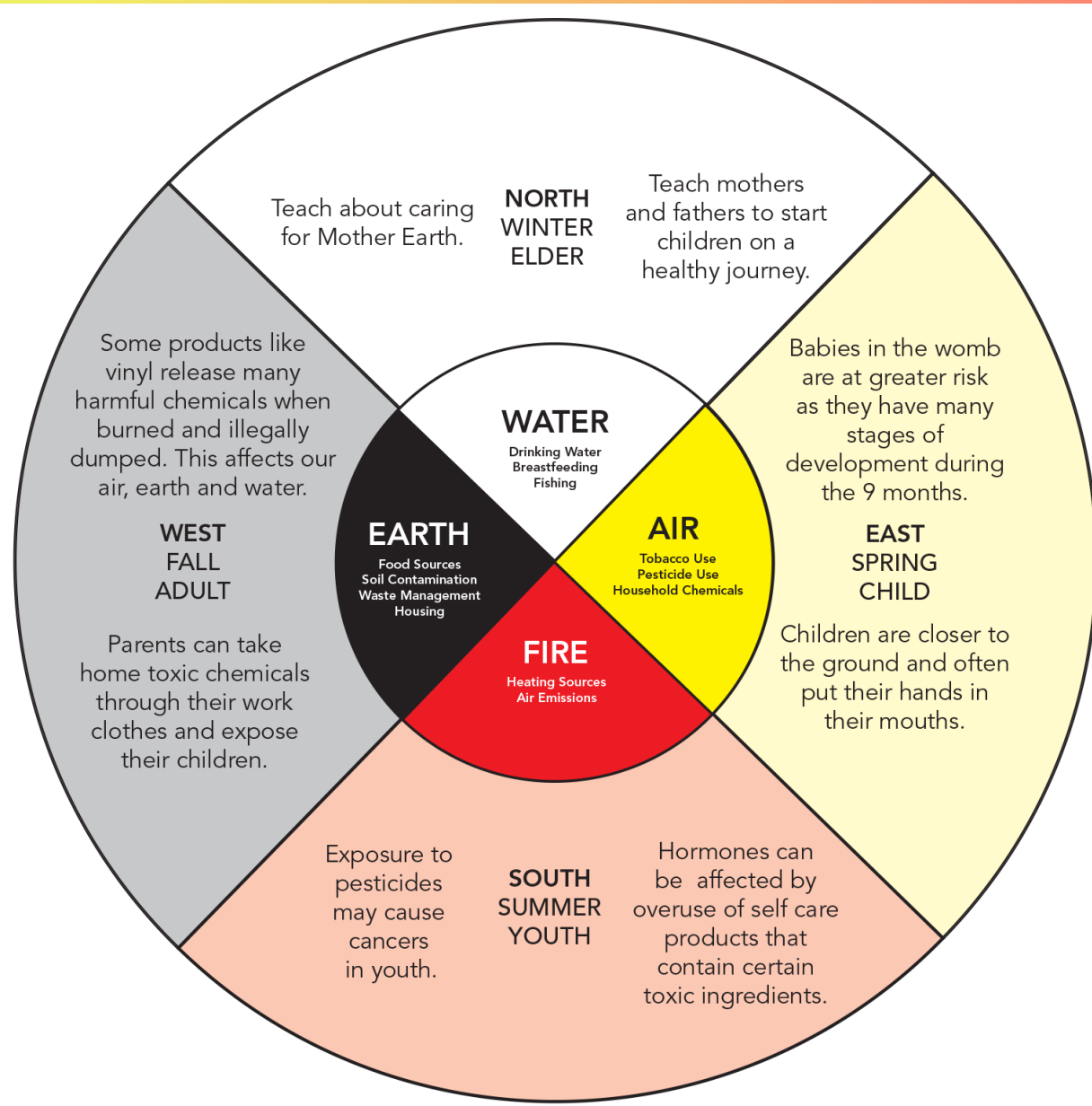


Caring for Mother Earth Project



Lynda Banning

Lyne Soramaki, Thunder Bay District Health Unit



Protecting Our Children's Future: A Caring for Mother Earth Checklist, (Revised, 2017).



Looking for strengths in ourselves and others takes practice. We are more used to focusing on weaknesses than strengths.



When looking for strengths we can use the *Seven Sacred Grandfather Teachings*

“You are practicing…”



Respect – when you recognize that every plant has a spirit and each carries a different medicine to share with the world.



Honesty – when you take responsibility for your actions and how they may affect your plant in a positive or negative way. For example: If you don't water your plant and it dies you would admit that.



Humility – when you don't brag if your plant does better than someone else's.



Bravery – when you reach out and ask for help from people who may know more about gardening and growing plants than you.



Love – when at the end of the growing season you all share equally so no one does better than anyone else. That's what First Nation people did, shared with all the community.



Wisdom – when we seek knowledge from Elders and others. This could be our parents, grandparents, aunts, uncle. Storytelling is part of First Nation culture. Our Elders enjoy sharing stories and people enjoying hearing them.



