



# WHAT WE HEARD

2021 ANTI-POVERTY ROUNDTABLE

# RAPPORT SUR CE QUE NOUS AVONS ENTENDU

TABLE RONDE ANTIPAUVRETÉ 2021

NOVEMBER • NOVEMBRE | 2021

Le présent document contient la traduction  
française du sommaire.

Government of Northwest Territories  
Gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest

English

French

Cree

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Chipewyan

## South Slavey

## North Slavey

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## Executive Summary

The 7<sup>th</sup> annual Anti-Poverty Roundtable discussions took place virtually on January 26–27, 2021 to discuss how the Government of the Northwest Territories (NWT) and partners are approaching food security and to develop a way forward together. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is committed to reducing poverty in the NWT by working with partners to advance the [Territorial Anti-Poverty Action Plan](#) (Action Plan). The Anti-Poverty Roundtable, the annual meeting of partners working to advance the Action Plan, is an essential part of this collective effort.

Indigenous governments, non-government organizations (NGOs), community governments, industry, and other interested parties (NWT agri-food sector, grocers and the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor)) gathered to discuss food security as an element of poverty and poverty reduction. A total of 80 participants participated virtually in 11 roundtable discussions that were recorded. The discussion content was then analyzed using qualitative analysis and organized into themes to better understand participant perspectives about food security.

Food insecurity is an important issue in the NWT. The remoteness of northern communities not only contributes to slower or a complete lack of access to fresh foods but also contributes to unfairly priced goods and commodities; these factors reduce individual and community access to food security. To adequately address the food security needs of NWT communities, it is necessary to first support Indigenous communities in defining their own food systems and having control over harvesting, production, and distribution of healthy and culturally appropriate foods. Throughout the discussions, participants identified ways to increase food security in the NWT such as:

- **Access to Resources:** increasing access to funding and infrastructure; finding catalysts to start food security pilot programs; and removal of barriers to traditional harvesting practices.
- **Collaborative Approaches:** working in partnership; using innovative approaches that are community-centred, supported by the government, and guided by research and traditional knowledge systems; establishing a multi-sectorial food security organization for the NWT; creation of a Food Security Strategy for the GNWT; and creation of a territorial agri-food association.
- **Community-Centered:** ensuring adequate communication, consultation, and built-in feedback loops with communities; creating a community co-op; establishing a dedicated conference on food security and creating a charter; and undertaking community needs assessments.
- **Learning and Knowledge Development:** facilitating community-level learning about the role of nutrition in socio-economic well-being; and sharing intergenerational knowledge on harvesting and food production.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Indigenizing agricultural practices to support sustainable growth in this sector.

- **Government Support:** engaging policymakers and government staff to allocate funding resources, structural support, flexible funding applications, and easier access to programs like Nutrition North.

Food security is a universal human right and there are many opportunities to contribute to accomplishing food secure status for all residents in the NWT. Actions such as conducting community needs assessments, establishing a food security committee, and ensuring flexible government support for funding resources are some of the ways to move forward in taking steps towards food security in the NWT.

The table below summarizes responses (themes) that came up for each question that participants reflected on and provided feedback on.

**Table 1: Summary of themes discussed per question**

| <b>Questions</b> | What makes you feel food secure?<br>What do we envision for our food system in the NWT? | What can we do to sustain harvesting into the future? | What does a healthy NWT agricultural sector look like? | How can we work together to support food security/sovereignty in the NWT? | How do we ensure that Indigenous communities define their own food systems and have control over harvesting, production, and distribution of healthy and culturally appropriate foods? |
|------------------|---|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Themes</b>    | Access to resources   | Remove barriers for sustainable access                | Informative, collaborative, and sustainable            | Community-led and community centered                                      | Collaborative organizational model   |
|                  | Skills and knowledge development  | Localized, traditional collaborative approaches       | Innovative, Indigenized, and community-centered        | Holistic approach to production, and distribution                         | Locally led and community driven   |
|                  | Innovation in local food production   | Engaging communities, schools, youth, and Elders      | Learning and training resources                        | Access to resources   | Government support   |
|                  | Participation and collaboration   | Develop, Indigenize, and utilize learning resources   | Government supported                                   | Indigenize health knowledge and food systems                              | Funding resources  |



## Sommaire

La 7<sup>e</sup> Table ronde annuelle anti-pauvreté a eu lieu virtuellement les 26 et 27 janvier 2021. Les représentants du gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (GTNO) et les partenaires ont discuté de l'établissement d'une marche à suivre conjointe concernant la sécurité alimentaire. Le GTNO est résolu à réduire la pauvreté aux TNO en travaillant avec ses partenaires afin de faire progresser le [Plan d'action antipauvreté](#) territorial. Cette réunion annuelle des partenaires qui travaillent à la progression du Plan d'action fait partie intégrante de cet effort collectif.

Les gouvernements autochtones, les organisations non gouvernementales, les administrations communautaires, l'industrie et les autres parties concernées (le secteur agroalimentaire des TNO, les épiciers et l'Agence canadienne de développement économique du Nord [CanNor]) se sont réunis pour discuter de la sécurité alimentaire comme étant un élément de pauvreté et de réduction de la pauvreté. En tout, 11 tables rondes ont eu lieu et 80 organismes y ont participé virtuellement. Pour mieux comprendre les points de vue des participants sur la sécurité alimentaire, les discussions ont été analysées au moyen d'une analyse qualitative et réunies par thématiques.

La sécurité alimentaire est un enjeu important aux TNO. L'éloignement des collectivités du Nord peut ralentir ou même empêcher complètement l'accès aux aliments frais, et causer une hausse inéquitable des prix des biens et des produits, une situation qui réduit la sécurité alimentaire des résidents. Pour répondre adéquatement aux besoins alimentaires des collectivités ténaises, il est d'abord nécessaire d'aider les communautés autochtones à établir leurs propres systèmes alimentaires et à contrôler l'exploitation, la production et la distribution d'aliments sains et adaptés à leur culture. Tout au long des discussions, les participants ont proposé des solutions pour accroître la sécurité alimentaire aux TNO. En voici quelques exemples :

- **Favoriser l'accès aux ressources :** Faciliter l'accès au financement et aux infrastructures; trouver des éléments catalyseurs favorisant la création de programmes pilotes concernant la sécurité alimentaire, et éliminer les obstacles à l'exploitation alimentaire traditionnelle.
- **Adopter une approche coopérative :** Travailler en partenariat; adopter des approches novatrices centrées sur la collectivité, appuyées par le gouvernement et orientées par des recherches et des systèmes basés sur le savoir traditionnel; établir des organismes de sécurité alimentaire aux TNO; créer une stratégie sur la sécurité alimentaire au GTNO; créer une association agroalimentaire.
- **Être centré sur la collectivité :** Garantir une bonne communication ainsi que mener des consultations avec les collectivités et y mettre des mécanismes intégrés permettant de recueillir des commentaires; créer des coopératives dans les collectivités; mettre en place une conférence sur la sécurité alimentaire et adopter une charte; entreprendre une évaluation des besoins communautaires.

- **Renforcer le perfectionnement et le développement des connaissances :** Favoriser l'apprentissage communautaire au sujet du rôle de la nutrition sur le bien-être socio-économique; partager les connaissances intergénérationnelles sur l'exploitation et la production alimentaires.
- **Adopter des pratiques durables :** Adapter à la culture autochtone les pratiques agricoles pour favoriser la croissance dans ce secteur.
- **Offrir du soutien gouvernemental :** Inciter les décideurs politiques et les fonctionnaires à octroyer des ressources financières et du soutien structurel; mettre en place un processus souple de demandes de financement et faciliter l'accès aux programmes comme le programme Nutrition Nord.

La sécurité alimentaire est un droit humain universel, et il existe de nombreuses façons de s'assurer que tous les Ténos sont bien alimentés. Voici certaines mesures à adopter qui nous permettront d'aller de l'avant pour assurer la sécurité alimentaire des Ténos : évaluer les besoins des collectivités, créer un comité de sécurité alimentaire et s'assurer de la souplesse du processus de demande d'aide financière du gouvernement.

Le tableau ci-dessous présente un résumé des commentaires (thématiques) qui ont été soulevés pour chacune des questions sur lesquelles les participants se sont penchés ou ont formulé un commentaire.

**Tableau 2 : Résumé des thèmes abordés (divisés par questions)**

| Questions | Qu'est-ce qui vous fait sentir en sécurité sur le plan alimentaire? Selon vous, à quoi devrait ressembler le système alimentaire téniois? | Que pouvons-nous faire pour garantir l'avenir de l'exploitation alimentaire?                                 | À quoi ressemble un secteur agricole en santé aux TNO?           | Comment pouvons-nous travailler ensemble pour assurer la sécurité et la souveraineté alimentaires des TNO? | Comment s'assurer que ce sont les communautés autochtones qui établissent leurs propres systèmes alimentaires et contrôlent l'exploitation, la production et la distribution d'aliments sains et adaptés à leur culture? |
|-----------|---|--|--|--|--|
| Thèmes    | L'accès aux ressources  | En éliminant les obstacles à un accès durable aux ressources   | Il est informatif, collaboratif, et durable                      | En mettant en place des initiatives dirigées et axées sur la collectivité                                  | Une structure organisationnelle collaborative  |
|           | Le perfectionnement des compétences et le développement des connaissances   | En mettant en place des approches locales, traditionnelles et collaboratives                                 | Il est novateur, adapté à la culture autochtone et communautaire | En mettant en place des approches globales de production et de distribution                                | Des initiatives communautaires dirigées localement   |
|           | L'innovation dans la production alimentaire locale  | En faisant participer les communautés, les écoles, les jeunes et les aînés                                   | Il offre des ressources d'apprentissage et de formation          | En fournissant un accès aux ressources   | Du soutien gouvernemental  |
|           | La participation et la collaboration  | En développant des ressources d'apprentissage, en les adaptant aux cultures autochtones et en les utilisant. | Il a le soutien du gouvernement                                  | En adaptant aux cultures autochtones les connaissances sanitaires et le système alimentaire                | Des sources de financement   |

# Introduction

The What We Heard report outlines main themes and ideas that came out of the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Anti-Poverty Roundtable (Roundtable) discussions held January 26–27, 2021. The Roundtable discussions were held virtually to adhere to public health orders related to Covid-19 issued by the Chief Public Health Officer of the Northwest Territories (NWT). The annual Roundtables have been restructured to focus on a single poverty reduction issue and the focus this year was food security. The goal of the event was to discuss how the GNWT and partners' [Territorial Anti-Poverty Action Plan](#) (Action Plan) can address food security and to develop a way forward.

A total of 80 delegates participated in the Roundtable discussions. Participants included representatives from Indigenous governments, community governments, NGOs, industry, and the federal government. In addition to regular Anti-Poverty partners, representatives from local grocers and the NWT agri-food sector were also included to ensure a more comprehensive discussion about food security.

Roundtable participants discussed GNWT food security programming, visioning, harvesting, local food production and agriculture, Indigenous food sovereignty, and methods to promote collaboration to maximize impact in addressing food security. These topics were selected by the GNWT Interdepartmental Food Security Working Group with input from the external Anti-Poverty Advisory Committee, which is made up of representatives from among the Anti-Poverty partners.

Food security is a major issue in the NWT and is used as an indicator of poverty within the territory.<sup>1</sup> The GNWT is committed to reducing poverty in the NWT using a collaborative approach of listening and learning from people, Indigenous communities, and partner organizations, to collectively advance our work on the Action Plan.

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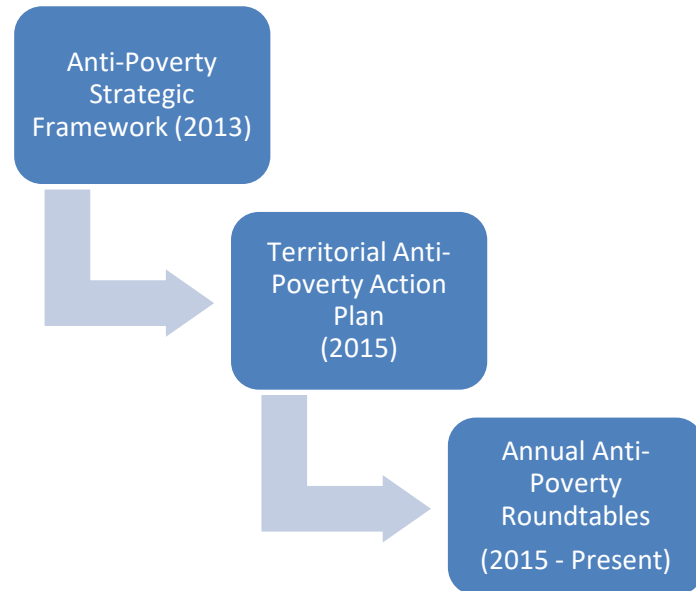
<sup>1</sup> NWT Bureau of Statistics: <https://www.statsnwt.ca/Poverty%20Indicators/index.html>

## Background

In 2013, [\*the Anti-Poverty Strategic Framework- Building on the Strengths of Northerners\*](#), was tabled in the Legislative Assembly of the NWT. Building upon the strategic framework, the GNWT created the Action Plan. This plan outlined the GNWT's commitment to address the needs of those most vulnerable and those at-risk of falling into poverty. The plan envisioned that departmental actions would build on the strengths of people and communities, so Northerners have access to the supports they need to live in dignity and free from poverty as active participants in community life.<sup>2</sup> The guiding principles of the Action Plan are:

- **Respect and equality are essential to Anti-Poverty work**
- **People are our most important resource**
- **How we do things is as important as what we do**

The government cannot eliminate poverty alone. To that end, the GNWT is committed to take action in partnership with Indigenous governments, NGOs, community, business, industry, and other partners through implementation of the multi-stakeholder Action Plan. Since 2013, the GNWT has held 7 Anti-Poverty Roundtable discussions. This report, and the findings included, provide data that contribute to the monitoring, reporting, and evaluation aspects of the Action Plan.



<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/sites/hss/files/resources/working-together-ii-action-plan-reduce-poverty.pdf>

## Food Security in the NWT

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.<sup>3</sup>

Food insecurity amongst Indigenous populations is an urgent public health issue in Canada.<sup>4</sup> Access to fresh foods as well as traditional food sources have been impacted by colonization, specifically the colonial legacies of changing lifestyles, climate change, lack of local fresh food resources, and reliance on store-bought food that is often expensive and has limited nutritional value.

Inequalities in social determinants of health such as poverty, unemployment, housing, and food security continue to play a crucial role in the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples of Canada. In light of this, food security and its impact on health should help us to understand the gravity of the situation in the NWT.<sup>5</sup> As per the 2018 NWT Bureau of Statistics, about 23% of NWT households indicated that they often or sometimes worried that food would run out before they had money to buy more.<sup>6</sup> Addressing inequalities in social determinants of health (poverty, the effects of global climate change and environmental pollution on traditional food systems, and high rates of diet-related diseases) remains an important area of work for all levels of government in Canada.

## Methodology

The Anti-Poverty Roundtable was held on January 26-27, 2021. This was the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Roundtable and first virtual event. In recent years, the Roundtable discussions have been restructured to focus solely on one topic – this year’s focus was food security: a key poverty reduction issue as indicated in the Action Plan. Dēneze Nakehk’o, a radio and video journalist from Líl’dlı́ Kųę First Nation served as the “on air” host for the event. The event was run like a news broadcast with technical support from Pido Productions as their team coordinated the event through Zoom. The GNWT staff who hosted the event worked

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<sup>3</sup> World Food Summit, 1996:

[http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/faoitaly/documents/pdf/pdf\\_Food\\_Security\\_Cocept\\_Note.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/faoitaly/documents/pdf/pdf_Food_Security_Cocept_Note.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Conceptualizing Food Security for Aboriginal People in Canada, Elaine M. Power, Canadian Journal of Public Health, 2008, accessed at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF03405452>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca/docs/social%20determinates/nccah-loppie-wien\\_report.pdf](https://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca/docs/social%20determinates/nccah-loppie-wien_report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.statsnwt.ca/Poverty%20Indicators/Poverty%20Indicators%202021.pdf>

proactively to support participation despite challenges inherent to virtual connectivity in the North.

## Participants

Over 80 delegates from across the NWT attended the virtual event. In addition to the usual Anti-Poverty partners (Indigenous governments, community governments and NGOs), other representatives from the NWT agri-food sector, grocers and the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNOR) also participated in this event.

## Data Analysis

It is important that GNWT decision-making be based on evidence supported by data. The Roundtable discussions provided valuable data that was organized into themes based on patterns of similar responses (thematic analysis) and presented in tables and graphs that provide snapshots of the Roundtable proceedings. The analyzed findings provide a summary of the valuable perspectives and observations shared in Roundtable discussions.

## Discussions

Attendees participated via short panel discussions, followed by longer breakout groups. The breakout groups were facilitated and recorded by staff from the GNWT departments of Health and Social Services (HSS); Environment and Natural Resources (ENR); Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI); Education, Culture and Employment (ECE); Department of Justice (DOJ); and Executive and Indigenous Affairs (EIA); as well as staff from Hotù Ts'eeda, the Northwest Territories SPOR (Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research) Support Unit.

Roundtable discussions were guided by the following questions:

- 1. What makes you feel food secure? What do we envision for our food system in the NWT?**
- 2. What can we do to sustain harvesting into the future?**
- 3. What does a healthy NWT agricultural sector look like?**
- 4. How can we work together to support food security/sovereignty in the NWT?**
- 5. How do we ensure that Indigenous communities define their own food systems and have control over harvesting, production, and distribution of healthy and culturally appropriate foods?**

The roundtable discussion method brings together experts working in the area of food security to share their knowledge and observations. The strength of this method is that it creates a space for understanding the many dimensions of a complex anti-poverty issue, for sharing experiences and observations that provide context for others working in the field, and for creativity and collaboration that lead to new solutions. The roundtable method does not, however, guarantee a comprehensive exploration of the topic under discussion because

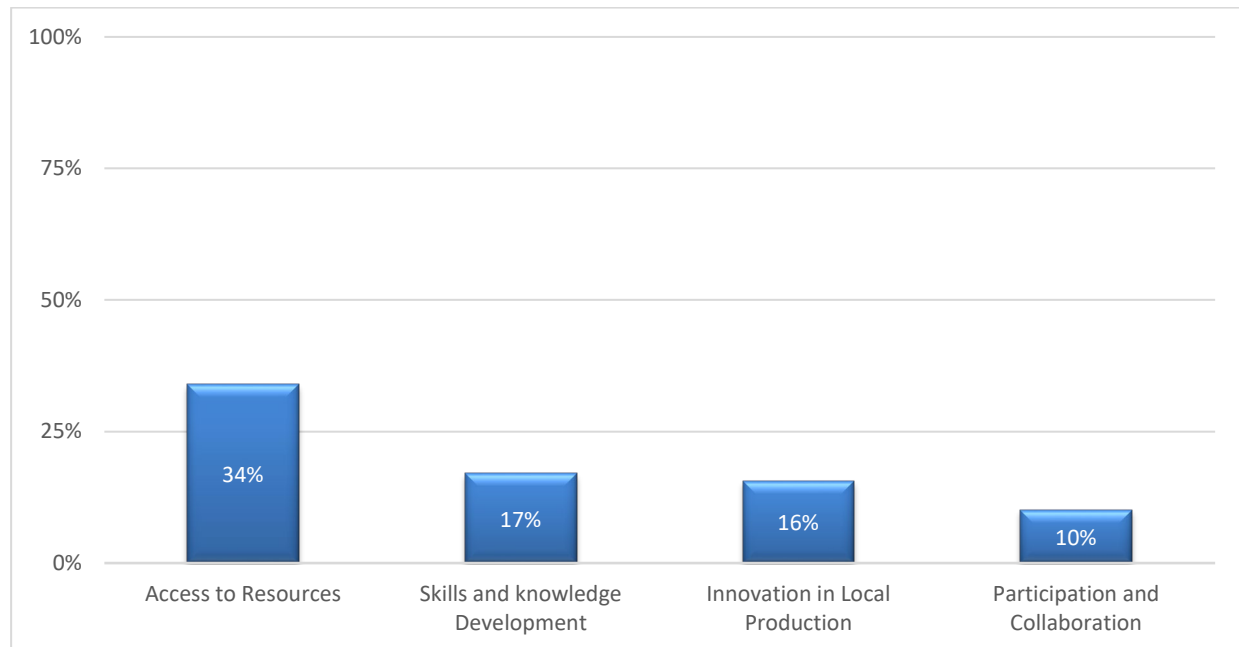
the data collected is necessarily limited to those experts who are able to attend and the flow of discussion. Since the goal of a roundtable is not necessarily to exhaustively map the field, but to leverage the knowledge and creative power of the experts in attendance, there may be aspects of the topic that are missed or not discussed.

## Findings

### I. What makes you feel food secure? What do we envision for our food system in the NWT?

The participants reflected on what being food secure meant to them, and what it looks like when territory-wide food security is achieved.. Starting with an assumption of food security as a human right, participants identified values such as **access, participation, collaboration, positive change, and building knowledge systems** as critical to their vision of food security for individuals and for the wider NWT food system.

**Figure 1: What makes you feel food secure? What do we envision for our food system in the NWT?**





## **Q1 Theme 2: Access to resources**

In response to question one, 34% of Roundtable participants identified access to resources as a key factor that makes them feel food secure and that characterizes their vision for a secure NWT food system. Participants identified a wide variety of resources that impact upon individual and food system-level food security:

- Access to space, food distribution systems, and community gardens;
- Access to funding to go out on the land, to set up greenhouses, and community co-ops;
- Access to traditional foods in grocery stores and fresh foods that are fairly priced;
- Access to infrastructure, hunting equipment, harvesting medicines, and plants.

Beyond simply making these resources available, participants advocated for accessibility of resources. Accessibility refers to the availability of resources while removing personal, social, and systemic barriers that prevent communities from being able to become food secure. Factors that facilitate access include: jobs in the agriculture sector, income, essential infrastructure, knowledge building, and communication with the government.

## **Q1 Theme 2: Skills and knowledge development**

A portion of participants identified important knowledge and skills gaps that would need to be addressed to allow individuals to become food secure and contribute to a health territorial food system. Roundtable discussions concluded that the following strategies would foster the development of the skills and knowledge that is needed to support food security in the territory:

- Providing people with resources to learn more about growing their own food;
- Harvesting and food security knowledge included in school curriculums;
- Establishing bush classrooms so knowledge holders can teach on the land skills, the process of hunting, and gathering wild plants;
- More training for adults on life skills: how to cook, preserve food, and making healthy food choices.

Providing opportunities to build these skills and knowledge would equip individuals to grow or harvest their own foods and reduce reliance on market and convenience (fast) foods.

## **Q1 Theme 3: Innovation in local production**

Participants identified local food production as a valuable component of a healthy NWT food system. Respondents envisioned a food system that uses innovative ways to grow food locally, balancing input costs and maximizing nutritious food outputs. Innovative strategies for supporting local food production included:

- Harnessing technological innovation such as growing without soil to deal with the impacts of climate change, counter harsh environmental conditions, and grow sustainable foods in the North; and

- Incorporating traditional harvesting methods.

The vision of a diverse and strong NWT food system includes innovative solutions to uniquely Northern conditions. There is a strong interest in agriculture and local food production in the NWT – for such initiatives to be successful, Northerners may need to leverage advanced scientific and technological solutions to accomplish food production goals in environments and communities that have not historically been home to cultivated agricultural food production.

### **Q1 Theme 4: Participation and collaboration**

An overall value of collaboration became a theme as participants discussed the way forward. Participants envisioned a future where food secure communities come together, collaborate, share, and build on systems that enhance the mental, social, and economic well-being of all residents. The future of food security in the NWT requires an understanding of the interdependence of communities, people, animals, and the land.

### **Q1 Other important discussions**

The Roundtable is a valuable forum to gather input from individuals with varied and unique expertise. Participants engaged in a discussion about how political support could advance food security goals by:

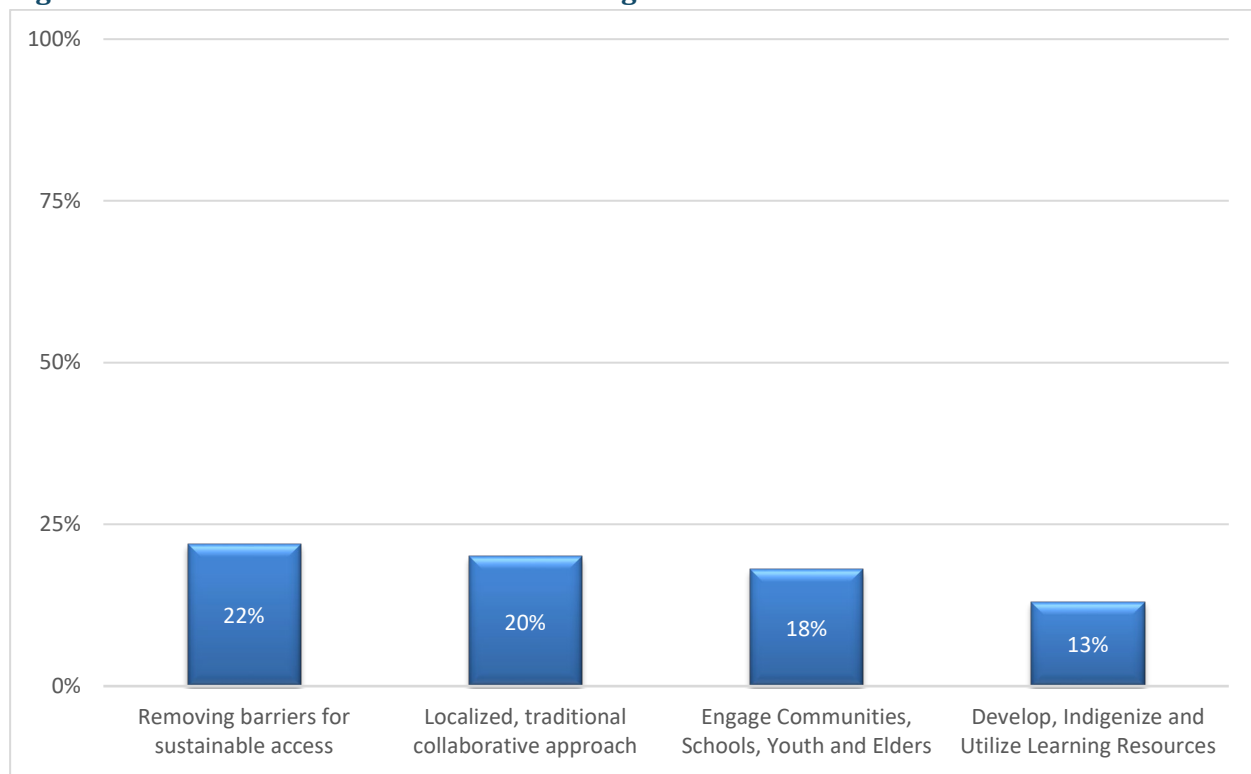
- Establishing a mandate to support commercial scale agriculture;
- Recognizing food security as a human right;
- Improving access to funding for Northern growers.

Other important discussions included how to set up an agriculture society and local, market greenhouses, how to northernize agricultural practices, and how food production and food security are impacted by climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **II. What can we do to sustain harvesting into the future?**

This question asked participants to think specifically about sustainable harvesting and what role it plays in the future of NWT food security. To sustain harvesting into the future, participants recognized the importance of honoring traditional systems of harvesting that have existed for generations. By thinking innovatively about the future of harvesting, alongside government support, communities can develop food systems that provide for everyone in a sustainable way. Participant responses can be grouped into four broad conceptual themes:

**1) removing barriers for sustainable access, 2) localized, traditional collaborative approach, 3) engage communities, schools, youth and Elders, and 4) develop, Indigenize and utilize learning resources.**

**Figure 2: What can we do to sustain harvesting into the future**

### **Q2 Theme 1: Removing barriers for sustainable access**

Participants agreed that traditional on-the-land harvesting is an important part of ensuring food security in the territory. Participants highlighted several important points of access that could support health food security for NWT residents:

- Funding for hunting infrastructure;
- Accommodations within the workplace and flexibility for work hours so that people can harvest during the day (e.g., checking fish nets during the day);
- Normalizing the distribution/selling of traditional foods in grocery stores.

While current GNWT programs are in place to improve access to traditional harvesting, it is valuable to maintain an active and ongoing conversation about how to keep these important cultural practices accessible. Accomplishing goals like access to traditional harvesting and developing an economic infrastructure for harvesting are complex and multifaceted, and should include a food security lens alongside other considerations.

### **Q2 Theme 2: Localized, traditional collaborative approach**

A few of the topics discussed under this category were:

- Teaching traditional hunting and meat processing skills.
- Involving young people and having them connect with elders to learn more about traditional harvesting skills. This also helps to pass on intergenerational knowledge.

## **Q2 Theme 3: Engage communities, schools, youth, and Elders**

Participants identified several sites and groups of community members that could be valuable in the work of improving food security for the territory. Strategies for targeting these include:

- Mentorship programs focused on harvesting, and pairing youth with elders;
- More learning opportunities that focus on involvement of the whole community, such as fish camps;
- Emphasis on intergenerational learning and immersing future generations in culture to ensure they will have the skills and knowledge to access harvesting in the future.

Participants agreed that harvesting is foundational to overall personal and community wellness, so youth, Elders, and families need to be at the forefront of this work. Relationships are foundational to ensuring family- and community-level food security.

## **Q2 Theme 4: Develop, Indigenize, and utilize learning resources**

Participants acknowledged that to include harvesting as a pillar for NWT food security, community members need to be equipped with a specific set of skills and knowledge to ensure that harvesting is accessible, sustainable, safe, and respectful. Learning resources that are rooted in local, Indigenous knowledge and traditions are critical to ensuring this accessibility and appropriate use of wild food resources. Participants identified the following strategies for providing such learning:

- Intergenerational knowledge exchange;
- On the land programming;
- Learning from community hunts;
- Full-Time hunter program in every community and expansion to other traditional food activities.

When community members are appropriately resourced with knowledge and skills to harvest in a respectful and sustainable way, it will improve food security for NWT communities.

## **Q2 Other discussions**

Sustainable harvesting is an inherent part of the traditional lifestyles of Indigenous people in the NWT and a valuable opportunity to advance food security goals, however it is also not a simple endeavour. Truly effective and sustainable harvesting requires familiarity with traditional knowledge developed over generations alongside an understanding of the modern factors that impact accessibility, appropriate use, and ensuring the future of traditional harvesting in the NWT. Participants identified several important discussions to consider when integrating traditional harvesting into the vision of NWT food security:

- Taking a holistic approach to harvesting;
- Understanding colonial history, and impact of residential schools on access;
- Engaging government to identify opportunities for support

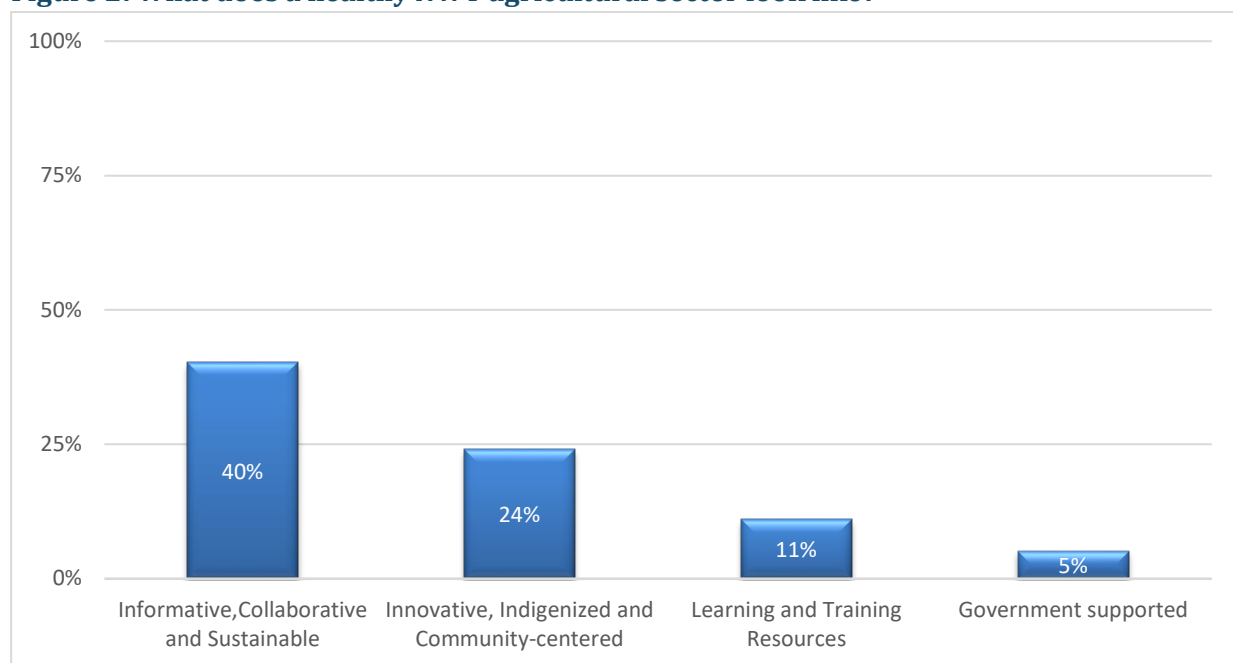
- The role of harvesting in holistic nutrition;
- Considering waste management.

In the course of their discussions, participants developed a vision of a food secure NWT that relied on harvesting as a significant pillar. Harvesting responsibly and respectfully is linked to mental well-being and understanding the role of nutrition for the overall well-being. Decolonizing, returning to land, and taking a holistic approach to harvesting are the way to move forward in achieving sustainable food security.

### III. What does a healthy NWT agricultural sector look like?

Participants reflected on what a healthy NWT agricultural sector would look like. A healthy agriculture sector has a voice and representation, is sustainable, accessible, community-centered, and supported by the government. Participant responses can be grouped into four themes: **1) informative, collaborative, and sustainable, 2) innovative, Indigenized, and community-centred, 3) learning and training resources, 4) government supported.**

**Figure 2: What does a healthy NWT agricultural sector look like?**



#### **Q3 Theme 1: Informative, collaborative, and sustainable**

The majority of participants identified a need to establish a cohesive overall approach to how an agricultural sector might function in the NWT. This approach is explicitly informative, collaborative, and sustainable. To accomplish this, participants identified the following objectives:

- Creating viable jobs in the agriculture sector;
- Improving inclusivity of gardens (e.g., growing boxes at different heights);

- Partnering with homeless shelters and individuals from the underhoused community to work in gardens, return the food yields to shelters for sharing;
- Introducing “agro -therapy” through engaging and connecting with the land.

Participants envisioned an agricultural sector that supports communities by integrating at multiple access sites to support community members that are most vulnerable to food insecurity while building local growing capacity to improve overall sustainability.

### **Q3 Theme 2: Innovative, Indigenized, and community-centered**

Participants identified some key characteristics of a healthy, successful NWT agricultural sector. It was important to participants that the priorities and objectives of the NWT agriculture sector incorporate innovation, be inherently Indigenous, and focused on community. Some of the suggestions for establishing these priorities are:

- Using traditional knowledge in agricultural practices;
- Empowering local experts (e.g., gardeners, community- run gardens) to share knowledge, resources, plants, etc. with local people (e.g., in-person or through a website);
- Encouraging synergies that support nutritious community kitchens that have access to affordable fresh food.
- Applying a culturally responsive and Anti-Poverty lens.

These key principles, when applied to the efforts undertaken by the NWT agriculture sector, will improve the success of people growing food in the NWT and ensure benefits of agricultural success contribute to community and territorial food security.

### **Q3 Theme 3: Learning and training resources**

Participants identified important areas of knowledge that need to be fostered in order to achieve a successful, healthy, productive NWT agricultural sector. Cultivating food requires resources like seeds, soil, and soil amendments that go to waste if growers do not have the knowledge and skills to make productive use of them. Directions for improving knowledge and training resources for Northerners interested in agriculture include:

- Making gardening information accessible, especially information about how best to use valuable resources like seeds and soil;
- Creating pathways to formal agricultural education opportunities at southern universities and Aurora College;
- Developing affordable, accessible training opportunities for everyday food production, preservation, and distribution that ensure community members can accomplish these tasks safely.

In order to have a healthy NWT agriculture sector, residents need to have access to the learning resources needed to work in that sector and produce food locally.

### **Q3 Theme 4: Government supported**

Participants felt that government support was needed to propel the agriculture sector to a healthy and successful status. They reported several suggestions for targeted government support:

- Better access to the Nutrition North program;
- Renewing agricultural strategy;
- Reviewing departmental policies and removing red tape;
- Developing long-term funding for food production initiatives.

With improved government initiatives, participants felt a healthy agriculture sector was possible for the NWT.

### **Q3 Other discussions**

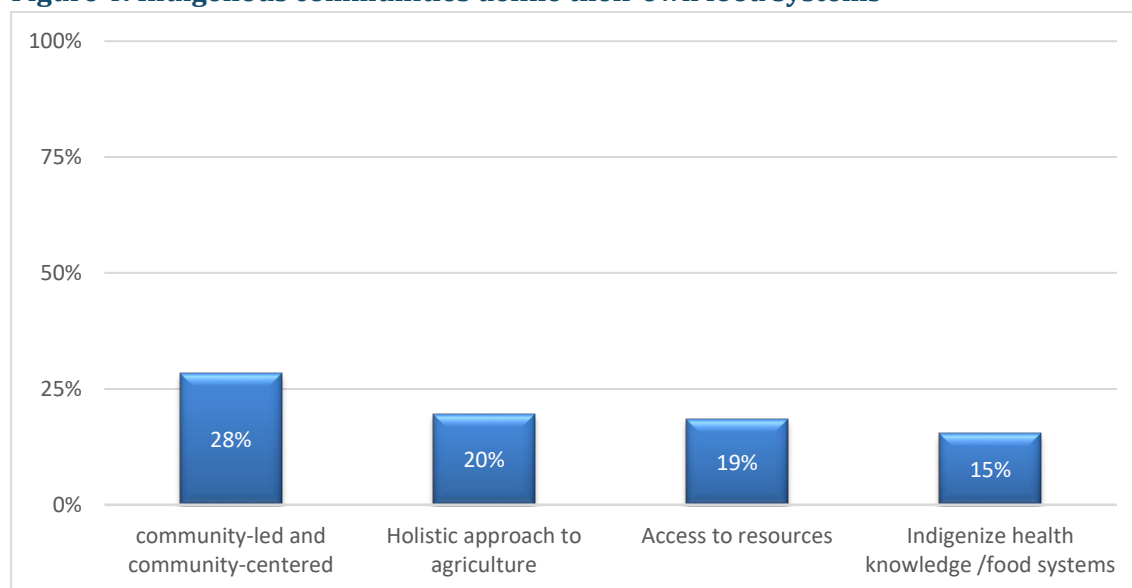
Participants identified several other opportunities to strengthen the agriculture sector in the NWT:

- Coordinate with local organizations to create uniquely northern, community-based agri-business;
- Develop a coordinated plan to reduce food wastage;
- Consider the barriers to training, start-up costs, living wages, inclusivity, and red tape and how these can be reduced or removed;
- Encourage research-based learning practices delivered through local colleges, and Elders.

The participants shared a vision of a healthy agricultural sector in which priority is given to increasing local production, there is availability of resources such as subsidies, education, and viable jobs in the sector.

## **IV. How do we ensure that Indigenous communities define their own food systems and have control over harvesting, production, and distribution of healthy and culturally appropriate foods?**

It is important that, in the enthusiasm for establishing food security strategies, Indigenous peoples and communities are respected. Participants discussed how communities can participate in defining their own food systems, and what a territory-wide approach to harvesting, production, and distribution of healthy and culturally appropriate foods looks like.

**Figure 4: Indigenous communities define their own food systems**

#### **Q4 Theme 1: Community-led and community-centered**

In order to ensure that the NWT food system reinforces Indigenous sovereignty over food, food security initiatives need to be community-led and community-centred. Participants recommended:

- Connecting with and consulting with Elders;
- Reviewing existing wellness plans to learn about community priorities;
- Reclamation of autonomy and power within governing systems.

In order for Indigenous communities to define their own food systems, the community requires constant and respectful communication with other food actors and decision makers. Communities want to feel that they are being listened to including seeing community consultations being turned into action plans. The government needs to look at what work has already been done, review community wellness plans, and conduct a community needs assessment. Completing undertaken tasks and reporting back to communities on those actions can help build accountability, connection, and trust.

#### **Q4 Theme 2: Holistic approach to agriculture**

In their discussions, participants developed a vision of food production that was holistic and interconnected. In order to ensure that Indigenous communities maintain control over local food production, other factors need to be considered and integrated into food security initiatives:

- Understanding treaty rights and honouring traditional knowledge;
- Settling land claims;
- Researching how to connect healing and wellness to access for food.



Communities also want to honour their traditional knowledge systems. Safe spaces that are also learning spaces should be created so communities can develop more knowledge about nutrition and define their own food systems.

### **Q4 Theme 3: Access to resources**

Participants observed that many NWT communities lack resources to independently support all the local food production they would like. Participants made suggestions for increasing autonomy over food production through improved access to resources:

- Providing more grants to give Indigenous people more choice - most know that they can harvest, but do not have access to equipment;
- Removing barriers to accessing traditional foods, which include no money or space, and no resources and tools.

Community expectation of government support translates to flexibility, accessibility to grants, and resources. Communities also want to build capacity, and coordinate action-oriented support.

### **Q4 Theme 4: Indigenize health knowledge and food systems**

Indigenous knowledge has a great deal to contribute to the future of food security and the food system in the NWT. Acknowledging the potential of these contributions and integrating them into food system looks like:

- Decolonizing diet and understanding traditional foods;
- Ensuring that knowledge about country foods and traditional food systems is passed on to the next generation, enabling them to carry on cultural knowledge and innovate in their own ways;
- Supporting community's rights to decide what occurs in the community;
- Advocacy on food security & traditional knowledge is just as important as other roles;
- Working collaboratively across roles.

Like any initiative in the NWT, food security work must find ways to respectfully incorporate the traditions, knowledge, and perspectives of Indigenous peoples and communities in the territory.

### **Q4 Other discussions**

This is a broad and complex question that encouraged a larger conversation about the types of support needed to ensure Indigenous people in the territory are able to actively, productively, successfully, and autonomously engage with the food system. Suggestions included:

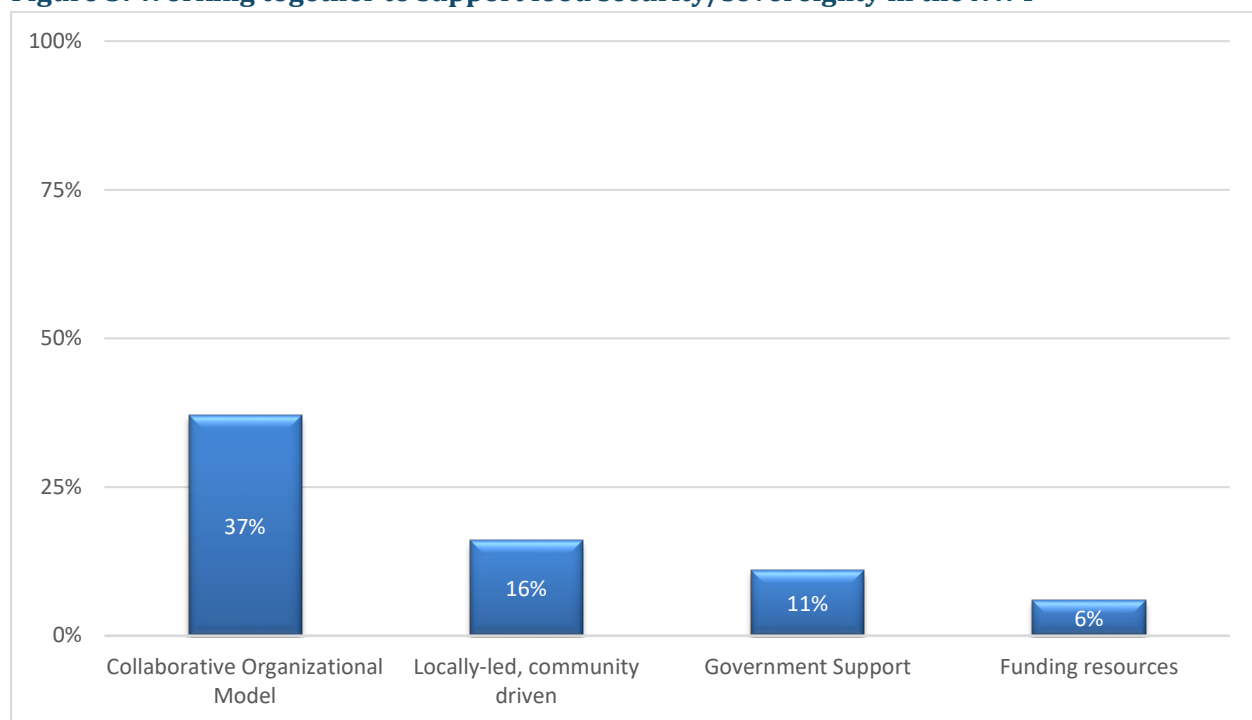
- Identifying opportunities to provide legislative support for Indigenous-led, community-level food initiatives;
- Making traditional foods more widely available

Indigenous communities want to apply Indigenous sovereignty principles to all aspects of food security, which involves wider perspectives of settling land claims and narrower perspectives of provision of traditional foods in grocery stores and charitable foods.

## V. How can we work together to support food security/sovereignty in the NWT?

Participants reflected on a collaborative approach where local organizations, communities and the GNWT can work together to support food security and sovereignty in the NWT. The themes that emerged from this discussion were **1) collaborative organizational model; 2) locally-led, community driven, 3) government support, 4) funding resources.**

**Figure 5: Working together to support food security/sovereignty in the NWT**



### Q5 Theme 1: Collaborative organizational model approach

Working together means collaborating as partners who are invested to achieve the same outcome (i.e., attaining food security for all) by providing an equitable access to resources, means and structures. Participants had several suggestions for how to implement this collaborative model:

- Establish a lead agency for dedicated coordination;
- Collaborative trade and exchange – for example, if one community has access to a resource that another does not, they can arrange trade of local resources;

- Develop a collective organization of multisectoral partners that would work to advance food sovereignty and security (eg. Like the On the Land Collaborative, but for food security);
- Examine decision-making, regulatory systems, leadership, not just distributing funds.

In pursuing these objectives, participants felt the foundation for a food secure and food sovereign NWT was possible.

### **Q5 Theme 2: Locally led, community driven**

Participants expressed a strong feeling that food sovereignty must be reinforced at the community-level. To accomplish this, the participants recommended:

- Food security should be community driven and outside of government for more integration;
- Community organizations, rather than the territorial government, should lead food security initiatives with government as a partner;
- Engage community to identify gaps and local context;
- Collaborate with Hunters and Trappers Associations (HTA) and other community committees and boards.

By integrating food security initiatives into community life, communities are able to take ownership of food solutions, take advantage of existing synergies, and make decisions based on local context and expertise. Participants agreed that this was an opportunity to strengthen food security in the territory and promote food sovereignty in the NWT.

### **Q5 Theme 3: Government Support**

Achieving food security in the NWT requires a balanced approach that considers how harvesters, consumers, and government partners can contribute. Participants had specific feedback for how government could better work with other partners towards food security and sovereignty:

- Be willing to make changes to regulations, strategies, and understanding based on input from partners to explore creative solution (eg. designated hunter programs);
- Actively work to remove red tape;
- Implement the Action Plan.

With government support that is nimble, adaptive, and community-forward, participants felt food security would be achievable in NWT communities.

## **Q5 Theme 4: Funding resources**

There is a fundamental need for more programming that is supportive of community food security. For such programming to be realized, funding opportunities need to a) exist and b) be accessible to community members. The Roundtable participants agreed that:

- Community hunts need funding;
- More effort must be made to increase awareness of available funding;
- Assistance with preparing proposals is needed for harvesters and other community members to access funding.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of the 2021 Anti-Poverty Roundtable discussion was to foster collaborative engagement to discuss how to collectively address food insecurity in the NWT. Participants' responses highlighted that access to resources, use of collaborative approaches that are community-centered, establishing learning and knowledge development systems (with government support), and encouraging sustainable growth-based practices are key steps needed to attain outcomes related to food security.

Food systems that serve the NWT require innovative approaches where use of traditional knowledge is balanced with technological knowledge needed to establish innovative mechanisms for food production. Establishing a healthy and sustainable agriculture sector in the NWT involves honouring all forms of knowledge; engaging in collaboration with communities, schools, Elders, and youth; and establishing spaces for communities to come together to learn and share nutrition related knowledge.

The discussions at the Roundtable reflect some of the top concerns and ideas from experts in food security from across the NWT. We acknowledge that, while there were many organizations in attendance, representing diverse populations and many forms of experience and expertise around the table, there are perspectives that may not be represented in the discussions and issues that could not be fully addressed as part of the Roundtable. Future food security work should consider the range of population groups that may be at greater risk of food insecurity – for example the underhoused population, new Canadians, and other minority groups – to ensure their unique needs and perspectives are acknowledged and understood.

Food security is a universal human right, and there is work that needs to be done in the NWT. Actions such as conducting community needs assessments, establishing of a food security committee, and flexible government support for funding resources are some of the ways to move forward in taking steps towards food security in the NWT. The GNWT is committed to further exploring these recommended actions and to updating Roundtable participants on progress.

## Appendix A: List of Participating Organizations

- Fort Good Hope Renewable Resources Council
- Foster Family Coalition of the NWT
- Inuvik Community Greenhouse
- YWCA NWT
- NWT Seniors' Society
- Yellowknives Dene First Nation
- Riverside Growers
- Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty
- Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
- Yellowknife Farmers Market
- Jean Marie River First Nation
- NWT Human Rights Commission
- Deline Renewable Resources Council
- Native Women's Association of the NWT
- Children First Society
- NWT Association of Communities
- Dept of Executive & Indigenous Affairs
- NWT Disabilities Council
- NTHSSA
- Fireweed Farm
- Arctic Co-operatives Ltd.
- Liidlii Kue First Nation
- Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, Community, Collaborative
- Food Rescue Yellowknife
- Aimayunga Women's Shelter
- GNWT - ENR
- Aurora Honey
- GNWT - HSS
- Dehcho First Nations
- MakeWay Charitable Society
- Food First Foundation
- Inuvik Youth Centre
- Choice North Farms
- City of Yellowknife
- Status of Women Council of the NWT
- Government of Nunavut  
Nunavut Food Security Coalition
- Gwichya Gwich'in Council
- Anti-Poverty Advisory Committee
- Fort Good Hope Renewable Resources Council
- Hay River Committee for Persons with Disabilities

- Inuvik Emergency Warming Centre Society
- Arctic Co-operatives Ltd.
- Deline Got'ine Government
- NWT Literacy Council
- The Salvation Army NWT Resource Centre  
Alternatives North
- Northern Farm Training Institute
- GNWT - MACA
- Ulukhaktok Community Corp
- Territorial Agrifood Association
- Dene Nahjo
- Hay River Committee for Persons with Disabilities
- Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation
- Madeline Lake Market Garden
- Conseil de développement économique des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (CDETNO)
- Yellowknife Women's Society
- Horticulture Health
- Ecology North
- Rainbow Coalition
- Tlicho Government
- EIEIO Farm
- Le Refuge Farm
- Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
- The North West Company
- West Point First Nation
- Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
- NWT Recreation and Parks Assoc
- Family Support Centre
- National Nutrition Advisory
- Rio Tinto Diavik Diamond Mine
- Katlodeeche First Nation
- Fort Fitzgerald Gardens
- Nature United

# Appendix B: Virtual Anti-Poverty Roundtable Agenda

## Virtual Anti-Poverty Roundtable

### Agenda

January 26-27, 2021

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://pido-ca.zoom.us/j/85600934568>

Meeting ID: 856 0093 4568

| DAY 1 – JAN 26 |                           |  |
|----------------|---------------------------|--|
| Time           | Subject                   | Lead   |
| 9:30 AM        | Login                     |  |
| 10:00 AM       | Opening Prayer            | Pat Martel   |
| 10:05 AM       | Welcome                   | Honourable Julie Green<br><i>Minister of Health and Social Services</i>  |
| 10:20 AM       | GNWT Food Security Update | Bruce Cooper, <i>Deputy Minister, HSS</i><br>Pamela Strand, <i>Deputy Minister, ITI</i><br>Sylvia Haener, <i>Deputy Minister, Lands</i><br>Erin Kelly, <i>Deputy Minister, ENR</i><br>Tom Williams, <i>President CEO, NWTHC</i><br>Rita Mueller, <i>Deputy Minister, ECE</i><br>Shawn McCann, <i>Deputy Secretary, EIA</i> |
| 10:45 AM       | Break                     | Video starting at 10:59 AM<br><i>Dehcho First Nations: Dechǵtah T'ahsú Nezhéh Met'áhodézá – Plant Wisdom</i>   |
| 11:05 AM       | Visioning Panel           | 1. Sara Brown, <i>NWT Association of Communities</i><br>2. Earl Evans, <i>Beverly Qamanirjuaq Caribou</i>  |

| DAY 1 – JAN 26 |  |   |
|----------------|--|---|
| Time           | Subject                                | Lead  |
|                |  | <i>Management Board</i>   |
| 11:30 AM       | Breakout Groups                        |   |
| 12:10 AM       | Lunch                                  | <p>Videos starting at 12:28 PM</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>ENR: Caribou Hunters</i></li> <li>2. <i>Wild Kitchen: Hunting in the Delta</i></li> </ol>   |
| 1:10 PM        | Plenary                                | <i>Deneze Nakehk'o, Moderator</i>   |
| 1:30 PM        | From the Land: Traditional Foods Panel | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Steve Ellis &amp; Lori Tagoona, MakeWay, Full Time Hunter and Steward Program</i></li> <li>2. <i>Daniel Jackson &amp; Chris Pereira, Fort Good Hope Renewable Resources Board, community hunts with youth and mobile meat processing unit</i></li> </ol> |
| 1:50 PM        | Breakout Groups                        |   |
| 2:30 PM        | Break                                  | <p>Video Starting at 2:44 PM</p> <p><i>Dehcho First Nations: Golᑭᑭᑭᑭ – Moose Hide</i></p>   |
| 3:50 PM        | Plenary                                | <i>Deneze Nakehk'o, Moderator</i>   |
| 4:10 PM        | End of Day                             |   |



| DAY 2 – JAN 27 |                                   |  |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Time           | Subject                           | Lead   |
| 9:30 AM        | Login                             |  |
| 10:00 AM       | Welcome                           | Deneze Nakehk'o, <i>Moderator</i>  |
| 10:10 AM       | Growing Innovation Panel          | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Amy Lemay, <i>NWT Agri-Food Association</i></li> <li>2. Ray Solotki, <i>Inuvik Greenhouse</i></li> <li>3. Daniel Allaire, <i>Aurora Honey</i></li> </ol> |
| 10:30 AM       | Breakout Groups                   |  |
| 11:10 AM       | Break                             | Video starting at 11:16 AM<br><i>NA-TAS-KEK: Reconnecting with Mother Earth</i>  |
| 11:30 AM       | Plenary                           | Deneze Nakehk'o, <i>Moderator</i>  |
| 12:00 PM       | Lunch                             | Videos starting at 12:16 PM<br><i>Wild Kitchen:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lesson in Pemmican</li> <li>2. Farming and Foraging</li> </ol>                                       |
| 1:00 PM        | Indigenous Food Sovereignty Panel | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Karen Blondin-Hall, <i>Cultural Safety, HSS</i></li> <li>2. Dawn Morrison, <i>Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty</i></li> </ol>                |
| 1:20 PM        | Breakout Groups                   |  |
| 2:00 PM        | Break                             | Video starting at 2:15 PM  |

| DAY 2 – JAN 27 |                                |  |
|----------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Time           | Subject                        | Lead   |
|                |                                | <i>YK Food Rescue: How to Food Rescue</i>  |
| 2:20 PM        | Plenary                        | Deneze Nakehk'o, <i>Moderator</i>  |
| 2:40 PM        | Collaborative Approaches Panel | <p>a) Mona Duale, <i>Nunavut Food Security Coalition</i></p> <p>2. Julie Price, Nicole Lamy and Alexandria Moodie, <i>Northern Manitoba Food, Community and Culture Collaborative</i></p> <p>3. France Benoit &amp; Tracey Williams, <i>Yellowknife Food Charter</i></p> |
| 3:00 PM        | Breakout Groups                |  |
| 3:40 PM        | Plenary Session and Wrap up    | Deneze Nakehk'o, <i>Moderator</i>  |
| 4:05 PM        | Closing Prayer                 | Elder Pat Martel   |
| 4:10 PM        | End of Day                     |  |

## Appendix C: Analysis and Methodology

These questions were designed by [the Food Security Working Group](#). The content or the data from those questions' discussions is thematically analyzed in the following way:

- The data is organized in a spreadsheet per question.
- The responses are studied to identify over-arching themes.
- The data is coded per theme to calculate how many responses fall under a particular theme to assign importance (based on frequency) to a theme.
- The responses that did not fall under a theme are categorized under the “other” category.

### Limitations

Some messages noted in the sticky notes were not readable, and thus were excluded from the analysis.

It is also recommended that for future discussions, one question is asked per question.

## Appendix D: Other Related Resources

### Documents

- [Working Together II: An Action Plan to Reduce and Eliminate Poverty in the Northwest Territories 2019-2022](#)
- [Report on Progress Under the Strategic Framework to Reduce Poverty in the NWT: 2013-2018](#)
- [Sustainable Livelihoods Action Plan](#)
- [Agriculture Strategy](#)

### Video Resources

- Dehcho First Nations: [\*Dechı́tah T'ahsı́ Nezhéh Met'áhodézá – Plant Wisdom\*](#)
- ENR [\*Caribou Hunters\*](#)
- [\*Wild Kitchen: Hunting in the Delta; Lesson in Pemmican; and Farming and Foraging\*](#)
- Dehcho First Nations: [\*Golqdhéh – Moose Hide\*](#)
- Northern Manitoba Food, Community and Culture Collaborative: [\*NA-TAS-KEK: Reconnecting with Mother Earth\*](#)
- Food Rescue Yellowknife: [\*Food Rescue\*](#)

## Appendix E: Responses by Question

A total of approximately 922<sup>7</sup> responses were recorded.

**Table 3: Total responses analyzed**

| Question     | Total number of responses |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| 1            | 218                       |
| 2            | 174                       |
| 3            | 154                       |
| 4            | 194                       |
| 5            | 182                       |
| <b>Total</b> | 922                       |

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<sup>6</sup>Conceptualizing Food Security for Aboriginal People in Canada, Elaine M