Food Costs and Climate Change Impact Stories from Remote BC Communities

A Special Supplement Report to the Food Costing in BC 2022 Report

Provincial Health Services Authority

BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority

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- Xeni Gwet'in First Nation
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- Atlin
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Executive Summary

Food sovereignty and food security, including accessibility, affordability and availability, are critical issues affecting remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in British Columbia (BC). This project set out to gain a better understanding of food costs and climate change impacts on food in remote communities and to amplify local voices to highlight the experiences, challenges, opportunities and hopes for people living in remote communities across BC.

Eight communities were identified to participate through a Call for Interest approach. One-on-one and group conversations with Knowledge Keepers and community members were held to hear stories and experiences from across the province with the intent to learn from one another, better understand complex issues surrounding food security in remote communities and identify cross-collaborative actions to address the expressed needs of people in remote communities in BC.

Conversations occurred over a four-month period in late 2022 and early 2023. Individuals living in remote communities were eager to share experiences, community assets and challenges, and ideas for improving food access. The following five overarching themes and thirteen subthemes emerged from the common experiences and stories of people in participating communities:

Costs and efforts of accessing food

- **Food costs and affordability**
- **Transporation and travel costs**
- **Planning and effort to access food**
- **Limited income and high cost of living**

Food availability and preservation

- **Traditional and local foods**
- **Limited selection and quality**
- **Food preservation, storage and equipment**

Unpredictability of a changing climate

- **Climate change impacts of food access**
- **Weather events and conditions**

Community leadership and food programs

- **Volunteerism and giving back to community**
- **Food banks and charitable food programs**

Impacts to community health and well-being

- **Health and well-being considerations**
- **Lasting impacts of COVID-19**

The Community Stories and Experiences section of this report is rich with the voices of community members from these remote parts of the province. Their unique stories have been brought to life and shared with permission on the BCCDC's food security website.

With many people living in remote communities presently experiencing food insecurity and the continuing impacts of climate change, immediate action is needed. The BCCDC has committed to gathering further information and data by looking at new methodology for the provincial Food Costing Report to better reflect the experiences of people living in rural and remote areas of BC.

Background and Context

Food Security and Food Sovereignty in Remote Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Communities

Significant work has been done across British Columbia (BC) to understand and define food security and food insecurity and describe Indigenous food sovereignty. This work and associated publications by the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) and health system partners include:

- Defining Food Security and Food Insecurity in British Columbia
- Food Security Policy Brief: Rural, Remote and Indigenous Food Security in BC
- Conceptual Framework for Food Security Indicators Summary Report

Each of these publications provides a more in-depth context to the complexity and intersectionality of food security and food sovereignty.

In BC, food security has been defined as:

- Everyone has equitable access to food that is affordable, culturally preferable, nutritious and safe;
- Everyone has the agency to participate in and influence food systems; and
- Food systems are resilient, ecologically sustainable, socially just and honour Indigenous food sovereignty. (BC Centre for Disease Control, 2022)

In addition, the *Food Security Policy Brief: Rural, Remote and Indigenous Food Security in BC* outlines that food security exists when:

- Individuals and communities can reliably access food;
- Nutritious foods are sufficiently available; and
- Food is affordable or there is adequate income to purchase foods that meet personal and cultural preferences.

Individuals, families and communities across the province experience food insecurity due to economic, social, environmental and geographical factors out of their control that affect access to nutritious food (Hasdell, Kurrein, & Lau, 2022). Individual and household food security are influenced by factors such as income, employment and housing, while, at the community-level, elements such as food supply

systems, food prices and community and cultural values determine how remote communities access food (Hasdell, Kurrein, & Lau, 2022).

Remote communities are experiencing increasing food security challenges that were made more apparent by the COVID-19 pandemic. This was discussed in the *Food Security Policy Brief: Rural, Remote and Indigenous Food Security in BC* published in May 2022. This report outlines that those living in rural, remote and Indigenous communities experience unique challenges related to the accessibility, affordability and availability of nutritious foods. Food accessibility issues for remote communities in this report include; limited access to food stores, increased travel time to food stores and additional barriers for those with physical constraints or limited access to a private vehicle. Food affordability concerns from this report include; cost of food, lower average household incomes and identification that rural, remote and Indigenous communities are not adequately represented in provincial food costing data. Finally, evidence on food availability includes supply constraints, concerns about food freshness and non-market ways of accessing food, including traditional foods.

Métis Nation BC also recently (March 2024) published a report titled *Métis Food (In)security and Food as Medicine: Examining the Societal Consequences* of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Métis Nation British Columbia, 2024). This report presents key findings about the complex socio-economic factors, including food insecurity, that Métis people experience due to settler colonialism and shares the inherit rights of Métis people to food security.

For Indigenous communities, traditional foods are more than just a source of nutrition. Traditional foods enhance physical, spiritual, mental and cultural health and wellness and are the outcome of the distinct and reciprocal relationships between Indigenous Peoples and the Land[1] (Métis Nation British Columbia, 2024) (Haneymaayer, et al., 2022) (Métis Nation British Columbia, 2023). The westernization of traditional diets has contributed to food insecurity in Indigenous communities, resulting from colonization, residential schools, and separation of Indigenous Peoples from the, culture, languages and each other (Poirer & Tait Neufeld, 2023) (Kelsey, 2023). Ongoing structural discrimination, racism and colonialism lead to greater food insecurity for some communities, and these factors adversely impact the holistic physical, mental and social health and well-being of people living in food insecure communities (Hasdell, Kurrein, & Lau, 2022).

Though Indigenous food systems have been disrupted by colonial processes, many communities are making efforts to re-establish sovereignty over their food systems (Government of British Columbia, 2023). The Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty identifies self-determination with respect

[1] Capitalizing the word Land moves it from being talked about as a 'thing', into giving it the same recognition, respect, and position in how we talk about others we are in relationship with. In other words, it shifts it from being 'land' in the extractive sense, to "Land" the relational thing and space.

to food sovereignty as "the ability to respond to our own basic needs for healthy, culturally appropriate Indigenous foods in sustainable tribal economies. The ability to make decisions over the amount and quality of food we hunt, fish, gather, grow, eat and share. Freedom from dependence on grocery stores or corporately controlled food production, distribution and consumption in industrialized economies". Food sovereignty provides communities with autonomy and control over their own food systems and the ability to respond to food insecurity through sustainable and self-determined approaches (Haneymaayer, et al., 2022).

Climate change is also greatly impacting and will continue to impact food security and food sovereignty for remote communities in British Columbia. For example, wildlife migration patterns and population sizes have changed, which impacts the availability of food from fishing and hunting. Growing seasons are also shifting because of temperature and seasonal changes (Poirer & Tait Neufeld, 2023) (Wale, 2022). These changes to seasonal cycles result in people needing to make difficult decisions about prioritizing tasks or activities to ready themselves for winter (for example, harvesting berries which are ripening earlier or harvesting wood for winter warmth and cooking) (Wale, 2022). Furthermore, remote communities dependent on food shipments by road, air or water are vulnerable to delays or disruptions in the supply chain due to extreme weather events, such as wildfires, floods or extreme storms (Kelsey, 2023). All the communities that participated in this project have experienced these issues.

Despite these challenges, remote communities are finding innovative ways to improve their food security and food sovereignty through community-driven projects and by supporting one another in more personal ways (BC Centre for Disease Control, 2022). While internal capacity to address barriers to food security varies from community to community, all remote communities have demonstrated their strength and resilience for overcoming food security challenges (Hasdell, Kurrein, & Lau, 2022).

Importance of Remote Community Voices in Food Security

As it stands, limited research and engagement has been done on food security in rural, remote and Indigenous communities in BC (Hasdell, Kurrein, & Lau, 2022). Further, remote and Indigenous community voices are often not represented at decision-making tables, and government policies and actions do not adequately address existing food insecurity in remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

In addition to the higher cost of market foods, there are other increased costs associated with accessing food in Indigenous and remote communities, including costs of fuel, vehicle maintenance, time, food processing, growing, preservation and storage, hunting and fishing and more. People living in remote areas travel further than those in urban communities to purchase food. There are also limited employment opportunities and sources of income for people living in remote communities,

which can be an additional barrier to affording nutritious and quality food. The BCCDC Food Security Policy Brief identified and unpacked some of these factors, and points to further exploration of remote community food access and availability, which was an impetus for this report and stories (Hasdell, Kurrein, & Lau, 2022).

By inviting remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to share stories of their experiences with food insecurity, and how they are taking action, there is opportunity to learn from one another. This provides a better understanding of complex issues surrounding food security in remote communities and opportunities to identify cross-collaborative actions to address the expressed needs of remote communities in BC.

Context and Project Purpose

Every two-to-three-years, the BCCDC, a part of Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), produces a report in partnership with the five regional health authorities, the Ministry of Health and the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) to monitor the cost and affordability of a nutritious diet in BC. Most recently, the Food Costing in BC 2022 Report was released in May 2023. The data collection includes gathering prices for food items in the National Nutritious Food Basket (NNFB) in a randomly selected sample of full-service grocery stores across the province's 16 health service delivery areas. The food costing data is used to assess the affordability of a healthy diet for different population groups. It also allows for population and public health planning and monitoring to inform policy.

Since 2013, the health authorities have been requesting more data on food costs, access and affordability in remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. The BCCDC identified limitations in the current food costing methodology used as it relates to remote communities in BC. One limitation is that most remote communities do not have full-service grocery stores (carrying all or most of the 61 items in the NNFB) and are therefore not included in data collection. Additionally, transportation or freight costs and vehicle expenses have not been included or considered in food costing. Beyond market foods, the cost of hunting and harvesting foods, growing foods, accessing culturally preferable foods, traditional foods or seasonal differences are not captured in the assessment of food costs.

In BC we are reliant upon complex global and local food systems. Climate change is disrupting food systems, and therefore threatening the food security of people and communities in BC (Poirer & Tait Neufeld, 2023). We have seen this, with rising temperatures, wildfires, extreme flooding and changing conditions for marine life and other ecosystems (Poirer & Tait Neufeld, 2023). These climate change impacts will continue to disproportionately impact food security in remote communities, which already experience greater food insecurity.

