

First Nations and Inuit communities are working in many ways to help address food security.



This handout package includes **eight community examples** that will be discussed during the *Our Community, Our Food Capacity Building Workshop on Food Security*. Food security involves many different issues and these examples show that different types of activities can be undertaken to help address some of these. For each initiative, a short description is provided as well as words of advice and sources of more information.

Many of the examples included in this handout relate to the work of the Food Security Reference Group (FSRG). The FSRG is made up of representatives from the federal government, the Assembly of First Nations and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and also involves the participation of academic experts, representatives from provincial and territorial governments, and other organizations. Sharing knowledge and planning for ways to collectively address First Nations and Inuit food security have been key activities of this group.

In 2008, the FSRG completed a *Promising Practices for Food Security* report. This report looks at a variety of First Nations and Inuit community-based initiatives, and describes many factors that enabled them to happen, as well as challenges experienced by the people involved. From a review of twelve different initiatives, the following promising practices were identified. These can be thought of as ingredients to help support success.

- **Increased availability of nutritious food** – Initiatives helped increase access to nutritious foods, including traditional, locally grown and/or store foods.
- **Capacity building** – Initiatives helped build capacity in individuals or participating communities.
- **Strong partnerships** – Initiatives involved strong partnerships for assisting in the development, implementation and/ or management of projects.
- **Benefits of initiatives are evident** - Improved physical, economic or cultural benefits were evident.
- **Creative approach** – Initiatives used novel strategies with existing program resources.
- **Secure, adequate funding** - Successful initiatives involved adequate funding to help sustain efforts.

The Household Garden Initiative

Tsartlip First Nation, British Columbia

About: The Household Garden Initiative is “putting food in people’s backyards”. Each spring, all community households are invited to be part of the household garden initiative. Households are selected on a first-come-first-served basis and must have the following: access to a cleared piece of property (preferably sunny), access to water, and time to “see the project through.”



Most of the households will have a raised backyard bed made from scrap and/or purchased lumber and soil purchased from local suppliers. The project coordinator builds the beds and makes sure everything is ready for households to plant in the spring. Households in shady locations plant container gardens. Each household chooses what they want to grow but are also encouraged to try new plants such as spinach, squash, and cauliflower. First-time households receive a variety of vegetable plants, a berry plant and fruit trees. Households with gardens are required to “pass a gift” by sharing seeds or abundant food (e.g., potatoes, tomatoes) with those in need. Approximately 25% of the community participated in 2008.

The Household Garden Initiative has a strong education component. A series of workshops covering a variety of topics including seedlings, when to start planting, what to plant together, and food safety are offered. Visits to small, local farms are organized. Mentors who provide hands-on support and education throughout the growing season are a key part of the initiative. The initiative was launched in 2002 from a 'Good Food Box Program' that was deemed insufficient in providing recipients with adequate amounts of produce.

Words of advice from the Household Garden Initiative *“Communities thinking about implementing a similar food security initiative should start to “get to know the environment”. Find out what community strengths you can build on. Learn who within the community already has a garden. Learn about local farmers. It is important to determine what the community wants from the initiative. Is it food for the table or food to store in a freezer? How much time do community members have to spend on a garden? Bringing resource people into the community as well as going to visit local farmers to “see what they are doing” is helpful. Anyone who coordinates a similar initiative should grow a garden themselves.”*

For more information on community gardens:

- Food Share: Non-profit community organization whose vision is good healthy food for all. www.foodshare.net
- Green Thumbs Growing Kids: support urban children, youth and their families to learn about, grow and prepare fresh foods, cultivated in an environmentally sustainable manner in hands-on programs. www.kidsgrowing.ca
- Northern Healthy Foods Initiative: primary focus is food self-sufficiency. Fact sheets on gardening and various program descriptions. www.gov.mb.ca/ana/nhfi.html

Community Greenhouse

Inuvik, Northwest Territories

About: In 1998, an arena no longer being used was converted into a community greenhouse in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. The purpose is to “allow for the production of a variety of crops in an area where fresh, economical produce is often unavailable.” The greenhouse has two main areas operating from May to September:

- 1,200 square feet of raised community garden plots
- 4,000 square foot commercial greenhouse. About 100 garden plots are available to residents on a first-come-first-served basis.



Each person or family pays a \$20 membership fee, as well as a \$50 or \$25 (half plot) rental fee. Some plots are sponsored for elders, group homes, children's groups (e.g., daycare and Girl Guides) or local charities. Members agree to volunteer and record 15 hours per season. Volunteer time can be spent making compost, filling water barrels, helping elders or children with their plots, or on construction or maintenance projects. If members complete volunteer hours and clean out their plot at the end of the season their \$50 is returned. Members agree to take care of their plot. Plots unattended for two weeks are given to those on the waiting list.

The commercial greenhouse produces plants for flowerbeds and hydroponic vegetables to cover operation and management costs. In addition to selling plants to individual residents, the commercial greenhouse currently has two contracts, one to provide hanging flower baskets for the town site and a second with Inuvik Housing to fill planter boxes.

The Inuvik Community Greenhouse offers gardening workshops including basic gardening techniques, composting, and container gardening as well as wildflower walks led by elders. A gardening club for tiny tots is planned for 2008 and the greenhouse is embarking on its second and final year of a native seed propagation study.

Words of advice from the Inuvik Community Greenhouse *“A feasibility study would be important if a community wanted to operate a commercial, self-sustaining greenhouse. They would need to be aware that the role of the volunteer board of a “business” is more complicated than that of a solely not-for-profit organization. For example, a “business” board must pay taxes, set up payroll for staff, etc”.*

For more information on greenhouses:

- Inuvik Community Greenhouse:
www.inuvikgreenhouse.com
- The Stop Community Food Centre Green Barn:
<http://www.thestop.org/faq>



Salmon Restoration Project

Elsipogtog First Nation, New Brunswick

About: In 1998, the fisheries on the Richibucto River, NB closed, as the river was no longer able to sustain a healthy salmon population. To respond, the Elsipogtog Miigmag First Nation Salmon Restoration Project was launched in 2004. The Salmon Restoration Project is a community initiative of the Elsipogtog Miigmag First Nations to work on restoring the salmon populations in the Richibucto River combining traditional ecological knowledge and scientific knowledge.



Negotiations with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has resulted in an agreement that Elsipogtog First Nation, in collaboration with Biologists from Kouchibouguac National Park, would carry out field projects and management actions in support of the protection and restoration of the salmon population in the Richibucto River. In the first year of the restoration initiative, 120,000 young salmon were released. These parrs were from 42 adult salmon collected as brood stock during the fall of the previous year (2004). As part of the Salmon Restoration Project, Grade 2 students from Elsipogtog receive salmon eggs to care for in their classroom. When the eggs were large enough to survive, the children released the eggs into the Richibucto River under the guidance of Traditional Ecological Knowledge Advisor.

Strengths of the Salmon Restoration Project

- Initiative “takes back something that was almost lost”.
- Initiative is of economic, social, and cultural benefit to Elsipogtog and other communities located along the Richibucto River.
- Workers are dedicated to the project. Today, eight community members are employed.
- Youth are educated about the importance of traditional food.
- Community at large is involved in the project.



Words of advice from the Salmon Restoration Project *“If a community is thinking about implementing a similar initiative, key partners need to be identified first. The combination of traditional ecological knowledge and scientific knowledge is critical to the success of any “traditional” restoration project”.*

Is there a food that is known in your region and you want celebrate or preserve knowledge for future generations? For more information:

- Slow Food Canada: www.slowfood.ca
- White Earth Land Recovery Project: Revives and protects native seeds, heritage crops, naturally grown fruits, animals, wild plants, traditions and knowledge of their indigenous and land-based communities. <http://nativeharvest.com/>

Harvester Support Program Nunavut

About: The overall purpose of the Nunavut Harvester Support Program, which was initiated in 1995, is to support traditional harvesting practices. To this end, the program provides financial assistance to local Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) to organize a community harvest to benefit community members. It is administered at the territorial level by Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.



All 27 communities in Nunavut can access the Harvester Support Program. Snowmobiles, boats, outboard motors, etc. may be purchased through the Capital Equipment Program. Each community receives between \$45,000 and \$90,000 per year, which is allocated based on family income (less than \$75,000/year). In addition, communities can carry out Community Hunts through a separate, proposal-based component. Meat harvested via the hunt is distributed throughout the community. Approx. 200 households are assisted each year through the program.

The Small Equipment Program provides for the purchase of small equipment such as Coleman stoves, sleeping bags, fishing nets, Global Positioning Systems, sewing machines, satellite phones, and high frequency radios so that harvesting households may "adequately carry on a traditional Inuit harvesting lifestyle." Small equipment is purchased by the Nunavut Harvester Support Program and sent to local HTOs who then sell the equipment to beneficiary harvesters at a subsidized cost. The recipients must be registered beneficiaries of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*, at least 16 years of age, and not in arrears with the Nunavut Harvester Support Program. Only one applicant per household per year is allowed.

A review of the Nunavut Harvester Support Program in 1999 identified a need to broaden the scope of the initiative to include women's role in harvesting (e.g., berry picking and sewing). As well, the need for more community-based pilot projects training for youth, community freezers, inter-settlement trade, and program monitoring and tracking were identified. Plans are underway to organize on-the-land projects (e.g., camps) and more group activities.

Advice *"If a region is thinking about implementing a similar initiative, the key informant felt that strong decision-making at the local level is critical. He suggested that the region ensure that adequate administrative support is in place to implement the initiative. He also cautioned that those involved with a similar initiative may be frustrated by the rules but they are there so the program is not abused".*

Here is a similar program: Nisichawayasihk Country Food Program: The objective of this program is to gather seasonal fresh food including fish from lakes and rivers, harvesting raspberries, blueberries, and cranberries from gardens, and hunting wildlife in Boreal forests surrounding the community.
www.trustoffice.ca/view/country-foods-program.aspx

Traditional Diet Program

Whitehorse General Hospital, Yukon

About: The Traditional Diet Program provides traditional foods to patients at the Whitehorse General Hospital, in the Yukon. This in-hospital program has been running for approximately 15 years. It was designed to “advocate for First Nations patients, to ensure quality and culturally sensitive holistic health care.” Many First Nations people eat traditional foods as part of their daily diet, and not having traditional and familiar food can be a source of stress. The program acknowledges the healing and nutritional benefits of traditional foods.



The program works by giving patients the choice of a traditional entrée from the hospital's offered menu. Popular dishes on the menu include moose and caribou stew, caribou-barley soup, and moose steaks boiled in bland sauces. The program coordinator ensures adequate food supplies, recruits hunters, and links with hospital nutrition and kitchen staff. Approximately five to six animals are needed per year. Game is supplied by hunters, outfitters, and/or Conservation Officers. Moose and caribou are acceptable donations, but not small animals, fish, or fowl.

The program is unique in using non-federally inspected traditional foods. A number of ways ensure food safety. Hunters should know the *Guidelines for Ensuring Safe Handling and Transporting of Game Meat* prior to a hunt. The quality of donated game is assessed using two questionnaires that determine whether it meets health and safety standards. The donor of game completes:

The Hunter's Questionnaire: when the animal was killed, temperature, appearance of the animal, transportation details, etc.

The Quality Control Form: the quality of the animal and handling of the carcass upon receipt by the butcher (completed by *Yukon Meat and Sausage* who receive and butcher the animal).

Local health authorities provide information about regulations that apply and provide “advice inspection.” The game is monitored at receiving, storing, production, and delivery points to ensure safety. Quality control and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points audits are periodically conducted. The Department of Environmental Health reviews the Traditional Diet Program's policies and procedures.

Words of advice from the Traditional Diet Program “Don't get discouraged from the first regulatory barrier (e.g., food inspection regulations). Also all key stakeholders, such as biologists, Dietitians, and First Nations, should “come to the table” to plan the implementation of the initiative”.

To find out more information on this program:

Laura Salmon, Traditional Diet Coordinator,
Phone: (867) 393-8891 Email: Laura.Salmon@wgh.yk.ca



Healthy Eating Program North West Company, Canada

About: Promoting nutrition in an upstream prevention approach is integral to create positive health outcomes for this generation and the generations to come. The NorthWest Company is committed to building healthier communities by implementing the Healthy Eating Point of Purchase program across their Northern Canada stores. The overall purpose of the program is to create a supportive in-store nutrition environment to help educate consumers make healthier food choices in a Northern context.



In remote and isolated areas, Northern & NorthMart grocery stores are a mainstay which provide goods and services as well as a platform for community members to gather and socialize.

Healthy Eating Program Overview The Healthy Eating program is geared to target components of food security, more specifically collective and individual factors that impact food choices as it applies to the retail sector.

Healthy Eating Program Components (4 prongs)

1. Permanent signage program placed in all of the 136 stores nation-wide creates a visual stimulus towards a healthier, nutritious environment. The program emphasizes messages found in Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating in addition to recommendations made in provincial/territorial versions.
2. Promotion of "Healthy Bites", which are meal or snack ideas that are displayed monthly on the web and in the first week of each month in flyers. They are brand specific and promotions have pictures advertising appropriate portion sizes.
3. Educational health material-based approach. This approach targets providing health care workers and educators in our communities with culturally appropriate handouts pertaining to diabetes and general nutrition topics. These handouts are provided free of charge.
4. Grass roots approach to synergize current nutrition-activities in communities. Partnerships include: local schools, breakfast programs, pre-natal programs and public health units to name a few.



For more information: Suzanne Hajtó RD CDE, Healthy Eating Coordinator, The North West Company. Phone: (204) 934-1672, E-mail: shajto@northwest.ca

Websites: www.northernstores.ca/recipes.asp & www.northmart.ca/recipes.asp



Peetabeck Academy School Nutrition Program

Fort Albany First Nation, Ontario

About: The school nutrition program has been running for over a decade providing at times snack, breakfast, lunch and food for after school activities as well as field trip food supplies to over 200 students.



The school includes a kitchen with a large serving area. For the elementary students, breakfast is prepared in the kitchen and delivered on carts to each class at 10:00 a.m. Each classroom is equipped with sinks, dishes and cleaning supplies. The high-school students are offered breakfast in the cafeteria at 8:30 a.m. and a snack at 10:15 a.m. Students assist with delivery, set up and clean up. Once a month, breakfast is offered to the whole school and this includes a hot meal.

The nutrition program at Peetabeck Academy extends beyond providing breakfast and snacks. Throughout the year students participate in cooking instruction, learn skills related to traditional foods, such as dressing game. There is also a new greenhouse that will be incorporated into the school nutrition program. At one time, the school started a farmers market for community members.

Ordering is similar to the breakfast program: *The process begins with the initial order to a southern grocer. The community is geographically remote; accessible only by plane year round, by boat and barge during the ice-free season, and by ice road after freeze-up. The food is then trucked to the train in Cochrane, moved by rail to Moosonee. The food is then loaded on a plane and finally trucked to the school for teachers to sort, bag and price.*

Factors that enabled the implementation

- Champion in the community to oversee program
- Training for the coordinator and volunteers
- A commercial kitchen with full range of supplies and storage
- Funding and commitment from leadership
- Community was eligible for the previous Food Mail Program (now Nutrition North Canada)
- Diversity of Partners – University, Foundations, Corporate



For more information on starting a student nutrition program:

- Breakfast Clubs of Canada: <http://breakfastclubscanada.org>
- Breakfast for Learning <http://www.breakfastforlearning.ca/>
- Show Kids You Care: <http://www.showkidsyoucare.org>

“Our program at Peetabeck Academy provides students with nutritional, appealing food each day. Students who previously participated in our snack program regularly exhibited higher levels of concentration, motivation and energy as well as decreased levels of disruptive behaviour. The breakfast program was needed due to the change in eating habits away from traditional foods and the isolated location of Fort Albany, as community members have a difficult time accessing affordable, healthy food for their children”.

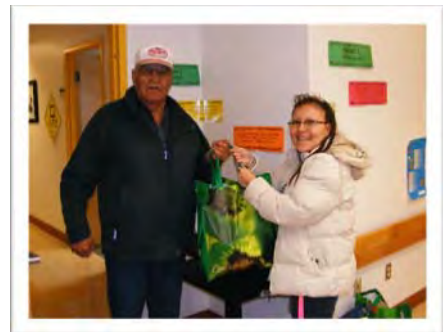
The Good Food Box,
Piikani Nation, Brocket, Alberta

About: The Piikani Nation is located along Highway #3 midway between the towns of Fort Macleod and Pincher Creek. Brocket town site is located on the reserve along the highway.



The community has established the Good Food Box (GFB) program which partners with a grocery store in Lethbridge, Alberta, other health and social programs and local volunteers, to increase healthy food access.

The GFB runs like a large buying club with centralized buying and co-ordination. The goal is to increase the availability of fruits and vegetables at a low cost to community members. A variety of seasonal fruits and vegetables are provided for \$5 or \$10, depending on the size of the order, and are often paired with recipes to encourage participants to try unfamiliar items. GFB orders increased from less than 10 to over 100 in 2009. As a result of the project, participants have noted an increase in healthy eating as a result of the project as well an improved feeling of health.



Participant Feedback

How has the GFB helped you?

- Given us healthy choices for snacking
- It helps me a lot in eating healthy
- Eating properly, all the food groups

How is the GFB making a difference for you and your family?

- Different kinds of vegetables and fruit in our diet
- Makes us feel better, eating better is a plus
- Forces one to good eating/cooking and proper meal planning
- Healthy food choices; economical good decision more for the money
- It really provides extra for our family



Words from the community *"We utilize recycled bags and have received great support. The program now has a solid following and the benefits are great".*

Interested in starting a program in your community? For more information:

- Community Kitchen Program of Calgary: Working cooperatively with individuals, families and communities to facilitate and/or enable initiatives that reduce hunger. <http://www.communitykitchenprogram.com/>
- CHEP Good Food Inc: CHEP works with children, families and communities to improve access to good food and promote Food Security. <http://www.chep.org/gfb/index.html>