

National Indigenous Economic Development Board



Roundtable on Northern Sustainable Food Systems

What We Heard Report



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Introduction

The National Indigenous Economic Development Board (NIEDB) provides advice and guidance to the federal government on issues related to Indigenous economic opportunities. In recognition of the severe food security challenges facing Northern communities, the NIEDB is looking to examine the economic development impacts of food security using the lens of sustainable Northern food systems.

Sustainable food systems are important drivers of healthy and productive Northern communities. Statistics Canada data from the 2013-2014 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) confirmed high levels of food insecurity in Northern Canada. Nunavut and the Northwest Territories demonstrated the highest levels observed since monitoring began in 2005, with household food insecurity reported at 46.8% and 24.1%, respectively¹. The NIEDB is seeking new ideas, perspectives, and frameworks to enhance our understanding, to examine our assumptions, to expand our thinking, and to help formulate recommendations that provide guidance for creating healthier communities and stronger local economies. The NIEDB has focused on several key themes to support conversation towards the development of improvements to Northern food systems, including: climate change, demographic changes, income inequality, inter/intra-governmental coordination, transportation infrastructure, local food production and traditional foods.

This report is a summary of the feedback received from stakeholders and partners during a Roundtable event held in Whitehorse, Yukon on June 4, 2018. All comments received will inform the development of recommendations to the federal government regarding food systems and economic well-being in Northern communities. While submissions included a wide range of specific comments, this report summarizes feedback into four common themes – outside influences on food systems, required coordination, harvesting of traditional foods, and funding structures.

Roundtable Discussions

On Monday, June 4th, 2018, a wide variety of stakeholders and partners involved in Northern food systems attended a Roundtable event in Whitehorse, Yukon. Participants were from across the Northern territories and Inuit Nunangat and included:

- Indigenous Elder
- Representatives from Indigenous Organizations, Governments and Corporations
- Federal, territorial and regional government representatives
- Industry representatives
- Non-profit groups and academics
- Local food producers and food Co-ops
- Commercial food distributors and retailers

¹ Tarasuk, V, Mitchell, A, Dachner, N. (2016). Household food insecurity in Canada, 2014. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <http://proof.utoronto.ca>

Participants offered significant feedback, providing helpful insights on the development of NIEDB recommendations to address Northern sustainable food systems. The views expressed in this report are those of the participants at the event and reflect the discussions that occurred.

Summary of Key Messages by Theme

Outside influences on food systems

Participants saw ongoing legislative and policy barriers as colonial legacy practices, and requested a movement towards more locally-directed regulatory frameworks that are reflective of Indigenous and Northern priorities.

“Capitalism, colonialism and Christianity have caused this problem and they aren’t going to solve this problem.”

Participants highlighted the following:

- Wildlife preservation policy decisions made outside of local communities and across jurisdictional boundaries would benefit from greater cohesion and inclusion of local knowledge with increased authority at the local level.
- Concerns that dietary choices are being dictated to Northerners. The Nutrition North program provides subsidies for some foods but excludes others (such as flour) that are prominent in Northern diets. Participants requested subsidies be provided to food items that are more reflective of local diets.
- Participants discussed existing southern based retail food corporations as structures that prevent community ownership and control over food systems and create a dependency on externally sourced foods. Participants voiced desires for food systems to be more locally owned, and reflective of the community.

Required Coordination

Participants highlighted examples of programming that was well coordinated across and within levels of governments, and policies that were in conflict and/or misaligned across jurisdictions. Leveraging cooperation was discussed as a way to maximize the efficiency and impact of limited resources and minimize duplication or misalignment of policies.

Participants highlighted the following:

- Participants supported the closer integration and leveraging of governmental strategies (e.g. poverty reduction strategy and housing strategy). Initiatives that create multiple benefits across sectors should be developed and supported. For example, a national breakfast program would incentivize education.
- Independent and locally-driven projects in local food production in the North were identified as being widely unknown. Participants suggested the development of a national-level repository of project information to increase awareness as well as provide support and learning opportunities for new project development.
- Policies developed to support Northern food systems require follow-up within local communities to ensure that they are producing the desired results. For example, some purchasers of food in the North (e.g. mining camps) are exempt from Nutrition North

subsidies when ordering food, but can go into a retail store, receive the subsidy and clear out shelves.

- The need for closer alignment of market analyses, procurement and transportation systems to ensure locally-produced food is not wasted and available more broadly across communities.
- Participants supported equalizing accountability of federal/territorial government activities citing inequality in reporting and transparency requirements between Indigenous communities and federal/territorial governments.
- Participants suggested the development of tools to consistently and thoroughly measure food security in the North. Current measures are perceived to not adequately assess the contribution and/or adequacy of traditional foods, farming or harvesting in household food availability.

“Food security is about people feeding themselves well.”

“It is about a life free from stress from food.”

Harvesting of traditional foods

The essential contribution of traditional foods to sustainable food systems is a prominent focus across Northern regions. Participants voiced concern about the increasing financial, environmental and cultural pressures on traditional food harvesting and generally sought a more Indigenous-informed and controlled role on policies, programs and support.

“Species have no borders.”

Participants highlighted the following:

- Participants discussed the lengthy history of sustainable Indigenous harvesting practices that have demonstrated greater success in the management of local natural environments and wildlife than external management and control. An alignment of legislation, policy and practices, all informed by Indigenous knowledge, was suggested as a way to ensure sustainable management of resources.
- Participants requested greater input of Indigenous knowledge into broad policy development in light of perceived misunderstandings as to the holistic nature of Indigenous spiritual and cultural values in harvesting activities. Interaction with environmental conditions, how the hunt progresses, and practices after a successful hunt are significant elements of harvesting activities and require local knowledge integration to inform policy development.
- Participants discussed the conflict between the cultural importance of community sharing of harvested animals, and the commoditization of meat for economic development purposes. Concern was voiced over the potential to lose the cultural sharing practices that are essential to supporting Elders and those in need if monetary value is attributed to traditionally harvested food. Participants stressed that economic development must be directed by Indigenous communities to ensure protection and benefits at the local level.

“It’s not that you can kill a moose that makes you a Cree. It’s how you treat the moose when you kill it that makes you a Cree.”

Examples of communities in Alaska where traditional food production is primarily exported leaving Indigenous communities hungry were cited as warnings.

Funding Structures

Federal, territorial, and regional funding was perceived to be out of touch with Northern realities and based on southern-focused models. Tailoring funding to address barriers of climate and seasonality, life experiences and Indigenous practices was suggested to improve participation in funding initiatives and efficiency of outcomes.

Participants highlighted the following:

- Country food harvesting would benefit from additional funding support (e.g. gasoline, ammunition). Participants suggested the development of funding programs that are informed by local experiences to increase eligible participation.
- Participants suggested that funding cycles should be developed to acknowledge seasonal restraints in the North. Materials often need to be transported during limited shipping seasons and ordered well in advance. To miss an ordering deadline due to misaligned funding cycles can postpone a project by a full year. Locally-informed cycle alignment would allow for greater flexibility.
- Participants discussed how funding performance measures (e.g. creating jobs or a marketable product) are often misaligned with community development goals which are more likely designed to enhance sustainable local production or provide alternative benefits for the community. Support for microgranting was suggested as a way to bypass conventional performance measures.

“Community based food systems change ‘middle of nowhere’ thinking into ‘middle of somewhere’ thinking.”

“Reclaim, Reorganize, Reskill and Rebuild. Reclaim your role in the food system. Reorganize your food system to recognize your role. Reskill people to work in your food system. Rebuild an Indigenous food system, emergent from place.”

Next Steps

The comments received have provided valuable direction. The NIEDB is now reviewing the research they have done and the insights from the Roundtable and will submit recommendations to the federal government on ways to improve Northern sustainable food systems. The submission of the recommendations report is anticipated to be in late 2018 and will be published on the NIEDB website when submitted. The NIEDB would like to thank all of the people who participated in the Roundtable event.

Appendix A: List of Attendees

Elder

- **Betsy Jackson**, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council

Facilitator

- **Dr. Marie Delorme**, National Indigenous Economic Development Board

Indigenous Organizations, Governments and Corporations

- **Chief Doris Bill**, Kwanlin Dün First Nation
- **Chief Kristina Kane**, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council
- **Kluane Adamek**, Interim Regional Chief, Assembly of First Nations, Yukon
- **Derrick Hastings**, Farm Manager, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation
- **Andy Baribeau**, Director of Industry and Commerce, Grand Council of the Crees
- **Jennifer Deleskie**, Membertou First Nation

Government Representatives

- **The Honourable Ranj Pillai**, Deputy Premier, Government of Yukon
- **Anne Savoie**, Senior Industry Development Officer, Agriculture and Agri-food Canada
- **Jillian MacIsaac**, Economic Development Officer, Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
- **Dionne Savill**, Regional Director General, Yukon Region, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs/Department of Indigenous Services
- **Kathleen Coventry**, Manager, Intergovernmental Affairs, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs/Department of Indigenous Services

Industry Representatives

- **Tara Tootoo Fotheringham**, Chief Executive Officer, Arctic Buying Company
- **Ray Solotki**, Executive Director, Inuvik Community Greenhouse
- **Sonny Gray**, Chief Executive Officer, North Star Agriculture Incorporated
- **Andrew Pope**, Vice President, Scheduled Services, Airports & Cargo, Canadian North
- **Harry Tulugak**, General Manager, Povurnituq Coop Store, Fédération des Coopératives de Nouveau-Quebec
- **Derek Reimer**, Director, Business Development, The North West Company

Non-Profit Groups and Academics

- **Kristina Craig**, Executive Director, Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition
- **Nicole Lamy**, Program Coordinator, Food Matters Manitoba
- **Dr. Joseph Leblanc**, Executive Director, Social Planning Council of Sudbury and Member of Indigenous Circle of Food Secure Canada
- **Jamie Jackman**, Labrador Institute of Memorial University and Coordinator of the Pye Centre for Northern Boreal Food Systems
- **Norma Kassi**, Co-founder, Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research
- **Dr. Nicole Gombay**, Associate Professor, Department of Geography, University of Montréal

National Indigenous Economic Development Board Members

- **Darlene Bernard** from Lennox Island, Prince Edward Island
- **Hilda Broomfield Letemplier** from Goose Bay-Happy Valley, Newfoundland and Labrador
- **Chief Terrance Paul** from Membertou, Nova Scotia
- **Dr. Ruth Williams** from Kamloops, British Columbia
- **Maxime Vollant** from Quebec City, Quebec
- **Sandra Sutter** from Calgary, Alberta
- **Victoria LaBillois** from Listuguj, Quebec

National Indigenous Economic Development Board Secretariat

- **Christopher Duschenes**, Director General, Economic Policy Development, Lands and Economic Development, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs/Department of Indigenous Services
- **Jennifer MacKinnon**, Acting Director, Partnerships and Coordination Branch, Lands and Economic Development, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs/Department of Indigenous Services
- **Sandra Romain**, Senior Policy Analyst, Horizontal Policy, Lands and Economic Development, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs/Department of Indigenous Services
- **Jody Touchette**, Senior Policy Analyst, National Indigenous Economic Development Board Secretariat, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs/Department of Indigenous Services
- **Manon Richard**, Executive Coordinator, National Indigenous Economic Development Board Secretariat, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs/Department of Indigenous Services

Appendix B: Agenda

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD (NIEDB)
Northern Sustainable Food Systems Roundtable
AGENDA
Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre (Artist Studio)
Whitehorse, Yukon
June 4th, 2018

Time	Subject	Speaker
8:30 a.m.	Opening Prayer	Elder Betsy Jackson, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council
8:45 a.m.	Welcome from the National Indigenous Economic Development Board	Darlene Bernard and Hilda Broomfield Letemplier, National Indigenous Economic Development Board Christopher Duschenes, Director General, Economic Policy Development, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
9:00 a.m.	Roundtable Participant Introductions	Facilitated by Dr. Marie Delorme, National Indigenous Economic Development Board
9:30 a.m.	Setting the Context	Chief Kristina Kane, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council Chief Doris Bill, Kwanlin Dün First Nation Kluane Adamek, Interim Regional Chief, Assembly of First Nations
10:00 a.m.	Opening Remarks	The Honourable Ranj Pillai, Deputy Premier, Government of Yukon
10:30 am	Health Break	
10:45 am	Panel Discussion and Questions: <i>Challenges and Ideas in Attaining Sustainable Food Systems in the North</i>	Andy Baribeau, Director of Industry and Commerce, Grand Council of the Crees Nicole Lamy, Program Coordinator of Food Matters Manitoba Dr. Joseph LeBlanc, Executive Director, Social

		Planning Council Sudbury and Member of Indigenous Circle of Food Secure Canada
12:00 p.m.	Lunch and Networking	
13:00 p.m.	Setting the Context	Chief Kristina Kane , Ta'an Kwäch'än Council
13:30 p.m.	Individual Breakouts Sessions: Based on Discussion Paper Questions 1-5	Facilitated by Dr. Marie Delorme , National Indigenous Economic Development Board
15:15 pm	Health Break	
15:30 p.m.	Breakout Session – Reporting Back	Facilitated by Dr. Marie Delorme , National Indigenous Economic Development Board
16:00 p.m.	Open Forum for Discussion	Facilitated by Dr. Marie Delorme , National Indigenous Economic Development Board
16:45 p.m.	Closing Remarks	Darlene Bernard and Hilda Broomfield Letemplier , National Indigenous Economic Development Board
17:00 p.m.	Closing Prayer	Elder Betsy Jackson , Ta'an Kwäch'än Council