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TRADITIONAL FOODS and INDIGENOUS RECIPES IN B.C.'S PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Prepared by Queenswood Consulting Group



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Bringing B.C. food to public institutions

TRADITIONAL FOODS and INDIGENOUS RECIPES in B.C.'s PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

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We thank all the individuals and organizations who provided their knowledge, insights and experience with the provision of traditional foods in British Columbia. Appendix A includes a full list of participants.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes a qualitative study of the barriers and facilitators to serving traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in public institutions in British Columbia (B.C.), with a focus on health care and post-secondary institutions. The study and the development of considerations and a webinar format to share with key stakeholders took place between February-October 2020, and explored the following:

- Applicable B.C., federal, or other legislation and regulations that prohibit or support the use of both non-market (donated) and market (purchased) traditional foods;
- Current programs in B.C. public institutions that offer traditional foods or Indigenous recipes, focusing on health care facilities and post-secondary institutions and extending, if possible, to K-12 schools and correctional facilities and other public facilities;
- Limited consultation to identify current practices, including discussions with Indigenous people and Knowledge Keepers in B.C. working to preserve or increase access to traditional foods and staff from health authorities (including the First Nations Health Authority [FNHA]) and post-secondary institutions that oversee food procurement and menu planning; and
- A jurisdictional scan on traditional food programs that have been implemented in Canada, documenting their successes and challenges.

This study was undertaken in the context of the Government of B.C.'s concurrent efforts to 1) understand the needs and increase the use of B.C. produced and processed foods in government facilities, 2) improve the patient experience in health care, and 3) build collaboration across other government interests and sectors – such as education, post-secondary institutions, and corrections – that support tangible opportunities to further Government's commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Reconciliation includes improving the quality of life of Indigenous people through new economic partnerships, resource development revenue sharing, and closing gaps in health, education, skills training, and employment. The Government of B.C. passed legislation¹ in November 2019 to implement the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), which includes rights to traditional medicines and health practices, including the conservation of Indigenous peoples' vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals.²

It is important to note that this study was not intended to present a comprehensive report on traditional foods of all Indigenous people in B.C., but to understand the

central barriers and opportunities for public institutions to incorporate traditional foods and Indigenous recipes. Meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities is a necessary next step to any government or public health initiative to bring more traditional foods into facilities. There is no single definition or understanding of what constitutes "traditional food." Some consider only foods that were available in a given area pre-European contact to qualify as traditional food, while others accept a broader definition that focuses on how food has been traditionally used and obtained. For this study, traditional foods are considered to be animal and plant species that are harvested from, or cultivated within, the natural environment - such as wild meat, fish species, bird species, plant species, and berries - through traditional activities such as hunting, fishing and gathering during seasonal periods.

Similarly, there is a wide range of acceptance of what is considered an Indigenous recipe, which can include everything from only those items prepared with pre-contact food ingredients, to recipes that Indigenous people would customarily eat, regardless of food source or type. Here, recipes that draw on historical Indigenous food traditions but have been adapted to use commercially available (market) ingredients are considered Indigenous recipes.

As noted, this was primarily a qualitative study, based on interviews with 60 individuals. Publicly available information and studies about food purchasing practices were also considered for the public institutions within scope: B.C.'s 25 public post-secondary institutions, seven health authorities (including the FNHA), ten correctional centres, 60 school districts and approximately 5,000 licensed child care centres.

¹ B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act: <https://www.leg.bc.ca/parliamentary-business/legislation-debates-proceedings/41st-parliament/4th-session/bills/first-reading/gov41-1>

² United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, 2007 www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

Although not the focus of this report, there was an inherent shared understanding among all participants of the benefits offered by increasing the provision of, and access to, traditional foods and Indigenous recipes. These include strengthened cultural connections, higher nutritional value, enhanced connection to the land, mental health benefits, and potential reduction in costs should the availability and use of such foods gain more prominence.

Study participants also confirmed some of the key barriers identified in the study's high-level review of the available literature. These include:

Legislation and regulation: multiple provincial statutes, regulations and guidelines are discussed in the report. Together, they reinforce two central barriers to increasing the use of traditional foods:

- a) restrictions on the commercial use of many wild-sourced traditional foods; and
- b) restrictions on the ability of food premises to serve food obtained from an unapproved source.

Understanding of traditional foods: a number of challenges relate to understanding what constitutes traditional food, and how these foods vary across the over 200 First Nations and other Indigenous communities within B.C. Other specific challenges include loss of Traditional Knowledge and practices and a lack of understanding about these practices among non-Indigenous people and institutions who are part of food procurement and service processes.

Access to traditional foods: both historical factors (including the legacy of colonial practices that denied access to lands and waters) and practical

limitations (including the time and cost required to harvest traditional foods in acceptable ways) serve as a barrier to increasing the use of traditional foods.

Supply of traditional foods: the ability to secure sufficient supplies of traditional foods to meet demands is another challenge, including factors such as a lack of sufficient quantities in the wild, lack of commercial processors and distributors, the cost of foods where they are available, the risk of overharvesting, and preserving the existing stocks in the face of climate change and environmental degradation.

Food service limitations: institutional restrictions and requirements such as contracting practices, onerous policies for approving alternative sources of food, and the necessity of meeting dietary guidelines that do not always reflect Indigenous food traditions and practices also serve as a barrier to increased use.

One result of these barriers and challenges is that within B.C. there are limited examples where public institutions are serving traditional foods, and almost all of these are purchased from the few food businesses that meet the criteria for approved sources, including sources that are non-B.C. and/or non-Indigenous. This has both practical and cultural implications. On a practical level, it means that the foods which are available are both expensive and in many cases challenging to source, so that even where institutions may want to offer or expand programs, they are effectively prevented from doing so.

Culturally, the status of food that is sourced from commercial vendors may not be considered traditional by some, especially if it is raised unsustainably or harvested in ways that do not reflect traditional protocols.



Based on findings from the literature and the study's jurisdictional review, and the study's conversations with some Indigenous leaders and professionals working in public institutions across B.C., a number of considerations are identified that might 1) inform the overall approach going forward and the next phase of engagement, 2) provide opportunities to explore changes to legislation or regulation, and 3) suggest short and longer term projects or actions to support an increase in traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in B.C.'s public institutions.

Considerations: potential strategies that could be adopted for overall efforts to increase the availability and use of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in B.C.'s public institutions. These include:

- Ensuring that Indigenous people are central to efforts and that local traditions are foundational;
- Starting small, with feasible goals and initiatives;
- Connecting to Truth and Reconciliation calls to action;
- Continue to explore co-stewardship and expansions of Indigenous harvesting rights;
- Connecting to other "buy local" commitments;
- Building networks of traditional food distributors;
- Supporting education about gathering and using traditional foods; and
- Being patient in efforts to change underlying biases and beliefs.

The considerations represent important opportunities to explore further work through the wider and deeper consultation that should form the basis of future actions aimed at increasing the use of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in B.C.'s public institutions. Such work could also have broader application and support more opportunities in various sectors.



TRADITIONAL FOODS and INDIGENOUS RECIPES in B.C.'s PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

British Columbia's Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training and other partner ministries are working closely to increase the use of British Columbia (B.C.) grown and processed foods in hospitals, schools and other government facilities under the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries-led Feed BC initiative. Recognizing the shared objective to increase the use of B.C. foods, improve the patient food experience in health care, and efforts to increase access to traditional foods and

Indigenous recipes in public institutions, partner ministries wish to understand the facilitators and barriers to serving traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in B.C.'s public institutions.

Queenswood Consulting Group was contracted to complete a qualitative study to identify the barriers and facilitators to serving traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in public institutions. This report presents the findings of that study as well as considerations for moving forward.

CONTEXT

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries is working across government and industry partners to bring more British Columbian food to provincial government institutions and facilities through the Feed BC initiative. Given the complexity of the food procurement system for government facilities, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries is working closely with partner ministries and foodservice staff, and advisory committees including the Feed BC Value Chain Advisory Group. The advisory group is made up of representatives from across B.C.'s food service supply chain, including producers, processors, distributors, group purchasing organizations (GPOs), food services, buyers and facilities/clients. The lessons learned about the food procurement processes for B.C. institutions have and will continue to provide helpful groundwork for considerations to increase service of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes.

Another important step towards understanding B.C. public institutions' ability to serve traditional foods and Indigenous recipes was a 2016 B.C. Centre for Disease

Control study on *Increasing Indigenous Children's Access to Traditional Foods in Early Childhood Programs*.³ One of the key recommendations of that report was to develop a set of guidelines on serving traditional food in early childhood programs in B.C., and that these guidelines could be "adapted to other settings such as schools, hospitals and long-term care facilities." This study explored the unique context of other types of public institutions, and the considerations that are set out in this report are provided as opportunities to explore ways of increasing service of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes throughout B.C.'s publicly funded institutions.

This project is also relevant to the Government of B.C.'s commitment to the *UN Declaration on the Rights of*

³ Mundel, Erika, Bevelander, Kirsten, Burgaretta, Mary. 2016. *Indigenous Children's Access to Traditional Foods in Early Childhood Programs*. B.C. Centre for Disease Control.

Indigenous Peoples (the UN Declaration).⁴ As part of its work to create true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, in November 2019 the province of B.C. passed legislation to align B.C.'s laws with the UN Declaration. As a whole, the UN Declaration emphasizes Indigenous peoples' rights to live in dignity, to maintain and strengthen Indigenous institutions, cultures and traditions and to pursue self-determined development. Two related articles from the UN Declaration state:

Article 20

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.
2. Indigenous peoples deprived of their means of subsistence and development are entitled to just and fair redress.

Article 24

1. 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.
2. Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. States shall take the necessary steps with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of this right.

The commitment to align B.C. laws with the UN Declaration open the possibility to explore changes to legislation which currently act as a barrier to serving traditional foods, such as the B.C. *Wildlife Act*'s

prohibition on selling wild game or the Food Premises Regulation's requirement for all food served to come from an approved source, when the process to become an approved source excludes the harvesting practice of many traditional foods.

Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* protects Indigenous rights, including traditional activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering plants without a license within their traditional territory. It is important to note that these rights do not apply outside one's traditional territory, and that many Indigenous people reside far from their traditional territory. Indigenous people may seek permission of the First Nations whose traditional territory they live on to be granted the right to hunt, fish or gather there, but this is administratively burdensome for both the individual and the nation.

Key factors in the availability of traditional foods are the health of the natural environment and the access Indigenous harvesters have to steward them. In 2018, the Government of B.C. began a public conversation to improve wildlife management and habitat conservation in B.C., including comprehensive discussions with Indigenous communities, stakeholder groups and members of the public. The culmination of that 18-month engagement was a strategy⁵ to guide the province for the next 10 years, released in November 2019, for review and engagement with British Columbians. It includes Goal 5: Advancing Reconciliation: A Shared Path with Indigenous Governments, which outlines the intent to create new opportunities to work collaboratively with Indigenous governments to effectively and efficiently deliver wildlife stewardship.

4 UN General Assembly. 2007. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 2 October 2007*

5 Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resources Operations and Rural Development. 2019. Together for Wildlife Strategy – DRAFT. <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/wildlifeandhabitat/>



METHODOLOGY

To conduct this study Queenswood Consulting Group assembled a team that included Indigenous chefs Andrew George (Wet'suwet'en), Jared Qwustenuxun Williams (Quw'utsun) and Ben Genaille (Métis); subject matter experts Dennis Green of South Arm Training and Jaskwaan Bedard (Haida); and Queenswood resources Jane Worton, Greg Awai and René Peloquin.

The timeline for this phase of the project was very short, with work beginning in February and ending in March 2020. As a result, consultations were limited, though the large team allowed for more flexibility to connect with people across the province. The purpose of this study was to outline the central barriers and facilitators to serving traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in public institutions through:

Research and documentation of applicable B.C., federal, or other legislations and regulations that prohibit or support the use of both non-market (donated) and market (purchased) traditional foods, including consultation with food safety, fish, and wildlife experts.

Identification of public institutions in B.C. currently offering traditional foods or Indigenous recipes with a focus on health-care facilities and post-secondary institutions, but also including K-12 schools, early childhood education, and correctional facilities. Consultations with staff from the regional health authorities, Provincial Health Services Authority, and post-secondary institutions that oversee food procurement and menu planning, to identify current practices around the use of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes.

A jurisdictional scan on traditional food programs that have been implemented in Canada, documenting their successes and challenges, including interviews with Indigenous people and Knowledge Keepers in B.C. working to preserve or increase access to traditional foods and the FNHA.

Interviews were requested from and conducted with individuals in eight relevant areas, as summarized below:

Sector	Requested	Completed
B.C. Corrections	3	2
Early Childhood Education	2	1
Elders and Knowledge Keepers	7	7
Food Safety, Fish and Wildlife Government Staff	8	8
Health Authorities and Facilities	23	18
K-12 Schools	5	4
Indigenous restaurants	2	2
Post-Secondary Institutions	19	18
Total	69	60

Not included within the scope of this project was a meaningful consultation with First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and communities across B.C. Only a small number of the over 200 First Nations within B.C. were represented within the study participants and project team, nor was any formal consultation conducted with First Nations hereditary or elected chiefs. Comprehensive regional or provincial engagement with Indigenous communities would be a central first step of any further progress towards making traditional foods available

in B.C. public institutions. Broader consultations may identify further barriers or facilitators to serving traditional foods.

Based on the findings, the team prepared findings and a series of considerations for the B.C. government to increase the use of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in B.C. public institutions, including considerations for the general approach going forward, and shorter and longer-term project opportunities.



These considerations through a set of principles developed by the project team, with the intent of reflecting requests for care or attention to issues identified through the consultations with Indigenous people and Knowledge Keepers in B.C. working to preserve or increase access to traditional foods. These principles were not tested or validated as a whole with anyone outside of the project team and are included within the report to reflect the process. Further work towards increasing access to traditional foods may find it helpful to build on and validate these principles in boarder conversation with Indigenous communities within B.C. The guiding principles developed by the team included:

- Protecting traditional food supply;
- Maintaining or improving Indigenous food sovereignty;
- Prioritising Indigenous communities' access to and benefit from traditional foods;
- Understanding the variation in traditional foods and Indigenous recipes between nations and regions;
- Not introducing new economic barriers to accessing traditional foods; and/or
- Increasing access to Indigenous recipes broadly within institutions, without specifically targeting Indigenous patients or customers.

INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Indigenous food sovereignty is a policy approach to addressing the underlying issues impacting Indigenous peoples' ability to respond to their own needs for healthy, culturally adapted foods and includes self determination (the ability to make decisions over the amount and quality of food).

