

Alberta First Nations Food Sovereignty Declaration - June 13, 2017
Increasing Access to Traditional Foods in Community Programs and Facilities

Alberta First Nations Elders' Advisory Group & Alberta First Nations Food Security Working Group

The following list of recommendations to increase access to traditional foods in community programs and facilities are based on feedback provided by members of the Food Security Working Group and the Elders' Advisory Group. Traditional foods include moose, deer, bison, bear, fish, duck, geese, berries and plants. Reference is made to the relevant articles in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the end of these recommendations. It is important to note that these recommendations are based on common themes acknowledged by the Elders and supported by the other participants. A comprehensive list of the feedback provided over the course of this project can be found in appendix 1.

1. Developed by the Nations

Any process for increasing access to traditional foods in community programs and facilities needs to come from the Nations. Currently, Environmental Health Officers provide advice to Chief and Council based on Provincial legislation and standards. The communities must have their own food safety regulations in place to govern themselves. As one Elder stated, "we need to empower our people and make them independent from the government systems we are currently dependent on".

It is understood that traditional diets have sustained and kept First Nations people healthy for many generations, whereas the western diet has had damaging impact on First Nations health. Furthermore, traditional knowledge and protocols already exists in the communities. For example, hunters have their own methods to determine whether an animal is healthy before it is killed and consumed.

The Elders stated that each community has their own ceremonies that deal with protection and food safety. It was recommended that a food sovereignty declaration be developed and blessed through ceremony. This would act as advice for communities looking to develop their own food safety laws. Ultimately each Nation would develop its own process to ensure traditional food safety.

2. Identify the Experts

Each community may have their own person(s) they consider to be experts in food safety. This may include local experts that specialize in traditional methods of inspecting traditional food to ensure it is safe to consume such as experienced hunters and/or Elders that regularly practice it as part of their lifestyle. Or, it may include external experts such as Environmental Health Officers, nurses, nutritionists, and veterinarians, who can provide a western perspective on food safety to compliment the traditional knowledge.

It is recommended that each community identify their own experts (both internal and external) to involve in the process to ensure any traditional food is safe to serve in community programs and facilities.

3. Link Traditional and Western Knowledge

There needs to be an opportunity to provide meaningful input in the process and give validity to traditional knowledge. This can be achieved through a parallel panel of western and traditional knowledge with an ethical space in between. From a western perspective, factors in the environment are measured through data on paper; whereas Elders share oral data (traditional knowledge) through stories.

It was recommended that Practitioners such as Environmental Health Officers engage with Elders to learn oral traditions/traditional systems that are unique to the individual communities. Then practitioners can provide recommendations and give options to Chief and Council that include components of both western and traditional systems. Traditional and western knowledge keepers must work together with the common goal of health and safety.

4. Educate the Youth

The Elders gave several examples on how to educate today's youth about the traditional lifestyle. This included reaching them at a younger age, making the material engaging, bringing in Elders from other communities to gain a different perspective, incorporating traditional teachings into the education curriculum, providing more funding for Youth-Elder camps, utilizing cultural camps to teach about healthy foods, and following existing models (i.e. the little birds model). It was recommended that more resources and opportunities be made available to ensure the youth are physically active.

One Elder stated that: "We lived simple lives. Our grandfathers taught us to be patient, often sitting for an hour in silence". It is not just the food that is important, but the physical activity required to maintain a traditional lifestyle. As another Elder stated, "In the old days we used to pack a moose on our backs".

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

"Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals. Indigenous individuals also have the right to access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services." (The United Nations General Assembly, 2007, article. 24.1)

"Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions." (The United Nations General Assembly, 2007, article 31.1)

Appendix 1: Elders and Working Group Recommendations

<p>Developed by the Nations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarify Jurisdiction - currently using provincial laws on federal lands. (i.e. Firearms Acquisition Certificates, commercial fishing licensing, National Resources Transfer Agreement). - Maintain inherent indigenous rights to hunt and fish - Incorporate, compare and revise existing or develop new processes (parallels western and traditional). - Recognize wild game protocols i.e. Tobacco offering - Include provincial representatives at meetings to listen to the community to learn how they have historically managed safety for wild meat use and consumption (i.e. food preservation and cooking) - Historical data important to climate change (i.e. migration patterns) – share with communities - Need business plan i.e. Game farms, feasibility study for these endeavors - Access to provincial labs to examine quality of meat if concerned. - Access to veterinary services if needed for information - Access to EHO by communities to help make appropriate or requested linkages. - Community can submit proposals to the National Contaminants research fund and or Climate Change and Health Adaptation Program - Community led policies to reduce/limit use of herbicides and pesticides.
<p>Identify the Experts</p> <p>Internal Experts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth - Trappers Association - Food Safe certified cooks - Other boards (e.g. women’s shelters, AHSOR, education) - Recognized by the community (e.g. Hunters, Elders, traditional knowledge keepers, CHRs, Chief and Council, health directors, health boards). - Elders’ societies <p>External Experts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health Canada (e.g. Environmental Health Officers, nurses, nutritionists) - Alberta Government (veterinarians) - Medical Officers of Health, Alberta Health Services (AHS); First Nations & Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) - Parks Canada (veterinarians) - Butchers, meat packers - Fish and wildlife officers to assist in developing protocol
<p>Link Traditional and Western Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing and working together - Respect - Spirituality (Elders, pipe ceremony, smudge) - Acceptance of differences - No preconceptions (UNDRIP) - Traditional areas - Oral and written history - Communication/consultation - Understanding - Protocols – learning/Elders - Cultural variations (Treaties 6,7,8). - Transfer of knowledge - Integration of both worlds - Environment – respect mother earth - Knowledge preservation/storage of knowledge – monitor/surveillance

- Mutual sharing of existing processes
- Openness to learn.
- Social media communication
- Trust each other
- Common goal is awareness of health and safety
- Climate change – knowledge
- Document findings into something that can be used
- Technology to use as education/tool
- Jurisdiction
- Re-connection of Elder/youth to traditional practices
- Re-learning of traditional skills
- Learning about animals and plants
- Hunting practices – connection to land
- Bridge western and traditional knowledge
- Understanding is key
- Traditional languages (ceremonial language); learning mother tongue
- Sacred First Nation language some can't be shared
- Elders can teach western knowledge keepers/academia
- Living traditional lifestyle, medicines, traditional/western
- Preventative
- Putting data on paper that can be accessed by all Nations
- Discover our family trees
- Balance

Educate the Youth

- Reach the youth at a younger age, but engage all age levels
- Don't force traditional teachings on them
- Interest based, hands on learning, utilize technology (e.g. develop apps)
- Incorporate Elder's in teachings, hunting/fishing protocol, Elder in residence
- On-going education, not just 1-2 day workshops
- Educate EHOs (Environmental Health Officers)
- Ensure resources (financial) are available and adequate
- Create interest in food sustainability
- Land based teaching from K-12; traditional life skills program in school
- Create an honouring system for completing the training
- Engaging the youth is a community effort (multi-sectors)
- Use creative teaching; make subject relevant – it is more interesting if engaging
- Bimonthly cultural day
- Youth gatherings
- Teach traditional values at family camps
- Engage family unit
- Acknowledge learning these skills
- Creating sense of identity/pride

Must be a community effort involving all stakeholders.

Appendix 2: Membership list

Food Security Working Group	
Name	Organization/Community
Barb Taylor	Sucker Creek First Nation
Bonny Graham	Maskwacis Health Services
Calvin Badger	Prevention Sub-Committee Representative
Dawn Cardinal	Footprints Healing Centre, Alexander First Nation
Dustin Twin (Elder)	Swan River First Nation
Jeff Kresowaty	First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (Environmental Health)
Judy Halladay	First Nations & Inuit Health Branch (Nutrition)
Reg Crowshoe (Elder)	Piikani Nation
Richard Lightning (Elder)	Maskwacis Health Services
Simon Sihota	First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (Environmental Health)
Wadieh Yacoub	First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (Medical Office)
Alberta First Nations Elder's Advisory Group	
Name	Organization/Community
Albert Kasoney	Beaver First Nation
Alex Crowchild	Tsuu T'ina Nation
Charles Powderface	Stoney Tribes
Clifford James	Paul First Nation
David Janvier	Chipewyan Prairie Dene First Nation
Deanne Lightning	Ermineskin Cree Nation
Doris Courtoreille	Swan River First Nation
Dorothy Jobin	Sucker Creek First Nation
Eunice Louis	Mackwacis - Montana
Francis Alexis	Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation
Jeramie Houle	Saddle Lake Cree Nation
Julian White	Saddle Lake Cree Nation
Mike Beaver	Wabasca
Pat Grey	Whitefish Lake First Nation #459, Atikameg
Raymond Potts	Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation
Rose Houle	Saddle Lake Cree Nation
Shirley Crowshoe	Piikani Nation
Sylvia McDonald	Enoch Cree Nation
Tom Twoyoungmen	Stoney Tribes
Victoria Arcand	Alexander First Nation
Wallace Bear Chief	Siksika Nation
Warner Manybears	Blood Tribe (Kainai)