Truth – to tell others exactly how you feel about the experience.

Protecting Our Children's Future:

A CARING FOR MOTHER EARTH CHECKLIST



Shade, M'Chigeeng First Nation



Union of Ontario Indians
FASD Program



Thunder Bay District
Health Unit

Through the Eyes of a Child



First Nation Children's Environmental Health



Union of Ontario Indians
Anishinabek Health Secretariat
2009

HOME ENVIRONMENT checklist



Thunder Bay District
Health Unit

Resources



WHAT ARE PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS?

Personal care products include items like shampoos, deodorants, perfumes, shaving creams, lotions, soaps, body washes and makeup.

An average person uses 7 to 9 personal care products per day, each containing more than 25 ingredients.

Unborn babies and children are more vulnerable to chemicals than adults because of their size, metabolism and behaviour.

- Avoid personal care products for babies under 6 months of age even if they are labelled organic.
- Pregnant women and children should avoid essential oils as they can be highly concentrated or mixed with artificial fragrances.





Your Health: Personal Care Products Information & Tips

For more information:
 Union of Ontario Indians
 Nipissing First Nation
 P.O. Box 711
 North Bay, ON P1B 8J8
 Phone: (705) 497-9127 | Toll Free: 1-877-702-5200

November 2015

999 Balmoral Street, Thunder Bay ON P7B 6E7
 Phone: (807) 625-5900 | Toll-Free: (888) 294-6630
 TBDMU.COM

Union of Ontario Indians
 Anishinabe FASD Program

Thunder Bay District Health Unit

THE ISSUE

AIR

- Breathing in contaminants can cause damage to lung tissue, increasing the risk of lung problems in the future.
- **AVOID** ingredients listed as "fragrance" or "parfum." This term may include many other chemicals not actually listed.
- **TRY** a homemade recipe using natural ingredients like cedar, lavender, mint or roses.



FIRE

- Contaminants can enter the body through the mouth and be absorbed in the digestive track when eating, drinking or even when using lipstick.
- **AVOID** ingredients listed as "petrolatum" and "petroleum." It is also a non-renewable resource.
- **TRY** products made with vegetable oil instead.



EARTH

- Some contaminants are easily absorbed through the skin and travel through the bloodstream to other parts of the body.
- **AVOID** ingredients listed as "antibacterial" and "triclosan." It affects the earth and other elements of the medicine wheel.
- **TRY** plain soap like glycerin with water to wash hands.



WATER

- Overuse of personal care products can pollute our lakes and streams.
- **AVOID** ingredients listed as "polyethylene" or "polypropylene." Microbeads are tiny plastic beads found in body washes to exfoliate (scrub) the skin. Fish eat microbeads and we eat the fish.
- **TRY** a natural scrub with coffee grounds, brown sugar, apricot seeds, oatmeal or rice.