<https://www.indigenousfoodsystems.org/food-sovereignty>



WHAT IS “TRADITIONAL FOOD”?

A fundamental challenge in assessing barriers and challenges related to traditional food and Indigenous recipes relates to the very definitions of these terms. What constitutes “traditional” versus “traditional-inspired” food, and what qualifies as an Indigenous recipe varies widely in the literature and among the participants that took part in this review.

Traditional foods

Traditional foods are also referred to as country foods or wild foods. They mainly consist of animal and plant species that are harvested from the natural environment, such as wild meat, fish species, bird species, plant species, and berries acquired through traditional activities such as hunting, fishing and gathering during seasonal periods.

Some would consider game, fish, birds, plants or berries which are sustainably farmed and harvested with protocol and respect as traditional foods, and others would not. This ambiguity applies to many foods that institutions currently use in their programs, which would not likely meet a strict definition of traditional food.

Indigenous recipes

Indigenous recipes draw on historical Indigenous food traditions but have been adapted to use commercially available (market) ingredients. Traditional methods of preparing Indigenous recipes such as cooking food over an open fire or pit cooking may be challenging to serve in institutional settings due to commercial kitchen requirements.

Regional variation in traditional foods

While there are commonalities, it is important to understand that traditional foods and food systems vary from nation to nation as a result of differences in geographical locations, the availability of food species, trade networks (grease trails) and access to animal migration routes and plant species, and traditional hunting and fishing practices.

When seeking to develop traditional foods to be served in an area as large as a health region, for example, there is likely to be wide variation between traditional foods, especially for regions which encompass both coastal and interior lands.



These variations can also be reflected in the preparation of traditional foods. For example, Coast Salish peoples commonly smoke salmon to preserve it, whereas the Stó:lō wind-dry salmon.

FOOD SERVICE IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

The scope of this project included consideration of food service in B.C.'s public institutions, focusing on health care and post-secondary institutions but also including K-12 schools, early childhood education, and correctional facilities. These are part of B.C.'s institutional food service industry, where food is offered as a necessity or convenience for patients or customers but is not typically the primary objective of the facility. For example, while a post-secondary institution typically offers a range of food service options, the institution's main purpose is education-related.

B.C.'s institutional market purchases approximately \$398 million of food products each year.⁶ Most public institutions purchase food through a broadline distributor, though some have the ability to purchase some products through smaller, specialty distributors or direct from producers or processors.



⁶ fs Strategy Inc. (2019), *Selling B.C. Food to B.C.'s Government Supported Facilities*. Prepared for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/B.C.FeedBC/selling_B.C._food_to_B.C.s_government-supported_facilities_-_feed_B.C._resource.pdf

Post-secondary institutions

There are 25 public post-secondary institutions across B.C. Food service in post-secondary institutions is provided in a variety of services such as residential dining halls, cafeterias, food kiosks/carts, pubs, cafés, vending machines and catering. Many post-secondary food services are contracted, and campuses can include multiple food service operators.

Dining hall, cafeteria and pub food is typically prepared in commercial kitchens within the facility.⁷ A recent Feed BC report on B.C. food procurement in post-secondary institutions found that just over a third of public post-secondary institutions manage and operate their food

services in-house, with the other two-thirds outsourcing or contracting food service.⁸ Whether operated in-house or contracted out, B.C. post-secondary food services typically purchase food through one of two broadline distributors.⁹ Some post-secondary institutions also offer professional cook or other culinary trades programs, which teach students to prepare a range of food in line with the Industry Training Authority Program Outline.

In 2015-16, 6.88% of post-secondary students self-identified as Aboriginal.¹⁰ Some post-secondary institutions have notably higher percentages of Indigenous students. For example, in 2015-16 the percentage of Aboriginal learners amongst domestic full-time equivalent students at the following institutions were the highest in the province: Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (91.9%), Coast Mountain College (46.1%), College of New Caledonia (26.3%), Northern Lights College (25.3%). The smaller size of these institutions relative to some others means that the majority of Indigenous learners are often at larger institutions, where they make up a smaller percent of the student population.¹¹

Many, but not all of B.C.'s 25 public post-secondary institutions have Aboriginal Service Plans¹² which are developed in partnership with Indigenous communities and organizations to enhance the post-secondary educational experiences and outcomes of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners. These plans are intended to build on the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework, which includes actions to ensure that Aboriginal people are comfortable coming to, and are supported to be successful in, B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions.

Health care institutions

In B.C., five regional health authorities and the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) administer health-care facilities, which includes 168 hospitals and publicly funded



7 Ibid.

8 MNP (2019), *Study on B.C. Food Procurement in B.C.'s Public Post-Secondary Sector*. Prepared for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/B.C.FeedBC/B.C.food.study.executive.summary.pdf>

9 Ibid.

10 Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training. 2018. *Aboriginal Learners in British Columbia's Public Post-Secondary System*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED590249.pdf>

11 For example, only 2.9% of FTEs at UBC in 2015-16 were attributed to Aboriginal learners, however, Aboriginal learners at UBC represented 10.3% of all Aboriginal FTEs in the public post-secondary system. Ibid.

12 The term Aboriginal is used here to reflect the name of a report.

long-term care facilities.¹³ Most decisions about menu planning and purchasing are made at the health authority level, and food services are either provided in-house, by a third-party contractor or both.¹⁴

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) works with the regional health authorities and the PHSA to address the needs of First Nations peoples during service planning, policy development and to promote culturally safe and appropriate service delivery. Each of the regional health authorities has an Indigenous health team that works across their organization to improve service delivery to Indigenous people.

There is wide variation across health authorities and within individual facilities on where food is prepared: in some, the majority of food is prepared on-site from scratch in commercial kitchens; in others, food is prepared off-site and reheated prior to serving (re-thermable meals); and some have limited kitchens and use primarily pre-prepared food in meal preparation.

Food safety, which is important for all food service facilities, is critical in health-care facilities because they service at-risk populations with compromised immune systems. While food services in health-care facilities include multiple formats such as in-patient nutrition (for patients) and retail food service (for staff, visitors and out-patients), this project focused more on discussion around options for in-patient nutrition.

Recently, a Feed BC resource estimated that hospital meals in Western Canada have a budget of approximately \$35.00 per day for in-patient nutrition, with approximately \$10.00 reflecting food purchases, and the remaining reflecting costs for labour and other overhead. Long-term care facilities were estimated to have a lower budget of \$25.50 per day, with approximately \$9.00 designated to food purchases.¹⁵ Actual meal day costs in B.C. facilities may vary from these Western Canada figures; for example, one long-term care facility reported it was allocated \$7.00 per day for food.

As with schools, Canadian hospitals have a history of being used to further assimilationist goals, and segregated Indian hospitals were not only understaffed and underfunded but also for many patients a place of mistreatment, medical experimentation, and abuse. Indigenous people living in B.C. and across Canada still experience systemic racism within the health-care system, and many face explicit racism when accessing care. The Ministry of Health, through initiatives such as this project, is actively working to improve Indigenous peoples' experiences with the health-care system.

Correctional Centres

As with many post-secondary and health-care facilities, food in B.C. correctional centres is provided through contracted food services. One company holds the contract for all ten provincial correctional centres in B.C., including both served meals and canteen services where inmates purchase additional snacks.

Served meals follow a dietitian-approved menu, with options for religious (e.g. kosher, halal), medical (e.g. gluten or dairy free) or personal preference (e.g. vegan, vegetarian) reasons. Any special menus are determined for each inmate in advance. Special menus are typically more expensive than the regular menu.¹⁶

The greatest flexibility in introducing new foods into correctional centres is with the canteen, from which inmates may purchase snacks and personal care items. Dietitians are not involved in setting canteen menus, and a lower quantity of supply is required. Within correctional centres in Canada, the per diem cost for food for inmates was \$6.12 in 2018-19, with a total cost including labour of \$12.00 to \$14.00. B.C. Corrections inmate meals are provided at an average cost per inmate of \$10.28/day (including both labour and food).¹⁷

Indigenous people are vastly over-represented in correctional centres within Canada, including in B.C. While accounting for 5.9%¹⁸ of the B.C. population, the proportion of Indigenous people in provincial custody is more than 29.7%.¹⁹ Similar proportions are found in the federal prison system.²⁰ Proportions of Indigenous inmates are

13 Feed BC. B.C. Food Expenditures in Health Care 2018-2019. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/feedbc/bc_food_expenditures_report_2018-2019.pdf

14 fs Strategy Inc. (2019), *Selling B.C. Food to B.C.'s Government Supported Facilities*. Prepared for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/feedbc/selling_bc_food_to_bcs_government-supported_facilities_-_feed_bc_resource.pdf

15 fs Strategy Inc. (2019), *Selling B.C. Food to B.C.'s Government Supported Facilities*. Prepared for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/feedbc/selling_bc_food_to_bcs_government-supported_facilities_-_feed_bc_resource.pdf

16 Porter, Tony. (2020, February 25). Phone Interview with Jane Worton.

17 BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. 2017. A Profile of BC Corrections: Reduce Reoffending, Protect Communities. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/corrections/reports-publications/bc-corrections-profile.pdf>

18 Statistics Canada. 2016. Total population by Aboriginal identity and Registered or Treat Indian status, British Columbia, 2016 Census. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-PR-Eng.cfm?TOPIC=9&LANG=Eng&GK=PR&GC=59>

19 B.C. Government. Corrections and Aboriginal Justice. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/corrections/reducing-reoffending/aboriginal-justice>

20 Office of the Correctional Investigator (2020). "Indigenous People in Federal Custody Surpasses 30%

Correctional Investigator Issues Statement and Challenge," News Release: Jan 21, 2020. <https://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/comm/press/press20200121-eng.aspx>



notably higher in particular B.C. correctional centres, such as Prince George (64%) and Kamloops (47%). This over-representation demonstrates a strong rationale to offer options for traditional food or Indigenous recipes in correctional facilities, given the high proportion of Indigenous inmates.

Early Childhood Education

Many licensed child care centres, whether public, non-profit, or privately operated, offer some food to children throughout the day. In these centres, parents may supply lunches, with centres offering additional snacks, or the centres may be responsible for providing both meals and snacks. This food is usually prepared by child care staff in the centre, who are expected to follow Food Premises Regulation requirements, such as serving food from an approved source. There are approximately 5,000²¹ licensed child care centres in B.C., with licensing oversight through the five regional health authorities and the FNHA.

In addition, B.C.'s Child Care Licensing Regulation require licensees to: (a) ensure that each child has healthy food and drink according to the Canada's Food Guide, and (b) promote healthy eating and nutritional habits. Further, licensees must ensure that the food and drink given to a child is sufficient in quantity and quality to meet the developmental needs of the child, given (a) the child's age, (b) the number of hours the child is under the care of the licensee, and (c) the child's food preferences and cultural background.²²

21 Ministry of Children and Family Development. Child Care Map. <https://catalogue.data.gov.bc.ca/dataset/child-care-map>

22 *Community Care and Assisted Living Act: Child Care Licensing Regulation* http://www.B.C.laws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/332_2007

Some child care centres have a high or sole percentage of Indigenous children, such as those funded through the Aboriginal Head Start program (including both on and off reserve programs). However, B.C.'s new Early Learning Framework, which applies to all child care, includes a commitment to resist language, concepts, and pedagogies that perpetuate legacies of colonization and marginalization of Indigenous people.

Public (K-12) Schools

In B.C., 75% of school districts report having a school meal program (breakfast, lunch, or snacks) in at least one school.²³ These programs are often funded through the provincial government's CommunityLINK (Learning Includes Nutrition and Knowledge) program, supplemented by community and school fundraising.²⁴ There are also programs raising the profile of healthy and sustainable eating including Farm to School programs, school food gardens and Take a Bite of B.C.

For special events or activities, students may participate in preparing food, or be provided with food related to the cultural event. In middle and secondary school, students may complete foods classes where they learn to prepare food, and in some districts, complete culinary technical training towards careers as professional cooks. Parent Advisory Councils may also offer hot lunch programs or other foods as fundraisers.

*The Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools*²⁵, published by B.C.'s Ministries of Education and

Health, set the minimum nutrition standard for foods and beverages sold in B.C. schools. School districts are required to implement these guidelines as part of the Government's directive to remove the sale of unhealthy food and beverages from schools.

Within B.C., there are over 1,500 public K-12 schools and 131 First Nations K-12 schools, and, while registration in First Nations schools is increasing, over 90% of Indigenous students in B.C. attend a public school. As part of a broader education transformation process, the Ministry of Education has been working to embed Indigenous perspectives and world views into all parts of the curriculum in a meaningful and authentic manner. The legacy of residential schools, which by design profoundly damaged communities and weakened traditional languages and cultures, also engendered a deep distrust of formal education among many Indigenous communities.²⁶

²³ The Coalition for Healthy School Food – BC Chapter <https://www.healthyschoolfood.ca/bc-chapter>

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/healthyschools/2015_food_guidelines.pdf

²⁶ Ministry of Education. (2015). *Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in the Classroom*. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/indigenous-education/awp_moving_forward.pdf



IDENTIFIED BENEFITS

Encouraging the use of traditional foods is a growing movement across B.C., Canada, and throughout North America. While a thorough analysis of benefits was not the focus of this study, it is important to reiterate the widespread recognition among the participants in this review that providing greater access to traditional foods and foods based on Indigenous recipes offers a wide range of benefits. This finding was supported by the scan of the literature that is available regarding this issue.

The benefits summarized below are based both on discussions with participants in this study and a high-level review of the growing body of literature about this topic. Conclusions about benefits are based on both high-level findings from the literature as well as feedback from interviews with participants. As a study of benefits was not intended to be the primary focus of this report, only the key conclusions related to these themes are set out below.

Cultural connection

The central role of food in connecting Indigenous peoples and communities is a cultural reality that goes back to time immemorial. Food and language provide two closely-related opportunities to learn, relearn and reconnect fundamental Indigenous values within communities; connections that were disrupted by generations of government policy. Overall, participants put a high value on the role that food can play in helping people connect to their traditions, cultures, and wider Indigenous world view.

Nutritional value

Although there is great variety in defining what constitutes traditional foods across the province, all traditional foods share fundamental nutritional qualities: they are whole foods with little to no processing or additives, and when it comes to wild meat and seafood, they can be higher in protein and lower in fat than non-traditional foods. Particularly when combined with traditional ways of hunting, growing and gathering, eating traditional foods not only has obvious health benefits, but also provides a more intangible value of connecting peoples' food to the lands they come from.

Mental health benefits

The availability of traditional food was widely described as spirit-lifting, especially for Elders who have long and strong memories of including these foods in their diets. Where people want to eat the food provided, they are more likely to have healthier appetites; this is seen as a key contributor to recovery from injury and illness, and a key factor in overall health.



Connection to the land

Increasing access to traditional foods offers potential benefits in terms of environmental stewardship, healthy harvesting, and integrated connection to the land and sea that is the source of foods. This includes better integration into traditional production cycles and stronger overall stewardship of natural resources.

Impact on costs

Currently, the cost to purchase traditional foods is often prohibitively high. Increased production of and access to traditional foods could have the effect of increasing availability and lowering costs, resulting from both greater production and a wider integration of such foods into food production processes. Increased access would also potentially open markets for people looking for traditional foods, resulting in the opening of more food service businesses that offer traditional foods.

Supporting reconciliation

Acknowledging and supporting the provision of traditional foods in B.C.'s health, education and other public institutions offers a strong and very practical way of demonstrating a commitment to the principles and goals of reconciliation and inter-cultural understanding. Recognizing the food preferences of Indigenous people sends a strong message that they are heard, valued, and determinative of their own diets and health.

Indigenizing institutions

The provision of traditional foods at public institutions – particularly educational institutions – can contribute to formal and informal efforts at Indigenization. It can facilitate the celebration and incorporation of Indigenous culture into educational and other institutions, providing opportunities to adapt practices with more traditional ways and approaches.

Supporting local foods

Increased access to and use of traditional foods naturally supports efforts to increase the production and use of locally grown and/or harvested foods. This aligns with the mandates of programs such as Buy B.C., as well as with a growing interest in the public that is evidenced by the popularity of sources such as farmers' markets, organic farms, and artisan producers of local foods.

Food security and sovereignty

Increased access to and production of traditional foods would contribute to increased food security and control of the food supply within Indigenous communities. There is the potential for increased economic activity within and between Indigenous communities; however, there are significant risks that accompany commodification of traditional food, and so this must be approached with caution.



IDENTIFIED BARRIERS

While the provision of traditional foods and foods based on Indigenous recipes pose potentially significant benefits, realizing these benefits depends on addressing a number of equally significant barriers. The barriers that are outlined below are based on discussions with participants in this study – including a number of individuals who are responsible for the design and implementation of traditional foods programs in B.C. and across Canada – as well as a high-level review of available information and supporting materials relevant to this topic.

Participants expressed disparate views, based on both their personal experience and wider understanding of movements to increase the production and consumption of traditional foods in organizations and institutions. Along with information arising from the literature, these responses have been grouped into five themes: legislation and regulation; understanding of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes; access; supply; and food service limitations.

LEGISLATION AND REGULATION

There are two central legislative barriers to serving traditional foods within B.C. public institutions, though these barriers may be reinforced through multiple interrelated statutes, regulations, or guidelines. These central barriers are a) many wild sourced traditional foods may not be sold, bought, traded or distributed for gain; and b) food premises may not serve food that was not obtained from an approved source.

Restrictions on commercial use

A number of statutes and regulations currently impose varying restrictions on the ability of people to sell or otherwise use traditional foods in a way that brings about a commercial gain. This limits those looking to serve traditional foods to using only those foods which can be donated, and in many instances donated foods cannot be served. Restrictions that apply to specific foods are summarized below.

None of these regulations prevent Indigenous people from hunting or trapping for personal use. Aboriginal rights established under section 35 of the *Constitution Act (1982)*, and further direction such as the 2003 *Powley Decision*, affirm that Indigenous people may hunt animals or migratory birds, trap, or freshwater fish for food, social or ceremonial purposes and within their traditional territory; the meat or fish may not be sold.

Game meat

As summarized below, two statutes, B.C.'s *Wildlife Act* and the *Canada Migratory Birds Convention Act* prevent the sale of wild game meat. In addition, the B.C. Game Farm Regulation limits game farming to fallow deer, bison and reindeer, but permits this meat to be sold from licensed producers.

Statute / Regulation	<i>B.C. Wildlife Act</i>
Ministry	Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
Scope	Applies to all native and some non-native amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals that live in B.C.
Relevant Section	Section 22: A person who traffics in live wildlife or wildlife meat, except as authorized by regulation or a permit, commits an offence. Trafficking is earlier defined as: to buy, sell, trade or distribute for gain or consideration or to offer to do so.
Traditional Foods Link	Prevents wild game meat from being bought or sold.

Statute / Regulation	<i>Canada Migratory Birds Convention Act</i>
Ministry	Environment and Climate Change Canada
Scope	Applies to all migratory birds in Canada.
Relevant Section	Section 5: Prohibition Except as authorized by the regulations, no person shall, without lawful excuse, (a) be in possession of a migratory bird or nest; or (b) buy, sell, exchange or give a migratory bird or nest or make it the subject of a commercial transaction.
Traditional Foods Link	Prevents wild bird meat from being bought or sold.

Statute / Regulation	B.C. Game Farm Regulation
Ministry	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Scope	Applies to most species of game in B.C.
Relevant Section	Section 2: (1) Game farming is prescribed as a regulated activity for the purposes of the Act. (2) A person must not engage in game farming unless the person (a) is a licensed game farmer, or (b) is an employee, within the meaning of section 10 of the Act, of a licensed game farmer. (3) Except as authorized under the Wildlife Act, a person must not possess live game unless the person is a person described in subsection (2).
Traditional Foods Link	Permits fallow deer, bison and reindeer to be raised on a licensed game farm and sold for meat, if slaughtered in an establishment licensed under the Food Safety Act.

Fish, shellfish and aquatic plants

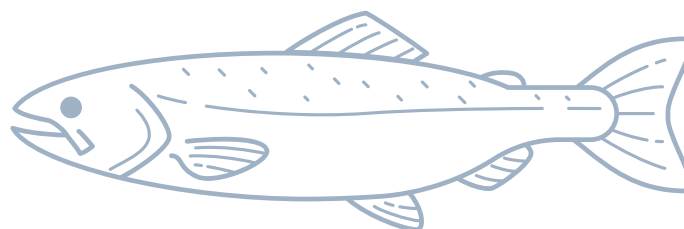
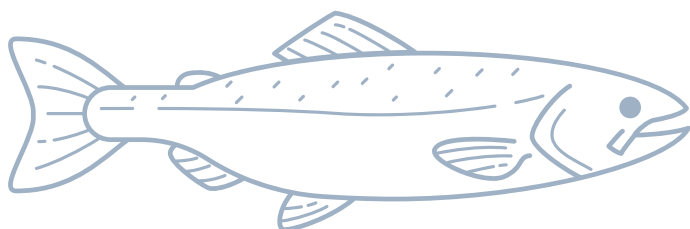
The situation is slightly different for freshwater fish, marine fish, shellfish, and aquatic plants. It is possible to obtain a commercial licence for freshwater, marine, and shellfish. Further, the Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative, launched in 2007, was designed to increase First Nations' access to commercial fisheries in B.C.

These licences are distinct from the communal fishing licences issued to First Nations. The federal department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada issues a communal licence to each First Nation, which lists the species of fish and amounts each First Nation is entitled to harvest, but again only for food, social and ceremonial (FSC) purposes, so the FSC fish cannot be sold. The licence

also may specify fishing area, times, species, allocations, equipment use or other restrictions. While out of the B.C. Government's mandate, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada restrictions around the harvest and use of communal license fish are also a barrier to accessing traditional foods.²⁷

²⁷ An illustration of the impact is provided by the 1995 case of Dorothy Van der Peet, a Stó:lō woman who was arrested for selling 10 salmon caught under a food fishing license. She was found guilty at trial, and the conviction was upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada. The majority decision of the Supreme Court stated that Van der Peet had "failed to demonstrate that the exchange of fish for money or other goods was an integral part of the distinctive Stó:lō culture which existed prior to contact and was therefore protected by s. 35(1) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*."

Statute / Regulation	Canada Fisheries Act
Ministry	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Scope	Canadian fisheries waters
Relevant Section	Section 7: Fishery leases and licences (1) Subject to subsection (2) the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, wherever the exclusive right of fishing does not already exist by law, issue or authorize to be issued leases and licences for fisheries or fishing, wherever situated or carried on.
Traditional Foods Link	Requires a licence to be in place to fish in marine waters.



Statute / Regulation	B.C. Fish and Seafood Licensing Regulation
Ministry	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
Scope	Applies to a person who possesses, rears, grows, harvests, processes, stores, transports or distributes fish or aquatic plants that may be distributed to the public for human consumption.
Relevant Sections	<p>Section 8 (1)A person must not harvest wild aquatic plants that may be distributed to the public for human consumption unless the person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a)holds a wild aquatic plant harvester licence, (b)is an employee, acting in the course of his or her employment, of a person who holds a wild aquatic plant harvester licence, (c)is exempt under subsection (3) or is an employee, acting in the course of his or her employment, of a person who is exempt under subsection (3), or (d)is exempt under subsection (5) or (6). <p>Section 16 (1)A commercial fisher must not distribute the commercial fisher’s catch to a person unless the commercial fisher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a)holds a fisher vendor licence and distributes the catch only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i)to a person holding a licence or other authorization under a provincial food enactment, or (ii)to a person directly from the vessel from which the catch was harvested. (b)is exempt under subsection (2), or (c)is an employee, acting in the course of his or her employment, of a person referred to in paragraph (a) or (b)
Traditional Foods Link	Requires a license to be in place to harvest wild aquatic plants or sell or buy commercial fish.



Non-timber forest products

No legislation or regulations permit or restrict the harvesting of non-timber forest products such as berries.²⁸ One exception to this was introduced in 2018, and again in 2019, when the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development restricted commercial-scale huckleberry harvesting to protect grizzly bear habitat in the Kootenay Boundary Region, including use of mechanical pickers, harvesting any huckleberries for resale, or harvesting for personal use exceeding 10 litres per person per season.²⁹ This type of restriction is rare.

Statute / Regulation	<i>B.C. Forest and Ranges Practices Act</i>
Ministry	Ministry Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
Scope	Applies to forest and range practices and resource-based activities conducted on Crown land in B.C.
Relevant Sections	Schedule 1 – Section 4 The following factors apply to a result or strategy for the objective set out in section 10 [objectives set by government for cultural heritage resources]: (a) the relative value or importance of a particular cultural heritage resource to a traditional use by an aboriginal people; (b) the relative abundance or scarcity of a cultural heritage resource that is the focus of a traditional use by an aboriginal people; (c) the historical extent of a traditional use by an aboriginal people of a cultural heritage resource; (d) the impact on government granted timber harvesting rights of conserving or protecting a cultural heritage resource that is the focus of a traditional use by an aboriginal people; (e) options for mitigating the impact that a forest practice might have on a cultural heritage resource that is the focus of a traditional use by an aboriginal people.
Traditional Foods Link	Requires timber licensees to consider the impact of their forest practices on cultural heritage resources (including non-timber forest products such as medicinal plants or traditional foods).

Summary

The table below summarizes changes that would be required for traditional foods to be sold:

Type	Statute / Regulation	Required change
Game meat	B.C. Wildlife Act	Create regulation or permit allowing First Nations to sell wild game meat.
Fish, shellfish or aquatic plants	No B.C. legislative or regulation change required to permit sale of fish, shellfish, or aquatic plants. Commercial licenses are available for purchase, though costly and in limited quantity.	
Non-timber forest products	No B.C. legislative or regulation change required to permit sale of non-timber forest products.	

Changes to federal statutes / legislation are not included in this summary, as they are outside of the authority of the B.C. Government. The above listed solely address legislative issues preventing the sale or purchase of traditional foods. There are several other barriers addressed further in this report, including regulations around food safety, understanding of traditional foods, access to harvest areas, and supply of stocks in the wild, among others.

Similar restrictions on the sale of wild game meat are in place in other Canadian jurisdictions, which is why wild game meat served as a traditional food is typically donated.

28 Hamilton, E. (2012). "Non-timber forest products in British Columbia: Policies, practices, opportunities, and recommendations. *Journal of Ecosystems and Management* 13(2):1-24. http://ruralnetwork.ca/sites/default/files/tools_resources/111.pdf

29 "Huckleberry harvesting restricted to protect grizzly habitat" <https://news.gov.B.C.ca/releases/2019FLNR0186-001439>

Restrictions on food service

The main enactment preventing serving traditional food in B.C. public institutions or other food premises is the Food Premises Regulation. A food premise is any place where food intended for public consumption is sold, offered for sale, supplied, handled, prepared, packaged, displayed, served, processed, stored, transported or dispensed.

The relevant provisions of this regulation, along with other relevant enactments, are summarized in the following table.

Statute / Regulation	Food Premises Regulation
Ministry	Ministry of Health
Scope	Regulates B.C.'s food industry, including agriculture, processing, retail and restaurants.
Relevant Section	Section 11: Food from approved sources Every operator of food premises must ensure that all food on the premises is obtained from (a) food premises for which plans and specifications have been approved under section 3, (a.1) a slaughter establishment licensed under the Meat Inspection Regulation, or (b) a source that is approved by the government of Canada, the provincial government, the government of another province or territory, or an official or agency of any of those governments under whose authority food safety standards are established and enforced.
Traditional Foods Link	Prevents food which is not from an approved source from being processed, handled or served. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no process by which wild sourced game meat can be an approved source. • There are approved sources for other wild sourced foods, though they may not reflect local species or be preserved for use in traditional foods. • Wild sourced seafood is the easiest traditional food to find; however, many wild sourced commercial fisheries do not use sustainable fishing methods.

Statute / Regulation	B.C. Public Health Act
Ministry	Ministry of Health
Scope	Governs all aspects of public health and disease prevention.
Relevant Section	Divisions 2, 3 and 4 of the Act give the Provincial Health Officer, Medical Health Officers, and Environmental Health Officers the authority to exercise their powers and perform their duties, including establishing food safety standards.
Traditional Foods Link	If Environmental Health Officers were authorized to approve food sources, it would make it easier to serve traditional foods.

Statute / Regulation	<i>Meat Inspection Regulation</i>
Ministry	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
Scope	Licenses slaughter establishments to sell their product within B.C
Relevant Section	Section 31: Excluded Animals A license holder must not permit an animal, other than an animal that is raised for food, to enter the slaughter establishment.
Traditional Foods Link	Prevents license holders from permitting animals, other than animals raised for food, to enter a slaughter establishment. Wild game is by definition, hunted or trapped in the wild, but this also prevents wild game from being inspected while being processed.



Finally, the Community Care and Assisted Living Act (including its Residential Care Regulation and Child Care Licensing Regulation) applies to the service of food in community care, assisted living, and child care facilities. These enactments are administered by the Ministry of Health.

While neither regulation has any section which explicitly relates to approved food sources, Section 63 of the Residential Care Regulation requires licensees to ensure that all food is safely prepared, stored, served and handled. Consultation participants noted that licensing officers enforcing the Child Care Regulation expressed concern about the serving of traditional foods, including

adequate commercial kitchen facilities. However, the Child Care Regulation's only reference to food preparation space is to preclude changing diapers in the food preparation area (Section 14).

In summary, the Food Premises Regulation requirement for food premises to only serve food from an approved source is a barrier to serving wild sourced traditional foods. However, it may be possible to alter the process requiring a food source to be approved or expanding the definition of approved food source, rather than altering the Food Premises Regulation which would make the Food Premises Regulation a facilitator.



UNDERSTANDING OF TRADITIONAL FOODS AND INDIGENOUS RECIPES

A number of specific issues were raised under the general concern of understanding what constitutes traditional foods, how these understandings differ, how they can be applied differently, and assessing whether a particular food or recipe should be pursued and offered in a given situation. Specific challenges are outlined below.



Variation in traditional foods

As noted elsewhere in this report, a fundamental challenge in increasing the provision of traditional foods is understanding what “traditional foods” means. An equally fundamental challenge is recognizing that there are different definitions and understandings, based largely on where the food is being obtained, prepared and served. There is no single Indigenous food, instead there are myriad of such foods that differ widely throughout the province.

The variety in traditional foods among and across B.C.’s First Nations is significant, even for people located in the same geographic region. Widely differing environments have greatly contributed to different traditions and traditional foods; differences that need to be recognized, respected and built upon for traditional foods programs to succeed. Food obtained and provided without recognition and respect of local traditions is unlikely to be accepted, or to realize the benefits that were outlined earlier in this report. Other Indigenous peoples in B.C., including Métis, Inuit, and those from elsewhere in Canada, also have a tremendous diversity in traditional foods linked to their distinct cultures, traditions, and home communities.

Balancing a highly localized understanding of traditional foods with the desire to develop and implement a consistent provincial approach is a barrier that most participants rated highly. Many expressed a concern that a homogenous approach to incorporating Indigenous food will not resonate with people, and that a provincial approach must find a way to incorporate local food traditions alongside those identified as being consistent with pan-Indigenous principles.

Participants also noted that the demand for certain foods is different in each region; not only traditional foods, but general commercially available foods are favoured and used differently by communities and between generations. Preferences are often impacted by what was available in that region or what people were eating during the time they grew up. These differences can pose a challenge to developing a broad, provincial approach but if they are incorporated at the local level, there will be a higher likelihood of enthusiasm and uptake.

Availability of Indigenous recipes

A fundamental challenge to increasing the use of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes is the limited availability of both. Supply issues are discussed in more detail in a following section.

With respect to recipes, there are issues related both to defining what constitutes an “Indigenous” recipe, and a lack of documented recipes that lend themselves to recreation and provision in larger institutional settings. Even where organizations are enthusiastic about providing traditional foods, it can be difficult to translate home-based recipes into approaches that meet the needs of a care home, hospital or school. This can lead to a general hesitation in attempting to provide traditional foods and recipes in larger scale or commercial contexts. Participants reported a reluctance to serve food that falls short of being fully connected to local foods and recipes – an almost impossible bar to meet if also bound by requirements to serve only approved sources of food. This translates into a tendency not to try a new food or recipe where there is doubt about authenticity, out of concern that the food will not be accepted by local residents as being sufficiently traditional.

Training food staff on how to prepare Indigenous recipes can also be challenging. Learning about local food traditions may not resonate with students from outside the region, and even though some principles are consistent (the importance of stewardship and connection to the land), specific traditions vary widely across B.C. Appropriate training requires significant education on how to prepare and handle traditional foods and Indigenous recipes, which can be especially challenging where learning resources, approaches, outcomes, and perception of value in culinary training are largely Eurocentric.

Indigenous peoples’ familiarity with traditional foods

The complicated challenge of definitively defining what constitutes traditional food is increased by a limitation on the ability to turn to Knowledge Keepers³⁰ for guidance. Over time, changing food systems and preferences have led to a loss of Traditional Knowledge³¹. This comes as a result of policies that restricted access to the land and prevented Indigenous people

30 Knowledge Keepers are First Nations, Métis, or Inuit individuals who are “recognized as having knowledge and understanding of the traditional culture of the community, including spiritual and cultural practices. They are identified based on their communities’ respect for them and peer recognition for their depth and breadth of localized knowledge.” <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/nrs-climate-change/applied-science/innescaverleytechnicalreport.pdf>

31 There is no universally accepted definition of Traditional Knowledge, but the Assembly of First Nations states that it is “commonly understood to refer to collective knowledge of traditions used by Indigenous groups to sustain and adapt themselves to their environment over time. This information is passed on from one generation to the next within the Indigenous group. Such Traditional Knowledge is unique to Indigenous communities and is rooted in the rich culture of its peoples.” https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/env/ns_-_traditional_knowledge.pdf

from traditional seasonal movements and associated provisioning practices; disrupted communities and changed tastes of young people through forced residential school attendance; and led to the need for paid employment, which makes gathering traditional foods prohibitively expensive. These actions encouraged consumption of low cost, highly processed, and nutritionally deficient foods, as these were often the only things available and affordable. Shifts in food practices changed considerably due to the poverty resulting from decades of oppressive and targeted policies and strategies against Indigenous peoples.

This general trend has been exacerbated through changing understandings of what “healthy” means – for many years, foods that constituted traditional ways of eating were not highlighted as being the foundation of a healthy diet.

All of these forces have led to a situation where many Indigenous people have lost connections to traditional foods and recipes. Significant effort is required to re-normalize these foods, emphasizing both the cultural connection and the basic health benefits that are available if people re-familiarize themselves with and make traditional foods a foundational part of their everyday diets. Better representation of traditional foods in Canada’s Food Guide would be one straightforward and powerful way to encourage this change.

Indigenous peoples’ knowledge of traditional harvesting

Related to a loss of knowledge about Indigenous peoples’ use of traditional foods and recipes is a loss of knowledge about traditional harvesting, processing and preparation methods. Traditional foods are rooted in cultural protocol, and one legacy of colonialism has been to limit many Indigenous peoples’ connection to their culture – for example, knowledge of how to gather, process and preserve traditional foods that historically was passed down through families was lost when children were sent to residential schools.

In many Nations and communities, a small number of Elders hold the information on how to harvest traditional foods in the right way, including protocols to protect the land and spirit. Elders may be reluctant to share this knowledge, especially with non-Indigenous people, given experiences where non-Indigenous people have taken information about beneficial impacts of traditional foods or the location of these foods to overharvest and exploit resources.



Non-Indigenous people's familiarity with traditional foods

Increased provision of traditional foods will require the understanding, cooperation and encouragement by non-Indigenous people who are also involved in food production, supply and preparation. Participants noted that there is a basic level of knowledge transfer and education that must take place before this cooperation can take place, and that this knowledge transfer can sometimes be challenging.

Some participants spoke about differences in the ways Indigenous and non-Indigenous people transfer and receive information and knowledge. Indigenous ways are not always understood by non-Indigenous people, making it difficult to understand what exactly is meant by traditional foods or Indigenous recipes. This can be exacerbated when it comes into conflict with government or organizational mandates around food safety requirements and responsibilities. Where regulators lack or fail to apply knowledge about traditional foods, this can impede efforts to encourage uptake and normalize the use of these foods.

Non-Indigenous people's understanding of traditional harvesting and food preparation

The barrier noted above about non-Indigenous people's understanding of traditional food is particularly apt with respect to traditional harvesting and preparation methods. Participants felt there is a general lack of understanding about traditional ways of handling meat and fish safely, and a lack of flexibility in assessing safety based on prescribed health and safety regulations.

Lack of recognition of traditional ways of meeting safety requirements within current standards and frameworks was seen by interview participants as a major barrier to the increased access of traditional foods. Many participants felt that facilitating understanding about traditional hunting and harvesting methods, and creating room for these methods within current harvesting and food safety regulations, is a fundamental step that must be taken to reduce current barriers.

Many participants also described a general sense among non-Indigenous people that local traditions around food hunting, gathering, and processing are somehow inherently dangerous. Combatting this misconception must include looking to the traditional rules developed over thousands of years and respecting the traditions that have been handed down through specific families who hold such knowledge.



Overall, there was a shared concern that while harvest comprises a significant part of Indigenous peoples' cultural experience it is particularly challenging to incorporate that aspect into knowledge transfer and teaching, without directly bringing people to share experiences. This is acknowledged as a difficult barrier, but a fundamental one to tackle to ensure traditional foods are supplied in a way that is acceptable to Indigenous people.

Perceptions of legislation and regulations

Many consultation participants working in food services in B.C. institutions expressed concern about using wild-sourced traditional foods, including handling and slaughtering, inspection, and potential for contamination or disease in the source. While some noted that they believed if the traditional food safety protocols in place were better understood, this would address these issues, the requirement to work within the existing regulations was generally accepted. As a result, they primarily looked for commercially available sources of traditional foods.

Some Indigenous consultation participants noted that current food safety guidelines are entrenched in fear, in contrast to the harvesting protocols they had been practicing for millennia where harvesters are connected to the land, water, and animals. The imposition of food safety guidelines on traditional harvesting practices is seen by some as offensive, and as a result, some chose not to teach harvesting protocols in schools or institutions.

Others noted that as a result of the guidelines, access to fresh, local food with high nutritional value was limited in favour of products with low nutrition value that meet food safety regulations. Several examples were provided as to how western food safety rules had negatively impacted the access to or consumption of traditional foods. For instance:

In one community, harvest sites for herring eggs were close to river outflow locations and may have been affected by warmer temperatures or nutrient availability for bacteria. The B.C. Centre for Disease Control response was to treat this issue like oysters and told community members that herring eggs needed to be cooked before consumption. However, herring eggs are traditionally eaten raw, and many Elders would not eat them cooked, so they subsequently rejected all herring eggs, which they now saw as unsafe, even though it was a specific issue for those harvest sites at that time.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) is responsible for determining if shellfish harvest



areas are safe to harvest from. The risk of eating contaminated shellfish can be harmful or even fatal. The DFO have limited resources to test at all harvest areas, and participants told us that as a default, the DFO often lists a harvest area as closed regardless of whether safety testing has been done. Meanwhile, a central First Nations protocol to assess the safety of shellfish is to watch to see if other animals are eating it. If they are, it is likely to be safe. First Nations harvesters may be frustrated to have beaches closed which appear to be safe, based on their teachings.

ACCESS TO TRADITIONAL FOODS

A theme that participants often cited as a barrier to increasing the provision of traditional foods was limitations on the ability to access sources of those foods in the first place. Included in this theme are historically-related systemic limitations on access as well as more practical limitations related to the time and cost required to access foods.

Access to land and water

Prior to the arrival of European settlers, Indigenous peoples had established food systems which included all of the land, soil, water, and air. However, historical events such as the expulsion of Indigenous peoples from the land through the doctrine of *terra nullius* (“nobody’s land”) and the establishment of the parks system had significant practical impacts on the ability to access traditional foods. Due to the limited access to land established through the reserve system, First Nations do not collectively, or individually have access to sufficient territory to be able to meet demand for traditional foods.

This problem has been exacerbated by modern encroachments on traditional lands. On reserves and off, increasing urbanization and population growth has the effect of reducing the land available to access traditional foods.

In addition, health and safety restrictions including government-directed methods of testing were also cited as a barrier to access. For example, frustration was expressed with the way that Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) undertakes testing for shellfish, which includes grinding shells and meat together even though only small parts of the shellfish would actually be consumed. Participants suggested that incorporation of traditional ways of determining health and safety would help increase access to food that is safe for the community.

Overall, many participants cited a need to work with all levels of government to improve access to land and water as one of the major barriers that needs to be addressed. There are hopeful trends in some areas where the regional health authority is working with local B.C. First Nations, the FNHA, and municipalities to increase access to or reopen certain harvest sites.

Time and cost for traditional harvest

Two other barriers commonly cited were the cost and time associated with accessing traditional foods.

A Statistics Canada study found that in 2017, 33% of First Nations people living off reserve hunted, fished or trapped, and 30% gathered wild plants or berries. Self-

reported barriers to harvesting included not having enough time to hunt, fish or trap, and the cost for longer travel, vehicles, equipment, fuel, ammunition, and gun licenses.³²



32 Mohan B. Kumar, Chris Furgal, Peter Hutchinson, Wade Roseborough and Stephanie Kootoo-Chiarelo (2019). *Harvesting activities among First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit: Time trends, barriers and associated factors*, Statistics Canada: Catalogue no. 89-653-X2019001. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/89-653-X2019001>

According to many participants, these statistics are borne out by their own experience and the experience of their communities. As more community members live in towns, with the pressures of modern life they increasingly lack time to undertake traditional production practices like harvesting seaweed.

Some communities are attempting to address this, but while some, such as Cowichan Tribes, allow for cultural time off to go to longhouse, this time is not available for other activities like hunting, fishing, or gathering wild berries and other fruits and vegetables. While employment and engagement with community provides the income to assist people to access harvest areas, it limits the time available to hunt, fish, or gather.

In addition, bag limit laws³³ may limit the number of animals that hunters may kill or trap, and fishing limitations also apply to seafood. In the absence of time and access to land and equipment, families often need to rely on the generosity of the hunters or fishers to be able to access traditional foods.

Finally, the unpredictability of some traditional foods was also cited as a barrier by participants. As these foods tend to be wild rather than cultivated, they are very susceptible to natural swings in productivity. Some years and seasons are very productive, while others are not. Being subject to the natural cycles of wild food productivity is a significant challenge for those who need to plan, budget and make systemic decisions about obtaining, producing and serving food.

Differential gender impact

Indigenous women have been disproportionately affected by the ongoing negative health effects of colonization, such as diabetes, food insecurity, and undernutrition. Residential school curriculum denigrated Indigenous food practices, with children being taught to dislike the food their mothers cooked.³⁴ Colonization deliberately limited the access to traditional foods and transmission of knowledge around their preparation, and its ongoing effects include a shift in preferences away from traditional foods, as well as limited finances to enable their harvest or purchase.³⁵



33 A hunting licence, in combination with the appropriate species licence if required, provides a hunter with a personal bag limit (the number of animals of each species which they can kill). Bag limits vary per species; a hunter might be limited to kill one black-tailed deer per week, but be allowed to kill 10 snowshoe hares a day.

34 Neufeld, Hannah Tait, Richmond, Chantelle A. M. and Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre. Exploring First Nation Elder Women's Relationships with Food from Social, Ecological, and Historical Perspectives. Current Developments in Nutrition, Volume 4, Issue 3, March 2020.

35 Neufeld, Hannah Tait, Richmond, Chantelle A. M. and Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre. Impacts of Place and Social Spaces on Traditional Food Systems in Southwestern Ontario. International Journal of Indigenous Health. Volume 12, Issue 1, 2017, pp. 93-115.

SUPPLY OF TRADITIONAL FOODS

Along with statutory and regulatory restrictions and requirements, the most common theme that participants cited as barriers to traditional foods was the ability to secure a sufficient supply of these foods to meet demands. While there is widespread support for more programs that encourage traditional foods and Indigenous recipes, there is also widespread concern that there will be significant challenges in obtaining enough food.



Quantity of traditional foods in the wild

Many participants cited a fundamental challenge: there is a limited supply of food in the wild, and for some traditional foods like caribou, supplies may be far more limited than more widely used foods like fish and seafood. This has a practical effect: with less game available to hunt, there is simply less food available to supply basic individuals' needs, let alone larger organizational demands for food. This is exacerbated for some species like moose or salmon, where overall populations have declined and what is available can vary strongly from year to year.

Participants also felt this challenge is exacerbated by non-resident, guided hunters in B.C., the majority of whom participate in hunting for the experience and to take home a trophy. Non-residents can and do often leave the edible portions of what they have harvested with the guide outfitter. While guides can and sometimes do use this food to feed camp staff, some also donate to different food banks. An expansion of this approach would help mitigate the damage done by trophy hunters and presents an opportunity to build partnerships with the guide-outfitters organisation and/or fish and game clubs to facilitate donation of wild game.

Supply is equally challenging for traditional fruits and vegetables, such as berries and mushrooms, which can be subject to both unpredictable production and competition from commercial markets. One example of this is the impact commercial harvesters have had on the availability of mushrooms. The sustainability and predictability of such products is a significant challenge: in order to be effectively incorporated into menus, chefs, dietitians and food buyers must be able to rely on a stable supply.

The supply of traditional foods is a major issue that varies depending on geographical location. In the far North there may be higher availability of traditional foods due to a larger land base and more publicly owned and accessible property. In contrast, southern Vancouver Island is particularly difficult because there is very little Crown land and large areas of privately controlled land.

Many participants noted that the challenge of consistent supply and quality is true not only for traditional or wild foods, but for all products that come from small producers.

An additional challenge is dealing with inadvertent impacts of the success of the local foods movement. As some participants noted, as once "undiscovered" traditional foods become more popular, they tend

to become commodified, leading to challenges of overharvesting. Geoducks, sea urchins and other seafoods are good examples of where this has occurred in recent times. As the pressure to produce more mounts, resources become degraded and local communities' ability to source sufficient food becomes more challenging.

Finally, the role of donated food was often discussed by participants. This has been the backbone of some traditional food programs, such as the Whitehorse General Hospital's program. While this presents a clear opportunity for some communities, it also comes with inherent challenges including establishing trusted sources, the ability to establish and track food safety information, the ability to identify and consistently access a predictable network of food gatherers, hunters, fishers, and lack of opportunity for people to be financially compensated for their labour.

Access to distributors

Related to the lack of food available from the wild is a challenge in securing appropriate, consistent, and predictable distributors of traditional foods. Many participants felt this is one of the biggest challenges



they face: establishing a food supply chain that can provide needed traditional foods in a quantity that is required for ongoing operations of a program.

Inconsistency in the supply chain, in terms of both the availability and cost of products, can pose an insurmountable obstacle to organizations that want to introduce traditional food programs. Once an item is introduced to a menu, food service providers need to be able to rely on consistent supply and volumes – sporadic availability often means the item has to be removed from menus.

This problem is increased when a traditional recipe calls for ingredients that are not readily available – or not available at all – from commercial sources. For such foods, often a supply chain simply does not exist. Food service providers then face the choice of altering the recipe, turning to informal supply sources (e.g. donated foods or trusted individuals), or not serving the item at all. Under current conditions, harvesters and processors would also need to meet existing food safety requirements, which further narrows the field of potential vendors. Another option would be for traditional suppliers to work directly with in-house food services to explore opportunities for direct sales to those food services. While many foods go through distributors, this isn't the case for all products; bakery and dairy products (in health) and a wider variety of products (in Post Secondary Institutions) are sourced directly, rather than going through a distributor. With limited volume and seasonal availability, traditional foods may be well suited to piloting an approach outside traditional distribution channels. The supply barrier was an area that many participants felt was well suited to government or central programming support. For example, many cited the lack of information as a clear challenge when addressing supply issues. Some felt that province-led collection and sharing of information about supply options would be helpful, and that measures to address a knowledge gap would be welcome. A provincial database for traditional foods and suppliers was one specific example of a potentially helpful measure that could be developed.

Cost of traditional foods

Even where distributors of traditional food are identified and secured, the cost of these foods can be a considerable barrier to making traditional foods part of a foodservice program.

Some foods that are central to traditions, like wild game and seafood, are very expensive to purchase through

commercial distributors, which prohibits the ability to offer them consistently. Indeed, cost was identified by many participants as the biggest single barrier to their ability to increase the amount of traditional foods and recipes they are able to offer.

In addition to the base cost, some participants also expressed concern about related costs such as transportation, and the cost to the environment, where they purchase food items from sources that are not local. Along with the financial barrier, these participants had ethical concerns about obtaining food in this manner, as they preferred to support local producers and the local economy.³⁶

Some participants reported that they attempt to address this challenge by working with local foragers and producers. This can also be challenging, though, as local producers still require payment and Honoria. They also face competition for food items that become popular or trendy in restaurants – for example, wild mushrooms or huckleberries, once easy to obtain, now fetch a high price among creative chefs in city restaurants, making it more challenging for institutions with limited budgets to purchase them.

Market sources often not harvested traditionally

Even where supply sources are identified and secure, this may give rise to additional concerns where the products that are available are not considered fully traditional, or have not been harvested or preserved in a traditional way.

Salmon is an example that is often used when discussing this concern. The fish, which is such a fundamental part of many traditional diets, is widely available from both wild and farmed sources. The necessity of respecting traditional harvesting techniques, even in the face of cheaper options, is a practical challenge that traditional foods programs must confront and make principle-based procurement decision about.

Environmental challenges

Participants consistently cited environmental degradation and climate change as a key barrier in their ability to secure sufficient supplies of traditional foods.

³⁶ For example, spruce tips are a common traditional food in parts of B.C. A jar of sustainably harvested freeze-dried spruce tips from the West Coast costs about \$62 (Canadian Pine Pollen) compared to a jar of pickled eastern spruce tips from QB and ON which costs \$11 (Forbes).

Numerous examples were cited: reduced salmon runs, less abundant wild fish stocks overall, and changes in the movement of land and ocean animals as a result of warming oceans, development, and habitat destruction. One participant talked about how herring roe had once been a part of his community's traditional diet, but were no longer available as far south as they once were.

Development was widely seen as having a negative impact on the natural environment, resulting in loss of habitat and biodiversity throughout B.C. Wild plants were seen as being least impacted, but even here increasing scarcity was noted. Overall, disruption of continuous undisturbed land, reduced access, and reduced diversity of species were all seen as significant issues.

Contamination of traditional sources of food is another barrier noted by participants, which is particularly relevant for coastal shellfish and seafood. Although some felt this issue was often more perceived than real, development and industry related factors such as sewage and Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP) contamination and agricultural run-off were often seen as challenges that must be addressed to allow communities and organizations the ability to access sufficient supplies of traditional foods.

At a higher level, the challenges presented by climate change were often commonly cited as a factor that limits the availability of traditional foods. While this is a much larger issue than can be tackled within the scope of this project, it is important to note that this is having an impact on the ability to access traditional foods. As climate patterns alter, so do the patterns of animals and plants that were traditionally part of local communities' diets, making it more difficult to plan for and operationalize wider-scale reintroduction of traditional foods and diets.

Sustainability

A growth in the popularity of traditional foods can have an impact on access and cost, as noted above. However, many participants also noted that a sustainable supply of these foods is an equally challenging barrier. Overharvesting is not an issue that is limited to traditional foods, but it can have an inflated impact where the diversity of regional foods is limited, or where people rely on certain foods for sustenance and maintaining traditional ways.

Overharvesting is not limited to fish and game – products such as mushrooms and berries were also often cited as being at risk of becoming victims of their own popularity.



This can also extend to less obvious products – one participant cited the example of a local yew tree that was identified as having medicinal value, leading to commercial interests coming to the community and harvesting all available trees so that none remain.

Establishing and maintaining supply sources that respect principles of sustainability and food security is challenging enough to meet community food needs; this challenge is only increased when organizations and institutions introduce formal programs. It is a significant challenge and, unless addressed, can result in overharvesting and further reduction of available foods.

Sharing sources and traditional information

The challenge of securing sufficient supplies of food can be increased where local populations are reluctant to share information about where and how some products can be located and harvested. This is tied to a fear of over harvesting and misuse of resources, based on many communities' firsthand experiences of non-Indigenous people overusing natural resources in many contexts. Especially where traditional foods have medicinal properties (e.g. some berries and plants), information is often carefully guarded because of concern that it may be misused.

FOOD SERVICE LIMITATIONS

Many of the barriers discussed up to this point involved challenges with securing traditional foods. Even once secured, however, additional barriers may impede the ability of food programmers to offer more traditional foods and Indigenous recipes at their institutions and organizations.



Institutional restrictions and requirements

Many participants identified a general concern about contractual requirements and restrictions that limit their ability to offer traditional foods. Particularly in health care settings, participants expressed frustration with food programs that tend to be static, unchanging, and allow little room for innovation or creativity.

While more room has been created for special diets that are based on medical (e.g. gluten or dairy free), religious (e.g. kosher or halal) or dietary preferences (e.g. vegan, vegetarian or high activity for work crews), these require often cumbersome approval. Medical diets require medical sign off and religious diets require confirmation from a religious figure that this is truly for religious reasons. While this requires additional effort to establish that the special diet is valid, at least this is an option that is generally available in health care settings.

The same is not true for traditional foods, which are not commonly recognized as a valid option across B.C.'s

health care settings. Where some institutions have made exceptions, this is done on an individual basis rather than making such foods available more systemically.

Contractual restrictions also serve as a barrier to securing and offering more traditional foods. Many institutions and organizations have fixed contracts for many food items and ingredients, and it can be challenging to carve out the flexibility to also obtain items from local harvesters and processors. This is especially so because larger institutions and their distributors tend to rely on a very small number of large processors who can offer the best prices due to the volumes of product they work with.

Contracts with distributors and group purchasing organizations can also be comprehensive, extending to all food services including served meals and items available for purchase in canteens. Depending on the structure of the contract there is often limited flexibility to allow for additional items, even for purchase, because this could compete with the distributors business lines, or would



need to replace another product in the distributor's inventory. Some programmers bend rules by offering periodic "specials" but are not able to make traditional items a more predictable part of menu items.

In addition, distributors and/or group purchasing organizations tend to have onerous policies for approving new vendors, creating a disincentive to

seek out food items and vendors that are not already entrenched in the food service system.

Contract renewal cycles potentially offer an opportunity to amend terms to include a requirement for more traditional foods, but this would likely include increased cost for products. Nevertheless, these renewal cycles offer leadership an opportunity to indicate their support for prioritizing traditional foods and Indigenous recipes.

Other factors related to institutional requirements that participants cited as barriers include:

- Food packaging practices that must meet health and safety requirements, which precludes obtaining foods from local producers or through traditional means;
- A lack of on-site food preparation facilities, or labour shortages in on-site facilities, forcing organizations to look to pre-made and packaged foods rather than allowing for the purchase of raw materials and preparation of Indigenous recipes on-site; and
- Lack of processing areas on-site, making it difficult to accept donated items such as game or fish, even if those items were approved and met food inspection requirements.

Meeting dietary targets

A number of participants reported that it can be challenging to both use traditional foods and meet current dietary requirements as set out in Canada's Food Guide and interpreted by registered dietitians. They cited a fundamental disconnect between Health Canada's dietary targets and suggested use of foods, and the kinds of foods and ways of serving food that traditionally marked Indigenous peoples' diets.

For many, however, this was not a significant barrier, or one that is problematic in theory but not in practice. While institutional food programs must meet dietary targets, for example around the use of sodium or fat, traditional recipes can be adapted, and traditional items can be incorporated so that these targets are attainable. Where traditional foods are available, dietitians are generally open to working with clients to ensure that necessary adaptations are made to serve food that is both nutritious and familiar.

Informing Indigenous patients of traditional food availability

A practical barrier that some participants noted was the challenge in letting Indigenous people know about the option of receiving traditional foods, even where





those items are available. This problem can be multi-faceted, including:

- The ability to identify which patients or students are Indigenous, in order to inform them about the availability of traditional foods. This relates both to difficulties in assessing those who identify as Indigenous, and privacy concerns about singling people out who may not wish to be identified;
- Implementing menus in a way that lets people know there are traditional foods available, especially when those foods are not part of core offerings or are optional/available on request;
- Recognizing that one impact of colonialism has been to remove many Indigenous people from their cultures and communities, including their familiarity with traditional foods. As a result, many Indigenous people may not want traditional foods, even when they are available; and
- People cannot always read menus, so they may not be able to opt for traditional foods or even know they are available if not told in person.

In general, participants felt that people preferred to have traditional foods generally available, rather than available only on request or by special arrangements, which has the effect of separating Indigenous people out from the rest of the patient or student population. However, this may increase the demand for already limited traditional foods by non-Indigenous peoples if they are introduced in public institutions. An alternative would be to focus on Indigenous recipes using market foods, which provides the added benefit of introducing non-Indigenous people to Indigenous foods.

Conflicts with other priorities

An overriding concern with increasing the availability of traditional foods is that this objective must compete with many other priorities in institutional settings like schools, hospitals or care homes. A fundamental conflict, especially in schools, is that a significant portion of the student population lives in poverty and with food insecurity. Ensuring that children and youth have consistent access to adequate amounts of nutritious food is the priority, not necessarily ensuring that these foods are traditional or local. The desire to increase access to traditional foods can also conflict with human resource management priorities, in that it can be more labour-intensive to source, obtain, handle, process and prepare traditional foods than more conventional items. Making this commitment often means accepting the impact to budgets that increased labour costs entails.



CURRENT PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

Within B.C. and across Canada there are examples of public institutions of all types serving traditional foods or Indigenous recipes. While there are legislative and regulatory barriers to these initiatives, committed people have found creative pathways to achieve some of the benefits cited earlier in this report.

The following section provides a summary of some of these initiatives in B.C. public institutional settings, outlining both the barriers and facilitators to increased provision of traditional foods.

This project did not seek to create a complete inventory of initiatives like this within B.C. or across Canada, and so the initiatives included are not a comprehensive list of all the work ongoing in this area. While each community and initiative is unique, there are lessons to be learned and potentially replicated when seeking to increase the service of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in other public institutions.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION



Representatives from six public post-secondary institutions shared information about their initiatives to increase the service of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes. In reviewing the post-secondary initiatives identified, it appears that there are two broad categories: those seeking to increase access to traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in their foodservices; and those that are incorporating teaching about traditional foods and Indigenous recipes into their culinary courses. Examples of both types of initiatives are summarized below:

The University of Northern B.C. (UNBC) included Indigenous Priorities as one of five pillars guiding their food provision in their recent vendor selection, expecting food providers to actively consider Indigenous needs and consistently provide food options that align with these needs. Currently, their foodservices serve traditional foods only for special events.

The University of B.C. is working to increase the service of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in their foodservices, with a priority to offer these within the residents' dining. Currently, their foodservices serve traditional foods only for special events.

Okanagan College recently successfully piloted the province's first Indigenous Professional Cook program,

in partnership with the Industry Training Authority and the Okanagan Training and Development Council. Thirty percent of the program is based in Indigenous knowledge, and students are trained to prepare a range of Indigenous recipes. The program is now expanding across the province and is unique because it can lead to a Red Seal.

The Stó:lō Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Culinary Arts program, delivered in partnership with the University of the Fraser Valley and Vancouver Community College, provides pre-apprenticeship culinary training incorporating Indigenous recipes.

Coast Mountain College is developing a new culinary diploma program focusing on Indigenous foods and customs. The new program incorporates safe transport and storage of wild harvested foods, and builds on

their experiences delivering culinary training in First Nation communities (e.g. Masset, Moricetown, New Aiyansh, Hazelton, Kitkatla, among others), incorporating Indigenous recipes.

Camosun College and the Songhees Nation are working together to launch an interdisciplinary program in Aboriginal Culinary Arts, Hospitality and Hospitality Management. Camosun has been working to develop their knowledge of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes for use both in this new program and to integrate into the standard culinary program.

These descriptions also include factors which have helped their initiative, barriers which have made it more challenging, and suggestions for ways to address these barriers.

As an example, the description that follows provides more detail about the UNBC's approach to increasing the availability of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in its facilities.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA (UNBC)

UNBC included Indigenous Priorities as one of five pillars guiding food provision in its recent vendor selection.

In recognition that the needs of Indigenous students include specific and respectful food options and associated cultural components, in its recent foodservice provider vendor selection, UNBC noted that the foodservice provider will be expected to actively consider Indigenous needs, consistently provide food options that align with these needs and hold high levels of cultural competency, as it relates to Indigenous and other cultural service practices. This is a new requirement for UNBC's foodservice provider, but it has experience providing Indigenous food for special events.

For these events, UNBC food services received guidance from staff with the First Nations Centre in setting recipes and understanding how to use traditional food products properly. Its chef and kitchen team members like to forage and fish, so are more confident about handling local and wild foods, because they have a general understanding of safe harvesting practices. Chartwells also has an Indigenous chef at the corporate level who can consult and train staff.

Still, there is not enough volume from local harvesters or producers so traditional foods are offered primarily for Indigenous events, which have served, for example, spruce tips, birch and house smoked fish. UNBC is reliant on specialty distributors, and it can be difficult to count on the more distant small distributors. On one occasion, game meat didn't show up for a special function so they had to make do with what they could find, and house-smoked some ducks and fish instead. The policies to approve a new distributor can be onerous, so it can be challenging to get specialty items on occasion rather than through the regular supply. Finally, preparing traditional foods is more labour-intensive, which increases the cost above the specialty food products themselves.

What would help in the future:

- Greater organization within the network of small harvesters and producers, such as a central grading, washing and processing facility, might result in a more consistent schedule.
- Targets for a percentage of traditional foods in contracts, such as those linked to Feed BC.
- It will make it easier for everyone to increase the service of traditional foods as more product enters the approved system.
- More contract flexibility for food services to purchase small or irregular volumes of traditional foods off-contract.

In summary, the following table provides a brief description of the examples provided of initiatives underway in public post-secondary institutions throughout B.C., noting the common facilitators and barriers, and summarizing suggestions to address these barriers.

KEY FACTORS: POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTION INITIATIVES	
Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships enabling trusted sharing of Indigenous recipes and connections to traditional food sources • Strength and breadth of the institution's commitment to reconciliation, and seeing the benefits of integrating Indigenous recipes • Overlap with other institutional food purchasing targets such as Feed BC's local food purchasing goals
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price of traditional food ingredients through commercial sources • Lack of knowledge of approved sources of traditional food ingredients • Lack of access to Indigenous recipes and training in preparing them • Regulations limiting use of donated or foraged food • Cost of labour to prepare foods traditionally • Concern about risk of overharvesting wild sourced traditional foods
Participant Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of traditional food distributors • Education about traditional food harvesting protocols • Traditional food purchasing targets for institutions • Database of Indigenous recipes • Training to prepare Indigenous recipes • Processing facilities for traditional foods



HEALTH CARE

Representatives from five B.C. health facilities shared information about their initiatives to increase the service of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes, and further information was gathered from health facilities in four other Canadian jurisdictions. Examples of these initiatives are summarized below:

- North Island Hospitals offer patients a menu from which to choose their in-patient meals. The hospitals have been working to incorporate Indigenous recipes into the menu options, using food from the main distributor for Island Health in its region as it is not an option to use donated food or specialty distributors. Conversations are ongoing about how to ensure Indigenous patients are aware that Indigenous recipes are available.
- Deni House, an Interior Health long-term care facility, serves a traditional foods-inspired meal once a week through an initiative called 'Forest to Fork'. The intent for the program initially was to serve traditional foods, harvested locally with the support of Knowledge Keepers. However, the Food Premises Regulation required foods to be from approved sources, so the community has shifted to a menu of foods selected in consultation with Elders and Knowledge Keepers from all three local Nations.
- Northern Haida Gwaii Hospital has been able to increase serving traditional foods by asking, learning about, and following Indigenous protocol regarding traditional foods and recipes. Following substantial conversation with the community about how to serve traditional foods, the hospital in Masset began to cook food in its kitchens for in-patient meals. Many of the meals include salmon and halibut, donated to the hospital and processed through a local Canadian Food Inspection Agency approved facility. Northern Health has created a policy to allow donated fish, which made this possible, but the food program is heavily reliant on fishers' willingness and capacity to donate.
- The Stó:lō Elders Lodge is a Fraser Health funded assisted living facility, designed for Stó:lō and other Indigenous Elders. Meals must be from approved sources, though the kitchen team continues to look for ways to incorporate more traditional foods and Indigenous recipes, including using produce from their garden. Elders share traditional recipes and knowledge

with the facility regularly, and activities include traditional fish preservation several times a year, with Elders working with the food service team.

- The PHS's Forensic Psychiatric Hospital is a secure facility in Coquitlam. The facility includes a full-service kitchen, which receives menu advice from a patient advocacy group. Food services staff have been actively looking for ways to incorporate Indigenous recipes into the meals offered, understanding that many of its residents are Indigenous and wishing to provide food which is familiar and nutritious. The facility has begun by arranging to purchase salmon from the Syilx / Okanagan Nation, and continues to seek Indigenous recipes and traditional food sources.

Four examples of similar initiatives in other jurisdictions within Canada were reviewed. The common strategy within all four was the permitted serving of donated meat or seafood, though there were different approaches for this approval.

- The Athabasca Health Yutthe Dene Nakohoki Health Centre, a health facility in Northern Saskatchewan, has developed a patient menu which includes as many traditional foods as possible available for purchase from commercial vendors. Wild game cannot be purchased, though some substitutes like beef tongue



are included which are commercially available. Game meat such as caribou can be prepared outside of the facility and brought in by family or members of the public, following the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority Game Meat in Care Facilities Policy.

- The Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre in Ontario offers a traditional food meal once a week, as part of meeting its mandate to provide services to its largely First Nations population in a way that addresses patients' health status and cultural needs. Game meat is donated, either from local hunters or through confiscations from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. The centre is named in the Ontario Food Premises Regulation as being exempt from the restriction on having wild meat from particular species on site, assuming it is handled, prepared, processed, and stored in a separate kitchen, and that patients are informed that the meat is uninspected and that they have the option of eating inspected meat instead. The centre also offers a selection of premade frozen Miichim (traditional food) meals for patients who wish to eat them daily.
- The Whitehorse General Hospital receives donations of big game from local hunters, and foodservices staff

incorporate these into meals for patients wishing to eat traditional foods, following a Traditional Foods Program Protocols & Procedures Manual. There is a dedicated kitchen area separate from conventional food preparation sites. Yukon has established a policy that wild game meat can be served in several settings, including traditional foods programs in hospitals, but not sold.

- The Yellowknife Stanton Memorial Hospital serves a Northern traditional foods meal weekly prepared in the hospital's main kitchen by kitchen staff and staff from Stanton's Indigenous wellness program. Game and wild harvested foods are donated following the Northwest Territories' handling guideline to meet food safety regulations, while also respecting traditional ways of harvesting and preparing food. The hospital also has freezer facilities to preserve batches of seasonably available food.

These descriptions also include factors which have helped their initiative, barriers which have made it more challenging, and suggestions for ways to address these barriers.

As an example, the description that follows provides more detail about Deni House approach to serving a traditional foods-inspired menu in its facilities.

INTERIOR HEALTH: DENI HOUSE FOREST TO FORK PROGRAM

Deni House, a residential care facility serves a traditional foods-inspired meal once a week.

Interior Health heard from community members in hospitals and care homes that the inability to access traditional foods was impacting their health recovery. In Williams Lake, where many of the requests originated, the local dietitian began to work with the community to develop a solution.

The intent for the program initially was to serve traditional foods, harvested locally with the support of Knowledge Keepers. The Food Premises Regulation required foods to be from approved sources, which are both expensive and typically not local traditionally harvested foods. The community has shifted to a menu of foods in consultation with Elders and Knowledge Keepers from all three local Nations. This includes blueberry soup, elk stew, salmon, deer meat and Saskatoon berries to name but a few as well as some common comfort foods from First Nations communities like bannock, yeast bread and cabbage pudding. Lillooet and Ashcroft are beginning their own processes towards sourcing traditional foods and recipes.

What would help in the future:

- Granting health authorities more power to approve food sources locally, allowing more traditional foods into the food supply chain.
- Institutions communicating with First Nations that there is a demand for producing traditional foods.

In summary, the following table provides a brief description of the examples provided of initiatives underway in public health facilities across B.C., noting the common facilitators and barriers, and summarizing suggestions to address these barriers.

KEY FACTORS: HEALTH FACILITY INITIATIVES	
Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive community consultation • Leadership within Indigenous communities • Commitment of local decision makers • Local processors willing to share facilities with harvesters • Availability of conventional kitchens within facilities to prepare food (in some facilities)
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of commercially sourced Indigenous recipe food ingredients • Availability of approved sources of traditional foods • Lack of sustainable practices in the production of some traditional food ingredients, e.g. concern about open net pen farmed fish • Identifying Indigenous patients and letting them know about menu choices • Lack of kitchen facilities to process and prepare food (in some facilities) • Legislation precluding purchasing game meat from hunters
Participant Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply of Indigenous recipes translated to different serving quantities • Environmental Health Officer authority to sign off on serving donated foods • Review of all legislation that impacts traditional food harvesting and service • Normalizing traditional foods as a healthy way to eat • Access to a medicine garden • Cultural safety and humility training for health facility staff • Legislative changes limiting purchase, storage, and service of traditional foods

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Representatives from one Early Childhood Education facility shared information about their initiatives to increase the service of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes. This information reflected the challenges which had been identified in the 2016 B.C Centre for Disease Control study on *Increasing Indigenous Children's Access to Traditional Foods in Early Childhood Programs*.³⁷

The description that follows provides more detail about the Nutsumaats Lelum Child Day Care approach to serving traditional foods in its program.

NUTSUMAAT LELUM CHILD DAY CARE

The on-reserve day care provides children the opportunity to develop a taste for traditional foods and deepen their cultural connection.

The Nutsumaats Lelum Child Day Care is located on the Stz'uminus First Nation reserve and is supported in part through the First Nations Health Authority Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve program. The program regularly serves traditional foods. The fisheries department will fish for the child care centre and provides cold storage, community hunters donate elk (which they have ground by a butcher with some added pork fat), or the centre picks and processes local berries and other plants. The day care has also been able to access local clams, dried and smoked fish. Many of the children do not eat traditional foods at home, and some staff do not either, but the centre provides an encouraging space to try them.

The cost of traditional foods is high. The centre is often dependent on community members' ability to donate food they have harvested, which is increasingly limited as wild stocks shrink. Child Care Licensing Officers have also expressed concern about the serving of traditional foods, even when this is outside their jurisdiction.

What would help in the future:

- Cultural competency training (including traditional foods) for Child Care Licensing and Environmental Health Officers
- Alignment of regulations around food service with the Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide - First Nations, Inuit and Métis
- Mechanism to integrate deer culls into donated wild game meat
- Province-wide working group of individuals with an interest in providing safe, non-market, traditional foods
- Indigenous developed food safety training specific to working with non-market high-protein and other traditional foods from field/ocean to table
- Information resources geared towards Early Childhood Educators that highlight traditional foods' use in early childhood programs
- Review mechanism so environmental policy proposals are evaluated to consider their effects on the traditional foods (wildlife, fish and plants)

³⁷ Mundel, Erika, Bevelander, Kirsten, Burgaretta, Mary. 2016. *Indigenous Children's Access to Traditional Foods in Early Childhood Programs*. B.C. Centre for Disease Control.

In summary, the following table provides a brief description of the examples provided of initiatives underway in one B.C. Early Childhood Education program, noting the common facilitators and barriers, and summarizing suggestions to address these barriers.

KEY FACTORS: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FACILITY INITIATIVES	
Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FNHA Environmental Health Officers • Donations of food from community hunters and Nation's fisheries department
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Care Licensing Officers intervening in Environmental Health Officer's decisions • Availability of traditional foods (wild stocks and individuals' ability to donate) • Cost of traditional foods (commercially available and wild sourced, including cut and wrap fees) • Variety of traditional foods may reduce benefit for Indigenous people living away from their territories receiving local traditional foods
Participant Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural competency training (including traditional foods) for Child Care Licensing and Environmental Health Officers • Alignment of regulations around food service with the Indigenous Foods Guide • Mechanism to integrate deer culls into donated wild game meat • Province-wide working group of individuals with an interest in providing safe, non-market, traditional foods • Indigenous developed food safety training, reflecting Traditional Knowledge, specific to working with non-market high-protein and other traditional foods from field/ocean to table • Information resources geared towards Early Childhood Educators that highlight traditional foods use in early childhood programs • Review mechanism so environmental policy proposals are evaluated to consider their effects on the traditional foods (wildlife, fish and plants)



K-12 SCHOOLS

Representatives from two B.C. K-12 schools shared information about their initiatives to increase the service of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes. Examples of these initiatives are summarized below:

- The Haida Gwaii School District 50 Local Food to School Program grew out of a Farm to School Initiative which was more focused on facilitating connections between local farmers and schools. The Local Food to School Program works to increase access to traditional foods for schools, as well as other organizations on-island that offer meals and food services. Haida people have historically grown a lot of food in gardens, and so much of the traditional foods include local food produced agriculturally, such as the Haida potato. The program has worked to find ways to process seafood and local venison, following both cultural protocol and demonstrating how it meets food safety standards. It is important to the program that the food is authentic, so the people serving and creating the traditional foods need to be rooted in Haida culture or have a very strong understanding of it guided by community Knowledge Keepers. Food safety regulations have required donated seafood and meat to be processed in a facility, though the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has been willing to be more flexible if an educational workshop model was being used.
- Funded in part by a Healthy Schools B.C. First Nations School initiative, Haahuupayak Elementary has been bringing traditional foods into the school. Working with another First Nations school, they put together a health and wellness curriculum including traditional foods and culture. The program has primarily used donated foods. For example, a seal was brought into the classroom and students learned about hunting techniques, traditional processing, and food preparation. One of the Indigenous leaders helping to facilitate the program made some traditional food toys to contribute to the language nest program. These normalize traditional foods as part of play, and include eulachons, salmon and a toy smokehouse.

In summary, the following table provides a brief description of the examples provided of initiatives underway in two K-12 schools in B.C., noting the common facilitators and barriers, and summarizing suggestions to address these barriers.

KEY FACTORS: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FACILITY INITIATIVES	
Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment of local decision makers and non-Indigenous community members • Trust and respect for Traditional Knowledge • Elder participation and guidance • Extensive consultation with the community grounded the work • Strong food culture within community • Healthy schools project • Embedded traditional foods into cultural teachings and health and wellness
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food safety rules do not take into consideration Traditional Knowledge • Distrust amongst many Indigenous community members for institutions • Not enough Indigenous people at all tables, at all levels of decision making • Supply of wild sourced traditional foods • Many Indigenous children don't have the taste for traditional foods
Participant Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment of food safety rules with Traditional Knowledge in Indigenous communities • Reduction in administration required to take children onto land • Create positions within school districts who can focus on relationship building and connection with Indigenous communities • Find ways to raise traditional foods locally and stop going into the bush to get them

CORRECTIONAL CENTRES

Two representatives from the provincial corrections system shared information about initiatives in correctional facilities aimed at increasing the service of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes. Examples of initiatives are summarized below:

- B.C. Correctional Centres once provided a special traditional foods menu for Inuit inmates being housed for the Northwest Territories. B.C. had agreed to temporarily house ten Inuit inmates for the Northwest Territories. The Northwest Territories government requested that the inmates continue to be served traditional foods and assisted the B.C. Correctional Centres' food services provider to find specialty distributors that could source some foods for a special menu. Even so, finding market sources of Inuit traditional foods available to B.C. was challenging. However, after a short time in B.C. observing what other inmates ate, the Inuit inmates requested to eat from the regular menu.
- Each B.C. Correctional Centre has one or more Aboriginal Liaison Worker who provide counselling and crisis intervention and connect Indigenous people convicted of offenses with groups that help them reintegrate into their communities. Elders and spiritual advisors also deliver cultural awareness programming to inmates from other ethnicities to help foster peace and understanding. On special occasions, such as National Indigenous Peoples' Day and the Moose Hide Campaign Day, Aboriginal Liaison Workers may bring bannock in from outside the facility.

In summary, the following table provides a brief description of the examples provided of initiatives in B.C. Correctional Centres, noting the common facilitators and barriers, and summarizing suggestions to address these barriers.

KEY FACTORS: CORRECTIONAL CENTRE FACILITY INITIATIVES	
Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help sourcing commercially available traditional foods and Indigenous recipes • Abilities to serve special menus • Aboriginal Liaison Officers
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strict safety regulations to bring food into correctional facilities, e.g. bones can be made into weapons • Additional snacks provided outside the food service contract competes with contracted services • Indigenous inmates may prefer westernized food over traditional foods • Menus are dietitian approved, and tightly costed in a multi-year contract • Special menus are more expensive to provide
Participant Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Indigenous recipes for service through the food service kitchen as part of special occasions • Availability of shelf stable Indigenous recipe snacks for sale at the canteen • Access to Indigenous recipes which meet nutritional requirements

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

The harvesting, preparation, eating and sharing of traditional foods that is a central part of Indigenous culture was deliberately interrupted with the legal ban on potlatches and related ceremonies. Now, community food sharing programs and events provide an opportunity to revitalize traditional generosity and relearn the sophisticated methods of food harvesting, management and preservation. Through these programs, cultural practices of food reciprocity continue to be practiced, people who cannot gather food are able to obtain traditional food through community connections.³⁸ Although the examples are not linked to a B.C. institution, they provide a model for other ways in which traditional foods could be incorporated into services and facilities.

Representatives from one B.C. First Nation shared information about a community initiative seeking to serve traditional foods:

- In 2018, Cowichan Tribes hosted the B.C. Elders Gathering, hosting over 3,000 Elders from throughout the province. The event was mainly held off-reserve due to the size of facilities required. Jared Williams, the Cowichan Tribes Elder's kitchen manager, understood that Elders would expect to be served traditional foods at the event. Other Elder Gatherings held on-reserve have had fewer barriers to serving these foods. Jared proposed to have a traditional foods tent where Elders could access traditional foods, in addition to the market-sourced meals being served. He developed a series of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plans for all traditional foods served. Local Environmental Health Officers were still uncertain about serving food from unapproved sources. The Medical Health Officer for the Cowichan Region took responsibility to approve the food. She is a member of the Stz'uminus First Nation and understood the importance of traditional foods. While the traditional meals were served, the HACCP plans were never formally approved through Island Health. Cowichan Tribes served 3,500 traditionally harvested and prepared meals, with no foodborne illnesses.

A different type of community initiative also identified in Manitoba is the Nelson House Country Food Program. A short summary follows:

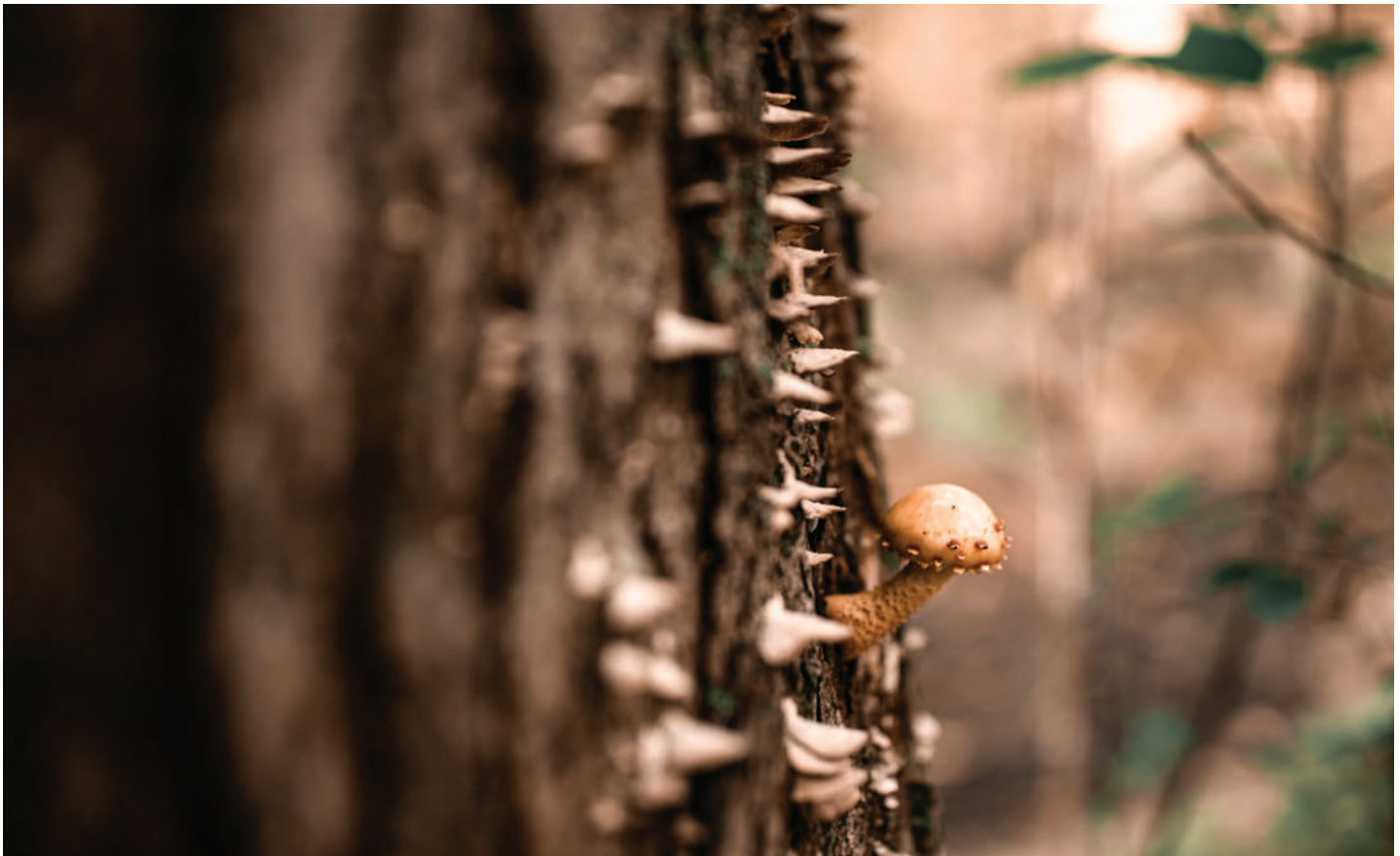
- The Nelson House Country Foods Program collects traditional food products harvested within Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation's traditional territory and distributes those foods to eligible members and organizations. Facilities include a food processing centre, with equipment to dress, clean, weigh and store wild meats. The program provides transportation expenses, equipment and supplies to individuals and groups for wild food gatherings and hunting of goose, duck and caribou, and also operates a Community Garden Program.



³⁸ https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHC_Health_Governance_Book.pdf

KEY FACTORS: COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community led processes with many partners • Commitment of Indigenous leaders
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation, processing, and storage areas need to be regularly inspected and approved by a local health inspector • Contamination and environmental degradation limiting supply of traditional foods • Transportation and equipment cost to reach harvest areas • Food Premises Regulations and Accreditation Canada Policies which require food served to be from an approved source • Lack of affordable sources of traditional foods outside wild harvest • Lack of familiarity with traditional foods amongst Indigenous peoples
Participant Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to country food processing facilities in communities • Funding to assist with education in traditional harvest skills and transportation costs for harvesting • Change to Food Premises Regulations, creating process to approve wild sourced traditional foods to be served • Increased access to harvest areas



CONSIDERATIONS GOING FORWARD

Based on the findings from the literature and jurisdictional review, interviews with people working in public institutions throughout B.C., and the conversations with Indigenous people and Knowledge Keepers in B.C. working to preserve or increase access to traditional foods, the team prepared a series of considerations for the B.C. government to increase the use of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in B.C. public institutions. Considerations are presented to inform an overall approach going forward as well as the next phase of engagement.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Development of considerations described in this section was guided by a set of consultant team principles that help to ensure considerations would help achieve the intents of the project without causing further harm. Accordingly, it was agreed that considerations would focus on options that could have the effect of:

Protecting traditional food supply;

- Maintaining or improving Indigenous food sovereignty;
- Prioritising Indigenous communities' access to and benefit from traditional foods;
- Understanding the variation in traditional foods and Indigenous recipes between nations and regions;
- Not introducing new economic barriers to accessing traditional foods; and/or
- Increasing access to Indigenous recipes broadly within institutions, without specifically targeting Indigenous patients or customers.

The idea of incorporating guiding principles into the analysis came from conversations with Indigenous people and Knowledge Keepers in B.C. working to preserve or increase access to traditional foods. While being very supportive of removing barriers to serve traditional foods and use Indigenous recipes in public institutions, many expressed concerns that future initiatives could result in unintended consequences, the most common being overharvesting of animals, fish, birds, plants or berries. These sources of traditional foods are already in short supply due to climate change, contamination, and environmental degradation.

The considerations that follow were developed as potential factors that could be adopted for overall efforts to increase the availability and use of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in B.C.'s public institutions. They could be used to guide future work on this topic, and to provide the foundations of a consistent



framework for governments, public institutions, and relevant organizations that aim to make efforts toward this goal.

OVERALL APPROACH

Indigenous communities lead

Many of the initiatives providing access to traditional foods and Indigenous recipes have been led by non-Indigenous people working in allyship with local First Nations, Métis or Inuit peoples. While the commitment of non-Indigenous people to support and sometimes initiate these projects is welcomed, most consultation participants noted that for initiatives to succeed, they require the commitment, support, and knowledge of local Indigenous peoples.

Some participants in this study described multi-year processes of developing relationships and earning the trust of Indigenous peoples before beginning initiatives. These relationships and earned trust are fundamental to be able to address a common barrier for public institutions: a widespread lack of understanding of local Indigenous cuisine, including which foods were traditionally eaten in each territory; traditional food harvest locations, protocols and processes; and recipes.

Indigenous peoples are reasonably wary of further sharing of this information, which has been used to exploit resources and harm Indigenous communities and food sovereignty. Ensuring that efforts to identify, secure

and use traditional foods are led by the local Nations that have responsibility for those resources will help allay this concern. It will also help ensure that local priorities are recognized and respected.

Start small

Given the significant challenges in supply of traditional foods, and risks of further jeopardizing the existing supply through overharvesting, many participants advised focusing on integrating a few traditional foods into the supply chain in each region. This also aligns with practical advice that any efforts should recognize and build on limitations to supplies of many traditional foods, and a concern that unrealizable goals are not put in place.

Some types of traditional foods may be easier to incorporate into the food supply, such as plants or berries, where there are fewer licensing and regulation-related barriers. The identification of which foods local initiatives could begin with can be led by the Indigenous peoples of each place, with consideration for the need to protect the supply of foods first for ecosystem health and second for domestic and cultural use within Indigenous communities prior to expanding use within public institutions.



Connect to Truth and Reconciliation calls to action

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission made 94 calls to action to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation.³⁹ While many aspects of colonialism have contributed to the breaking of Indigenous food systems, the practices of residential schools to stop Indigenous children from speaking their language, eating their traditional foods, and practicing their culture has resulted in generations of Indigenous peoples disconnected from these aspects of their culture. Supporting Indigenous communities working to revitalize their cultures, languages and foods is one step of many needed for reconciliation.

Continue to explore co-stewardship and expand Aboriginal harvesting rights

In the absence of access to land and water, Aboriginal harvesting rights cannot fully be implemented. There are many ways which Aboriginal harvesting rights can be supported through different approaches to land management. This consideration does not prescribe any one model, but rather underlines that there are examples being successfully implemented within existing legislation and encourages the Government of B.C. to continue to work with Indigenous communities to expand and add to these examples. B.C.'s *Together for Wildlife*⁴⁰ draft strategy outlines the government's intention to create new opportunities to work collaboratively with Indigenous partners to effectively and efficiently deliver wildlife stewardship.

Connect to other "buy local" commitments

The Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries began this work together in recognition of the links between Feed BC, improving the patient food experience, and the desire to increase service of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in B.C. public institutions. Many public institution representatives noted this connection as well and suggested that working on both priorities together would strengthen the resolve to overcome labour and financial-related barriers. Many of the barriers to increasing access to local foods within B.C. public institutions are also barriers for traditional foods: lack of supplier networks, lack of processing facilities, volume and food safety requirements of broadline distributors, and existing contract/procurement requirements.

While there is overlap between the two initiatives, it is worth noting that the lack of local distributors for some



39 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Summary: honouring the truth, reconciling for the future*. Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

40 Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resources Operations and Rural Development. 2019. *Together for Wildlife Strategy - DRAFT*. <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/wildlifeandhabitat/>

of the ingredients in Indigenous recipes has resulted in some chefs sourcing traditional food ingredients from outside B.C., as this is the only place where they can be found. A common solution to both initiatives is to support local processing facilities and distributors, but there is an important distinction in the methods of harvest and the integration with the natural ecosystems necessary to ensure a sustainable supply of traditional foods.

Build networks of traditional food distributors

A consistent message from staff in the food service supply chain of public institutions was the need to build networks of traditional food distributors. Many noted the difficulties they have had in finding approved sources of traditional foods which meet the food safety standards of established distributors, despite connections within communities and food supply chains, even when such sources existed.

A risk to making it easier to purchase traditional foods outside of the region where they are harvested is the potential that the available food supply (after protecting the ecosystem's sustainability) is less available for the Indigenous peoples in the area. This consideration, along with a number that follow, needs to be implemented with care for the guiding principles of maintaining or improving Indigenous food sovereignty, and prioritising Indigenous communities' access to and benefit from traditional foods.

There are many examples where traditional food items have been overharvested for sale as a specialty food product (e.g. the Northern Abalone), making them difficult for local Indigenous communities who have stewarded them for millennia to access. Future efforts should not exacerbate this effect.

Support teaching about how to gather food in the right ways

Part of the legacy of residential schools has been that generations of Indigenous children were prevented from learning about the harvesting and preparation of traditional foods. Where the information is held by remaining Elders and Knowledge Keepers, there is often reasonable caution about sharing this information and having it fall into the wrong hands, leading again to overharvesting and further devastation to the limited supplies that exist. As a result, this information is at risk of being lost in many nations.

It is urgent, along with initiatives to support revitalization of culture and language, that support be provided to nations to teach members to gather traditional foods in the right ways. As with traditional foods themselves, the right ways may have similarities between nations, but the food harvesting protocols and processes are a reflection of the land and unique cultures of each community.



Be patient

Consultation participants reminded us that addressing the barriers limiting the use of traditional foods and Indigenous recipes will take time. Changing the biases and beliefs which underly many of the rules which limit the serving of traditional foods will not be easy. Once there is agreement to change the rules, the process itself can be slow and there are often many players involved.

The food supply chain for public institutions is complex and challenging for any small supplier to access. There is a need for infrastructure and social investments to be able to harvest and process traditional foods to meet the needs of these supply chains. While these steps will not be fast, several participants noted that the growing momentum of interest and support for these initiatives will help.

SUMMARY

This report, as noted earlier, summarizes the findings of a qualitative study that was completed in a short timeframe. It was not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of efforts to increase traditional foods and Indigenous recipes, but rather to identify promising programs and initiatives, identify key factors that serve as both barriers and facilitators to the provision of traditional foods in public institutions, and identify areas where future work on this topic might focus.

Overall, efforts to increase the availability of traditional foods appears to not yet be well-established in the approaches of many public institutions, yet there are a number of promising practices to build on in B.C. and across Canada. Such initiatives are building on a growing sense of the importance of connection not only to healthy, nutritious food but also to the traditions and customs that are fundamental to Indigenous identities. Participants in this study were unanimous in their view that increased access to traditional foods is a fundamental way to improve both health and education

outcomes and, at a higher level, the connection of Indigenous people to their communities and traditions.

Efforts to support greater access to traditional foods aligns with government priorities as well, particularly those aimed at increasing the production, harvesting and use of local foods such as the Feed BC initiative. There are also clear opportunities to build on other programs such as FOODSAFE BC. Supporting such initiatives can also serve as a strong indicator of governments' support for the principles and goals of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in B.C.



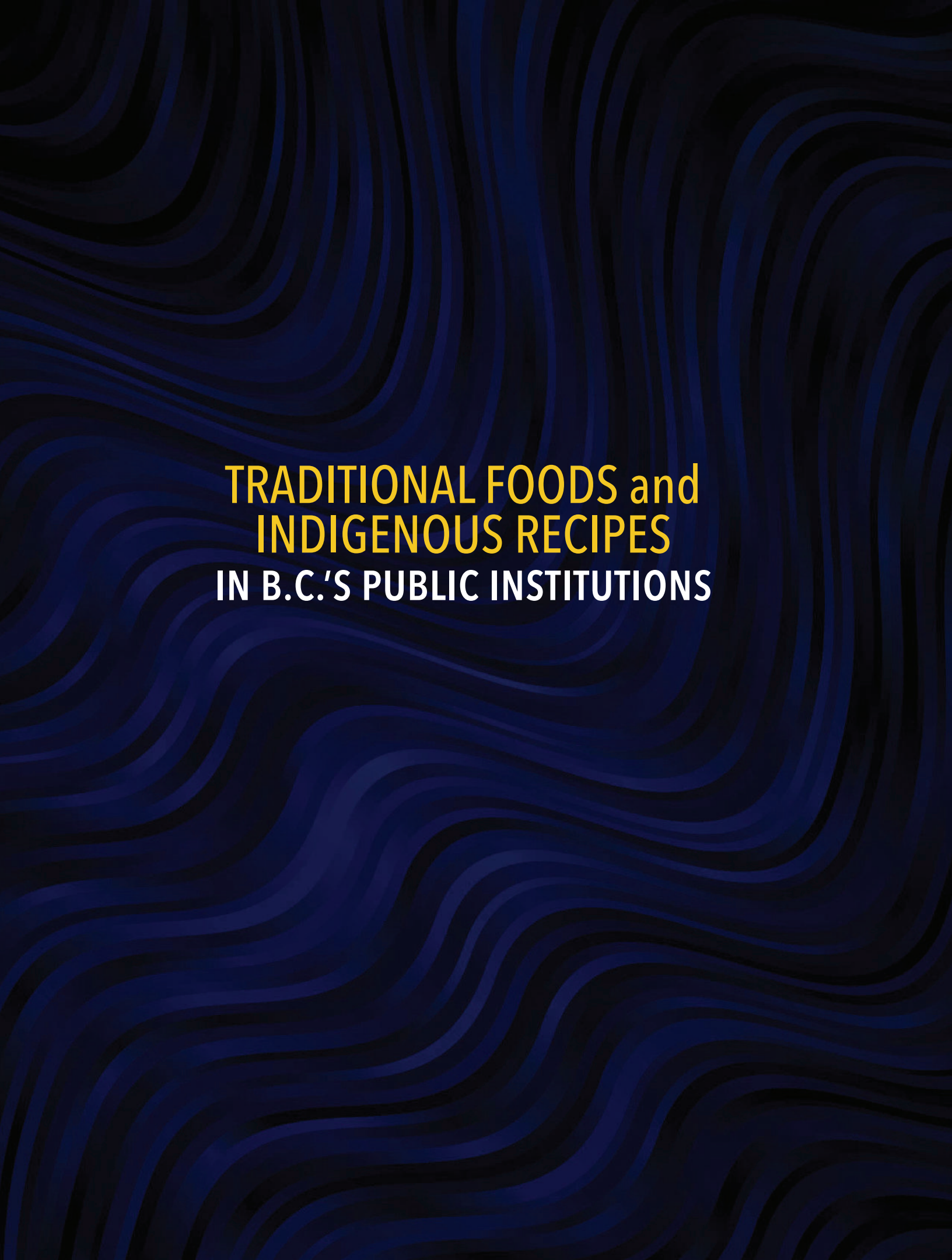
APPENDIX A: STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Thanks to the following individuals who participated in this study by providing their thoughts, insights and experience with the provision of traditional foods in British Columbia.

Sector/Group	Participant
Elders and Knowledge Keepers	Rita George, Elder
	Leon Lewen, Elder
	Susie Truss, Elder
	Corinne George, Elder
	Tim Kulchyski, Knowledge Keeper
	Margaret Edgar, Elder
	Nitanis Desjarlais, Knowledge Keeper
Indigenous Restaurants	Kekuli Café, Sharon Bond, Owner
	Salmon & Bannock, Inez Cook, Owner
Health	First Nations Health Authority, Casey Neathway, Regional Manager, Environmental Health
	First Nations Health Authority, Dr. Evan Adams, Chief Medical Officer
	First Nations Health Authority, Karen Larson, Environmental Health Officer
	First Nations Health Authority, Rebecca Sovdi, Strategic Policy Analyst
	Interior Health, Donna Koenig, Manager, Support Services
	Interior Health, Kevin Touchet, Manager, Environmental Health
	Interior Health, Megan Dark, Public Health Dietitian
	Island Health, Joanne Lum, Senior Environmental Health Officer
	Island Health, June Wade, Regional Manager of Food Services
	Island Health, Dr. Shannon Waters, Medical Health Officer
	Island Health, Shelley Cahill-Richford, Coordinator of Food Services for the North Island
	McBride and Associates, Lisa Forster-Coull & Michele McBride, Feed BC Consultants
	Northern Health, Shelly Crack, Community Dietitian
	Northern Health, Tessie Harris, Coordinator, Chronic Disease Management, Northern Haida Gwaii Hospital and Health Centre
	Provincial Health Services Authority, B.C. Centre for Disease Control, Melanie Kurrein, Provincial Manager Food Security
	Provincial Health Services Authority, José Morais, Manager, Food and Nutrition Services
Songhees Wellness Centre, Chef Dave Roger, Executive Chef	
Stó:lo Elders Lodge, Michelle Hobek, Administrative Assistant	

APPENDIX A: STUDY PARTICIPANTS CONTINUED...

Sector/Group	Participant
Post-Secondary Education	Camosun College, Chef Steve Walker-Duncan, Program Chair for Culinary Arts
	Chartwell (Compass Group), Matthew Quinn, Executive Chef, UNBC
	Chartwell (Compass Group), Yazan Kanaan, Director of Food Services, UNBC
	Coast Mountain College, Brad Vennard, Culinary Arts Instructor
	Coast Mountain College, Darlene Godfrey, Culinary Arts Instructor
	Ministry of Advanced Education Skills and Training, Griffin Ryall, Director, Sector Business Partnerships
	Okanagan College, Cari Jahns, Manager Culinary Programs
	Okanagan College, Reinhard Foerderer, Program Chair
	Thompson Rivers University, Kimberly Johnstone, Senior Lecturer, Culinary Arts
	Thompson Rivers University, Paul Murphy, Culinary Coordinator, Culinary Arts
	Thompson Rivers University (Aramark), Jennifer Bissell, Food Service Director,
	Thompson Rivers University (Aramark), Lisa Orr, Regional Marketing Manager
	University of British Columbia, David Speight, Executive Chef
	University of British Columbia, Vicki George, First Nations House of Learning
	University of the Fraser Valley, Chris Monkman, Instructor SASET Culinary Arts program
	University of the Fraser Valley, Randy Kelley, Director, School of Trades
University of the Fraser Valley, Sian Hurley, Instructor, Culinary Arts	
K-12 Education	SD50 Haida Gwaii, Sarah Stevenson, (Past) Local Food To School: Pantry coordinator
	SD50 Haida Gwaii, Kiku Dhanwant, (Past) Local Food To School Coordinator
	SD50 Haida Gwaii, Jaskwaan Bedard, Haida Language and Culture Curriculum Implementation Teacher
	Tahayghen Elementary, Verena Gibbs, Principal
Early Childhood Education	Nutsuma Lelum Child Day Care, Stz'luminus First Nation, Carey McRae, Manager
B.C. Corrections	Ministry of Attorney General, Simon Matthews, Manager, Procurement and Compliance
	Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Tony Porter, Strategic Operations
Food Safety, Fish and Wildlife Government Representatives	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Diana Berry, Policy and Project Analyst, Food Safety & Inspection
	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Kevin Romanin, Senior Seafood Analyst
	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Larry Neilson, Manager, Marine Fisheries and Seafood
	Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resources Operations and Rural Development, Terry Ahern, Senior Advisor, Legislation and Policy
	Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resources Operations and Rural Development, Nichole Prichard, Project and Policy Analyst
	Ministry of Health, Spencer Dawson, Senior Food Safety Specialist
	Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Alfredo Garcia, Senior Advisor
	Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Hannah Virtue, Assistant Negotiator, Business Economic Development



**TRADITIONAL FOODS and
INDIGENOUS RECIPES
IN B.C.'S PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS**