



# FUNDING REPORT

**Strengthening Food Security and Food Sovereignty in Northern  
Canada through North-South Exchanges**

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## FUNDING REPORT: STRENGTHENING FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN NORTHERN CANADA THROUGH NORTH-SOUTH EXCHANGES

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report describes the impact of a Targeted Area of Inquiry project carried out with the support of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation (“the Foundation”) between February 2016 and August 2017. Given the urgent issue of food insecurity in Canada, this project sought to address barriers to northern communities’ participation in food policy decisions. Although it related primarily to the *Water-Energy-Food Nexus* Targeted Area of Inquiry identified by the Foundation, it also overlapped with the targeted area of inquiry *Indigenous Relations in Canada*.

The purpose of this project was two-fold:

- (1) To provide support for civil society organizations and Indigenous representatives in northern Canada to meaningfully participate in food-related policy decisions in their communities, Indigenous governments, provinces and at the national level;
- (2) To promote fruitful Canadian North-South exchanges between communities and civil society organizations focused on food policy, which in turn promote collaboration on evidence-based, solutions-focused advocacy to strengthen food security and food sovereignty.

The primary means by which this project fulfilled those aims were: (a) collaborating with community organizations during the 2016 Summer Institute in the Yukon; (b) enabling three community partners from the Yukon to participate in Food Secure Canada’s 9<sup>th</sup> National Assembly in Toronto; (c) funding support for partner organizations in Whitehorse, YT and Yellowknife, NWT to host community engagement events soliciting input on the federal government’s Food Policy for Canada.

Although the project engaged numerous Scholars, Fellows and Mentors, the primary coordinators were Sophia Murphy (2013 Scholar) and Aelyse Weiler (2015 Scholar). Funds spent from the Public Interaction Program totaled \$8,860. Along with 2014 Fellow Evan Fraser, Aelyse and Sophia contributed \$1,995 in total from their respective Annual Travel Allowances to support travel for various speakers at the 2016 Summer Institute.

In this report, we describe:

- Activities and outcomes from the three major components of the project, including feedback from our community partners;
- How we disseminated knowledge from this project;
- An overview of final expenditures;
- Lessons learned and proposals for the future.

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## ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

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SUMMER INSTITUTE, 18-19 MAY 2016

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Professor Hannah Wittman at the Yukon Food Security Roundtable in Whitehorse, YT. (Anelyse Weiler)

As part of the 2016 Summer Institute in Whitehorse, YT, we collaborated with several community partners who are engaged in food security and food sovereignty initiatives. Our primary partner was the Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research (AICBR). The AICBR invited about 15 Foundation Scholars, Mentors and Fellows to participate in part of the first-ever Yukon Food Security Roundtable from May 18-19, 2016.<sup>1</sup> In addition, three Foundation community members (Murphy, Weiler, and 2014 Fellow Evan Fraser) were invited to speak about their research at a free, public evening event to complement the Roundtable.

As a gesture of reciprocity to the AICBR, we drew on our personal Annual Travel Allowances to enable Diana Bronson (Executive Director, Food Secure Canada) and Professor Hannah Wittman (Director, Centre for Sustainable Food Systems at UBC Farm) to attend and speak at the Roundtable. Finally, in 2017 several members of the Foundation community who had taken part in the Roundtable wrote a letter in support of AICBR's funding request from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> AICBR (2016). Working Together Towards a Food Secure Yukon. Outcomes from Yukon Food Security Roundtable, An Evening on Food Security, Open House. May 19<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> 2016, Whitehorse, YT. <http://bit.ly/2vHmywS>



Members of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation touring PETF Scholars, Fellows and Mentors around their mobile meat abattoir for moose and other wild game. (Anelyse Weiler)

In addition to partnering with the AICBR, Weiler and Murphy reached out to the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, who generously agreed to welcome more than 20 members of the Foundation community to their territory on May 19<sup>th</sup>. Our guides introduced us to some of the challenges facing Carcross/Tagish people and the role that food production was playing in responding to those challenges. Before treating us to a hearty lunch, they toured us around their mobile meat abattoir for moose and other wild game, and showed us the community garden, greenhouse and seed-saving project which includes a summer programme to engage and train youth in the community. We finished at a totem-carving workshop, where internationally renowned Tlingit artist Keith Wolfe Smarch talked about the art, craft and culture of totems.

To gather more in-depth insights on food security challenges and possible solutions in the North, we hosted a focus group in Whitehorse on May 19<sup>th</sup>. The focus group included participants from the AICBR, Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, local farmers, First Nations, members of the Yukon government, and others. In addition, our correspondence with Whitehorse MP Larry Bagnell resulted in our making contact with Stephen Van Dine, Assistant Deputy Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. Consequently, Wayne Walsh, Director General of the Northern Strategic Policy Branch, flew to Whitehorse for the Yukon Food Security Roundtable.

**Outcome #1:** Sponsoring Diana Bronson enabled AICBR and Food Secure Canada to have in-person meetings, strengthen their existing partnership, and strategize on next steps toward ensuring Northerners and Indigenous communities

have a voice on food policy at the national level. For example, Food Secure Canada later invited the AICBR to host multiple sessions at its 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly in Toronto in October 2016, and helped sponsor AICBR's community engagement activities around the national food policy in 2017.

**Outcome #2:** Collaborating with the AICBR as part of the Summer Institute provided the foundational relationship that enabled us to carry out the project as a whole. In addition, these 2016 Summer Institute activities allowed for a significant and mutual exchange of knowledge, networks and policy ideas between Foundation members from the South and partners in the North.

**Outcome #3:** By drawing on our networks and reaching out to federal officials, we prompted a public servant (Wayne Walsh) representing Nutrition North to attend the Yukon Food Security Roundtable.

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#### FOOD SECURE CANADA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, 13-16 OCT. 2016

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Members of the Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research at Food Secure Canada's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual National Assembly in Toronto. (Anelyse Weiler)

Funding from the Foundation enabled three food advocates from northern Canada to attend Food Secure Canada's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual National Assembly in Toronto: Mary Jane Johnson (Heritage Manager at the Kluane First Nation, Burwash Landing, YT), Katelyn Friendship (Co-Director of the AICBR, Whitehorse, YT) and Jody Butler Walker (Co-Director of the AICBR, Whitehorse, YT). There, they presented on their work and hosted multiple sessions focused on food insecurity in northern Canada. We made a point of meeting the delegates, attending their sessions and welcoming them warmly to Toronto.

The AICBR emphasized that network-building and strategy sessions they led at the Assembly were of tremendous value to them. The Assembly enabled them to meet with new allies from more southerly areas of Canada, including potential funders.

Policymakers and elected officials such as Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Carolyn Bennett were also present at the Assembly. The delegates expressed that it was critical for food policy advocates based in the South to learn about food insecurity in the North from northerners themselves:

*Having the North participate in this Food Secure assembly I think was very important for people at the leadership level of Food Secure Canada. For them to hear from people, whether it was myself or whether it was Leese [Leese Papatsie, Coordinator of Feeding My Family in Nunavut], whether it was some of the people that came from the NWT or northern Quebec or James Bay. I think it was very important that people at Food Secure assembly did not take what is happening in downtown Toronto, downtown Vancouver in regards to feeding people that are in those urbanized center as having the same kind of issues as what is happening in the North of Canada.*

- Mary Jane Johnson

In addition, the three delegates highlighted the value of being able to speak face-to-face with people from numerous other regions in the Canadian North. They noted that due in part to the Foundation's support, more Northerners were in attendance than at any previous Assembly. As the three delegates described, this enabled them to learn about Northerners' distinct challenges, share tools for addressing similar food security challenges, and to consider possible opportunities for collaboration (e.g. developing curricular materials with Food Matters Manitoba).

*It's really important, I think, particularly for Northerners to have that opportunity to meet face to face, because we don't get that chance very often at all, if ever. So it's much easier to work from a distance once those relationships have been seeded by having that first interaction.*

- Katelyn Friendship

*Down the road, it [networking with other Northerners at the Assembly] will help as the food crisis in the North becomes more acute, which it is probably going to do before it gets better . . .*

*Food security is so political, there's just so much politics in it and big agriculture and laws with different power relations that make it very challenging for people who aren't at the table to have any say in anything at all. I've come away feeling that, whether it's Northern [Food] Summit or however it takes shape, is much more doable and much more realistic now that we've met in person. And we realized that all of us are looking at the same thing, that nobody's saying, "Do it this way!" or "Do it that way!" It's, "How can we work together to move this whole thing forward?" I think that is much more feasible than it was prior to the Assembly.*

- Jody Butler Walker

One of the insights all three delegates took away was that the scope of what some people define as Canada's "North" is much broader than they had previously understood (i.e. some delegates conceived of the North as encompassing not only the three territories, but also northern parts of the provinces). This presents challenges to the size and scope of a prospective Northern Food Summit that would bring together all Northerners to address food insecurity collectively. In addition, they realized that food security groups throughout the North were at very different stages in terms of the level of community engagement within their own regions. They felt this intra-regional work was likely a precursor to a Northern Food Summit. However, another insight they took away was that free or low-cost conference calling could help them overcome many of the challenges of communicating with other Northerners.

***Outcome #1:*** Northern and Indigenous delegates had the opportunity to network at the Food Secure Canada Assembly with new allies, policymakers and potential funders from the South, and to help them southern Canadians better understand the unique contexts of food insecurity in the North.

***Outcome #2:*** Northern and Indigenous delegates had the opportunity to meet face-to-face with other Northerners, which facilitated discussions about possible collaborations and an exchange of ideas for how people in other regions were addressing shared challenges of food insecurity.

***Outcome #3:*** In-person, Northern-led meetings among Northerners at the Assembly provided a critical venue to consider the feasibility of a Northern Food Summit, along with possible alternatives (e.g. low-cost conference calls).

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS IN YUKON & NWT FOR CANADA'S NATIONAL FOOD POLICY (SUMMER 2017)

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Katelyn Friendship asking Northerners to fill out a federal survey at the Fireweed Community Market in Whitehorse. (Philippe Morin/CBC)

Funding from this project enabled three organizations in northern Canada to host two community engagement events to solicit Northerners' input on a Food Policy for Canada. The Food Policy for Canada is a federal government initiative coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture to “set a long-term vision for the health, environmental, social, and economic goals related to food, while identifying actions we can take in the short-term.”<sup>2</sup> The federal government has established an online survey to consult Canadians on the issues they deem important for a national food policy.

Food Secure Canada, a national network focused on just and sustainable food systems advocacy, distributed funding and support to the recipient organizations in northern Canada, including funding from our PETF initiative. AICBR and the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition co-hosted two community engagement events in Whitehorse, YT called *What's Your Recipe for a Better Food System?*<sup>3,4</sup>:

- July 20, 2017: Community workshop at the Fireweed Community Market from 3 to 8pm.
  - People were encouraged to complete the online federal survey, and seven people did so at the workshop tent (via iPad). 25 people responded to the question ‘What Food Issues Matter to You?’ on a

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<sup>2</sup> Government of Canada. (2017) A Food Policy for Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/campaign/food-policy.html>

<sup>3</sup> AICBR (2017, July 18). Press Release: What's Your Recipe for a Better Food System? Upcoming Community Engagement Events in Whitehorse seek to raise Yukoners' voices on National Food Policy. <http://bit.ly/2vnTGta>

<sup>4</sup> CBC (2017, July 21). Food for thought: Northerners asked to inform National Food Policy. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/food-for-thought-northerners-asked-to-inform-national-food-policy-1.4215195>

flipchart, and approximately 40-45 people stopped by the workshop tent. Participants were of all ages (mostly younger adults/seniors).

- July 31, 2017: Community meal and facilitated discussion was held at the Old Fire Hall from 5:30 to 8pm.
  - The event drew 30 participants, who answered four questions (a combination of those posed by Food Secure Canada) in small, facilitated groups. Alongside members of the public, participants included the Agriculture branch, farmers and community gardeners, Dieticians of Canada, and the Council of Yukon First Nations.

The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and AICBR are compiling data from these two events for a detailed follow-up report, which will include additional data from consultations with individuals who have lived experience of hunger and food insecurity. Based on the partners' preliminary analysis, major themes from the events included:

- Access to fresh, local, organic food;
- Fulfilling dietary needs (especially for limited income);
- High cost of [healthy] food (especially in isolated communities);
- Interest in Local Growing - Greenhouses and Gardening (in community and at home);
- Need for Educational Opportunities (Food Skills & capacity building for teachers).

They note that one of the limitations of data from these events is that it represents the perspectives of urban Whitehorse residents. They advise that for a more accurate picture of Yukon's perspectives on the National Food Policy, additional engagement with rural and First Nations communities in the Yukon is necessary.

Similarly, Ecology North, based in Yellowknife, NWT, hosted a small gathering of 11 NWT growers and food advocates in Samba K'e Park on 25 July 2017. They facilitated a discussion about the Food Policy for Canada and distilled core northern perspectives on what should be included in the national discussion:

*Attendees were excited to have a venue to speak, and many barriers and challenges were brought up, as well as the key point that there is a wide diversity in the food system in the north was a consistent message we'd like to raise. There was agreement at the table that we in the NWT need to organize, communicate more with each other, and develop a stronger network to advocate and promote northern food systems. Ecology North and our partners will be working toward developing these ties, building relationships and pushing such a network forward.*

- Craig Scott, Executive Director, Ecology North

**Outcome #1:** Community organizations in the Yukon and Northwest Territories convened their own community engagement meetings regarding the Food Policy for Canada, articulated their priorities to the federal government, and strengthened their networks in the process.

## KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

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Sandra Diaz Creative.

With a view to informing public and policymaking dialogue on issues of hunger and food insecurity in Canada's North, we published the following articles as part of this project. We commissioned an artist, Sandra Diaz, to design an image to accompany our op-ed with *The Tye*.

- Murphy, Sophia. (2016, June 29). Food insecurity: Not just a poor country's problem: <http://www.hilltimes.com/2016/06/29/food-insecurity-not-just-a-poor-countrys-problem/71624>
- Murphy, Sophia (2017, 23 March). Governments must make good on food promise: <http://www.producer.com/2017/03/govt-must-make-good-on-food-promise/>
- Weiler, Anelyse and Murphy, Sophia (2017, 16 August). What will people eat in 2037? A vision for food democracy in Canada. *The Tye*: <https://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2017/08/16/Canadian-Food-Revolution/>

To coincide with the final stages of the federal government's development of a Food Policy for Canada, we may also explore the possibility of publishing an op-ed in a broader venue such as the *Globe and Mail*.

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## FINAL EXPENDITURES

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- Travel for 3 delegates from the Yukon to attend Food Secure Canada's National Assembly in Toronto: \$6,000
- Community engagement events on the Food Policy for Canada led by Northern partners: \$2,330
- Original design by Sandra Diaz Creative commissioned to accompany The Tye article (and possibly other publications): \$470

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## TAKEAWAYS AND PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE

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We are grateful for the opportunity to build on relationships established with community partners through the 2016 Summer Institute, and to reciprocate well beyond the scope of the Summer Institute. Nonetheless, the project included some challenges. Some of the takeaways we garnered:

- **Factoring in the length of time to build relationships with community partners.**
  - Before undertaking a more ambitious collaboration, we found it helpful to organize lower-stakes initiatives with community partners during the 2016 Summer Institute. Given that we were both new to the Yukon and the food politics of the North more generally, it was important to establish common ground and build trust to be able to move forward on a common agenda.
- **Budgeting for high cost of booking last-minute flights from northern Canada.**
  - We entrusted a partner organization (Food Secure Canada) to select northern delegates to attend their Assembly. Because they followed a careful process of selection led by their Indigenous and northern members, the delegates we sponsored were unable to book flights until close to the event. Consequently, the cost of flights was significantly higher than what we had budgeted for.
- **Being willing to adapt to community partners' changing needs.**
  - Our initial TAI project proposal was based on the understanding that community partners would be organizing a national Northern Food Summit in the winter of 2017. Because this Summit has been postponed, we had to adapt the project to meet community partners' other needs.

We strongly encourage other members of the PETF community to consider building on this project, including the community partnerships that have been carefully established. Although issue of hunger and food insecurity among Indigenous and northern communities remains persistent, affected communities are responding with innovative solutions that merit support. Based on our observations and comments by our community partners, projects that could be considered for future support from the Foundation include:

- Planning and implementation for the Northern Food Summit. No location or date announced yet.
- Supporting an evening public event led by Food Secure Canada focused on northern and Indigenous food systems, which could include speakers from the PETF community such as Marie Wilson.
- Supporting the development of a northern and Indigenous cookbook project.
  - This might involve hiring a northern coordinator to gather traditional recipes from across the North, including the Indigenous names of foods.

We are very grateful to the PETF for supporting this project, and especially to Jennifer Petrela and Gina Beltran for their patience and understanding as the project evolved.