



# First nations in Canada:

The path to nutrition sovereignty

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August 2025



# First Nations nutritional status: (over 600 bands across Canada)

- 82% of Indigenous adults obese or overweight
- 1 in 5 adults suffering from type 2 diabetes
- 2017: 65% of households still food insecure
- Severely affected by climate change (climate-sensitive resources)

## **YET:**

- Nunavut communities who relied on a diet made up of 50% or more of traditional foods did not suffer from a single day without food



# Why?

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## Colonialism and globalization:

- Weak/unadapted health and educational services, poverty and unemployment
- Shift to a dependency on imported, processed food products.
- As a result, significant impact on health conditions of First Nations

\* Food systems knowledge is primarily passed on by the elders to the next generations. Yet, younger people are becoming more absorbed by modern culture; and these important traditional skills risk being lost forever.

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## What to do? First nations action(s) taken (examples):

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- NW Territories: **Take a Kid Trapping and Harvesting:** transferring traditional life-skills of hunting, trapping, fishing, traditional food preparation, outdoor survival skills and harvesting improved food sources
- **Outcome:** Most noticeable challenge is to keep up with the demand, with more and more schools participating



# First nations action(s) taken (examples):

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- **A lesson from traditional fishing communities:** Effectiveness of local fishers in the Norway House Cree Nation
- **Outcome:** Succeeded in ensuring almost 90% food security for Cree households



# First nations action(s) taken (examples):

- Newfoundland and Labrador's **Root Cellars Rock Food Skills Workshops** based on the 4Ps (Planting, Picking, Preparing, and Preserving food).
- **Outcome:** The Inuit community is gradually developing private gardens, saving money on costly store-bought vegetables. Greenhouses and related projects are also helping



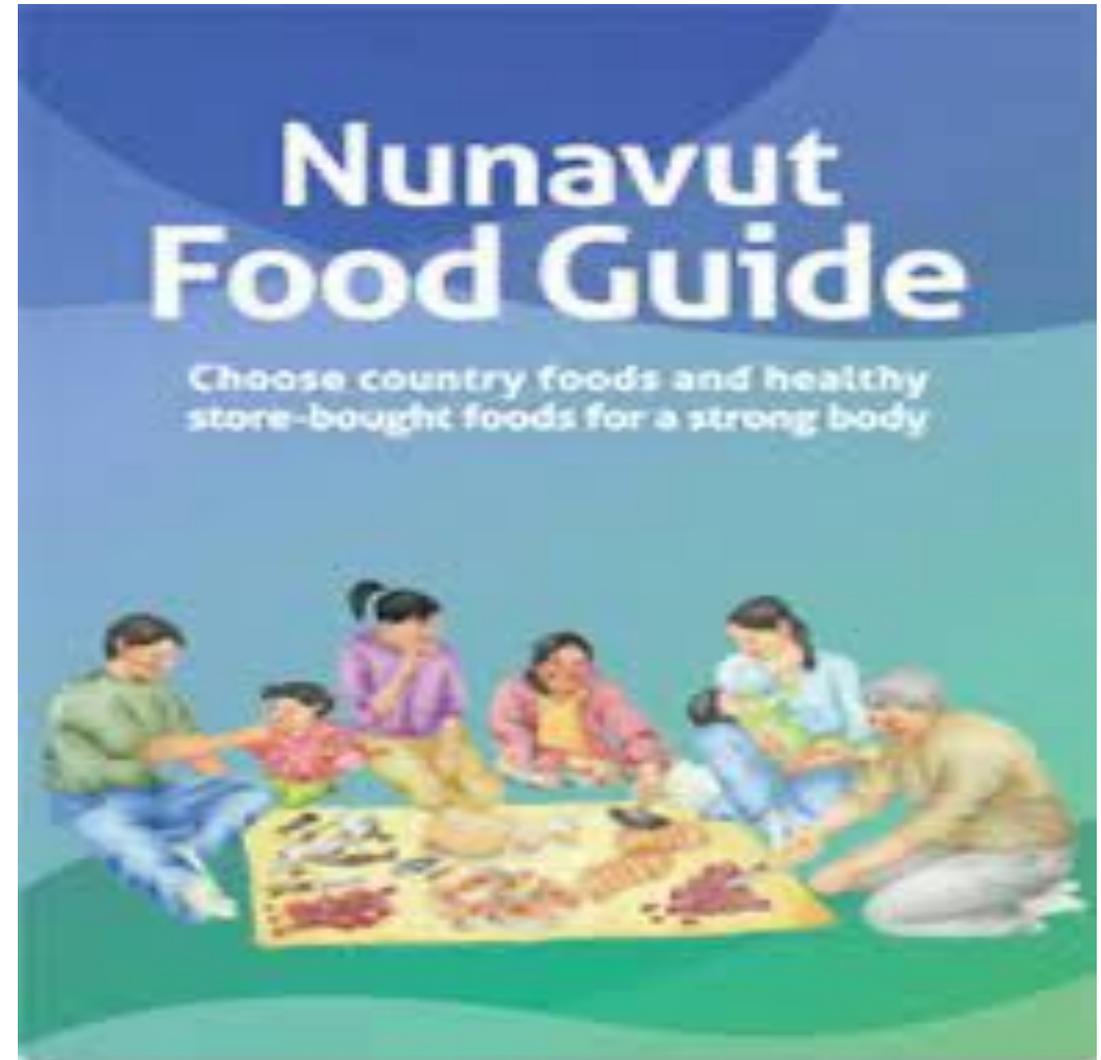
# Nutrition based initiatives (examples):

- **Feeding my Family** (Iqaluit) local initiative, built on a social media platform created in for this purpose. Facebook and other platforms were also used to increase awareness of the value of traditional foods.
- **Outcome:** Through social media and radio, traditional knowledge and advice on cooking methods are getting followers to rediscover traditional produce that improves health and strengthens the local food supply chain.



## Nutrition based initiatives (examples):

- **Nunavut Food Guide** was developed in 2012.
- Showcases nutritionally dense cultural food, based on four food types.
- **Outcome:** This culturally adapted guide is widely used during any nutrition education workshops.



# Nutrition based initiatives(examples)

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- **Yukon Nutrition Framework**  
Vision is to improve healthy eating habits for all Nunavummiut
- **Outcome:** Community kitchens were developed, supporting sustainable harvesting activities, monitoring grocery basket costs, and promoting traditional foods.



# Nutrition based initiatives(examples ):

- **Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project:** Due to colonization, the traditional Mohawk lifestyle has been disrupted leading to rising number of obese and diabetic patients. Five culturally-based strategies were implemented:
  - 1) Traditional cooking and healthy eating;
  - 2) Physical activity;
  - 3) Mindfulness and breathing techniques;
  - 4) Cultural traditions and spirituality; and,
  - 5) Socializing and interacting with other participants during activities.
- **Outcome:** A significant improvement in health condition of the community



# The road ahead/Lessons learned:

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- Empower communities;
- Develop local skills, creating jobs and ensuring sustainability;
- Buildup local champions, technically-savvy community members to help implement initiatives;
- Support innovation in local food production
- Review local laws, regulations and policies governing local food production;
- Review subsidies, building-up local food production instead of imports
- Increase awareness and capacity of communities to make better nutrition choices (using locally available food as much as possible)

***Traditional produce not only served to improve healthy living but is also valued by the culture and is used as a cultural resource***



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## Conclusion:

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*Let's return to our food, our life and our tradition. With our food, we will improve our health, recover our culture, and take care of the natural world. (Ingano tribe)*