This project responds to needs identified in the previous initiatives and reports. It aims to address gaps in understanding food security challenges and identify opportunities for addressing these gaps. The

goal was to hear the stories and experiences of people in remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities across BC to better understand food costs and the impact of climate change on food security. Seven local stories reflecting the unique circumstances and context of each community are shared on the BCCDC Food Security website. This report provides a summary of key common themes identified through engagement with the eight participating communities. It has also informed several key considerations for cross collaborative discussion and action at a variety of levels including federal, provincial, regional, local governments and Indigenous governments, health authorities and non-profit/non-government organizations and across sectors, and work alongside and driven by remote community members. These key considerations will be brought forward to the provincial government in a separate process.

Approach

Guiding Principles

Throughout the project, the Project Consulting Team strived to create a safe, inclusive and collaborative environment that supported the needs of participants, Project Advisory Group members, the BCCDC Food Security Team and the overall project goals. To ensure this, the following principles were created to guide the process and its team members:

Collaboration

Bridge multiple knowledge systems by bringing together people with diverse insights to the challenges and opportunities of remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities' food security issues.

Equity and Inclusion

Prioritize equity and inclusion in the discussions and work undertaken. Everyone has an equal opportunity to be heard, and there is fair and just representation throughout the entirety of the project.

Well-being

The well-being of team members and community members who will be engaged, as well as any groups or individuals who may be impacted by this work, is a leading priority. The discussions were driven by the desire to take care of each other and ourselves.

Respect

The work will be built upon mutual respect between all team members and understanding that there is a broad range of experience and knowledge represented, all of which are valued equally. It takes into account the distinct needs of participating communities as well as their cultures, traditions, sovereignty, knowledge and worldviews.

Confidentiality

Any proceedings and discussions that take place within the context of the project will remain confidential until there is a consensus that related materials and reports are ready for public viewing and have been approved by BCCDC leadership.

Validation

All team and community members involved deserve to be heard and validated without judgment. We will create a shared space for members to listen intently to what was being discussed and provided equitable opportunities for the members to voice their insights.

Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP®)

In addition to the principles listed above, the Project Consulting Team and BCCDC Food Security Team prioritized the First Nations principles of ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP®) within the work to promote data sovereignty and self-determination of the individuals and communities participating in the story-focused project. The First Nations Information Governance Centre defines the OCAP principles as follows (First Nations Information Governance Centre):

Ownership: "[T]he relationship of First Nations to their cultural knowledge, data, and information. This principle states that a community or group owns information collectively in the same way that an individual owns his or her personal information."

Control: "First Nations, their communities, and representative bodies are within their rights to seek control over all aspects of research and information management processes that impact them. First Nations control of research can include all stages of a particular research project-from start to finish. The principle extends to the control of resources and review processes, the planning process, management of the information and so on."

Access: "First Nations must have access to information and data about themselves and their communities regardless of where it is held. The principle of access also refers to the right of First Nations' communities and organizations to manage and make decisions regarding access to their collective information. This may be achieved, in practice, through standardized, formal protocols."

Possession: "While ownership identifies the relationship between a people and their information in principle, possession or stewardship is more concrete: it refers to the physical control of data. Possession is the mechanism by which ownership can be asserted and protected."

To honour the OCAP principles, each participating community is seen as the keepers of their story. They maintain ownership and control over the story by being both the first and the final reviewer during the writing stage, and had a final say on the publication of their community story. Access to interview transcripts and story content was offered or provided to each community. While the community stories and report will be hosted on the BCCDC website, each community has the right to request changes or removal of their data and story.

Role of the Project Advisory Group

The Project Advisory Group consisted of Indigenous Knowledge Keepers from communities across the province, and representatives from Métis Nation BC, the First Nation Health Authority, Ministry of Health and each of the regional health authorities. Advisory Group members offered valuable knowledge and perspectives on the unique challenges and opportunities present within remote

Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities regarding food access and/or the implications of climate change on food.

Project Advisory Group members were asked to work in partnership with the BCCDC Food Security Team and the Project Consulting Team by making recommendations to inform the processes and procedures followed in Phase 2 of this project. Specifically, the Project Advisory Group supported the following:

1) Review and revise the draft Expression of Interest.
2) Review and revise the draft criteria for eligibility and participation.
3) Review and provide feedback on the methods for community selection.
4) Review and revise the interview/conversation guides and other engagement methods.
5) Provide feedback on this report and community stories.
6) Provide guidance or feedback on other relevant key documents or issues that arose throughout the duration of the project.

Methods

Figure 1. Project timeline and phases

The project occurred in two phases:

- Phase 1 (January – April 2022) was a scoping phase to determine feasibility of the overall project. An internal report was submitted to the BCCDC in April 2022 with recommendations to proceed with the second phase.

- Phase 2 (July 2022 – April 2024) included collaboration with eight remote communities in BC to hear stories and understand experiences of food access, food costs and the impact of climate change on food. Seven unique community stories emerged and have been shared at xx and were used to form the basis of this special addendum report.

Each phase is described in further detail below.

Phase 1

Feasibility Assessment and Jurisdictional Scan

In Phase 1, the Project Consulting Team conducted a jurisdictional scan and engagement process to determine the feasibility of and interest in the project. Feasibility and interest were discussed with representatives from health authorities, Métis Nation BC and Chee Mamuk (an Indigenous Health program of BCCDC) as well as with remote community representatives. All those engaged expressed interest in the project moving to the second phase.

The jurisdictional scan involved making connections with federal, provincial and territorial contacts across Canada. They were asked to share current approaches to food costing and understanding climate change impacts on food in remote communities in their respective provinces and territories.

Responses were received from eight provinces and two territories. A keyword Google search to find related projects and reports was also completed. The information received and gathered is summarized in Appendix A.

Phase 2

Expression of Interest Process

A key recommendation from Phase 1 was to apply an expression of interest approach to finding communities that met the eligibility criteria and were interested in having their stories heard. This was done to promote fair opportunity for remote communities to self-identify themselves to be considered in the selection process.

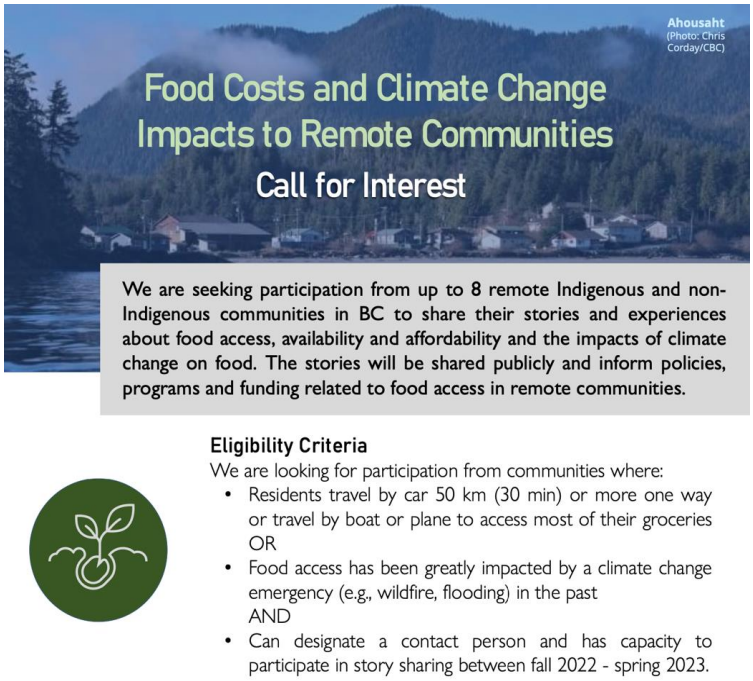
The eligibility criteria for project participation included:

- Residents travel by car 50 kilometres or 30 minutes or more one way, or travel by boat or plane, to access most of their groceries; or
- Food access has been greatly impacted by a climate emergency (e.g., wildfire, flooding) in the past; and
- Can identify a community point of contact and have the capacity to participate in story sharing between fall 2022 and spring 2023.

Other considerations for community participation included:

- Geographic and circumstantial representation across the province;
- A willingness to have stories about their community's and personal experiences shared publicly in a report (*all stories and information are shared with community permission, and consent to share may be withdrawn at any time);
- Financial and physical (spatial) challenges in accessing nutritious and culturally appropriate food; and
- Recent or anticipated food access impacts due to climate change.

Figure 2. Image of digital poster for phase 2 Call for Interest



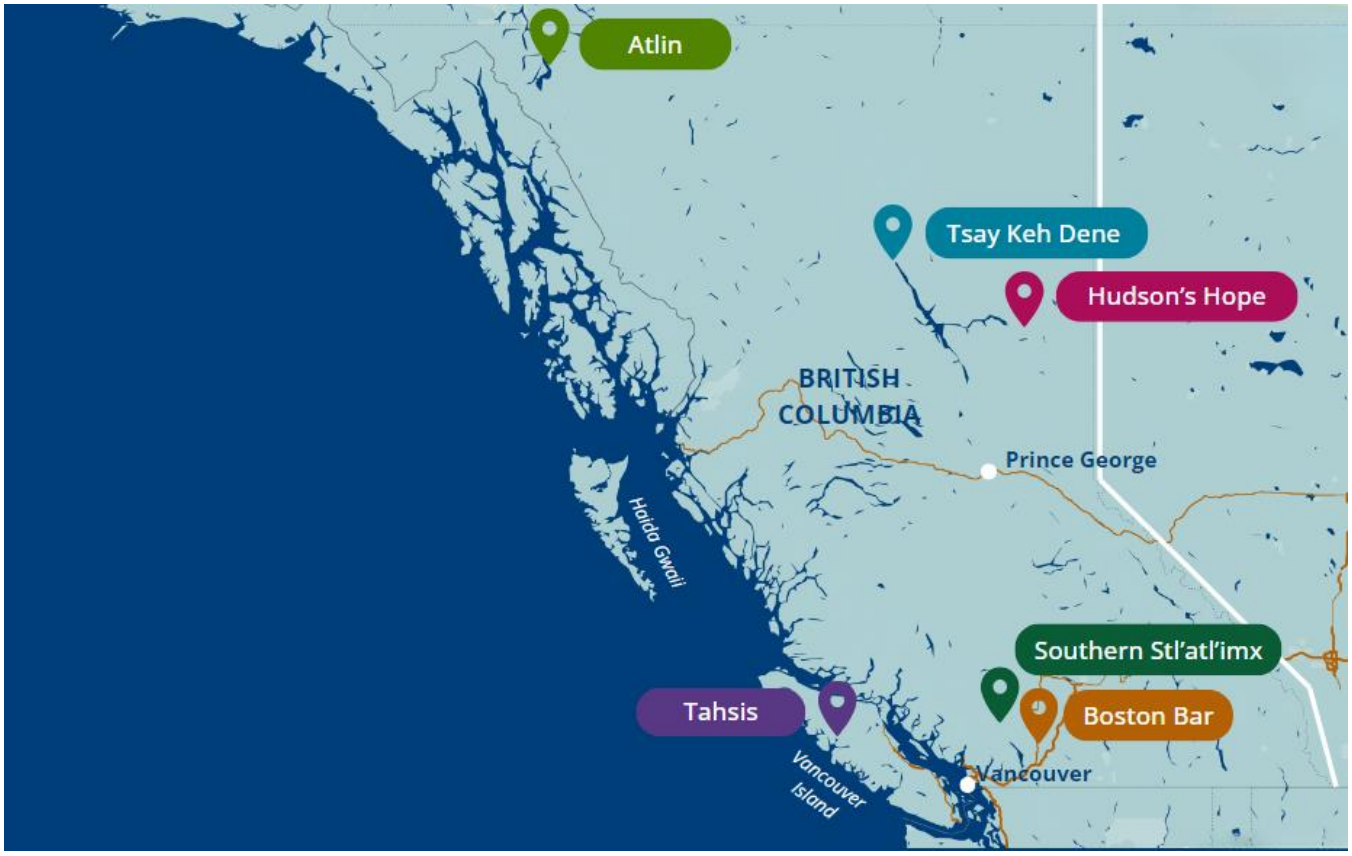
A digital poster (Figure 2) containing project information and eligibility criteria was shared with the Project Advisory Group to ensure its suitability and then distributed virtually to remote communities across BC through existing networks of the Project Advisory Group.

The expression of interest was open for four weeks and the Project Consulting Team received interest from a total of 19 communities, with at least one eligible community in each of BC's health authority regions. The list of interested communities was then shared with the Project Advisory Group who identified communities they believed would have unique stories to share, benefit the most from inclusion in this project and be representative of diversity by geography and circumstances. The participating communities include:

Table 1. List of Participating Communities

Region	Community name	Indigenous/non-Indigenous community	Number of participants
Island Health	**Ukwanalis Village - Dzawada'enuxw** (Kingcome Inlet) *(pronounced dza-wah-day-noowh)*	First Nation community	1
	Tahsis	non-Indigenous community	5
Vancouver Coastal Health	**Southern Stl'atl'imx** *(pronounced stat-lee-um)*	includes five First Nation communities	13
Fraser Health	**Boston Bar**	non-Indigenous community	5
Interior Health	**Xeni Gwet'in** *(pronounced hon-ay gwi-teen)*	First Nation community	10
Northern Health	**Tsay Keh Dene Nation** *(pronounced say-kay-denay)*	First Nation community	8
	Atlin	non-Indigenous community	5
	Hudson's Hope/River of the Peace Métis Society	Métis chartered community	2

Figure 3. Map of British Columbia showing location of communities featured in the project website



Community Story Gathering

Bespoke Approach to Story Gathering

Three approaches were used to engage with communities and gather stories about their food-related experiences. These included in-person community visits, virtual interviews/conversations and subcontracting of individuals in the community to conduct engagement sessions with community members. Discussions were held with community contacts to determine the preferred approach and timing for the community.

Five of the eight participating communities chose a subcontracting approach to engagement, two communities invited the Project Consulting Team for an in-community visit and one community participated in virtual story sharing via Zoom. Although eight communities engaged in the project, seven stories were developed. Local individuals who were subcontracted used their existing relationships with community members to create a comfortable and familiar environment for story sharing. Participating communities and individuals were given honoraria for their contributions and time.

Hearing from the People: Individual Knowledge Keeper/Community Member Conversations

Conversations with Knowledge Keepers and community members was the primary method of story gathering. The conversations were typically held one-on-one between the community member and the Project Consulting Team member or subcontractor. These semi-structured conversations followed a conversation guide (Appendix B) created by the Project Consulting Team. The conversation guide included topics such as food access, availability and cost, traditional food and food harvesting, gathering and preserving experiences, climate change impacts and other opportunities and challenges individuals face in relation to food in their communities.

Hearing from the People: Group Conversations

The secondary method used was group conversations or focus groups. These conversations followed a similar format to the Knowledge Keeper and community member conversations but included more than one participant per story-sharing session. The questions and prompts were adapted from the conversation guide (Appendix B) to reflect the core themes.

Ongoing Consent and Permission

This project prioritized free, prior and informed consent and the First Nations principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP). Ongoing consent guides the project process. The BCCDC Food Security Team and Legal Team developed a media permission form that integrates these principles and ensures ownership of materials for participants while permitting BCCDC's use of the project materials related to this project. All information, quotes, photos and names are shared with permission.

Story and Report Writing

This project primarily serves to amplify the voices of those living in remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in British Columbia to highlight the experiences, challenges, opportunities and hopes of people in these communities. The community stories and special addendum report place the people at the heart of the work. Language and verbatim, lived experiences and community context are embedded in the stories and report to ensure the voices of the people carry through and impact the reader to emphasize how people in these communities perceive and experience their unique food-related circumstances.

Transcription and Analysis

Conversations that were recorded using an audio capturing device were transcribed using a Microsoft Word transcription tool or manual transcription. Several conversations were recorded through physical note taking, either on paper or on a computer. This method made it more challenging to preserve exact phrasing used by participants, but was necessary when the audio recordings were not usable or when participants did not wish to have their voices recorded.

The information gathered through audio recordings, transcripts and note-taking was compiled, cleaned and organized based on the common themes identified by the Project Consulting Team using and online collaboration tool. These common themes are seen throughout the stories, including five overarching themes and thirteen subthemes, and are reflected in the What We Heard section of this report.

Story Approval and Revision Process

The Project Consulting Team compiled the information gathered to form a unique community story for 6 participating communities. Draft community stories were sent back to the community contacts for review and approval. The community contact could make or suggest changes to the story and share the draft with individuals who had shared their stories to seek their approval or feedback. The approved and/or revised draft was then shared with the BCCDC Food Security Team and with the BCCDC Knowledge Translation team to provide feedback and comments to the Project Consulting Team. The Project Advisory Group met in May 2023 to provide additional feedback on the community stories format and the draft project report. A revised community story was sent again to the community contact to approve the final draft. This review process is depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Review process used for story approval and revisions

Community Stories and Experiences

Key Themes

Five overarching themes and thirteen subthemes emerged from the common experiences and stories of the participating communities.

Costs and efforts of accessing food

- Food costs and affordability
- Transporation and travel costs
- Planning and effort to access food
- Limited income and high cost of living

Food availability and preservation

- Traditional and local foods
- Limited selection and quality
- Food preservation, storage and equipment

Unpredictability of a changing climate

- Climate change impacts of food access
- Weather events and conditions

Community leadership and food programs

- Volunteerism and giving back to community
- Food banks and charitable food programs

Impacts to community health and well-being

- Health and well-being considerations
- Lasting impacts of COVID-19

Each of the themes are described below, along with direct quotes from the individuals who shared their stories.

Costs and Effort of Accessing Food

Food Costs and Affordability

Major Centres Have Lower Food Prices

Remote community members frequently choose to travel the extra distance beyond the closest rural community to urban settings to stretch their dollars further and for more variety. In many cases, participants expressed that the nearest rural centre with a full-service grocer may still have elevated food costs and limited variety compared to major urban centres.

> "Food cost in Pemberton is ridiculous. I would rather go out to Vancouver."
>
> Participant from Southern Stl'atl'imx

Participants from Boston Bar, which is a 45-minute trip one way to Hope, choose to travel further.

> "Personally, I travel one and a half hours one way to Chilliwack to go to Superstore or Walmart Super Centres in order to get as much food as possible for my dollar. Sometimes, I travel an additional 20 minutes to Abbotsford Costco. To me, two hours of travel is worth the amount of extra food I am able to get from the city."
>
> Ang, Boston Bar

Affordability of Food

Remote community members shared that rising food costs are impacting them and their families.

> "The increase in prices makes it very challenging for families. I live paycheque to paycheque."
>
> Janine, Tsay Keh Dene

Overall, impacts of inflation were mentioned in relation to the rising costs of food.

> "I think everything right now, inflation the way it is, everything is going up in price. You're making those choices - do I buy this, or do I buy that? I mean, you're a lot more careful with your money now than you were in the past. That goes for toilet paper, goes for vegetables, canned food, peanut butter, everything."
>
> Bill, Tahsis

Community members in Southern Stl'atl'imx gave specific examples of increases they have experienced in food costs.

> "Prices have shot up. In 2019 (before COVID-19), groceries used to be about $400/month. But now, it is closer to $400 in one week."
>
> Participant from Southern Stl'atl'imx

> "When I moved here, potatoes were $18. Then it was $54, then $88 for a box of potatoes. The other day, two big bags of potatoes were $175!"
>
> Participant from Southern Stl'atl'imx

Many participants talked about the stress and anxiety associated with lack of food access and costs.

> "I worry a lot, maybe every other day… I try not to worry too much because stress makes the body sick. There's always just enough, so I try not to worry."
>
> Lucy, Southern Stl'atl'imx

Local Community Store Prices

Food prices in remote local community stores were described as higher than at major market retailers available in non-remote locations.

> "Shopping at [the local store] with $250 will amount to one plastic grocery bag full."
>
> Sam and Faith, Tsay Keh Dene

> "And what we do get at our local grocery store is horridly priced. We've seen in the last year food cost rise extremely in our little community. Just for example, the other day here, 2 weeks ago, I went to grab a head of lettuce. And I got to the till, and it was just a small head of iceberg lettuce, it was $6 and some cents."
>
> Joan, Hudson's Hope

Participants believe that prices are reflective of the fuel and shipping costs of bringing the foods into remote communities.

> "Locally, groceries are much more expensive than they are in Whitehorse. That relates directly to the cost of transportation, and freight is tremendously expensive because of the cost of gas or diesel."
>
> Donna, Atlin

There was also mention of elevated prices being linked to increased demand such as when industrial workers are living in the area.

> "You're looking at like almost three times the price for meat here compared to Fort St. John. So, because they have a bigger population centre. Understandable. But like I said, the store owner basically starts hiking prices when he sees the supply and demand come with industry."
>
> Earlene, Hudson's Hope

Overall, affordability of foods available in communities with store access was a common concern.

> "We do not have affordability in our community for anything, especially for food items. Everything is expensive and marked up."
>
> Participant from Boston Bar

Transportation and Travel Costs

Travel Time and Road Conditions

For every remote community that participated in the project, the most notable component of food access and food costs was transportation. Travel time for participating communities to access a full-service grocery store ranged from 45 minutes to six hours one-direction. While most participating communities have year-round road access, one community was not road-accessible, and is accessible by boat only. Weather in remote communities can create challenging and unpredictable travel conditions and safety concerns for community members. Road conditions can also be impacted by topography and large volumes of industrial traffic. Participants expressed worry about and had experienced flat tires, vehicle break downs and road blockages such as rockslides or fallen trees. These concerns are further exacerbated by weather events and a changing climate. Road maintenance and repair are not always timely. Road closures due to weather events, accidents, maintenance, etc. are common and can close off access into and out of a community for many hours and sometimes days or weeks.

Vehicle Access and Costs

Access to a vehicle is required for people needing to travel out of their home community. Due to rough road conditions, weather and travel distance, many participants said that having a reliable and sturdy vehicle is necessary.

> "Having a good vehicle around here is a must if you want to get around."
>
> Dan-Dan, Southern Stl'atl'imx

It was also noted that many individuals living in remote communities may not have a driver's license and/or vehicle insurance. In almost every participating community, there was at least one interviewee that did not have a vehicle. These participants shared that this limits their food access even further and

increases reliance on friends, families and neighbours. Some participants suggested that having access to a community bus, especially for elders and individuals who do not drive, would support better food access and reduce the need to rely on others.

> "I don't have a car. So, if I need something, I might have a neighbor pick up few things for me… and that is basically how I get by."
>
> Bill, Tahsis

Vehicle ownership can be a significant expense for people including purchase price, insurance, licensing and maintenance. Rough road conditions contribute to an increased need for vehicle maintenance and increased cost.

> "[T]he road gets really rough sometimes, too. I mean, it is really hard on vehicles."
>
> John, Tahsis

Flat tires, especially on rough roads, is an ongoing worry for people. Participants from Southern Stl'atl'imx, which is accessed via a rough, rocky and narrow forest service road, said they have to replace their vehicles' tires "every six months to a year".

Travel Costs and Timing of Travel

Fuel costs are an added expense not often considered in the cost of food. This impact has been felt more deeply within the last year as fuel prices increased substantially. Many remote community members try to save money and time spent on travel by fitting in as much as possible into a trip to town. For many individuals, the time of the month for food shopping also mattered. Shopping trips to town are often timed to coincide with pay days. Medical appointments, mail collection, banking, insurance renewal, and other errands and shopping are often planned when people travel to town for groceries.

> "I don't go just for grocery shopping. It's usually doctors or dentists, or appointments or haircuts, or going to the bank, or the hardware store, or whatever else - we combine it."
>
> Donna, Atlin

In some cases, an overnight stay may be required due to the travel times, which adds additional accommodation expense. Community members in Tsay Keh Dene, the most remote of all the participating communities, experienced some of the highest travel costs to access food.

> "…when I go to town, it costs me roughly $1500 or more once everything is complete [including] travel, shopping for groceries and using your vehicle and accommodations."
>
> Participant from Tsay Keh Dene

Many community members in Tsay Keh Dene rely on medical appointments, covered by the BC First Nations Health Benefits Program, for their travel costs.

> "Most members rely on medical trips, so they can buy groceries while they are in Prince George."
>
> Sam and Faith, Tsay Keh Dene

These financial worries can place additional stress and burden on remote community members.

> "Transportation costs are a concern for literally everyone I know."
>
> Meagan, Boston Bar

Freight Costs and Shipping

To bring food into the community, the cost and frequency of freight/shipping must also be considered. Often, freight cost is reflected in the prices of food items and supplies at small local stores. Freight trucks are also faced with access barriers such as weather interference and road closures. In communities where delivery trucks arrive infrequently to small local stores, participants expressed the importance of getting to the store right after delivery because items sell out quickly.

Some individuals are trying to take advantage of services like Amazon or other online delivery services.

> "I've noticed Amazon has a tremendous amount of pantry items that are a good price or the same price as Walmart or Costco. We're having a lot of our pantry items and non-perishables shipped in from Amazon. Same brand, same quality, same price."
>
> Trevor, Tahsis

While some remote communities have an in-community post office location available, others travel out of their community to collect mail items and shipping is not always an option in all communities.

Planning and Effort to Access Food

Planning for Shopping

People living in remote communities indicated they spend a significant amount of time and planning to ensure they have food for themselves and their families. Preparation is needed for travel; including making a very thorough grocery and supply list, packing the vehicle with emergency supplies in case of travel disasters and preparing for planned or unexpected overnight trips.

> "You make sure you make food last for a couple of weeks, not just for the week. What do we have in the pantry versus when do we need to go out and buy more? For shopping lists – often

> physical lists don't work as well since you might forget it and not realize until you get to the store. [I use] digital shopping lists on my phone."
>
> Lucy, Southern Stl'atl'imx

Physical and Mental Toll of Travel

Travel often takes a full day, or more, and participants described it as physically and mentally exhausting.

> "It basically takes a whole day. For travel time, purchasing supplies and to come back into the village. Due to the sheer physical exhaustion of the trip, I usually have to take a day off to recover. My back and legs hurt a bit from the fact I'm sitting in a vehicle 6-8 hours in one day. That about sums up my adventures to go buy food and supplies once a month or once every two months depending on the roads."
>
> Trevor, Tahsis

> "It wears you down to be out all day and get home at 8, 9 or 10 pm. Sometimes you don't eat all day – you have to get the kids ready, load the truck, run around all day. You're beat when you get home."
>
> Dan-Dan, Southern Stl'atl'imx

Participants indicated that long travel times combined with challenging travel conditions make travelling for food highly stressful and tiring for remote community members.

Limited Income and High Cost of Living

Limited Incomes

Many participants noted that they have a fixed or limited income, which impacts their ability to access and afford food. The lower income levels were related to a variety of reasons including limited employment opportunities, old age/pension income and health challenges, among others.

> "Elders are on a fixed income."
>
> Sarah, Tsay Keh Dene

There were similar experiences related to fixed incomes.

> "I'm just an old-age pensioner, so I just do the best I can."
>
> John, Tahsis

Many families are very stretched and rely on charitable food programs, or even experience running out of food at times, which is further discussed under charitable food programs below.

> "Not all our community members can do this, as they physically can't, financially can't [afford] or have no means of transportation to get to the stores that offer the better deals, causing them to heavily rely on food bank or borderline starve from month to month."
>
> Participant form Boston Bar

Participants expressed a need for additional remote living allowances for individuals with fixed or limited incomes living in remote areas of BC.

Cost of Living in Remote Communities

While the cost of housing in most remote communities was identified as being lower than other locations in BC, the cost of accessing other essential things such as food and medical care are reported to be substantially higher. With the increasing costs of food, fuel and other daily household items, without substantial increases to incomes or limited job opportunities, participants indicated that food is becoming less and less affordable.

> "What we save on maybe cheap housing, we spend on gas."
>
> Sarah, Tahsis

> "It's nice for people to start realising that small communities exist, and that sometimes we move away because cost of living is less expensive. But that only applies to rent or house purchases. Everything else is so expensive."
>
> Participant from Boston Bar

Food Availability and Preservation

Traditional and Local Foods

Traditional Foods and Sharing

Traditional foods are a vital part of the food supply and the culture of people living in remote communities, especially for Indigenous peoples and communities.

> "Food was the basis of everything. Our culture centered around food."
>
> Dan-Dan, Southern Stl'atl'imx

> "Food brings people together. Especially when there is a passing, we have a gathering, and all the traditional food comes."
>
> Faye, Southern Stl'atl'imx

Gathering and sharing traditional foods is one way that Indigenous peoples care for one another.

> "Traditionally, the first deer caught by a person is completely given away. Then in future years, parts of each first deer of the season is given to other people. This is to respect the spirit of the deer that has given their life to feed not just one family, but many. When I go fishing, I give the first fish away. And if it is a good run, I usually give half of the fish away right away – to take care of the ones that do not fish or don't have fishing spots. Throughout the year, all produce that we gather, fish and hunt is also shared in community gatherings or gifted as giveaways. The animals and plants take care of us so that we can take care of each other."
>
> Dan-Dan, Southern Stl'atl'imx

Traditional Foods Availability and Access

While there is significant interest in continuing to access traditional foods, participants identified many issues that have impacted the availability and access of traditional foods. Changing wildlife populations was often brought up, in relation to climate change and changing seasonal patterns, overhunting and overfishing, increased tourism and industry impacts.

> "Fish are less, spawning has changed. Game herds are thinner or have moved to inaccessible areas due to wildfires and flooding, and they are not coming back to their normal areas because of the lack of food for them. Berries and plants and medicine plants are not growing the same, at the same rate or the same quality because of the changes in climate."
>
> Participant from Boston Bar

> "A lot of tourists come to the area to hunt deer."
>
> Participant from Southern Stl'atl'imx

Changing regulatory policies (such as shorter hunting seasons or seasonal restrictions) and licensing requirements were also mentioned as barriers to access.

> "[Conservation] took our meat we hunted away. This is our right. We should not need the Possession and Acquisition Licence, hunting or fishing licenses, or approvals to hunt on our own Lands."
>
> Participant from Southern Stl'atl'imx

The costs of accessing traditional foods was also raised. Hunting supplies, fuel, licenses and processing are all concerns, especially when there is no guarantee of returning home with any food.

The need for revitalization of the skills and knowledge that was lost due to colonialism and residential schools was discussed. Traditional food skills were impacted.

> "Today, our lives have been changed drastically, and living off of the Land seems to be forgotten. But some of us have cabins. We go to out of the village and continue to hunt, fish, and gather food."
>
> Jean, Tsay Keh Dene

During the group conversation in Southern Stl'atl'imx, there was a passionate discussion around the intentional and focused efforts of Knowledge Keepers to teach children and youth about traditional ways for gathering, processing and preserving foods. This is a huge priority in this community and could be supported by integrating traditional food system and skills education within schools to continue reconnecting younger generations with their foods and culture.

Funding for positions that enhance local food security and traditional foods education was also identified as a priority by several participants. This links to essential volunteer work, discussed in a later section, as historically food security related roles were solely volunteer based.

Local Food

The local food economy was raised several times as being important in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Whether it's homegrown food that is saved or shared, food that is caught or gathered, or trying to support local farms and business, local foods are prioritized. Growing, gathering and preserving were mentioned as an important part of many people's diets, especially saving for the winter and spring months. Some participants try their best to choose local foods where possible.

> "I have preference for local products, and they may be more expensive. We know that if things travel long distances, that affects their nutritional values. So sometimes paying more for less gives you more in the end. So that's one of the main reasons that I will buy locally if I can."
>
> Donna, Atlin

Several participants expressed the need for more support for local food production such as local agriculture and greenhouses. Year-round greenhouses, whether private or commercial, ideally with subsidy, grants or low interest loans, could greatly improve access to healthy, locally grown foods. Small local grocery stores or markets, offering local and/or traditional foods, and better access to fresh and healthy food options at reasonable prices, are greatly desired in every community.

> "People told me there used to be farms in the area. I think it would be beneficial to possibly have some sort of agricultural or cultivation processing plant in the area. Bunch of greenhouses or something for more local food production, making the food cost cheaper for everybody."
>
> Trevor, Tahsis

Another idea shared by participants to increase access to local foods was to protect wildlife populations by prioritizing local hunters and reducing the risk of overharvesting and overhunting. In

areas where climate change impacts have been profound, there is a need for greater environmental stewardship and protection or revitalization of animal habitats.

Limited Food Selection and Quality

Limited Variety

Participants shared major concerns about the lack of variety and selection available to remote community residents. Small local stores can have very limited selection, and due to shipment delays or infrequent scheduled deliveries, sometimes residents are faced with empty shelves. Many participants shared a desire to eat a more nutritious diet but are unable because of the limited options available, or the costs of foods available.

> "Food is brought up with the transport truck to the general store. The store staff orders what the members request. Some want healthy foods, and some prefer easy foods, microwavable food. I work at the Elders' Centre and find it difficult to cook healthy foods for the elders, when there is not much variety of healthy food at the store or not enough. The challenges – trying to eat healthier and teach my grandchildren."
>
> Yvonne, Tsay Keh Dene

> "We have one small local grocery store, and we have a large convenience store that doesn't carry any kind of fresh produce or anything like that. Our grocery store is quite small, so they can only hold or carry, I guess, probably so many items. So that's a big thing; it's not a large building."
>
> Joan, Hudson's Hope

Food Quality

All participating communities identified food quality as an issue. This was particularly the case with foods purchased at small local stores.

> "Food quality is ALWAYS a concern. If we get lettuce or vegetables, it's already close to out of date or spoiled. Fruit is the same. Milk has been spoiled or expired, along with cheeses and sour cream."
>
> Jayme, Boston Bar

> "Fruits and vegetables are not fresh. They are almost rotten by the time we get them to the store, and eggs are sometimes mostly broken in the cartons by the time it gets to the store in community."
>
> Janine, Boston Bar

There are many contributing factors to this including supply chain, shipment times, road conditions and food costs. Community members frequently commented on accidentally purchasing mouldy, rotten, stale, wilted, soft or bruised foods, or finding foods on store shelves that were at or past the best before or expiry date.

> "I don't think much of its quality after getting that loaf of bread that was mouldy. I haven't been back to get anything since."
>
> John, Tahsis

Another concern with food quality is related to the limited frequency of shopping and travel conditions. Since it is quite common to only shop once per month or less often, the perishable items purchased may only last days to weeks, and then frozen or canned foods are usually used in between shopping trips. Canned foods or preserved and stored foods are staples for many. If a person accidentally over purchases fresh perishable food, they may risk the food rotting before it can be eaten. Frozen items cannot be kept frozen for the duration of the travel home, so many times these items are avoided all together.

> "You always have to make sure you buy your meats not frozen. Because by the time we get home, you never know, it could thaw, and you could be in trouble."
>
> Mandy, Tahsis

The road conditions in these remote communities are another concern related to food quality. Rough, bumpy roads can lead to broken eggs, cracked packaging, squished bread and other damage to food items by the time a person returns home. On dusty roads, if items were in the back of a pick-up truck, every single item could become covered in a layer of dust if not in a sealed container.

Food Preservation, Storage, and Equipment

Preserving Foods

Preserving foods, whether they are grown or gathered locally, purchased in bulk or when prices are lower, is a priority for most people living in a remote community to ensure that food is available year-round and stocked up in case of emergency. Earlene and Joan from Hudson's Hope emphasized the high importance of preserving foods to their food security.

> "I end up trying to get the groceries [when prices are as] low as possible. I end up canning, and I preserve all my food and try to keep a good supply, so I don't have to depend on this grocery store here [in town]."
>
> Earlene, Hudson's Hope

> "We can and try to process as much [as possible]. So we buy a lot of foods in Fort St. John that we can come home to process and can, or vacuum seal, or dehydrate ourselves. So we can make it through from a month to month basis."
>
> Joan, Hudson's Hope

Some communities talked about the importance of education and teaching food preservation skills. Food skills and knowledge around preserving foods has slowly been lost over time for a variety of reasons including industrialization of food systems and loss of traditional or family knowledge. Communities are making efforts to incorporate this knowledge again and are providing opportunities for community members to learn, but participants feel that more is needed in this area for training and resources.

> "They have different programs where they share and they have an instructor who will show you how to do canning and drying and smoking, and these different activities to be able to preserve it, which you know are traditional ways of preserving it for later. Which is awesome."
>
> Vincent, Atlin

Vehicle Cargo Capacity

Vehicle size and cargo capacity is a consideration for many. Purchasing enough food for a family for at least a month may quickly fill all the cargo space a vehicle has, and not leave a lot of room for other essential items. One interviewee mentioned that they picked up their mail in town and filled their vehicle, so they had to do another trip the following day to purchase food. If a person does not have a vehicle and needs to travel with someone else, both parties may need to scale back on their shopping list to ensure it all fits in the vehicle for the trip home.

> "We worry about how much we can actually shop for. Do we have enough room to bring everything we need to get home?"
>
> Lucy, Southern Stl'atl'imx

In some communities, a shuttle service is available for elders and other individuals, but the amount of space available to bring home items is very limited.

Fridge, Freezer and Pantry Space

Ample fridge and freezer space is also needed to store food. Many people mentioned having at least one large chest freezer. They aim to fill the freezer or freezers in the summer and fall to last them through to the next spring and summer. Pantry space, root cellars and cold storage in houses are also helpful when storing food and preparing for winter, but not all houses are equipped with these spaces.

> "Storing food from autumn harvest requires extra fridges, freezers and storage room because of our limited access and potential shortages. Hence, increased electric bills. An increased cost of appliances, as well."
>
> Donna, Atlin

Participants suggested that having increased access to fridges or freezers or a community cold storage facility would be a great benefit for elders or those who may have limited resources or space. Another idea shared was that a food storage and distribution centre would be an asset for remote communities.

With the amount of food stored in fridges and freezers, there was concern expressed around the risk of food spoilage due to power outages.

> "Everyone has freezers, but there are worries about power outages and losing food, including traditional foods. There have been two power outages already this year."
>
> Participant from Southern Stl'atl'imx

Significant food spoilage was a reality for community members in Boston Bar in 2021 during severe fires and flooding. Meagan shared they had "almost a full week of power outages that spoiled all of our fridges and freezers."

Additional Equipment

Other equipment mentioned by participants include jars, pressure cookers and dehydrators for preserving and storing food. Depending on the time of year and location of shopping, food processing equipment such as canning jars, can be difficult to find, or only available at an inflated cost. For example, a member of the project advisory group shared that in Terrace BC, a northern BC urban community, jars are nearly impossible to find during peak fishing season due to the demand of individuals wishing to can their fish for the winter.

Others talked about their basic food equipment, such as fridges and stoves, breaking down, and the challenge with getting new equipment to them due to cost or delivery.

> "I just broke down and bought another stove about a month ago – two of the burners weren't working, and the oven wasn't working right."
>
> John, Tahsis

Another equipment and food access challenge is that due to many individuals living on a fixed or limited income, items such as a boat for fishing are seen as luxury items.

Unpredictability of a Changing Climate

Climate Change Impacts on Food Access

The impact of climate change on food was a major concern for all participating communities especially the impact on wildlife populations and habitats and traditional edible plants.

> "Climate change is affecting the swamps in our harvest areas, where moose habitats are, the swamps on the Davis side (a traditional use area). The creeks are too low, also, not able to catch fish in the traditional fishing areas on territory. I have never seen the creeks/rivers as low as they are. Everything is changing with the weather, and it is making it difficult to gather traditional foods. We are not sure what this year will be for berries. My concerns are the watersheds, the wildlife and the territory. We will find out this spring how it will be."
>
> Janine, Tsay Keh Dene

> "I used to can quite a bit, and there used to be plenty of deer, but there has been a decrease in the number of deer. We have noticed that sometimes the fish have worms. Not sure why. There have been recent mudslides/rockslides… you look at the river, and it's all brown. The fish get stranded for a number of weeks/months. Maybe this has an impact on the quality. The fish are getting more "beat up"."
>
> Participant from Southern Stl'atl'imx

> "It is hotter now a days. Used to be more rain. Fall time used to be all rain."
>
> Participant from Xeni Gwet'in

> "As the weather gets hotter, the fish and berries are affected."
>
> Participant from Xeni Gwet'in

Climate change disasters have also impacted access in and out of remote communities, which ultimately impacts food supply. The community of Boston Bar was one such community that experienced major barriers and effects from the atmospheric river that hit BC in the fall of 2021. Meagan from Boston Bar describes this:

> "2021 was quite literally the year of hell and damnation for Boston Bar and outlying communities. We had record breaking heat, fires that lasted months, unbelievable flooding, almost a full week of power outages… and then record snowfall and avalanches. All of these were within a six-month period. And our highways were either gone, impassable, unstable or just closed for repairs and crew working."
>
> Meagan, Boston Bar

Another Boston Bar participant described the direct impacts of that climate change disaster, and the broader impacts on changing in their area:

> "Climate change is changing everything. From our road access to our weather and seasons, from how much rain we get and how much sun, the heat and the cold, the length of our seasons, the flooding and the wildfires. These things impact our foods, delivery, travel and traditional food access."
>
> Participant from Boston Bar

As climate change impacts continue, power and service disruptions are likely to worsen, leading to ongoing impacts on food access across the province.

Weather Events and Conditions

Weather events and conditions impact access to food year-round. Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events in BC. These changes can create significant uncertainty, stress and danger for community members needing to travel out of community. Ice and snow can build up, trees or boulders may fall during winter storms and sometimes the roads can become impassable.

> "In the fall and winter months, 50% of the time the road is not passible due to huge amounts of ice and snow built up and fallen trees from windstorms."
>
> Trevor, Tahsis

Mudslides and avalanches occur on occasion; with many mountain passes nearby, Boston Bar experiences this often.

> "Transport is disrupted most during late fall to early spring as we have many mudslides, rockslides, avalanches which close our highway."
>
> Meagan, Boston Bar

Summer travel is not easy either, as dust and rocks can cause low visibility.

> "Dust from roads gets really bad…. makes it difficult to see the road."
>
> Dan-Dan, Southern Stl'atl'imx

Community Leadership and Food Programs

Volunteerism and Giving Back to the Community

Essential Volunteers

There is significant gratitude among participants to the incredible volunteers that give so much to each community and its residents. These volunteers frequently give their time and energy, and often also money and/or food donations to their fellow community members. They go above and beyond to ensure people who need or desire help will have it. A couple of participating communities identified one or two incredible volunteers that seem to take on a huge portion of the volunteer required tasks.

> "Our community has a staple few volunteers, one in particular, that takes care of us."
>
> Participant from Boston Bar

One community talked about its reliance on the 'favour economy', which keeps the community going. Volunteerism, as well as sharing and giving, is a beautiful part of remote and small community living. Sylvia from Southern Stl'atl'imx talked about her approach to gifting to others, including food donations and gift baskets.

> "You gotta give. If you don't give, you don't get. If you give something, you better like or love it – then the love goes through to people."
>
> Sylvia, Southern Stl'atl'imx

A participant from Xeni Gwet'in also talked about sharing with other community members in need:

> "If people didn't get enough to eat, everybody always has cattle so they would butcher [a cow] for that person, so they had that when there wasn't enough wild meat."
>
> Participant from Xeni Gwet'in

However, volunteer burnout is a major concern. The key community volunteers, who take on the majority of volunteer required tasks, may eventually run short on time, energy, or enthusiasm to keep going. It is common for community food programs to be volunteer run, and food security related roles are under-funded.

Receiving Support

For those individuals needing support or assistance, there is concern about this reliance upon others in their community. Concerns were expressed over asking for favours such as rides into town or sending a shopping list with friends and neighbours.

> "It's important to understand how hard it is to rely on people and getting favours all the time."
>
> Sarah, Tahsis

Many people may feel like a burden on others. It is not always possible for these individuals needing help to return the favour either. Lucy, a Southern Stl'atl'imx community member, said she feels "pressure" when she receives help and doesn't always know how she can return the favour, but tries to help in some sort of way, such as paying for gas or trading foods.

Food Banks and Charitable Food Programs

Food banks and charitable food programs play an important role in filling emergency food needs and gaps for many people living in remote communities.

> "If you didn't have access to the food bank and family place emergency services – food access would be terrible if we didn't have access to these programs. And my baby would probably starve without these. We would be in a very bad situation without these programs. 80-90% of the community accesses the food bank."
>
> Sam, Boston Bar

> "All I can say right now, we are somewhat reliant on donations from the food bank to provide extra foods for people who can't afford it. And there are a lot of people who can't afford food right now. I think more than half the community is on some sort of pension or income assistance or underemployed. And then you got your program, that good food box, and that helps a lot."
>
> Bill, Tahsis

Since food banks are generally volunteer-run or a 'side of the desk' project, they can differ in efficiency and frequency, and the variety of foods offered, from community to community. Other charitable food programs mentioned include meals-on-wheels, food vouchers/gift cards/coupons, food boxes and special hampers, food donations, and meal offerings. These programs are appreciated significantly by those with the greatest needs.

> "I don't have a vehicle to be able to travel for food or supplies. The Ministry of Children and Families do help with food vouchers for me to be able to buy groceries for my grandchildren."
>
> Yvonne, Tsay Keh Dene

> "There are so many more people here now supplementing their weekly food shopping with what they can get from service organizations (like Meals on Wheels, church pantries, First Nations community meals, food bank hampers, donated food supplies) … compared to just a couple of years ago."

Carol, Atlin

> "We've seen an increase in the food bank and then the use of the food bank, which is a big thing. So, you know, there's families out there that are struggling cost wise to provide food for their families just because of the cost in general."
>
> Joan, Hudson's Hope

In some communities, such as Tahsis and Atlin, community members who have the means kindly contribute to the charitable food programs to allow for greater reach to those in need.

> "A few very generous people have donated money so that we can purchase chickens and beef. So, we've been able to maintain a high volume of food. We are providing the equivalent of about 90 meals a week and that is almost all due to donations. Thank heavens for others who are willing to donate very generously, so that can be done."
>
> Donna, Atlin

Several communities discussed programs and services that were formerly available in their community that had increased community food access. A variety of factors contribute to these services ending such as closure of major industry (e.g., mill closures), short term funding, loss of key volunteers and changing infrastructure and leadership. Sonja from Southern Stl'atl'imx spoke to this:

> "Often projects start, something happens where the people running them leave or funding runs out, and the projects end. Sometimes this makes it a larger issue because people get used to having that support and then suddenly it's gone."
>
> Sonja, Southern Stl'atl'imx

In the absence of formal food programs, as is the case in many remote communities, it is the generosity of some community members that feed the community.

Impacts to Health and Well-Being

Health and Well-Being Considerations

Health Conditions

A few participants mentioned living with chronic conditions, and shared concerns over the limited options for foods that meet their dietary needs. Many participants mentioned community members who live with diabetes and their issues getting appropriate nutrition.

> "Diabetes is an issue in [our] community. I have worked with the Meals on Wheels program for the elders, and there was not enough healthy foods such as vegetables or fruit."
>
> Cherole, Tsay Keh Dene

> "I find it difficult sometimes to find affordable foods that satisfy my diabetic diet requirements. I need to have a low carbohydrate high protein diet, and it's difficult to get here with any sense of variety… I have an arrangement with the store owner who will make big things of coleslaw for me to get from her, which I really appreciate."
>
> Participant from Tahsis

> "When you have somebody in your home that has diabetes and you don't have access to the food that you need; I think in our community, health wise - that's a big thing…. it impacts us fairly hard sometimes."
>
> Joan, Hudson's Hope

Others commented on mobility challenges that make it more difficult to access food.

> "I don't buy anything there unless I really have to, and then I have to get somebody else to go in and get it for me. 'Cause I'm in a wheelchair and I… sure, they've got a ramp there, but… I gotta put [my wheelchair] in my car and take it out of the car, and I can't do that."
>
> John, Tahsis

Food Insecurity Impacts Well-being

Understanding that food insecurity, and the additional time, effort and money that goes into obtaining food in remote communities is extremely stressful and impacts well-being is vital. Every person interviewed described a situation or time when they worried about food, including food access, food costs, transportation costs, traditional food availability, weather and/or the impact of climate change on food. It is important to acknowledge and understand these stressors, and the potential impacts on individual, family and community well-being overall including physical, emotional and mental health.

> "It's very stressful. Cost is overwhelming between fuel and food prices skyrocketing. We don't make more money, so now we just eat more junk food. I will not be surprised when our hospitals and medical systems start being inundated with people who are having more health problems related to processed food."
>
> Participant from Boston Bar

> "It's very, very, very difficult again or not even possible in the fall and winter months due to the road conditions and the weather conditions, it's stressful."
>
> Trevor, Tahsis

Lasting Impacts from COVID-19

COVID-19 has had a lasting impact in many communities, both negatively and positively. Many individuals and communities feel that they are still recovering, or that there are ongoing impacts.

> "It's a hard thing to measure, but I think Covid had a huge impact on the community. It definitely had an impact on your mental health there for a while."
>
> Bill, Tahsis

Participants in Southern Stl'atl'imx expressed an appreciation for the ability to participated in this project because of the significant impacts the pandemic has had on their community.

> "Covid has changed so much about everyday life for First Nations. The culture is family oriented, but Covid distanced us. We need something like this [project] to lift us, reenergize us, reconnect us. This is a step to self-sustaining [ourselves] again. It can be a tool to heal. Hope is that the community can be whole again, and self-sustaining. We used to learn from elders how to grow, preserve and gather food; had chickens, gardens, fruit trees."
>
> Participant from Southern Stl'atl'imx

There are also noted positive impacts and lessons learned from the pandemic.

> "Increased attention that is being paid to small greenhouses and gardens, home gardens, little farms that provide even a small amount of food locally - every bit helps. I think, even before Covid, there was an increased awareness of that. But Covid brought that back to the forefront of importance."
>
> Donna, Atlin

Conclusion

This project was established to gain a better understanding of the food costs and climate change impacts on food for people living in remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities across BC. It aimed to identify food security challenges and opportunities to address them.

We heard stories and experiences from people in eight remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities across the province. Every story was compelling and there were key similarities and differences in the challenges and actions experienced by remote communities. Five overarching themes and thirteen subthemes emerged from the stories of the participating communities.

Several limitations have been identified within this project's scope and methods. This project only captures stories and experiences from eight communities, and therefore does not reflect the full diversity of remote communities across the province. Also, the project did not include any quantitative data collection for food costs and food access costs and therefore does not report on the actual food costs for people living in remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. While this project is a first step toward elevating the voices of people living in remote communities, further work is needed to understand and share the unique experiences and circumstances of remote communities across BC.

Although further data is needed, there is an impetus to act and build upon the resources already within remote communities. With many people living in remote communities presently experiencing food insecurity and the impacts of climate change, immediate action is needed. As found in the jurisdictional scan conducted in Phase 1 of this project, other provinces have made progress toward improved food costing methods to include remote community data, such as creating of a revised nutritious food basket. The BCCDC is committed to looking at new methodology for the provincial Food Costing Report to better reflect the experiences of people living in rural and remote areas of BC.

The shared stories and wisdom gathered have been brought to life and shared with permission on the BCCDC's food security website. The stories have also informed numerous key considerations for policies, programs and practices to enhance food security, reduce food insecurity and support Indigenous food sovereignty for remote communities in BC. These key considerations will be shared directly with government partners for cross-sector and cross government discussion and action.

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Appendix A. Jurisdictional Scan Findings – Phase 1

Part of the information gathering in this project involved a jurisdictional scan across Canada to better understand what others are doing (Jan-Apr 2022). The information gathered and shared below provides a collection of cross provincial reports and programs as well as an overview of each province and territory's approach related to food costing and climate change impacts in RRI communities, if applicable.

Cross Provincial Reports and Programs

First Nations Food, Nutrition, and Environment Study – 8 Provinces

In the jurisdictional scan, many of those contacted mentioned the value of the First Nations, Food, Nutrition and Environment Study (FNFNES) in relation to food costing in their province. The FNFNES is a cross Canada study (involving 8 Canadian provinces) that has gathered information about traditional and store-bought food use, food security, nutrient values and environmental chemical hazards in traditional foods, and drinking and surface water. 92 First Nations communities, randomly sampled by ecozone, participated in the study which took place between 2008-2018. All provincial reports, with the exception of BC as the first province to participate, included consideration of food costs. The National Nutritious Food Basket was used to compare the cost of food basket in a major urban centre to the average cost in FNFNES participating communities and the highest cost of a FNFNES participating community.

Interestingly, as presented in the full project report published in 2018, BC had the highest rate of individuals that reported that they were experiencing shortages in traditional food access and worries that their traditional food supply would run out before more could be obtained (70% and 65% respectively) (Chan L. , et al., 2019). This is of relevance to the current project because concerns around traditional food amounts would likely result in a higher need for foods purchased from the grocery store.

Nutrition North Canada

Nutrition North Canada (NNC) is a program provided by the Government of Canada which aims to make nutritious food and some essential items more affordable and accessible (Government of Canada, 2021). Currently, there are no communities in BC that are eligible for the NNC program subsidy because they do not match the eligibility criteria. These criteria, in short, include not having year-round surface transportation (road, rail, waterway); having an in-community post office, airport or grocery store; meeting the definition of a northern community; and having a year-round population. The fact that communities in BC are not eligible for this subsidy does not mean that these communities do not experience high costs of foods or barriers to accessing food. Recently, there have been conversations occurring between the BC Ministry of Health, the First Nations Health Authority, and the

Government of Canada to consider a change to the eligibility criteria to include some BC communities that face high barriers to food access and/or high costs.

Some food costing data in remote Indigenous communities was gathered through the NNC Program using the Revised Northern Food Basket (RNFB) (Government of Canada, 2020). The RNFB includes more meat and non-perishables which may be a better reflection of dietary preferences and food consumption patterns of those living in remote and northern communities.

National Climate Change Organizations and Projects

The Human Rights Watch organization is attempting to gather information and better understand the Climate Crisis and First Nations' Right to Food in Canada. They are conducting interviews in select First Nations communities in Canada (Yukon, BC, and Ontario) to understand the impact of climate change on the community's food and livelihood.

The Indigenous Climate Hub is an Indigenous-led project and national online platform for First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, communities, and organizations to learn, share and connect. It has been developed by Indigenous people for Indigenous people. The website contains a lot of valuable information and can be a great website to bring awareness to in our connections.

Indigenous Climate Action is another Indigenous-led group, which was founded in 2015 in Alberta. They "believe that Indigenous Peoples' rights and knowledge systems are critical to developing solutions to the climate crisis and achieving climate justice".

The National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health in partnership with the First Nations Health Authority published a resource in 2019 titled Indigenous Food Safety and Security: Community Adaptations in the Wake of Climate Pressures. It presents six case studies from communities in Canada doing unique things to adapt to climate change.

Provincial and Territorial Findings

Yukon

The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition (YAPC) and the Yukon Department of Health and Social Services last published the Cost of Healthy Eating in Yukon in 2017. The YAPC uses the RNFB, consisting of 67 items, for their price monitoring. All communities with at least one full-service grocery retailer were included, which was defined as having at least half of the food items listed in the survey basket. Communities without access to a full-service retailer were not included. There was statement by Yukon members of the public that the contents of both the National Nutritious Food Basket and Revised Northern Nutritious Food Basket don't fit the dietary preferences and food consumption pattern of Yukoners.

The Yukon has only one community eligible for Nutrition North Canada subsidy, and it does have a full-service grocery retailer so was included in the data collection. This is stated to allow for a reflection of the effectiveness of the program in reaching the stated goal, even though the community had the highest RNFB of all included communities, it is likely the prices would be even higher in this community without the NNC subsidy.

Communities that did not have a full-service grocery retailer were not included in the study, which was identified as a limitation and a recommendation has been put forward for more research to account for the time and transportation. Other limitations identified in the YAPC approach are that the report and data collection does not account for traditional foods, community gardens, and food sharing systems.

Northwest Territories

The Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics releases the food price index by community, with comparison to Yellowknife. The comparison includes 39 selected food items and 5 non-food items. The most recent report of food prices were from 2022.

Nunavut

Nunavut is known to experience extremely high rates of food insecurity, with some of the highest food costs in all of Canada. Air freight in Nunavut is 6-10 times more expensive than ground freight in other parts of Canada, including remote areas (Nunavut Food Security Coalition, 2016).

In 2014, the Nunavut Food Security Coalition was involved in a food price survey, in which all 25 Nunavut communities participated. 133-141 items, including 18 non-food items, were included in the data collection, as well as a narrowed 24 select food items list. The most recent data, published by the Nunavut Bureau of Statistics, shows a comparison of 2017 to 2018 food prices in each of the 25 communities.

In July 2021, a young mother of 3 from Nunavut made news headlines after sharing TikTok videos exposing high prices of food items available in Iqaluit. This could be considered an interesting and important way to engage with users of social media to gather data in the future.

Alberta

Alberta Health Services last published their Cost of Healthy Eating in Alberta report of 2015, which does not include data or consideration of costs for rural, remote and Indigenous communities. More recently there have been discussions between Indigenous Services Canada Alberta Region and Alberta Health Services to look at how Saskatchewan was including Indigenous communities within their food costing.

From the FNFNES findings, Alberta First Nations had the highest reported household food insecurity at 64% of households with children and 45% of households without children compared to First Nations households in other provinces in Canada that had participated in the study (Chan L. , Receveur, Batal, & David, 2013).

Saskatchewan

The latest publication of the Cost of Healthy Eating in Saskatchewan was in 2018. Typically, it is published every 2 years; however, the last iteration of the report was skipped due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To include First Nations communities within the food costing data, the Regional Nutritionist at the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch receives a list of on-reserve grocery stores from the Environmental Public Health Officer. Training is done on food costing data collection methods with the local dietitian. Written consent is received from the store manager before conducting food costing analysis in the community store.

Manitoba

Mandated by the Healthy Child Committee of the Manitoba Cabinet, a report was published in 2003 that looked at Northern Food Prices. The report is focused on why food prices in northern communities are the way they are including freight costs, access to communities by modes of transport, food production self-regulation, taxation, etc. Seven strategic options to address food prices were included within the report. It is unclear if a similar report has been written or considered since that time.

The most recent food costing report, found on the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority health professional public site, was last published in 2011. It does consider rural communities in Manitoba with a smaller population base and minimum of one grocery store; however, no information on food costs in First Nations communities was gathered.

Ontario

Ontario has more work completed and underway in relation to understanding food costs in their rural, remote and Indigenous communities.

The Northern Policy Institute published a 2018 report which identifies costs comparisons of northern and remote communities in Ontario with other provincial data. It also identifies factors behind the higher food costs in the northern communities. These factors include access to infrastructure, lack of road transportation, seasonal and unreliable ice roads in winter, and costly cargo airplane shipping. Another reported issue in remote communities is lack of market competition. The report dives into details around both problems and potential solutions to food costs in Northern Ontario and is a recommended read.

In 2015, Ontario's Northwestern Health Unit and the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority published a report titled Report on the 2015 Northern Food Basket Survey. A previous iteration of this report was also published in 2006. 3 First Nations communities with full services grocery stores were included in the data collection. This report has not been published online. In discussion with a dietitian from the Northwestern Health Unit, in partnership with the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority, they are in the process of creating their own revised nutritious food basket to do a comparison of municipalities with full-service grocery stores to Indigenous communities in follow up to these previous reports. The 2015 report findings included that there was nearly an $800 difference in monthly food costs for a family of four in a remote First Nation community compared to a family of four in a municipality. There was also a $500 (or 52%) increase for those remote communities in monthly costs between 2006 and 2015.

Food Secure Canada published Paying for Nutrition: A Report on Food Costing in the North in 2016. Although the report brings forward some highly relevant points related to food costing considerations for northern and remote communities, all the communities included in the data collection are located in Northern Ontario. Recommendations within the report that are relevant include expanding independent food store costing, improving data collection, and supporting policy to increase access to traditional foods. Additionally, there is acknowledgement that while understanding and lowering costs of foods in northern communities is important, that alone is not enough to address food insecurity.

Quebec

Other than the FNFNES Quebec Food Costing data, no additional information could be found on food costing in Quebec.

A research team based out of McGill, including Dr. Murray Humphries and Dr. Treena Wasonti:io Delormier, are looking at climate change and the wild food system in Northern Quebec. Although no relevant research has been released yet by this team, it will be one to watch for future relevant studies.

Nova Scotia

FoodARC, which stands for the Food Action Research Centre, is a research centre based out of Mount Saint Vincent University and is committed to research and action around food security, food sovereignty and food justice. Between 2005 and 2017, FoodARC led a project called Voices for Food Security in Nova Scotia which was a Participatory Food Costing Project (PFCP). The purpose was to include the voices of those experiencing food insecurity as well as those that had the ability to impact the issue. Nova Scotia claims to be the only province to use PFCP as an approach to food costing; however, it was not confirmed if this is still true or if other provinces have since started this approach.

The Cost and Affordability of a Nutritious Diet in Nova Scotia published in 2007 includes consideration of larger grocery stores (over 15,000 square feet) compared to smaller grocery stores (less than 15,000 square feet), which provides valuable data.

New Brunswick

Other than the FNFNES Atlantic Region Food Costing data, no additional information could be found on food costing in New Brunswick.

Prince Edward Island

No information on food costing, including RRI communities, in PEI could be found.

Newfoundland and Labrador

In addition to the aforementioned FNFNES, which included food costing in the Atlantic Region, there is food costing done at the provincial level which includes consideration of rural and remote communities.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, where many individuals live in a rural or remote area, the provincial government includes remote and fly in only communities in their food costing data. In addition, their food cost snapshot report (2022) includes consideration of transportation costs in overall annual household costs. The Newfoundland and Labrador Nutritious Food Basket was developed based upon the National Nutritious Food Basket for monitoring costs and affordability of healthy eating.

Appendix B. Knowledge Keeper and Expert Conversation Guides

Format: Semi-Structured Interview

The Project Consulting Team, led by the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), is engaging with remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities across the province to gather stories, experiences and insights related to food access, availability and affordability, and the impacts of climate change on food. The intent of this project is to gain a better understanding of real experiences related to food access and affordability and the true food costs in remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. The stories gathered will be shared publicly (with community permission) and included in a BCCDC report intended to inform policy, programs, and practice. Your community was selected after expressing interest through a call for interest approach, and we are so grateful that you are here today to share your story.

Over the past several years, the BCCDC has gathered information for a report called The Cost of Healthy Eating in BC. It involves random selection of communities in BC that have at least two full-service grocery stores (which means at minimum having the 67 foods in the national nutritious food basket). The report provides information on the average monthly cost of grocery items for a family of four provincially, and then also by region and sub-region. Because of the limited number of grocery stores in remote communities in BC, they were ineligible to participate.

The following questions are intended to gather information about the current state of food access, food costs, and the impact of climate change on food for you, your family, and your community. The questions are intentionally general to invite you to tell the story of food in your community in the way that you wish, but more specific questions have also been included as a guide.

With your permission, what you share will be used to write a story about the experiences of food access and availability in your remote community and will also be included in a provincial report that will inform policies, programming and practice. The stories and report will be posted publicly on the BC Centre for Disease website.

Before we get started, I want to check in to make sure that you are ok with proceeding with the interview? If yes, may I ask permission also to record our conversation today? The recording will only be used to capture your responses for me to transcribe your responses later, rather than trying to write all your responses as you speak. The recording will not be shared with anyone other than our three team members and will be deleted after we have transcribed the conversation. After I have transcribed your responses, if you wish, I can send it back to you for review and approval to ensure I have properly captured everything. Does that all sound ok?

Community Name:

Your Name:

I. Food Access, Availability and Cost

For the purposes of this project, food access, availability, and affordability [2]are defined as the following:

- Access – this refers to the ability and ways to gather, purchase, harvest, hunt, and process nutritious/cultural foods, including the consideration of methods and resources required to reach a place where food can be gathered or purchased.
- Availability – the abundance or presence of quality and culturally important food, including market-foods (foods purchased from stores) and food gathered from the Land.
- Affordability – there is adequate income to purchase foods that meet personal and cultural preferences; also, affordability may also relate to the costs associated with transportation to reach food, processing, storing, and cooking food.
  1. Can you please share about the experience of food access for you, your family, and/or your community?
  2. Can you please share about food availability for you, your family, and/or your community?
  3. Can you please share about food affordability and food costs for you, your family, and/or your community?

  Additional questions that can be asked if needed:
  - Is there a grocery store or store that sells food items in your community? Can you tell me about it? Possible probes:
    - Do you/most people in the community shop there? How often? If not, why not? What kind of food do they carry?)
  - Can you describe a typical trip to the grocery store for you and other members of your community? Probing questions:
    - Where do community members often travel to purchase or access this food outside of your community?
    - What is the travel time/distance to this city/town?
    - What is the main method of transportation to reach this city/town (e.g., road, rail, and/or water)?

[2] Adapted from the BCCDC Food Security definitions of food access, availability and affordability

- Can you tell me about any challenges you and other community members face accessing food in your community? Probing questions:
    - How often is transport disrupted, and what are the reasons for disruption?
    - Can you provide an estimate of the cost of transportation to purchase food or the cost of freight to bring food into the community for individuals?
    - Are community members consistently able to purchase basic grocery items such as fruit, vegetables, milk, eggs, bread, meat/meal alternatives and pantry staples at the community store?
    - What do community members say about food affordability and the cost of food at the store?
    - Is the quality of food ever a concern?

II. Traditional food and food harvesting/gathering/preserving (asked to Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous communities with a high Indigenous population)

4. Please share about access to traditional foods and approaches to food gathering and preserving for your community:

Additional questions that can be asked if needed:

- How do you define traditional foods? What is your experience with accessing traditional foods? Probing questions:
    - Can you describe the community's perspective around the importance of traditional foods?
    - Describe traditional foods access throughout the seasons.
    - Are there currently barriers to accessing traditional foods?
    - Are there community programs and supports that have increased community member access to traditional foods?
- What is needed to access traditional foods (e.g., what do you use to harvest, gather, preserve, or process)? What costs are there to accessing traditional foods? Probing questions:
    - Are community members concerned about the cost of accessing traditional foods?

III. Climate Change Impacts

5. Please share how you feel climate change has impacted food access, availability and costs, including traditional foods, in your community. Feel free to share recent examples of climate change impacts on food in the community.

Additional questions that can be asked if needed:

- Have there been changes in the abundance or presence of foods such as berries, salmon, and wild game that have created barriers for your community?

- Can you describe any natural events that have impacted your or your community's access to grocery stores (i.e., floods, landslides, snowfall, wildfires)? If your community has been impacted by such events, how did you and other community members overcome the challenges faced?

IV. Other Opportunities and Challenges

6. Are there additional opportunities and challenges regarding food access, food costs, traditional foods or the impact of climate change on food that you would like to share?
   Additional questions that can be asked if needed:
   - Are there examples of food or environmental programs that improve availability, accessibility, and adequacy of retail and/or traditional food in your community?
   - What regulations or policies have you experienced or heard from community members that create challenges to availability, accessibility, and adequacy of retail and/or traditional food in your community?
   - How are challenges with food access, availability, and cost affecting your own and your community's well-being?
7. What are your greatest hopes for changes you would like to see related to food in your community? What are the greatest needs for change, including policies, programs and funding?
8. Is there anything additional you would like to add before we wrap up? Do you have any questions for me about the project or the process to follow?

Thank you for setting aside time to talk with me today. Our team greatly appreciates you supporting this work. For next steps, I am wondering if you would like to receive and review the draft story about food in your community, which will include your stories shared today, before it is shared with the BC Centre for Disease Control and moved through a further review process? (If yes, then make sure we have their contact information). Would you like my contact information in case you have any questions after we end our chat today?

Knowledge Keeper and Community Conversation Guide

- What are your experiences in accessing or gathering food, including traditional and/or groceries from a store?
- Can you describe some challenges with accessing, gathering, or buying food and how you overcame them (or how you think they could be overcome)?
- How has climate change impacted your own and your community's ability to access, gather, or afford food?
- What are your experiences with the cost and affordability of food?

Appendix C. Definitions in Context

Food security means that everyone has equitable access to food that is affordable, culturally preferable, nutritious and safe; everyone has the agency to participate in, and influence food systems; and that food systems are resilient, ecologically sustainable, socially just, and honour Indigenous food sovereignty. (BC Centre for Disease Control 2022)

Food insecurity exists when factors outside an individual's control negatively impact their access to enough foods that promote well-being. Economic, social, environmental, and geographical factors influence this access. Food insecurity is most acutely felt by those who experience the negative impacts of *structural inequities*, such as discrimination and on-going colonial practices. (BC Centre for Disease Control 2022)

Knowledge Keeper is a First Nations person who is recognized by their community as holding traditional knowledge and teachings taught by an Elder or senior Knowledge Keeper within their community (BC First Nations Health Authority).

Remote

In 2020, the National Collaborating Centre of Indigenous Health (NCCIH) developed a recommended definition for remote and isolated communities, which was included within a brief 2-page recommendations paper (National Collaborating Centre for Indigneous Health, 2020). For First Nations and Métis Communities, the definitions for remote and isolated are as follows:

- *Remote* describes a geographical area where a community is located over 350 km from the nearest service centre having year-round access by land and/or water routes normally used in all-weather conditions.
- *Isolated* means a geographical area that has scheduled flights and good telephone service, but is without year-round access by land and/or water normally used in all-weather conditions.
- *Remote-Isolated* means a geographic area that has neither scheduled flights nor year-round access by land and/or water routes normally that can be used in all-weather conditions, irrespective of the level of telephone and radio service available.

The Statistics Canada definition is any Census Subdivision with no metropolitan influenced zone (in which commuting for work is not feasible) (Statistics Canada, 2015). No BC specific definition for remote was identified. The NCCIH and Stats Canada definitions of remote, isolated, or remote-isolated could be applicable to many BC communities that have seasonal and weather-related interruptions to their land and water access. Therefore, **remote in the context of this project** is a community that does not have a full-service grocery store and in which travel is generally required to access food OR that may experience seasonal or weather-related interruptions to their land and water access. As noted in a

Statistics Canada published report, it was identified that calculating a common measure of distance for communities with significantly different transportation infrastructures poses a major challenge, and that network distance and travel time do not provide an adequate measure for communities with little or no road access (Alasia, Guidmond, Penney, Bélanger, & Bédard, 2017). One health authority representative expressed concern with use of the term remote as it centres metropolitan areas, so continued use of the term may need to be further discussed.

Indigenous

The term Indigenous has a unique history of its original uses that are important to consider when defining the term. The word Indigenous is derived from Latin as '*Indigena'* (late Latin) or '*Indu'* (old Latin) meaning 'in, within' and '*Gignere'* from the root '*gene'* meaning 'to produce, give birth'. '*Indigena'* in Latin means 'native', which was first used in the 1640s when applied to native plants (Peters & Mika, 2017). In 1974, the International Indian Treaty Council was formed in South Dakota, an offshoot of the American Indian Movement. It was one of the first international Indigenous organizations to gain recognition at the United Nations and advocated for the term Indigenous to be used in place of other terms describing the original peoples of the Land (International Indian Treaty Council, 1977). The term Indigenous is therefore not derived from Indigenous language, however it is important to acknowledge that it was supported by an Indigenous organization to identify the people as opposed to government defining communities and who are the members. Terms such as Aboriginal, First Nation, Indian come from government documentation. It is vital to acknowledge the vast diversity of Indigenous peoples across Canada and across the world and the way in which a person identifies is their decision.

In Canada, there are three distinct groups specified within government documentation of Indigenous peoples, each with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2021). These distinct groups are First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. In BC, 63.8% of Indigenous people identify as First Nations and 33% identify as Métis, with only 0.6% identifying as Inuit (Statistics Canada, 2016). Given the small Inuit population in BC, in this project we will focus on First Nation and Métis people and communities. For the purposes of this report, First Nation communities may be fixed geographic regions identified as 'reserves' set aside within the Indian Act or communities with modern treaties (BC Treaty Commission, 2022) (Hanson E.). There are 204 First Nation communities in BC. Métis in BC have no official Land base; however, 39 Métis chartered communities are acknowledged within BC (Mussell S. , 2020). Of interest to this project, 30% of the Indigenous population in BC is living in a rural setting (or area with a very small population including First Nation community and remote community) and 40% of First Nations people live 'on-reserve' (Statistics Canada, 2016).