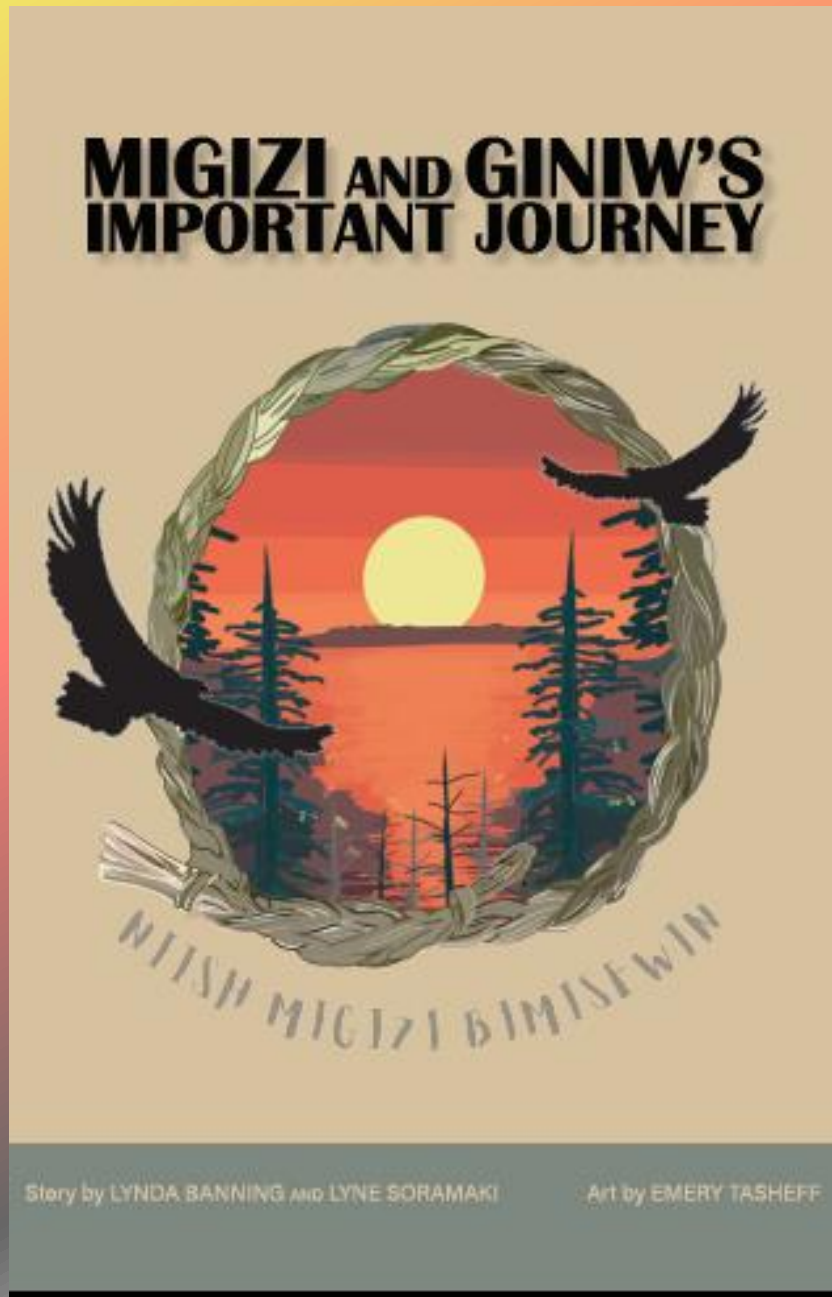


Resources

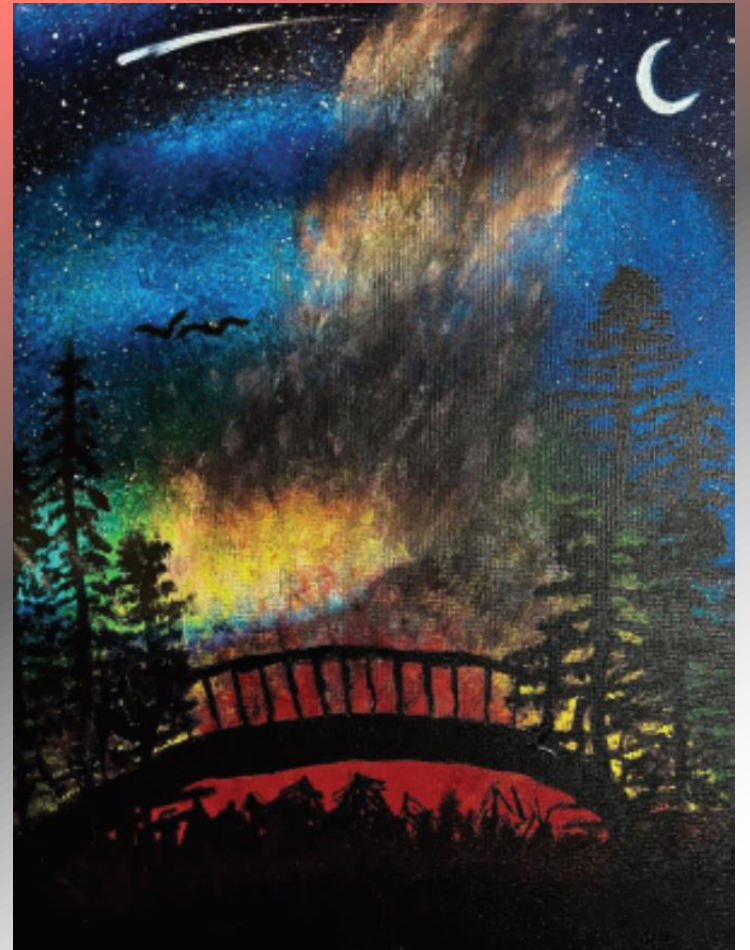




Migizi and Giniw's Important Journey,
Owl (Elder) meets Migizi and Giniw



Story by LYNDA BANNING AND LYNE SORAMAKI Art by EMERY TASHEFF



Bridge to Reconciliation
Acrylic on canvas by Lynda Banning

For More Information

Lynda Banning

lbanning@hotmail.com

Lyne Soramaki

Thunder Bay District Health Unit

lyne.soramaki@tbdhu.com

www.tbdhu.com/motherearthproject

Looking ahead

Upcoming events:

- Webinar 3 (March 4 2026 @ 12-1 PM ET) – Filling the gaps: Environmental health knowledge mobilization resources and strategies for preconception/prenatal care

Stay connected, get involved:

- Visit the PEHE-CCC project page and sign up for project news: <https://healthyenvironmentforkids.ca/prenatal-environmental-health/>
- Get in touch with questions, ideas, interest to collaborate:
 - Erica Phipps, erica@healthyenvironmentforkids.ca
 - Tim Ellis, tim@healthyenvironmentforkids.ca



Thank you | Merci | Miigwetch

Acknowledgements:

- Canadian Institutes of Health Research
- Health Canada - Chemicals Management Program
- PEHE Collaboration partners and collaborators
- CPCHE Partners and Affiliates
- ... and the many people and organizations who have been and continue to be part of this collective effort

Financial contribution:
Contribution financière :



Health Canada
Santé Canada

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada

