



Inuit Nunangat Food Security Strategy

July 2021

About Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) is the national representative organization for Inuit in Canada, the majority of whom live in Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland encompassing 51 communities across the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador). Inuit Nunangat makes up nearly one-third of Canada's landmass and 50% of its coastline. The voting members of the ITK Board of Directors are democratically elected by the beneficiaries of their respective land claims agreements, and Directors in turn elect the ITK president. ITK therefore represents the rights and interests of Inuit at the national level through a democratic governance structure that represents all Inuit regions. ITK advocates for policies, programs, and services to address the priorities identified by our people.

ITK's Board of Directors are as follows:

- Chair and CEO, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
- President, Makivik Corporation
- President, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
- President, Nunatsiavut Government

In addition to voting members, the following non-voting Permanent Participant Representatives also sit on the Board:

- President, Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada
- President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
- President, National Inuit Youth Council

Vision

Canadian Inuit are prospering through unity and self-determination.

Mission

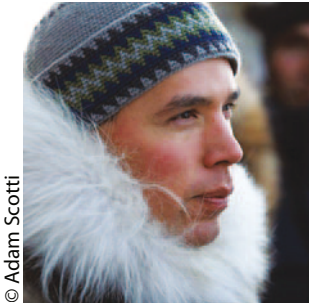
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is the national voice for protecting and advancing the rights and interests of Inuit in Canada.



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Letter from ITK's President



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Too many Inuit struggle to get enough food to eat. The food insecurity and poverty many Inuit experience stems from the combined historical and present-day effects of colonialism, systemic racism, and structural inequity in Canada. Living through food insecurity is to be in daily crisis and trying to manage through food insecurity can lead to long-term physical and psychological trauma. Far too many Inuit grow up intimately familiar with such trauma and its lifelong impacts. We have the ability to address food insecurity in our population, especially considering how much food wealth exists in Canada.

The current way food systems function across Inuit Nunangat directly contributes to food insecurity. Government policies, programs, and monetary investments have an incredible impact on food choices, food availability, and food prices in our communities. It is my hope that this strategy can lead to changes in this system that is a key driver for food insecurity amongst Inuit.

Inuit food insecurity is not a new issue, and it amounts to a shameful human rights violation that Canada is legally obligated to remedy. Governments have stood by for far too long, prioritizing incremental actions and investments that do not remedy the root causes of food insecurity.

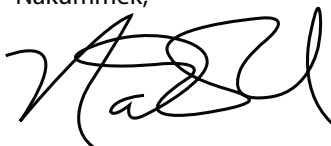
Inuit have helped document the high prevalence of food insecurity in our communities for at least a decade in an effort to galvanize the transformative actions required to improve access to food. Grassroots movements in Inuit Nunangat, such as the Nunavut-based Feeding My Family, have succeeded in focusing national attention on this issue. However, not enough has changed as a result of these efforts and too many of our people continue to struggle. This reality is unacceptable and must be changed.

The *Inuit Nunangat Food Security Strategy* (INFSS) identifies drivers of food insecurity that are common to all regions of Inuit Nunangat. It sets out the coordinated actions required to address the interrelated drivers of food insecurity, such as poverty, high living costs, climate change, and contaminants. The INFSS calls for actions to strengthen Inuit control over the governance of our food system through national policies, programs, and initiatives that provide direct supports for the local and regional Inuit-driven initiatives that can make a difference. Furthermore, the Strategy identifies ways to support the development of an Inuit Nunangat food system that more closely reflects the realities and priorities of Inuit communities.

The scope and complexity of food insecurity in Inuit Nunangat must be met with ambitious and coordinated solutions that address all drivers of Inuit food insecurity. This Strategy is a blueprint for action whose implementation can help improve food security in our communities. The Strategy's release is an important milestone; however, achieving this goal will require sustained support from governments and other partners.

Many people have contributed to the development of this Strategy and I am grateful for their work and expertise. It was developed through the National Inuit Food Security Working Group, whose regional representatives have worked on the front lines of food insecurity challenges for many years.

Nakummek,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Natan Obed', written over a white background.

Natan Obed



Executive Summary

The Inuit Nunangat Food Security Strategy (INFSS) advances Inuit-driven solutions for improving food security and creating a sustainable food system in Inuit Nunangat. Our vision is to end hunger and support Inuit food sovereignty throughout Inuit Nunangat by helping to develop a sustainable food system that reflects our societal values, supports our well-being, and ensures our access to affordable, nutritious, safe, and culturally preferred foods.

The right of all people to adequate food is a human right that Canada is obligated to implement as a party to multiple, binding, international conventions placing legal obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill this right. Canada has also committed to achieving the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include goals to end hunger and poverty. And the SDGs inform Canada's *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, a roadmap for the sustainable development of Inuit Nunangat and the northern regions of Canada. However, no corresponding federal food security or poverty reduction programs, policies, or initiatives are in place in Inuit Nunangat that are ambitious enough to achieve these commitments. As a result, the unacceptably high prevalence of food insecurity among Inuit remains largely overlooked by governments.

The high prevalence of food insecurity among Inuit is among the longest lasting public health crises faced by a Canadian population. Moreover, Inuit face the highest documented prevalence of food insecurity of any Indigenous people living in a developed country. This crisis not only reflects the significant challenges experienced within our food system but also the gravity of compounding social and health inequities that persist among our people. Multiple interrelated factors including poverty, high cost of living, climate change, inadequate infrastructure, intergenerational trauma, and systemic racism contribute to Inuit food insecurity.

Governments must take action to end this crisis by partnering with Inuit to improve food security in Inuit Nunangat. Action and investments are needed to support harvesting activities and Inuit wildlife management decision-making, to subsidize and regulate food transportation, to support regional food production through the development of local food markets, as well as to develop effective public policy initiatives, food security programs, and interventions. Partnerships between Inuit, governments, and research institutions are necessary to monitor the effectiveness and impacts of such measures, protect our health from contaminants, and support the development of new initiatives focused on the most vulnerable members of our society.

Ambitious and coordinated action within the following five priority areas is necessary to address the drivers of food insecurity: research and advocacy; food system and well-being; legislation and policy; programs and services; and knowledge and skills. The INFSS identifies objectives and actions within each priority area that must be advanced by Inuit in partnership with governments, academic institutions, and other partners.

Introduction

The *Inuit Nunangat Food Security Strategy* (INFSS) identifies the coordinated actions required to improve food security among Inuit in Inuit Nunangat. Inuit experience the highest documented prevalence of food insecurity of any Indigenous people living in a developed country.¹ This means that at any given time, many families struggle to access sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs, as well as their food preferences for a healthy and active life.

The high prevalence of food insecurity among our people is one of the longest lasting public health crises faced by a Canadian population and is a distressing indicator of the numerous, interconnected social and economic inequities experienced by too many Inuit. Poverty, inadequate and crowded housing, low educational attainment and employment are just some of the examples of these inequities. Climate change contributes to food insecurity and other social and economic inequities by making harvesting activities more expensive, unpredictable, and dangerous. These social determinants of health are highly interconnected and have a direct impact on food insecurity in our communities. In Inuit Nunangat, Inuit adults who have children, are unemployed, or live in crowded housing are disproportionately affected. Single mothers, in particular, face multiple barriers to securing food for their families.

Although Inuit experienced periods of food scarcity in the past, prolonged hunger was rare. Our ancestors thrived in our environment and were self-reliant, moving between seasonal camps to harvest food throughout the year. The Inuit Nunangat food system underwent remarkable changes beginning in the early 1900s through multiple colonial policies and initiatives that altered Inuit society. Colonial policies, such as relocations, settlement programs, and residential schooling curtailed Inuit mobility and in some cases prevented participation in harvesting activities and the transfer of essential life skills, at the same time limiting Inuit self-determination in the development of the Inuit Nunangat food system. Once Inuit moved into permanent year-round settlements, strict harvesting regulations and the culling of Inuit sled dogs in some regions had a dramatic impact on the ability of Inuit to remain self-reliant on harvested foods, limiting Inuit self-determination in the Inuit Nunangat food system, and this is a reality that persists today.

The INFSS identifies the national actions necessary to help improve food security throughout Inuit Nunangat. It sets the foundation for achieving Inuit self-determination and food sovereignty. Inuit food sovereignty is achieved when our people are able to freely define the policies shaping the Inuit Nunangat food system so that it reflects our food priorities and preferences. It is achieved by strengthening Inuit self-determination in all aspects of the Inuit Nunangat food system.

The INFSS complements and builds upon Inuit-led regional food security initiatives and promotes the interventions needed to support vulnerable individuals and households.² Implementation of the INFSS is intended to be advanced in partnership with governments. The INFSS does not directly address the unique challenges faced by urban Inuit experiencing food insecurity.

The INFSS is organized into two parts. Part 1 provides information about food insecurity prevalence, the Inuit Nunangat food system, and the drivers of food insecurity. It identifies evidence-based interventions for supporting vulnerable families and their potential application in Inuit communities. Part 2 connects this information to five priority areas for action and investment, as well as corresponding objectives and actions for improving food security and supporting food sovereignty.



Part I: Vision and context

Part I of the INFSS sets out the vision and rationale for developing the strategy. It identifies the interrelated drivers of food insecurity among Inuit as well as solutions for improving food security and supporting food sovereignty. It also includes information about work underway in each of the four regions of Inuit Nunangat and highlights examples of positive measures taken in other jurisdictions that can inform this important work.

Vision

We envision ending hunger and advancing Inuit food sovereignty throughout Inuit Nunangat by securing a sustainable food system that reflects our societal values, supports our well-being, and ensures our access to affordable, nutritious, safe, and culturally preferred foods.

Why we need an Inuit Nunangat Food Security Strategy

The high prevalence of food insecurity among Inuit is a complex national public health crisis that can only be remedied through coordinated actions undertaken by multiple partners. The drivers of food insecurity are interconnected. Addressing them requires innovative actions and investments that can only be coordinated through a national strategy. The INFSS serves three main functions:

1. To create a common national understanding of the prevalence of food insecurity among Inuit and its impacts on health and well-being.
2. To facilitate a common national understanding of the drivers of food insecurity among Inuit and the policy solutions that can help ensure all Inuit families are able to meet their needs.
3. To coordinate measurable actions by governments, Inuit, and stakeholders in the Inuit Nunangat food system to improve food security among our people.

The INFSS allows Inuit to work together using a strengths-based approach that builds on existing food security measures. Improving food security is a shared priority across Inuit Nunangat, and the INFSS identifies solutions that can be tailored to the unique circumstances of each Inuit Nunangat region.

Defining food security

The INFSS adopts the most widely used and accepted definition of food security developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations:

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.³

The strategy applies this definition to the unique circumstances facing Inuit. These circumstances include the uniqueness of the Inuit Nunangat food system, which incorporates harvested foods and store-bought foods. The centrality of harvested foods to our culture and way of life, as well as for meeting our dietary needs and food preferences, are also distinct aspects of this food system.

The right to adequate food is a human right

The right to adequate food and to be free from hunger is a fundamental human right affirmed in multiple human rights instruments, and the Government of Canada is obligated to respect, promote, and uphold this right. The Government of Canada ratified the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* in 1976, a binding international treaty that affirms the right to adequate food under Article 11:

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.⁴

The Committee responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Covenant has clarified the meaning of the right to adequate food as follows:

The availability of food in a quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals, free from adverse substances, and acceptable within a given culture;
The accessibility of such food in ways that are sustainable and that do not interfere with the enjoyment of other human rights.⁵

Canada has also committed to respecting, promoting, and upholding the right to food through a number of other treaties. The *Convention on the Rights of the Child*⁶ was ratified by Canada in 1991 and Article 24 affirms the right of every child to adequate nutritious foods. In 1981, Canada ratified the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination Against Women*,⁷ whose preamble recognizes that women living in poverty have the least access to food, health, education, training and opportunities for employment and other needs. In addition, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*,⁸ adopted by Canada in 2016, outlines the rights of Indigenous peoples to live in dignity, to maintain and strengthen our culture and traditions, and to self-determination.

Canada's failure to uphold the right to adequate food has been scrutinized by the international community. The 2012 Mission to Canada Report of the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the right to food highlights the high prevalence of food insecurity among Inuit, and links experiences of historical trauma and marginalization among Indigenous peoples with food insecurity and poverty. The Rapporteur recommended that Canada formulate a comprehensive rights-based national food strategy.⁹



Inuit Nunangat food system

The Inuit Nunangat food system encompasses the infrastructure, environmental factors, policies, and regulatory practices that influence the quality, costs, and availability of food throughout Inuit Nunangat. It includes the supply chains and retailers involved in transporting food to our communities, as well as the organizations and community networks involved in the harvesting, trade, regulation, and distribution of country foods and locally grown foods. Country foods are all animal, plant, and fish species that are harvested by Inuit, whether or not they are commercially harvested or sold. Local food cultivation is an emerging but relatively small component of the food system while country food harvesting is considerably more prominent. The growing number of local food production initiatives include community greenhouses, hydroponic containers, local food processing, and experimental initiatives focused on raising livestock, establishing fish hatcheries, and encouraging household gardens.

The Inuit Nunangat food system is unique in Canada because Inuit families rely on harvested foods as well as store-bought foods to meet our needs. It is also unique because of the influence of geography and the environment on the availability, quality, storage, and distribution of store-bought foods that, with the exception of two communities, must all be transported by air year-round or by sea during the short shipping season. As a result, our food system does not necessarily reflect the food preferences of the Inuit majority population, nor does it necessarily have the best interests of Inuit consumers in mind.

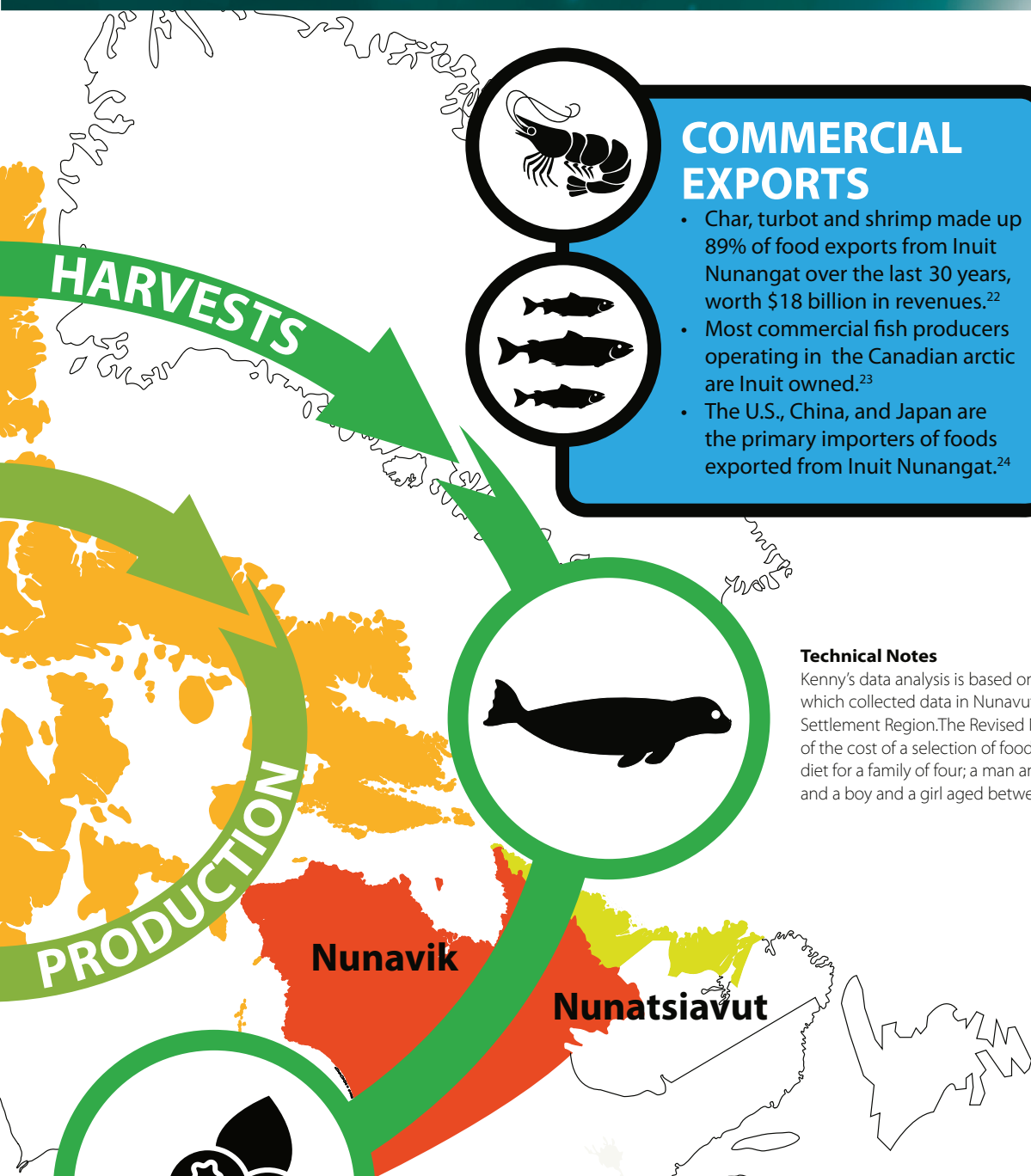
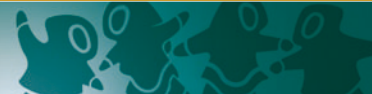
The structure of our food system influences the types of food available to our households and how they are acquired. The food system has three main streams: a) country food harvesting, b) commercial harvesting, and c) store-bought foods (see Appendix A: Commercial food distribution in Inuit Nunangat).

a) Country food harvesting

Harvested foods (also referred to as country food or wild foods) are a pillar of Inuit culture, identity, and health and are a major source of food. In Inuit Nunangat, most of our people hunt, fish, or trap and almost half gather wild plants or berries.¹⁰ Harvested foods are an essential component of our physical and mental health, well-being, and spiritual sustenance and are demonstrably superior in nutritional value and quality.¹¹ Analyses of the monetary value of harvested foods in Nunavut suggest that country food harvesting enables tens of millions of dollars in household savings when comparing harvested protein to store-bought sources of protein.¹² Inuit harvesting rights and the associated bodies that regulate and monitor harvesting activities are affirmed in Inuit–Crown land claims agreements. In the absence of local harvesting activities, the commercial food sector would not be able to meet the cultural or food needs of our people. The harvesting, preparation, and sharing of country foods fulfill profound cultural food needs that commercial sales cannot. Country foods are shared and informally sold, with a limited quantity available in institutional and retail settings in some communities.

Figure 1: Inuit Food Supply Dynamics





COMMERCIAL EXPORTS

- Char, turbot and shrimp made up 89% of food exports from Inuit Nunangat over the last 30 years, worth \$18 billion in revenues.²²
- Most commercial fish producers operating in the Canadian arctic are Inuit owned.²³
- The U.S., China, and Japan are the primary importers of foods exported from Inuit Nunangat.²⁴

Technical Notes

Kenny's data analysis is based on the 2007–2008 Inuit Health Survey which collected data in Nunavut, Nunatsiavut, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. The Revised Northern Food Basket is an estimate of the cost of a selection of food items intended to provide a nutritious diet for a family of four; a man and a woman aged between 31 and 50, and a boy and a girl aged between 9 and 13.

Nunavik

Nunatsiavut

COUNTRY FOOD HARVESTS

- 85% of Inuit 15 years and older in Inuit Nunangat hunt, fish or trap, and 47% gather wild plants.²⁵
- Country foods make up a significant proportion (23–52%) of the protein and 18–82% of various micronutrients including, but not limited to iron, niacin, and vitamins D, B6 and B12.²⁶
- Caribou meat was the #1 source of protein and iron for most Inuit until recent severe caribou population declines.²⁷

Inuit land claims agreements give Inuit the right to sustainably manage our natural resources and our food supply. Our country food harvesting economy includes not only our country food harvesting activities but also our processing, commercial production and distribution, and culturally based sharing networks. The Inuit country food economy lies at the core of our cultural identity and our local food systems. Our country food harvesting economy also strengthens our local economies where country food processing creates by-products, such as hides, skins, bones, tusks, and antlers, that are essential for Inuit clothing production, as well as the Inuit craft and art sectors.

b) Commercial harvesting

Inuit Nunangat is a food-producing region and is the source for a significant volume of food exported to commercial markets abroad. Between 1988 and 2017, nearly 3.5 million tonnes of seafood—mainly shrimp, halibut, and Arctic char—were exported from Inuit Nunangat, adding approximately \$600 million per year to the Canadian economy. In 2017 alone, the value of seafood exports from Inuit Nunangat was \$709 million.²⁸ Most of the fisheries involved in commercial harvesting activities are owned by Inuit and centred in Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut. In some cases, a portion of revenues are fed back into local and regional subsistence fisheries and the operation of hunting, fishing, and trapping organizations.

In Nunavut, harvested foods are also commercially processed and sold directly to consumers by some independent retailers, such as Kivalliq Arctic Foods (Rankin Inlet, Nunavut) and Nunavut Country Foods (Iqaluit, Nunavut). However, harvested foods are not integrated into the supply chains of the main food retailers operating in our communities. The widespread commercial sale of harvested foods within Inuit communities is not currently supported by existing infrastructure and the supply chains required to support region-wide or Inuit Nunangat-wide economies of scale. Current food safety regulations are not adapted to the context of Inuit country food systems, and the commercial harvest and sale of country foods is an ongoing topic of debate, where segments of our society perceive it as contrary to Inuit traditions and identity and/or is illegal in certain contexts.²⁹

c) Store-bought foods

Store-bought foods are flown into our communities year-round and shipped during the ice-free summer months, with the exception of the two Inuit communities on the road system. The most frequently consumed store-bought foods in our communities are of relatively low nutritional value when compared to our nutrient-dense country foods. (Figure 1: *Inuit food supply dynamics*). Prices of store-bought foods in Inuit communities tend to be several times higher than the cost of the same products in most other parts of Canada. Pricing is influenced by fluctuating transportation costs associated with energy prices, weather delays, infrastructure challenges, and competing cargo priorities. The unique transportation and storage challenges faced by retailers and shippers has an impact on their business models and the cost of store-bought foods. Some shippers and retailers are Inuit-owned allowing some community influence on buying practices. For example, in Nunavik, La Fédération des Coopératives du Nouveau-Québec (FCNQ) orders many of its food items based on local Inuit co-operative members' requests and preferences.



Prevalence of food insecurity among Inuit

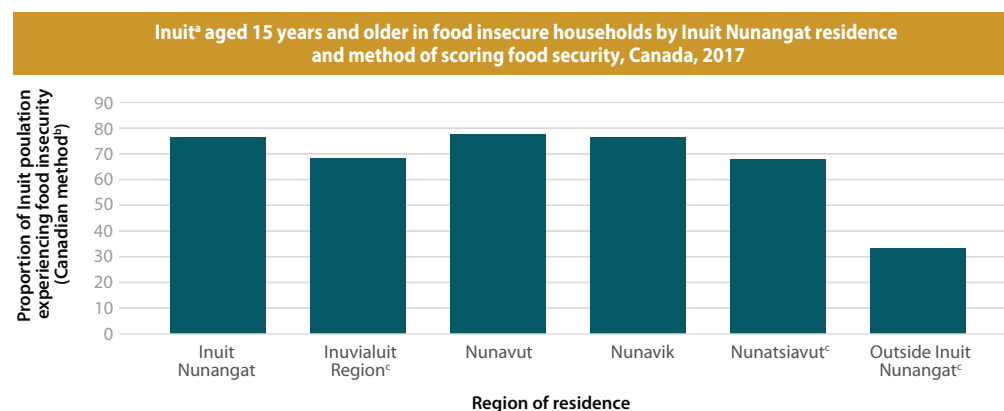
The prevalence of food insecurity among Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat is extraordinarily high. Food insecurity prevalence refers to the proportion of a population that reports experiencing food insecure states for a specified duration of time. Food insecurity encompasses different states that range from not having the ability to afford a balanced diet, persistent worrying about not being able to access food, missing meals, or not eating for days at a time. Food insecurity prevalence data on Inuit households does not tend to be uniform across all four Inuit regions or readily comparable with food insecurity prevalence data from other populations or jurisdictions due to variance in the research methods.³⁰

Inuit are remedying this situation by gathering our own Inuit health data through the Qanuippitaa? National Inuit Health Survey.³¹ In the future, the survey will allow us to monitor how Inuit across Inuit Nunangat experience food insecurity at a local and regional levels, as well as to gain a greater appreciation of how women and children, in particular, are disproportionately affected.

Current data and research on food insecurity among Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat is limited. The 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) carried out by Statistics Canada (Figure 2: *Prevalence of Inuit food insecurity in Inuit Nunangat*) is the most recent source of uniform data on food insecurity prevalence among Inuit. However, APS data are not directly comparable to other sources of national food security data, limiting our understanding of how food insecurity prevalence among our people may be changing in relation to national trends.³²

According to the 2017 APS, 76% of Inuit aged 15 and over living in Inuit Nunangat are experiencing food insecurity when taking into account “marginal,” “low,” and “very low” food security states. The 2017 APS also showed that 43.9% of respondents reported having moderate food security while 32.4% reported having very low food security. The prevalence of food insecurity is highest in Nunavut (77.6%) and Nunavik (77.3%) and somewhat lower in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (68.5%) and Nunatsiavut (68.4%). Food insecurity has also been shown to vary significantly between communities within the same region.³³

Figure 2: Prevalence of Inuit food insecurity in Inuit Nunangat³⁴



^a Inuit refers to individuals who identified only as Inuk (Inuit) or who identified as Inuk (Inuit) with other Indigenous identity(ies).
^b In addition to combining “low food security” and “very low food security,” the Canadian method also includes “marginal food security” in the prevalence of food insecurity. This method was used for the first time in the 2017 APS.
^c Significantly different from reference category, 95% confidence levels do not overlap.

Examining responses to the six questions (Figure 2a) used in the 2017 APS presents a more nuanced picture of food insecurity prevalence among Inuit in Inuit Nunangat. Statistics Canada used the U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module six-item short form³⁵ in the APS.

Figure 2a

Responses to household food security module questions for Inuit aged 15 and over living in Inuit Nunangat, 2017	
Question	Percent (%)
Q1. Food didn't last / no money to buy more	
Often true	27.4
Sometimes true	44.7
Never true	27.9
Q2. Balanced meals unaffordable	
Often true	23.1
Sometimes true	41.4
Never true	35.6
Q3. Meals skipped / cut meal size because there wasn't enough money to buy food	
Yes	42.2
No	57.8
Q3a. Frequency of meals skipped / cut meal size^a	
Almost every month	52.6
Some months but not every month	36.9
Only 1 or 2 months	10.5
Q4. Ate less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money to buy food	
Yes	40.2
No	59.8
Q5. Hungry but could not afford food	
Yes	30.5
No	69.6

Note:

Questions refer to past 12 months. Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

^a Question 3a asked only of those individuals who responded "yes" to question 3.

It is also important to consider the kind of deprivation that individuals endure. Notably 42.2% of respondents reported having to skip or cut meal size in the past 12 months because there was not enough money to buy food. Of these respondents, 52.6% reported having to do so almost every month while 36.9% reported doing so in some months, and 10.5% reported having to do so only one or two months every year. Additionally, 30.5% reported going hungry.



Data also allow us to identify which households are the most vulnerable to food insecurity. The 2012 APS results show that Inuit women over 25 have a significantly higher probability (56%) of living in a food insecure household than men (47%) even when factors such as living arrangements, educational and labour force status, income, ties to extended family, and geography are taken into account. The 2017 APS does not show the same difference, likely due to methodological differences between the two surveys. Surveys have also shown that Inuit single parents, couples with children, and individuals living in overcrowded households have a significantly higher probability of living in a food-insecure household.³⁶

No current Inuit Nunangat-wide data exist about the prevalence and impacts of food insecurity among Inuit children below 15 years old. However the results of the 2007-2008 Inuit Health Survey suggest that Inuit children are particularly vulnerable. The survey includes a Nunavut Inuit child health survey that paints a distressing picture of food insecurity among households with Inuit children aged three to five. The survey, which employed a modified questionnaire developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, found that 34% of Inuit households with small children suffered from severe food insecurity while 36% suffered from moderate food insecurity.³⁷

Nationwide, household food security prevalence data from the 2017/2018 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) administered by Statistics Canada illustrates the profound gap between Inuit Nunangat and the rest of Canada. The CCHS indicates that 91.3% of households in Canada are food secure, with 5.7% reporting moderate food insecurity and 3% reporting severe food insecurity. Nunavut is an outlier among provincial and territorial households, with 25.8% reporting moderate food insecurity and 23.7% reporting severe food insecurity.³⁸

Food insecurity and health

Food insecurity is a serious public health issues because it is so tightly linked to an individual's overall health and well-being. People experiencing food insecurity are often forced to compromise on the nutritional quality and/or quantity of the food they consume, creating risk for poor health outcomes, such as malnutrition, overweight, and obesity.³⁹ These challenges can in turn cascade into worsening, long-term negative health outcomes such as chronic diseases. These include diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension.⁴⁰ Because food insecurity is associated with poor health and nutrition, as well as increased risk for chronic disease, it can negatively impact the health and well-being of individuals and families and in turn strain health systems. Links between high food insecurity and greater risk for poor health outcomes are well documented in multiple populations.⁴¹ A number of studies highlight that where micronutrient-rich country food consumption declines and is coupled with the substitution of micronutrient-poor store-bought foods, there is a serious risk of inadequate nutrition in our communities.⁴²

Low food security is significantly associated with higher mental distress among both Inuit women and men.⁴³ Food insecurity among children and adolescents in some populations has been found to be associated with a variety of negative health outcomes including psychological distress,⁴⁴ developmental delays, behavioural problems, depression, increased risk for hospitalization, suicidal ideation in adolescence and early adulthood,⁴⁵ and poorer general health.⁴⁶ Adults and adolescents in food insecure households in Canada are more likely to experience nutrient inadequacies, live shorter lives, and have poorer diets; adults living in food insecure households report poorer physical health and are more vulnerable to multiple chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension.⁴⁷ In addition to the poor health outcomes associated with food insecurity, it also takes a significant toll on the health-care system. Evidence shows that food insecure individuals incur higher health-care costs than their food secure counterparts.⁴⁸ Improving food security among Inuit is, therefore, key to improving population health and reducing incidence rates of chronic disease.

Existing food programs, policies, and initiatives

Multiple federal, provincial, and Inuit-led programs, policies, and initiatives exist that are intended to address certain elements of food insecurity. Some of these mitigate short-term challenges, others offer medium-term solutions, but few provide long-term solutions that address the underlying drivers of food insecurity. Limited coordination between initiatives that tend to focus on isolated drivers of food insecurity, coupled with insufficient program monitoring, undermine their overall impacts and effectiveness.

In recognition of the challenges outlined above, the Inuit–Crown Partnership Committee (ICPC),⁴⁹ established to bring Inuit leaders and federal Ministers together to address intransigent Inuit policy issues, is committed to taking a “whole of government” approach to Inuit food security issues. The ICPC food security working group aims to use evidence-based analysis to create food security programs and interventions that recognize and address vulnerabilities in the Inuit food system and improve Inuit food security through transparent and accountable Inuit–federal partnerships.

Food-security policies, programs, and initiatives include but are not limited to the following.

Inuit-led initiatives: Inuit are taking action to improve food security among our people at the local, regional, and national levels. ITK launched *Nuluaq*, the Inuit Community-Based Food Initiatives Mapping Project in 2016 in order to highlight and promote the work of community-based food security initiatives.⁵⁰ *Nuluaq* features more than 20 distinct initiatives throughout Inuit Nunangat that include food banks, soup kitchens, community harvesting initiatives, nutrition education initiatives, and school breakfast programs, though many more exist. Most food security initiatives are intended to alleviate hunger and provide short-term and direct relief to individuals and families. Others teach food skills, such as nutrition, cooking, country food harvesting, and gardening skills. Regional hunter support programs encourage harvesting as a way of life, and community freezers provide country food to Inuit households through our sharing networks.



Food Policy for Canada: The federal department of Agriculture and Agri-Food released the *Food Policy for Canada* in 2019 in order to guide the federal government's food-related decisions and actions.⁵¹ The Policy identifies supporting food security in Northern and Indigenous communities as one of four action areas. This action area only includes the commitment to strengthening Indigenous food systems, with a focus on harvested foods. The Policy does not contemplate broader, interconnected drivers of food insecurity. However, it does include a commitment to work toward the development of a National School Food Program though no resources or timelines are currently associated with this commitment. Canada is among the few industrialized nations without a national school food program (including breakfast, lunch, and snacks), and its development and implementation are sorely needed. Although, numerous locally run school food programs exist across Inuit Nunangat, none receive sustainable funding or have access to Inuit-specific nutrition standards and are often dependent on volunteer efforts for their continued operation. Research shows that comprehensive, integrated school food programs decrease child food-insecurity rates, improve educational outcomes, increase nutritional literacy, and lead to overall short- and long-term health benefits.⁵²

Nutrition North Canada: Nutrition North Canada (NNC) was established by the federal government in 2011 within the department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Canada to replace the Food Mail Program as an economic-development program focused on providing Northerners in isolated communities with improved access to perishable foods.⁵³ The federal government provides a subsidy to retailers through the program that is intended to be passed on to consumers through price reductions on food and goods identified by the government for subsidy. There are currently a total of 116 communities across Alberta, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan, and Yukon that are eligible for the subsidy. NNC also funds and supports retail and community-based nutrition and education initiatives in NNC-eligible communities focused on the healthy eating of both store-bought and country foods through Indigenous Services Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada. Communities decide which activities to offer based on local needs and priorities. All but two⁵⁴ of 51 Inuit communities are eligible for the program, and retailers in Inuit communities draw down the largest proportion of program funding. However, the effects of the program on either food insecurity or economic development remain largely unknown because of limited transparency and the absence of rigorous evaluation.⁵⁵ Longitudinal analysis of food insecurity prevalence in Nunavut suggests that the prevalence of food insecurity increased even after the program was introduced.⁵⁶

The announcement in 2018 of the NNC Harvesters Support Grant was welcomed by Inuit as a response to Inuit advocacy for federal recognition and support for Inuit harvesting activities as an important component of the Inuit Nunangat food system and food security.

It was developed to increase access to country foods by reducing the high costs associated with hunting and harvesting.⁵⁷ However, NNC does not subsidize local food production in any significant way. Despite the fact that NNC has been roundly criticized for its failure to respond to the food security needs of the primary population it is intended to serve, the Government of Canada announced renewed program funding in the fall of 2018 that will extend the life of the program to 2024.

Drivers of food insecurity in Inuit Nunangat

Food insecurity is a symptom of broader social and economic inequities, including the disproportionate impacts of climate change on Inuit. Drivers of food insecurity are the factors in society that contribute to individuals and families becoming vulnerable to food insecurity. Drivers are often complex and interconnected. People experiencing food-insecure states are often impacted by multiple drivers of food insecurity simultaneously. Drivers include diminished Inuit self-determination as a result of policies and market food systems that are rooted in colonialism and ill-suited for our communities. Poverty, the high cost of living, and environmental factors including climate change and contaminants are also drivers of Inuit food insecurity.

Poverty: Poverty is the most significant driver of food insecurity among Inuit. Families with limited economic resources cannot afford many store-bought foods or the resources required to harvest country foods. The social and economic challenges associated with poverty, such as household crowding, stress, and intergenerational trauma, make it all the more challenging for children and families to succeed and break cycles of poverty and food insecurity. These challenges may cascade throughout the lifespan of some individuals and create further risk for future generations.

Although uniform Inuit Nunangat-wide poverty data are not currently available, indicators of poverty, such as educational attainment and employment, are distressing where poverty is both a symptom and a risk factor for low educational attainment and underemployment.⁵⁸ In 2016, 34% of Inuit in Inuit Nunangat reported having a high-school diploma or equivalency certificate compared with 86% of non-indigenous Canadians.⁵⁹ Disparities in educational attainment are reflected in disparities in earnings between Inuit and non-Inuit within Inuit Nunangat. The median individual income for Inuit 15 years and older in Inuit Nunangat is \$23,485 compared with \$92,011 for non-Indigenous people living in the region and \$34,604 for Canadians as a whole.⁶⁰

High living costs: The cost of living in Canada is highest in Inuit Nunangat, where prices for store-bought foods, rent, goods, transportation, and services can range from double to several times higher than in other parts of Canada. Components of the current Inuit Nunangat food system tend to operate within a regulatory and policy vacuum, with the system itself contributing to the high cost of living. The unregulated nature of the Inuit Nunangat food system contrasts with agricultural industries that benefit from a variety of federal and provincial policy measures designed to ensure their sustainability including billions of dollars



in annual subsidies.⁶¹ Inuit spend a disproportionately large share of income on food and housing compared with other Canadians (see Figure 3: *Variable food costs and incomes across Inuit Nunangat*). For example, in Nunavik, although Inuit households tend to spend a smaller share of income on housing than households in southern Quebec, the lowest income Inuit households spend more than 70% of their income on food and housing, even with the benefit of several cost-of-living measures that do not exist in other Inuit regions.⁶² The weekly cost of providing a healthy diet to a family of four in an Inuit community ranges from \$328 to \$488. The same basket of goods would cost approximately \$209 in a southern Canadian city.⁶³

Climate change and contaminants: Climate change and contaminants impact the availability of wildlife and the safety of Inuit harvesters. Environmental change is fundamentally disrupting the ecosystems supporting the animals we rely on to feed our families and maintain our culture and way of life (see Box 1: *Environmental change and Inuit food systems*). Harvesters often have to travel farther from our communities to harvest country foods at significant economic expense and personal risk. Unpredictable sea-ice thickness can also make travel over sea ice dangerous and even lethal. Rising global temperatures and ocean acidification will continue to impact the quality and availability of fish and game creating new barriers to food security. Furthermore, ambitious and urgent action is necessary to curb climate change, industrial development, and pollution that increases the contaminant exposure of the animals we harvest, with potentially negative health impacts for our people. For over 20 years Inuit organizations have played an active role in northern contaminant research and policy-making, monitoring, and the co-development of specific and targeted messaging with public health authorities that alerts particularly vulnerable subpopulations of the risk of consuming key wildlife species. However, despite the efforts of Inuit governments and organizations to mitigate the impacts of industrial development on our food systems, these impacts remain a significant threat. Data from the 2007-2008 Inuit Health Survey carried out in three of our regions show that caribou was the primary source of protein and several key micronutrients among Inuit in Inuit Nunangat.⁶⁴ Since that time most barren ground caribou populations have experienced severe population declines with significant implications for Inuit nutrition and food security. Recent hunting moratoria and restrictions—including the George River caribou herd hunting ban in place since 2013—as well as long-standing hunting bans, represent not only significant losses for local food systems, including food sharing practices, but are also a form of cultural erosion and loss.

Diminished Inuit self-determination: The Inuit Nunangat food system is shaped by the continuing impacts of colonialism on Inuit culture and society. Federal policies that included relocation, settlement, and residential schooling negatively impacted Inuit self-reliance on harvested foods and diminished Inuit control over the Inuit Nunangat food system. Inuit-Crown land claims agreements affirm significant Inuit harvesting rights yet barriers remain for securing Inuit self-determination and food sovereignty over harvesting. These include challenges in relation to integrating Inuit knowledge into wildlife management regimes, as well as the assessment of threatened or endangered species requiring harvest controls.

Figure 3: Variable food costs and incomes across Inuit Nunangat

The table provides an illustration of the relative food purchasing capacity of Inuit in Inuit Nunangat based on calculations revealing the proportion of income an individual would need to spend to afford a healthy food basket. While not a direct comparison, it should be noted that the average Canadian household spends 14.3% of its income on food including restaurant meals.⁶⁵

X means area and data suppression.

n/a means not available.

The median income is the midpoint—half of incomes fall below this point while half are above.

RNFB stands for Revised Northern Food Basket.

Inuit Nunangat communities	Weekly median income in 2015 ⁶⁶ (Inuit 15 years and older)	Weekly cost of the Revised Northern Food Basket ⁶⁷ for an individual (2019/2020 average)	Proportion of income needed to afford the full cost of the RNFB
Inuvialuit Settlement Region	\$476.31		
Aklavik	\$416.00	\$112.00	27%
Inuvik	\$677.00	n/a	n/a
Paulatuk	\$388.00	\$116.00	30%
Tuktoyaktok	\$399.00	n/a	n/a
Sachs Harbour	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ulukhaktok	\$351.00	\$113.00	32%
Nunavut Qikiqtaaluaq Region	\$433.13		
Arctic Bay	\$387.69	\$107.82	28%
Clyde River	\$377.44	\$111.23	29%
Grise Fiord	n/a	n/a	n/a
Igloodik	\$408.62	\$105.64	26%
Iqaluit	\$768.00	\$101.91	13%
Kimmirut	\$424.62	\$104.23	25%
Kinngait	\$327.08	\$112.36	34%
Pangnirtung	\$404.92	\$118.46	29%
Pond Inlet	\$337.85	\$103.27	31%
Qikiqtarjuaq	\$375.38	\$110.37	29%
Resolute	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sanikiluaq	\$309.85	\$114.56	37%
Sanirajak	\$425.23	\$101.78	24%
Kivalliq Region			
Arviat	\$401.85	\$97.10	24%
Baker Lake	\$418.46	\$96.22	23%
Chesterfield Inlet	\$528.00	\$103.90	20%
Coral Harbour	\$380.92	\$105.53	28%
Nauyasat	\$417.63	\$103.54	25%
Rankin Inlet	\$617.85	\$96.37	16%
Whale Cove	\$356.31	n/a	n/a
Kitikmeot Region			
Cambridge Bay	\$441.02	\$105.44	24%
Gjoa Haven	\$381.94	\$115.00	30%
Kugaaruk	\$384.83	n/a	n/a
Kugluktuk	\$330.25	\$109.26	33%
Taloyoak	\$397.54	\$120.21	30%
Nunavik	\$492.83		
Akulivik	\$435.08	\$101.74	23%
Aupaluk	X	\$93.67	
Inukjuak	\$446.37	\$99.01	22%
Ivujivik	\$396.31	\$93.70	24%
Kangiqaualujjuaq	\$416.00	\$95.95	23%
Kangiqsujuaq	\$583.38	\$96.35	17%
Kangirsuk	\$431.17	\$97.11	23%
Kuujuuaq	\$687.75	\$94.78	14%
Kuujuarapik	\$440.00	\$92.79	21%
Puvirnituq	\$413.42	\$102.72	25%
Quaqtaq	\$531.69	\$93.70	18%
Salluit	\$512.40	\$100.95	22%
Tasiujaq	\$461.54	\$94.59	20%
Umiujaq	\$486.15	\$95.47	20%
Nunatsiavut	\$446.37	n/a	n/a
Hopedale	\$372.67	n/a	n/a
Makkovik	\$557.54	n/a	n/a
Postville	X	n/a	n/a
Rigolet	\$557.54	\$92.14	17%
Nain	\$394.83	\$115.58	29%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50%



Box 1: Environmental change and Inuit food systems

Inuit Nunangat is experiencing unprecedented environmental changes including, but not limited to climate change, with impacts on local infrastructure, economies, and Inuit cultural wellbeing. Climate change presents particular risks to Inuit food and water security with changes in the distribution, migration, and ranges of wildlife and plant species, the contamination or loss of water sources, and potential changes in contaminant pathways.⁶⁸ All these changes have associated and significant implications for our communities given that we are economically and culturally dependent on a rich variety of marine and terrestrial wildlife species.⁶⁹ The resilience and adaptability of transportation infrastructure to extreme climatic events and thawing permafrost is also of particular concern where air transportation is the only reliable way to fly market foods into the majority of Inuit communities on a year-round basis.

For the past 50 years temperatures in Inuit Nunangat have increased at more than twice the global average, and models project that even with drastic cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in the short term, fall and winter temperatures in the Arctic will rise 4°–5°C above late 20th century temperatures by 2050.⁷⁰ Inuit Nunangat is experiencing marked and variable shifts in temperature, precipitation, and seasonality. Sea ice is becoming increasingly mobile as its thickness and extent declines, which increases hazards for Inuit harvesters who also face increasingly variable ice conditions in terrestrial environments. Although the opening of the Northwest Passage presents both opportunities and challenges for Inuit food systems, increased shipping traffic overlaps with Inuit sea-ice travel routes and the habitat and migration routes of the marine mammals we harvest. It is also anticipated that the opportunity for new commercial fisheries may benefit local and regional Inuit economies with the northward movement of more temperate fish species. However, a lack of reliable baseline data⁷¹ presents barriers for understanding the complexity of climate impacts on Arctic ecosystems, as well as efforts to adaptively manage future Arctic shipping corridors and industrial activity to avoid conflicts with wildlife habitat, migration routes, and Inuit sea ice travel and food security needs.

Technical Notes for Figure 3

The RNFB is the only measure currently available to understand the comparative cost of food across Inuit Nunangat. While the RNFB represents a nutritious diet for a family of four, it is a select list and does not include the cost of all essential items included in a household's grocery purchases.

A recent NNC evaluation found that most households in NNC eligible communities can afford less than 40% of the full cost of the RNFB, and very low-income families (earning \$10,000–\$20,000 a year), can afford only 6–13% of the RNFB's costs.

The weekly RNFB cost provided in this Table is based on the assumption that the cost of the RNFB for an individual is approximately 25% of the cost of the RNFB.

The total median income for Inuit in Inuit Nunangat aged 15 years and over was \$23,485 compared with \$92,011 for non-Indigenous people in this region in the 2015 tax year. Income includes income from all sources including employment, investments, government transfers such as Canada Pension, Old Age Security, Employment Insurance, child benefits, etc. Excluded are those without income.

When interpreting income data for Inuit, it is important to keep in mind the high cost of food, clothing and other necessities in Inuit communities as well as large family sizes where smaller incomes must be stretched further. The census misses some Inuit. Excluded from Inuit population counts are those who are homeless, those living in institutions such as prisons and hospitals, and others.

Inuit priorities have largely been overlooked as the Inuit Nunangat food system has evolved in response to market-driven forces. Despite the substantive contribution the country food economy and emerging local food-production efforts play in local food systems, they do not receive the kinds of support the agriculture sector receives in the South. And, despite being a food producing region, most commercially harvested seafood is exported to foreign markets for processing and sale. Furthermore, food policies, programs, and initiatives tend to be imposed on our communities by governments rather than being developed in partnership with us, leading to ineffective interventions.

Strengthening Inuit self-determination within the Inuit Nunangat food system

Respect and support for Inuit self-determination is necessary to develop the Inuit Nunangat food system in a manner that reflects Inuit priorities and food needs, and supports the goal of achieving Inuit food sovereignty. Inuit self-determination is achieved when governments partner in good faith with Inuit in the development of policies, programs, and initiatives that positively impact and shape the Inuit Nunangat food system into one that both serves Inuit food needs and is economically sustainable. Inuit food sovereignty is a desired outcome of Inuit self-determination, achieved through greater production of local food, as well as the development of corresponding policies and initiatives that support local food production and self-reliance. Fiscal policies that respect and support Inuit self-determination are pivotal for ensuring that food security measures are effective and impactful (see Box 2: *Promising models of Inuit self-determination in food systems*). Inuit-specific investments allow our people to readily identify, draw down, and apply resources that are intended to benefit Inuit and efficiently advance positive measures that may otherwise be delayed due to ambiguity over funding eligibility.

Improving food security through poverty reduction and economic self-reliance

Inuit food insecurity is largely a symptom of poverty and the inability of many families to afford food. In order to achieve food security among Inuit, governments must take aggressive action to reduce poverty by addressing its root causes including through new and innovative policy initiatives supported by major federal, provincial, and territorial (FPT) investments. The high prevalence of poverty and related social and economic inequities faced by many Inuit are unique for a Canadian population and unique among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations.⁷² Existing FPT policies, programs, and initiatives that are intended to reduce poverty among Inuit tend to fall short of the ambition, resources, and political commitments required to end poverty within our communities.

The federal government released *Opportunity for All – Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy* in 2018. The Strategy establishes targets for reducing poverty by 20% from its 2015 level by 2020 and by 50% by 2030.⁷³ It introduces the Market Basket Measure (MBM), a flawed measure of poverty that the federal government will use to establish an Official Poverty Line and also



Box 2: Promising models of Inuit self-determination in food systems

Processes that respect and support Inuit self-determination have shaped positive policies in Nunavik and Greenland. The Nunavik co-op movement, represented by La Fédération des Coopératives du Nouveau-Québec (FCNQ), is owned by its approximately 12,000 co-op members, the majority of them Inuit from the region's 14 communities. The co-op movement is the largest non-government employer of Inuit in Nunavik.⁷⁴ The FCNQ supports the affiliated co-ops in their efforts to work on their own development, and FCNQ stores are managed mainly by Inuit staff. The FCNQ is responsible for transporting food and goods from wholesalers in Montréal to Inuit communities in Nunavik and provides a range of other services. It has remained profitable even while implementing regional price equalization in all Nunavik co-op stores through the subsidy of differences in freight costs when transporting food and goods to Nunavik communities. Nunavik co-ops are the only retailers in Inuit Nunangat where prices are the same irrespective of where you live on a year-round basis.

Nunavik is also unique because the region benefits from six promising cost-of-living reduction measures enacted by the province and administered by the Kativik Regional Government (KRG). In order to reduce the cost of living in Nunavik, the Government of Quebec worked with Makivik Corporation and the KRG to identify measures designed to reduce the cost of living and their criteria. Following negotiations of a tripartite funding agreement between the Government of Québec, Makivik Corporation, and the KRG, the Government of Quebec committed in 2019 to pay \$115.8 million over six years to support multiple programs for elders' assistance, airfare reduction, country food community support, household appliance and harvesting equipment, food and other essentials, and gasoline. The food and other essentials program provides rebates between 15 and 35% on the majority of items purchased in Nunavik stores to all Nunavimmiut with the aim of aligning prices with those in southern Quebec stores. The rebate can be applied to food items and goods that are already subsidized by Nutrition North Canada, further reducing prices. Together, this suite of programs represents the only comprehensive policy initiative intended to help bring an Inuit region in line with the rest of Canada by reducing the high cost of living. However, with the exception of shelter, even with these cost-of-living measures in place, the cost of living is still significantly higher in Nunavik than in the city of Québec irrespective of income level. Low-income households devote more than 70% of their income to basic food and shelter and are inclined to choose the least costly goods and services whenever possible.⁷⁵ New and improved cost-of-living measures were implemented in 2019. Further price monitoring research by Université Laval researchers will assess whether 2019 improvements have led to a further reduction in Nunavik households' food costs.

Another compelling model worth examining is the commercial sale of country foods in Greenland, the only majority Inuit jurisdiction where harvested foods are sold widely, including by commercial retailers (see Appendix B for further details on the Greenland model). Harvested foods, such as maktaaq, seal, caribou, musk ox, and local fish, are sold throughout the country by retailers as well as in public markets. This system facilitates access to nutritious country foods by Greenlanders, often at prices that are significantly lower than imported meat and fish. Greenland also produces beef, lamb, and seasonal produce.

Studies of food insecurity prevalence in Greenland tend to focus on single communities and use measures that are not directly comparable to Inuit Nunangat prevalence data; however, they suggest that the prevalence of food insecurity may be lower than in some regions of Inuit Nunangat.⁷⁶ There are marked differences between the harvesting rights and regulatory systems shaping harvesting activities in Greenland and Inuit Nunangat, as well as differences in the acceptance of country food sales and paid harvester positions, and stark differences in the marine infrastructure supporting harvesting activities. For instance, with the exception of the 1993 Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, Inuit land claims agreements prohibit the commercial sale of country foods outside of Inuit land claims regions. All Inuit land claims agreements contain provisions allowing for the regionally based exchange and/or sale of country foods among Inuit. The specific terms of these provisions differ among regions.

establishes the National Advisory Council on poverty to advise the government and monitor poverty reduction. Although Inuit welcome a federal commitment to reducing poverty, the Strategy does not introduce new national policy measures for reducing poverty and it remains unclear how existing policy mechanisms will result in the achievement of these goals in Inuit Nunangat or how the new poverty line measure will be implemented in our communities. It is also concerning that despite the Strategy's commitment to a distinctions-based approach to reducing poverty among Indigenous peoples, Statistics Canada is modifying the MBM for implementation in the territories, overlooking Inuit living in Nunavik and Nunatsiavut.⁷⁷

Poverty reduction is pivotal for improving food security and supporting population health and wellness. Multiple evidence-based programs and interventions exist that help curb poverty and enhance food security, health, and wellness among low-income families, and similar interventions should be developed and implemented in Inuit Nunangat by governments in partnership with Inuit.

Poverty can be reduced by ensuring that our children grow up in safe and predictable environments and get the best possible start in life. The experiences we have in utero and the home environments we grow up in have powerful impacts on lifelong health, wellness, educational attainment, and economic self-reliance.⁷⁸ Nurse home-visiting public health interventions for new parents, interventions that teach parenting skills, and early childhood education programs, are among the evidence-based policy interventions shown to be effective in some jurisdictions at reducing poverty. Poverty and food insecurity are associated with many of the social and economic inequities disproportionately experienced by our people including household crowding, family violence, and addictions. Addressing these inequities through evidence-based interventions is necessary to reduce poverty, improve food security, and support population health and wellness.

Improving access to high quality early childhood education can have similar long-term positive effects for children. High quality early childhood education programs create safe and predictable environments for children, prepare them for success in primary school, and enable their parents to secure employment. Nunavik is the only region in Inuit Nunangat where residents have access to affordable child-care in each community through provincial subsidies. Child-care availability and cost are among the factors attributed to the region's stronger labour market performance when compared with other Inuit regions.⁷⁹

The intergenerational poverty and food insecurity that too many Inuit experience stem from profound social and economic inequities that have disproportionately negative impacts on infants and children (see Figure 4: *Inuit Nunangat Food Security Solutions*).



Figure 4: Inuit Nunangat food security solutions



Strengthening food security through direct financial support to low-income families

Families struggling with poverty and food insecurity require direct and immediate relief in addition to evidence-based poverty reduction measures. Nutrition assistance programs focused on improving food security among low-income families through direct support, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the United States, may provide helpful insights for the development of similar nutrition assistance programs in Canada (see Box 3: *U.S. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*).

There is evidence that transfer schemes that prioritize unconditional direct cash transfers to vulnerable families have succeeded in raising consumption and improving food security, educational attainment rates, and material well-being in some of the poorest regions of the world, while at the same time strengthening economic capacity and assets.⁸⁰ However, basic income models provide direct and immediate relief to low-income families by providing them with a minimum level of guaranteed income security with minimal eligibility conditions and restrictions attached to the use of funds. Unlike social assistance models whose terms and conditions can often “trap” low-income families in a state of monetary poverty, growing evidence shows that basic income models can permanently lift vulnerable families out of poverty with significant co-benefits including a comprehensive suite of cost reductions for society.⁸¹ Basic income resembles the Canadian pension system, which has achieved a substantial reduction in poverty and enhanced food security among seniors through a system of guaranteed income. This has contributed to seniors in Canada having some of the lowest poverty rates among elders in the world.⁸² Basic income differs from SNAP in that rigorous eligibility criteria are not monitored or enforced in the same fashion, reducing overhead associated with administering that program.

Box 3: U.S. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is a federal entitlement program administered by U.S. states that is designed to improve food security among vulnerable families. It provides benefits to eligible low-income individuals and families through Electronic Benefits Transfer cards that allow participants to purchase eligible food in authorized retail food stores. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s own analysis of nearly 10,000 households participating in SNAP for six months, these households experienced an associated decrease in food insecurity by about five to 10 percentage points, including households with food insecurity among children.⁸³ According to some analyses, SNAP has also succeeded in removing millions of Americans from poverty, as well as reducing the poverty gap (the total amount of additional income required to remove all poor families from poverty).⁸⁴ The program has also been shown to help prevent negative, long-term, and lasting effects of deprivation during childhood, such as less education and earning as adults, along with health problems like obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.



Subsidizing, regulating, and investing in the northern air sector as an essential service

In order to reduce the cost of living in Inuit Nunangat, airlines and aviation infrastructure, such as the runways and airports serving Inuit communities must be recognized by the federal government as critical infrastructure and supported by transformative infrastructure investments. Air services are lifelines to our communities because all but two Inuit communities are only accessible by plane year round (see Figure 5: *Inuit Nunangat food transportation networks*). These air services must similarly be recognized as essential services and supported with corresponding regulated subsidies.

Northern airlines that have demonstrated a long-standing commitment to guaranteeing essential air services (including passenger, cargo, aeromedical, and other emergency services) to communities in Inuit Nunangat, operate in unique and often challenging conditions. These airlines cover a vast geography with a lower passenger volume and have to account for extreme weather conditions. This results in unique operational needs that can require accommodating routes that are marginally profitable and/or commercially unviable and investments in northern air infrastructure that include combi aircraft which provide both passenger and cargo services to Inuit communities. Airline operations in Inuit Nunangat play a role in the cost of goods and services including food, in part, due to the significant cost of operating in the north. In addition, they contribute through corporate social responsibility to Inuit, such as providing reduced passenger fares and/or rebates or reduced rates on the transport of harvesting equipment and country foods to Inuit, which is aimed at fostering Inuit culture and the country food harvesting economy.

By its own admission, the federal government does not tend to view Inuit Nunangat as a geographically or politically integrated region of Canada.⁸⁵ Inuit Nunangat is consequently overlooked within multiple policy areas, including aviation infrastructure needs and the role aviation infrastructure plays in the provision of essential services to our communities. Commercial airfare throughout Inuit Nunangat is among the highest on the planet by distance and flight duration where the efficiencies, economies of scale and just-in-time delivery models possible in southern Canada are not possible in Inuit Nunangat. This reality drives up the cost of living, the cost of doing business and administering services, and also makes recreational mobility and the shipment of food between Inuit communities and between Inuit Nunangat and the rest of Canada difficult for most. These challenges are compounded by our aging air infrastructure where short, gravel airstrips, inadequate airstrip lighting, older fuel-inefficient jets, and the lack of basic weather and navigation aids have been well documented in recent years by the Auditor General of Canada,⁸⁶ numerous studies including senate and parliamentary reports,⁸⁷ and the latest review of the *Canada Transportation Act*.⁸⁸

Box 4: Remote air service subsidies

Airlines subsidies are in place in other jurisdictions with remote territory that are designed to help ensure that remote communities remain accessible and affordable to live in. For example, the U.S. Department of Transportation oversees the Essential Air Service program established to ensure that small communities are able to maintain a minimal level of scheduled air service. The program subsidizes commuter and certificated air carriers serving approximately 60 communities in Alaska and 115 in the contiguous U.S. that would otherwise not receive any scheduled air service.⁸⁹ Australia's Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development similarly subsidizes air service and airport infrastructure through its Regional Aviation Access Program.⁹⁰ The objectives of the program include providing support for remote aviation services that are not commercially viable, but are essential for the social and economic wellbeing of the communities they serve, as well as improving safety and facilitating improved delivery of essential goods and services such as food supplies, health care, community mail and passenger air services. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments have negotiated temporary financial support agreements with northern airlines providing air services to Inuit communities. These agreements recognize that air transport is essential to maintaining the food supply chains to our remote, fly-in communities along with other basic goods and services.

Airline services in Inuit Nunangat must cohere with certain principles of accessibility, innovation, and fairness. Such principles are already applied to other sectors in Canada that provide essential services that the federal government defines as a public good, including healthcare, education, and telecommunications services. The essential air services that must be provided to Inuit communities include the affordable and reliable transport of passengers and cargo such as food, medicine, and other urgent supplies on marginally profitable and/or commercially unviable routes.

This could be achieved in part through the creation of a federal remote air service program and strategic air infrastructure investments. Transport Canada examined programs in other jurisdictions during the most recent review of the *Canada Transportation Act*, where long-standing models exist in Australia, the U.S., and Europe (see Box 4: *Remote air service subsidies*) and similar models could be adopted for Inuit Nunangat.

Investments aimed at addressing the air infrastructure deficit in Inuit Nunangat cannot be 'one size fits all'. For example, the lengthening and paving airstrips is not necessarily viable in all communities where geographical conditions will not allow, and the ability to land larger jets with larger cargo capacity (versus more modern energy efficient jets) is not necessarily preferred where the lack of local temperature controlled storage is a large limiting factor in many communities, and often not currently economically viable where there is reliance on energy-intensive fossil fuels, and fresh foods have a limited shelf life. The development of targeted and comprehensive air transportation policy solutions are needed that will not only help bring food transportation costs down, but lead to many social and economic benefits, including the reduction of food waste, increased food availability, increased sharing of country foods between communities, and ultimately a reduction in the high cost of living overall.



Infrastructure

Inuit communities experience the greatest infrastructure deficit in Canada when compared to other Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.⁹¹ Major new investments targeting the production, processing, storage, distribution, sale, consumption and waste management of food in Inuit Nunangat are required to reduce the high cost of living, increase safety, and improve food security. Transportation infrastructure, including aviation and marine infrastructure in Inuit Nunangat lags behind other parts of Canada as well as other Arctic jurisdictions yet are critical components of the Inuit Nunangat food system (see Box 5: Inuit Nunangat's marine and air infrastructure deficits). Deficiencies and gaps in these areas not only contribute to the high cost of living, but make country food harvesting more expensive and less safe (see Figure 5: *Inuit Nunangat Food Transportation Networks*).⁹² Most of our communities require investments to repair, replace, or install sorely needed country food storage and processing facilities as well as temperature-controlled storage facilities at airports and docking facilities to prevent food spoilage and waste.

There is relatively little food-specific infrastructure in Inuit Nunangat, but it is a critical element in the harvesting, processing, storage, sharing and distribution of country food, and a key factor in increasing access to fresh, nutrient-dense food.⁹³ Inuit-specific local food infrastructure needs are unique, and face critical gaps including adequate local storage facilities to meet the needs of Inuit households as well as social institutions such as food banks, schools, daycares, and community freezers⁹⁴ that require adequate space to store food for months at a time. Such local social institutions also struggle to find facilities for warehousing, preparing, and serving food.

Local harvesting infrastructure is key to facilitating our access to our lands and waters including small craft harbours, multi-purpose facilities essential for the support of harvesters, and on-the-land training and stewardship programs.⁹⁵ Examples include equipment warehouses, training facilities, and local food processing plants that support country food preparation.⁹⁶ Such processing plants can increase access to country foods by extending their shelf life, and by supporting value-added business enterprises. For Inuit Nunangat, these kinds of public infrastructure assets are of similar importance to the infrastructure assets available to the agricultural sector in the South.

The Auditor General of Canada concluded in 2017 that the federal government had failed to take on a leadership role with other government partners and industry to improve significant deficiencies in the accessibility and safety of remote and northern airports.⁹⁷ These challenges contribute to food insecurity because they translate into higher food prices due to the inability of existing infrastructure to accommodate newer, more efficient jet aircraft, increasing the cost of food and goods that must be flown into communities. The most recent Canadian Transportation Act Review, which looked forward 20-30 years, found that the biggest challenge to the northern air transportation sector is aging and inadequate air infrastructure.⁹⁸ The report also found that it would go against basic fairness to expect northern communities and governments to take on the cost of the significant and critical investments needed to address pressing air infrastructure deficits, where the risks and operating realities of northern airports and airlines differ markedly from those faced by the southern air sector. In most Inuit communities, aircraft land on short, unpaved runways often without the aid of runway lights, global positioning satellite systems, 24-hour weather information, or other basic aviation infrastructure including a lack of temperature-controlled storage facilities at many airports, leading to food spoilage and wastage.

Box 5: Inuit Nunangat's marine and air infrastructure deficits

In Greenland, 14 of the country's 18 airstrips are paved and there are 61 paved airstrips in Alaska, more than six times the number found in Canada's three territories combined.⁹⁹ Nuuk's recently expanded deepwater port has the capacity to dock several ships at a time as well as a container terminal and this single port is more robust and versatile than all of Inuit Nunangat's marine infrastructure combined.¹⁰⁰ Transportation of harvested foods and other goods between communities in Greenland is supported by extensive marine infrastructure that includes 95 ports, the smallest of which can accommodate a 33 metre ship with a three metre draft.¹⁰¹ Two deepwater ports exist in Inuit Nunangat but they were purpose-built to serve separate mining operations near Arctic Bay and Pond Inlet. Inuit Nunangat is similarly deprived of small craft harbours. The only small craft harbours in Inuit Nunangat are located in Pangnirtung, Nunavut and in Nain and Makkovik in Nunatsiavut. The construction of an \$85M deepwater port that will take several years to complete is currently underway in Iqaluit.¹⁰²

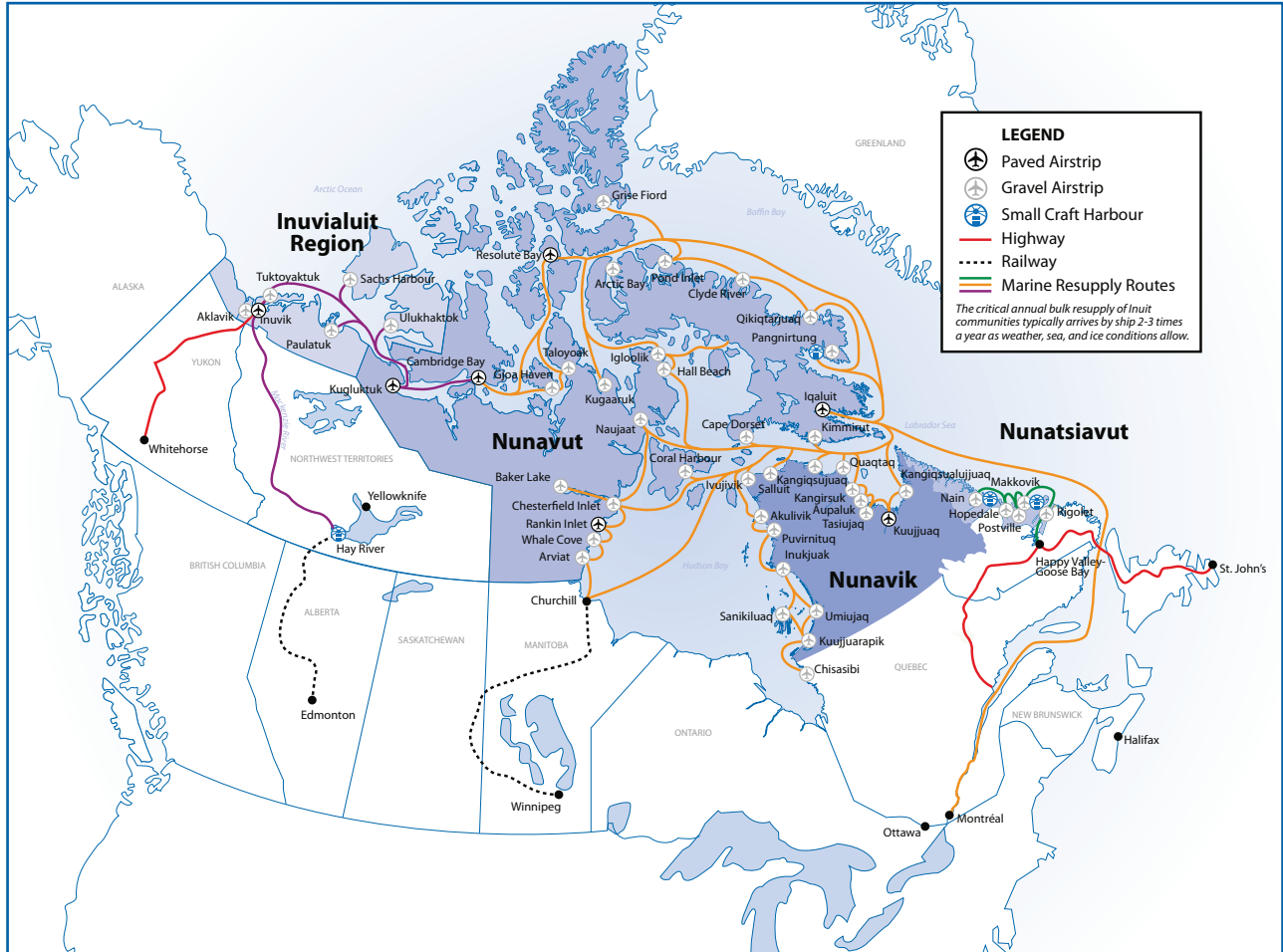
Our communities also suffer from a severe marine infrastructure deficit. During the summer shipping season when ice conditions allow, community resupply ships must rely on smaller vessels to transfer goods to land because there are either no docking facilities or challenging docking conditions, further increasing the prices of food and other goods. Harvesters must anchor their boats in open water often without even the benefit of a breakwater, where they are at risk of being swamped or damaged in poor weather.

So far, the INFSS has laid out the Inuit food security landscape in Inuit Nunangat, including the complex drivers of Inuit food insecurity, and the vision and rationale for taking action to combat the unacceptably high rates of food insecurity that have plagued Inuit communities for far too long. The INFSS is a testament to the collective resolve of Inuit to work together to achieve coordinated policy solutions through constructive partnerships with multiple levels of government, and other partners.

Part 2 of the INFSS provides an overview of the interlinked, comprehensive, and tangible actions needed to overcome Inuit food insecurity. It is a road map designed to provide guidance to Inuit across Inuit Nunangat, and our existing and emerging partners, on how to work together strategically in the coming months and years to come. We must pull together to overcome the public health crisis that Inuit food insecurity represents, a crisis long overdue for decisive action. Part 2 of the INFSS provides an explicit high level plan for action in both the immediate future, and for years to come, aimed at ensuring positive Inuit food security outcomes with implications for the overall health and wellbeing of Inuit across Inuit Nunangat.

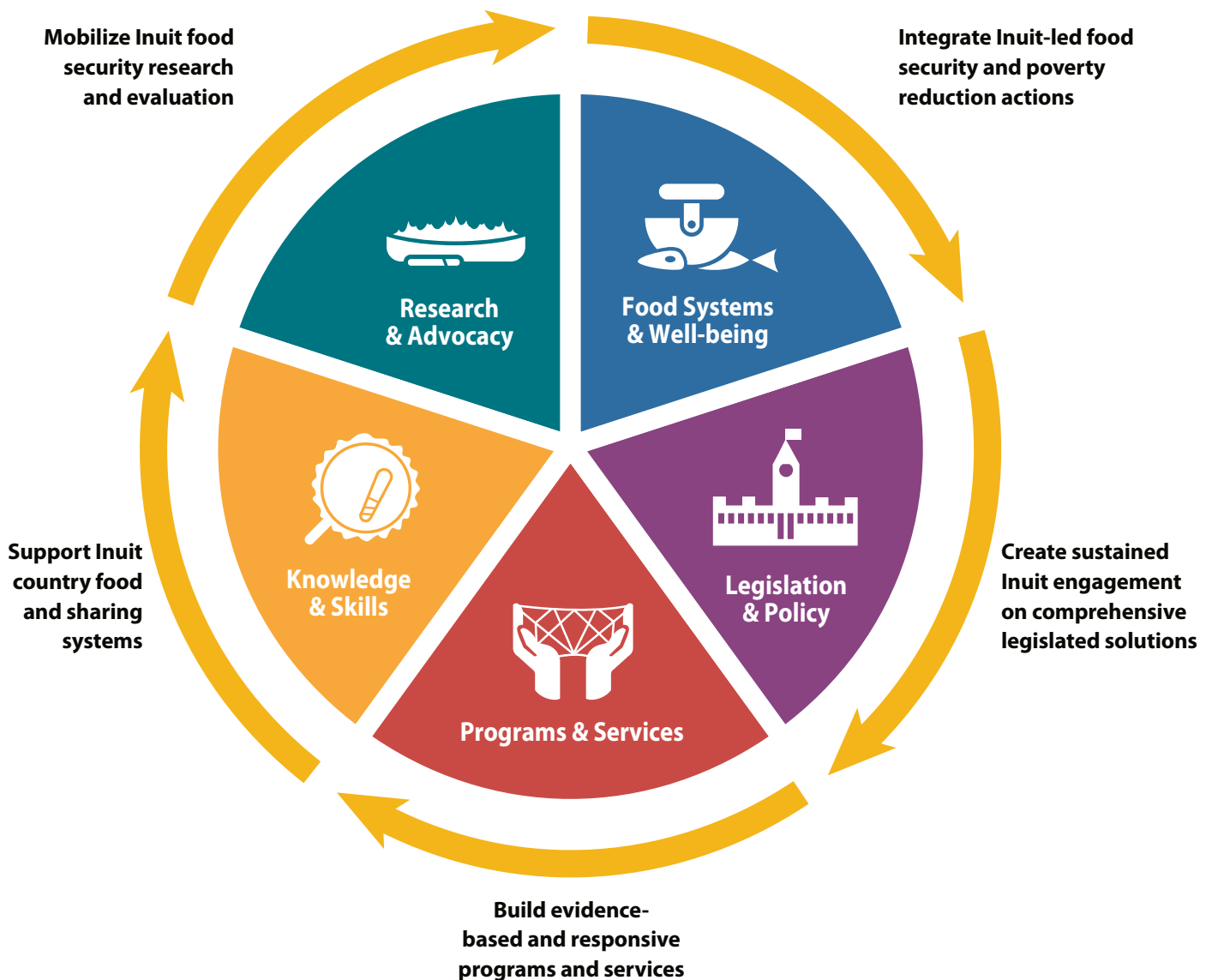


Figure 5: Inuit Nunangat food transportation networks¹⁰³



Part 2: Priorities, objectives, and actions

Part 2 of the Inuit Nunangat Food Security Strategy (INFSS) identifies objectives and actions whose implementation by INFSS partners is necessary to improve food security throughout Inuit Nunangat. Core to INFSS partnerships is the critical need for a comprehensive federal approach to food security from multiple federal government departments and agencies. Objectives and actions address the interrelated drivers of food insecurity among Inuit and are organized within the following five priority areas.





PRIORITY AREA 1: Food systems and well-being

Integrate Inuit-led food security and poverty reduction actions

Colonialism has shaped the current Inuit Nunangat food system into one that is incompatible with the food needs and priorities of Inuit. The food system must be reshaped by Inuit in partnership with governments in order to remedy systemic challenges that contribute to food insecurity. These challenges include the growing infrastructure gap between Inuit Nunangat and most other regions of Canada, as well as its negative impacts on harvesting, the high cost of living, and high food prices. At the same time, governments should build on promising initiatives and food system models in addition to partnering with Inuit to implement ambitious poverty reduction measures. Where there is alignment with Inuit regional contexts, governments should support and incentivize the integration of harvested foods into retail supply chains.

OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 Food security is improved through effective poverty reduction measures.
- 1.2 The Inuit Nunangat food system reflects Inuit food priorities.
- 1.3 Climate-resilient infrastructure supports the country food harvesting economy, promotes population health and safety, and reduces the cost of living.
- 1.4 Social benefits are adequate, and pathways for accessing them are clear and supported by adequate information.

ACTIONS

- 1.1.1 Advance comprehensive Inuit Nunangat cost-of-living reduction measures and advocate for their implementation by governments supported by an Inuit-specific cost-of-living standard.
- 1.2.1 Work through the Inuit–Crown Partnership Committee to align federally controlled components of the food system with Inuit priorities.
- 1.2.2 Support Inuit-led initiatives to sustain and promote the country food economy.
- 1.2.3 Apply an Inuit Nunangat policy lens in partnership with the federal government that eliminates program and service gaps and contributes to Inuit food security.
- 1.2.4 Develop an Inuit Nunangat–specific food guide and/or associated tools.
- 1.3.1 Address infrastructure deficits impacting the Inuit Nunangat food system focusing on transportation and harvesting infrastructure.
- 1.4.1 Assess the adequacy of social assistance programs.
- 1.4.2 Partner with governments to increase Inuit access to existing income.

PRIORITY AREA 2: Legislation and policy

Create sustained Inuit engagement on comprehensive legislated solutions

Partnerships between Inuit and governments that respect and support Inuit self-determination and Inuit food sovereignty are necessary to ensure that food security measures are effective. Federal legislative and policy initiatives that are intended to improve food security must be implemented in partnership with Inuit through a distinctions-based approach. Furthermore, ambitious policy measures analogous to those enacted to support agricultural industries are required to support and promote Inuit country food harvesting, reduce food transportation costs, and to support local and regional food economies. New legislative initiatives, as well as amendments to existing legislation, must be enacted in partnership with Inuit to eliminate the legislative and regulatory gaps that indirectly contribute to food insecurity among Inuit. Such measures should include federal subsidies that cap and reduce transportation costs, control volatile food prices, and reduce the cost of living in Inuit Nunangat.

OBJECTIVES

- 2.1** Rights-based partnerships between Inuit and governments guide the development and implementation of food policies, programs, and initiatives that are intended to benefit Inuit.
- 2.2** Consumer protections are in place that ensure Inuit have access to affordable food and are protected from volatile food pricing.
- 2.3** Airlines and aviation infrastructure serving Inuit Nunangat are subsidized and regulated as an essential service.

ACTIONS

- 2.1.1** Promote and support Inuit regional food security strategies and sustainable community programs and initiatives with long-term funding to provide food for children, youth, and families, as well as food skills development.
- 2.1.2** Work through the Inuit–Crown Partnership Committee to ensure that federal food security and poverty reduction initiatives are coordinated and developed in partnership with Inuit.
- 2.1.3** Advance legislative and policy solutions that support Inuit country food harvesting and local food enterprises that encourage the growth of the local economy. Address regulatory restrictions that prevent the sale of harvested foods in public institutions, restaurants, retailers and others.
- 2.2.1** Explore food price regulations, starting with options for Nutrition North Canada subsidized items.
- 2.3.1** Reduce the high cost of living by advocating for transformative northern air infrastructure investments.
- 2.3.2** Reduce the high cost of living by advocating for the creation of a remote air service program that creates targeted and regulated subsidies for airlines that provide essential services to Inuit communities.



PRIORITY AREA 3: Programs and services

Build evidence-based and responsive programs and services

New evidence-based programs and services are needed that address the interrelated drivers of food insecurity among Inuit including initiatives that provide direct financial relief to vulnerable families. National initiatives that build on promising cost-of-living reduction measures, such as those put in place in Nunavik through a negotiated Inuit–provincial agreement, are required to reduce poverty and improve food security throughout Inuit Nunangat. Nutrition North Canada should be reformed in partnership with Inuit into a program that is designed to address the drivers of food insecurity and uphold the right to adequate food. Near-term action should be taken to facilitate single-window access to the patchwork of federal programs, services, and initiatives that address various components of food insecurity.

OBJECTIVES

- 3.1** Federal food security programs and initiatives are in place that are effective at improving Inuit food security.
- 3.2** Food security programs and services are evidence-based and uphold the right to adequate food.
- 3.3** Programs and services that are intended to improve food security are accessible to Inuit throughout Inuit Nunangat.

ACTIONS

- 3.1.1** Reform Nutrition North Canada into an evidence-based food security program including advocacy for an audit of Nutrition North Canada.
- 3.1.2** Evaluate Inuit use and access to existing federal programs, services, and initiatives that are intended to improve food security.
- 3.1.3** Create an Inuit Nunangat school food program.
- 3.2.1** Advocate for the introduction of evidence-based poverty reduction measures, including, but not limited to, Inuit-driven home visitation programs and guaranteed livable income models.
- 3.3.1** Advance policy solutions for filling gaps in federal, provincial, and territorial infrastructure investments that impact the Inuit Nunangat food system.
- 3.3.2** Support local food programs, services, and initiatives across Inuit Nunangat.

PRIORITY 4: Knowledge, skills, and capacity

Support Inuit country food and sharing systems

Country food harvesting and distribution is integral to food security and Inuit food sovereignty yet harvesters can face significant barriers to securing and distributing country foods including unpredictable environmental conditions, inadequate search and rescue, and limited marine and harvesting infrastructure. Governments should recognize the connection between harvesting and the right to adequate food and partner with Inuit in advancing measures that further support and promote harvesting activities and knowledge transfer associated with harvesting. Such measures should include development and support for harvesting infrastructure and the integration of harvested foods into commercial supply chains. More can also be done to support an Inuit-defined healthy diet that meets Inuit cultural and nutritional needs. In addition, there are promising policy linkages that could be made to synergize the kinds of skills and multiple training opportunities available to Inuit harvesters and local health workers delivering training in country food and market food processing and nutrition education initiatives.

OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 All Inuit have the opportunity to acquire harvesting knowledge and skills.
- 4.2 Food produced in Inuit Nunangat is safe for consumption and accessible and affordable to Inuit.
- 4.3 Implementation of Inuit land claims agreements strengthens local and regional wildlife management bodies and facilitates access to harvested foods.

ACTIONS

- 4.1.1 Promote program models that teach Inuit harvesting knowledge and skills and provide supports for equitable participation.
- 4.2.1 Support Inuit-specific nutritional knowledge and literacy initiatives through informal and formal educational opportunities.
- 4.3.1 Advocate for investments in marine and harvesting infrastructure.
- 4.3.2 Create Inuit-specific policy and program supports for local and regional food system initiatives including Hunter Support Programs, on-the-land skills training for country food harvesters, local wildlife management activities, and country food subsidies.
- 4.3.3 Advocate for increased federal supports aimed at increasing the availability and affordability of country foods.
- 4.3.4 Champion the integration of local and imported market food supply chains, as well as Inuit sharing networks for country foods and local food production.



PRIORITY AREA 5: Research and evaluation

Mobilize Inuit food security research and evaluation

Research on food security is integral for mobilizing food security interventions, monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness, and protecting population health. In addition to existing Inuit-led research initiatives, new partnerships between Inuit and governments, researchers, and research institutions are necessary to document linkages between country food harvesting and food security, monitor environmental contaminants and climate impacts on harvesting, and support Inuit self-determination in fish and wildlife management regimes.

OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 Inuit food security research is based on Inuit food security priorities.
- 5.2 Measures intended to improve food security among Inuit are guided by the best available research.
- 5.3 National household harvesting and country food consumption data informs food and environmental policy.
- 5.4 Inuit Nunangat Food Security Strategy is evaluated.

ACTIONS

- 5.1.1 Advance linked Inuit food security research and policy initiatives through partnerships with researchers, research institutions, and funding agencies.
- 5.1.2 Create a food security measurement that accurately reflects the Inuit experience.
- 5.1.3 Enhance Inuit-led research capacity and infrastructure, including in relation to Inuit-owned research centres, to monitor food security and safety.
- 5.2.1 Evaluate the effectiveness of existing food programs, policies, and initiatives.
- 5.2.2 Food insecurity rates among Inuit are regularly measured through Qanuippitaa.
- 5.3.1 Use the Qanuippitaa National Inuit Health Survey to gather country food consumption data that supports Inuit decision-making to improve policies and programs.
- 5.4.1 Conduct monitoring, evaluation, and learning on the implementation of the Inuit Nunangat Food Security Strategy.

Conclusion

The high prevalence of food insecurity faced by our people is among the longest-lasting public health crises faced by a Canadian population. Inuit and all Canadians have the right to adequate food yet no corresponding national food security program or initiative is in place that is intended to uphold this right. Our people consequently have the unenviable distinction of experiencing the highest documented prevalence of food insecurity of any Indigenous people living in a developed country. This challenge exists against a backdrop of social and economic inequities that contribute to further vulnerability. Canada's unwillingness to seriously invest in the region's marine and aviation infrastructure sets it apart from other nations with Arctic territory, and its neglect of the region's infrastructure needs contributes to high food prices and high cost of living throughout the region.

Unregulated market forces can contribute to predatory pricing and the high cost of living. Strengthening Inuit self-determination within the Inuit Nunangat food system is pivotal for reshaping it into one that reflects Inuit food priorities. Governments must develop multiple evidence-based measures in partnership with Inuit that enhance food security and uphold the right to adequate food. Harvested foods are integral to the enjoyment of Inuit food security and regional economic development, and harvesting activities must be promoted and supported. At the same time, the federal government should build on promising measures developed by Nunavik Inuit and Quebec and take the lead in advancing comprehensive cost-of-living reduction measures throughout the region.



Appendices

APPENDIX A

Commercial food distribution in Inuit Nunangat

This evergreen document outlines the basic state of play of commercial food distribution in Inuit Nunangat including market food retail models, infrastructure, distribution centres, in-house retail fleets, and partnerships with sealift carriers; annual marine resupply dynamics including government roles, carriers, port infrastructure, resupply routes, seasonal scheduling; air resupply including airlines and airport infrastructure; local food organizations and infrastructure including community freezers, kitchens, food banks; out-shopping by social institutions, governments, and households; and commercial country food processing, retail activities, and fisheries.

Market food distribution

Inuit Nunangat is home to a variety of market food retail models including

- Two regionally based large co-operatives with majority Inuit membership, each with distribution centres in southern Canadian cities, and one with a private fleet of aircraft as well as one smaller Inuvialuit-owned co-operative.
- One multinational private corporation with retail storefronts in most Inuit communities.
- One Inuit-owned regional private retailer.
- A few independent retailers.

Arctic Co-operatives Limited (ACL) was established in 1972, and is made up of 32 independent community-based businesses in Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut (25 in Inuit communities in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and Nunavut). Each business has two voting delegates on the ACL's board of directors with some stores paying out patronage dividends. The majority of the ACL's business is retail, with group procurement designed to bring grocery costs down. The ACL also coordinates annual marine resupply operations, and its subsidiaries and partners include sealift, oil and gas, and transport operations.

Ilagiisaq-Fédération Coopératives Nouveau-Québec (FCNQ) was established in 1967 and is the largest private sector employer in northern Quebec and the largest employer in Nunavik. Subsidiaries and partners of FCNQ include sealift, oil and gas, and transport operations. The member-owned FCNQ co-operative stores are present in all 14 Nunavik communities.

Stanton Group Ltd. is classified as a co-operative owned by the Inuvialuit Development Corporation, an Inuvik-based food distribution company that owns retail stores in three ISR communities.

The North West Company (NWCo), is a multi-national private corporation with retail stores in all four Canadian Inuit regions, Alaska, Canada's western and central provinces, Hawai'i, Fiji, Guam, American Samoa, and the Caribbean Islands. Northmart or Northern Stores are present in most Inuit communities and convenience-style stores (Quikstop) are present in several Nunavut communities.

Big Land General Grocery Ltd. is a private retail chain with stores in three Nunatsiavut communities.

Independent retailers in Inuit Nunangat include Newviq'vi and Tullik in Kuujuaq.

Retail distribution centres

The NWCo's headquarters are located in Winnipeg, where a large central distribution warehouse is also located and supplemented by resupply out of Edmonton, Ottawa, and Montréal. The ACL headquarters and main distribution centre is also located in Winnipeg. Recently, ACL acquired a large warehouse and hangar just south of Montréal. The FCNQ's main retail distribution centre is located in Baie-D'Urfé on Montréal's west island. Stanton Group Ltd.'s main warehouse is located in Inuvik and receives supplies out of Edmonton and Yellowknife. Big Land General Grocery Limited's main distribution centre is located in St. John's for marine shipping and Happy Valley-Goose Bay for air freight.

In-house retail air fleets and sealift partnerships

The NWCo purchased Northern Ontario's North Star Air in 2017 and recently acquired a new hanger in Thompson, Manitoba. In 2020, a partnership between ACL and Quebec-based charter airline Chrono Aviation included the creation of an Inuit seat on the board of directors of Chrono Aviation and ACL's acquisition of a new hanger in St. Hubert, Quebec (just south of Montréal).

Only two of Inuit Nunangat's 51 Inuit communities—Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk—are served by road year-round. However, it is important to note that both the Dempster highway to Inuvik and the Inuvik–Tuktoyaktuk highway experience road closures during the fall freeze-up and spring break-up periods, and are increasingly vulnerable to climate change impacts. Aklavik is served by a winter road. All other Inuit communities are resupplied by sealift, barge, or ferry in the summer and by air year-round. Most communities are served by 2–3 marine resupply runs a year, while a number may only be served by a single annual run.

Annual marine resupply

The territorial and provincial governments run or play a role in negotiating annual dry cargo and bulk fuel marine resupply terms with marine resupply carriers to most Inuit communities. Details of designated carriers and delivery schedules are available online for most communities with sealift, barge and ferry service seasons generally running from late June to late October and as late as early December in Nunatsiavut.

In the Inuvialuit Settlement Region the Government of Northwest Territories-owned Marine Transportation Services operates barge resupply operations out of Tuktoyaktuk. In 2018, barge resupply to Kugluktuk and Cambridge Bay was cancelled, leading to the need to airlift dry goods and fuel into the communities at a cost of close to \$4 million.



The Government of Nunavut's Department of Community and Government Services is responsible for annual dry cargo resupply in Nunavut. In 2019, Nunavut Eastern Arctic Shipping Inc., whose parent company is based in Valleyfield, Quebec (southwest of Montréal), became the dedicated carrier for 18 of Nunavut's 26 communities for five years (Iqaluit, Cape Dorset, Kimmirut, Pangnirtung, Arctic Bay, Qikiqtarjuaq, Clyde River, Grise Fiord, Pond Inlet, Resolute Bay, Baker Lake, Chesterfield Inlet, Rankin Inlet, Whale Cove, Arviat, Coral Harbour, Kugaaruk, Sanikiluaq, and the Churchill–Kivalliq service).

In Nunavik and Nunavut, a partnership between Desgagnés Transarctik Inc., Nunavut Sealink & Supply Inc., and Taqramut Transport Inc. provides marine resupply services originating in Sainte-Catherine (south shore of Montréal) with 2–3 runs to communities in Nunavik, as well as runs to two dozen communities in Nunavut from late June to mid-September. Desgagnés Transarctik has been in operation for 50 years with headquarters in the city of Québec and has partnerships with the Ilagiisaq–FCNQ.

The Labrador coastal (ferry) service provides marine resupply services to Nunatsiavut through a partnership between Labrador Marine Inc. (a Woodward Group subsidiary) and Nunatsiavut Marine Inc. (NMI). In 2019, freight management was streamlined, with base operations centralized out of Goose Bay. There are sailings from Goose Bay every day except Saturday to all five Nunatsiavut communities.

Port, small craft harbour, and dock facilities

The marine infrastructure accommodating sealift operations across Inuit Nunangat is extremely limited, affecting the safety and efficiency of those operations. The Nunavut Small Craft Harbours report¹⁰⁴ indicates the Government of Nunavut is focused on developing fishing harbour infrastructure for Pangnirtung, Clyde River, Qikiqtarjuaq, Pond Inlet, Chesterfield Inlet, Repulse Bay, and Kugaaruk. Pangnirtung is now home to Inuit Nunangat's first small craft harbour, with the Government of Canada contributing \$40.5 million to its five-year (2009–2013) construction. The Arctic (low impact) corridors project, a collaborative project run by a University of Ottawa team with support from the Canadian Coast Guard and Transport Canada, outlines harvesting areas, strategies for avoiding conflicts with marine vessels. A variety of community reports are now available (for example Sachs Harbour). Beginning in 1998, basic marine infrastructure was built in all 14 Nunavik communities. Several of these projects were later upgraded (2006–2010) to better accommodate sea lift operations and other community needs. However, most if not all of the infrastructure is currently in need of significant investments.

Air resupply

Commercial air freight services

Commercial airlines servicing Inuit Nunangat include regional airlines: Aklak Air in the ISR, CalmAir in the Kivalliq region of Nunavut, and Air Borealis in Nunatsiavut as well as inter-regional services provided by Air Inuit and Canadian North. The majority of airports in Inuit Nunangat have short gravel runways with very limited, if any, temperature-controlled freight storage capacity and are able to accommodate limited cargo loads compared with airports in larger centres.

Local food organizations: community-run freezers, kitchens, food banks

In recent years, the Government of Nunavut's Economic Development and Transportation department started funding community freezer projects in Whale Cove, Qikiqtarjuaq, Arctic Bay, Pond Inlet, Taloyoak, and Arviat through its Country Food Distribution Program. There are many further examples of community freezer programs across Inuit Nunangat as well as local initiatives such as food banks and community kitchens. The Nuluuq Project is an ongoing effort designed to increase the information available on local initiatives in Inuit Nunangat that play a key role in addressing Inuit food insecurity.¹⁰⁵

Out-shopping¹⁰⁶

Out-shopping activities include direct orders through Nutrition North Canada's registered suppliers by social institutions, government events, mining camps, and households, as well as direct orders outside of NNC arrangements.

Commercial country food producers, retailers, and fisheries

Commercial country food producers are primarily located in Nunavut and include Kitikmeot Foods Inc., a Cambridge Bay-based; Nunavut Development Corporation (NDC) subsidiary, and Kivalliq Arctic Foods, a Rankin Inlet-based, NDC subsidiary.

Inshore and offshore Inuit-controlled fisheries include Papiruaq Fisheries, a Whale Cove-based, NDC subsidiary, which runs a plant that processes locally caught Arctic char and maktaaq. The Arctic Fisheries Alliance, jointly owned by the Grise Fiord, Qikiqtarjuaq, Resolute Bay, and Arctic Bay Hunters and Trappers Organizations and Community Trusts, owns the *Suvak* and *Kiviuq 1* fishing vessels with catches including offshore turbot, Atlantic halibut, and cod. Cumberland Sound Fisheries is a Pangnirtung-based, local Inuit-owned company that was bought from the NDC several years ago.

Primarily a winter inshore turbot fishery employing more than 80 seasonal fishers, Cumberland Sound Fisheries has the capacity (vessel) to run a summer turbot fishery if it obtains a quota. Cumberland Sound Fisheries owns and operates the Pangnirtung fish plant, which processes Arctic char and turbot, and has eight full-time permanent positions and approximately 30 full-time seasonal residents. It also serves the offshore turbot fishery.



Nunavut is also home to the Qikiqtaaluk Fisheries Corporation and Nataanaq Fisheries. Baffin Fisheries is jointly owned by five Hunters and Trappers Associations in the Qikiqtani Region of Nunavut: Pangnirtung, Amaruq (Iqaluit), Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet), Mayukalik (Kimmirut), and Namautalik (Clyde River), and also owns and operates two factory freezer trawlers and one factory freezer gillnetter. Profits from the commercial offshore fishing industry are reinvested into the communities that jointly own Baffin Fisheries.

The Northern Coalition Corporation (fisheries), includes five Inuit corporations including Makivik Corporation, Qikiqtaaluk Corporation (QC), NGC, Unaaq Fisheries (jointly held by QC and Makivik) and the Torngat Fish Co-op. Nuluak Fisheries and Pikalujak Fisheries each have majority Inuit (Nunatsiavut) ownership.

APPENDIX B

Greenland's regulation of country food harvests for commercial sale and distribution

In larger Greenlandic communities such as Nuuk, Sisimiut, and Ilulissat, country foods are available for purchase in two main venues: in grocery stores, which process country foods purchased directly from hunters as well as distribute country foods processed and packaged by commercial wholesalers, or in purpose built public markets, where country foods are available for purchase directly from hunters and fishers.

Wholesale commercial country food prices are set by Kalaallit Nunatta Aalisartut Piniartullu Katuffiat (KNAPK), Greenland's national hunters and fishers union representing more than 70 community organizations with approximately 2000 licensed members. These organizations are financed through taxes on the sale of country foods. Country food market prices are set by retailers who have purchased country foods from hunters or fishers or by individual hunters selling their catch directly to consumers in closed or open-air markets. Country foods are also sold on an informal basis by hunters and fishers directly to consumers.

The harvesting and processing of country foods for commercial distribution is regulated in Greenland by the Government of Greenland, as well as by municipal governments. Hunting and fishing is a licensed profession for those who earn more than half their annual income from hunting or fishing and who have completed the training and certifications required to hygienically process, store, and sell their catch. The Government of Greenland regulates and enforces training and certification standards and requirements for professional hunters and fishers, and specific regulations and certifications may be required in order for hunters to receive quotas for certain animals.

Individual professional hunters and fishers must complete hygiene and fish and game processing certifications that enable them to sell their catch to processing plants, restaurants, retailers, or to sell their catch in country food markets. Hunters and fishers are certified by municipal governments through mandatory courses administered in partnership with KNAPK. Certifications are required in order for hunters and fishers to sell their catch directly to food processors, stores, hospitals, schools, and directly to the public. These sales are taxed by the Government of Greenland.

The Government of Greenland monitors and enforces hygiene standards for fish and game processing plants and determines the type of game that can be processed in any given plant. Municipal governments build and manage closed and open-air country food markets and monitor and enforce compliance with statutory national hygiene standards for fish and game processing and sales. The Government of Greenland sets fish and game quotas for commercial hunters and fishers, as well as for personal use hunting and fishing.

Harvesting activities are not directly subsidized in Greenland although hunting and fishing receive in-kind support through infrastructure staffed and managed by governments. Municipal governments in Greenland oversee the development and administration of



purpose-built closed and open-air country food markets. In the municipality of Sermersooq, for example, which includes the city of Nuuk, a closed facility is located in the city centre for use by licensed hunters and fishers in which to sell prepared fish and game, with a portion of the finances required to administer the sites coming from taxes collected on the sale of country foods in the markets. A second market located near the city's wharf was being renovated at the time of writing. At the time of writing, the primary country food market in Nuuk was not a profitable enterprise, with the costs associated with management and upkeep of the facility dwarfing revenues collected through taxation on the sale of country foods by the licensed hunters and fishers who use the facility.

APPENDIX C

Evidence of lifetime outcomes from public health home visitations for new and vulnerable parents

Home-visiting public health interventions that are focused on supporting pregnant and/or new mothers and their infants can be an effective means to support health, well-being, and self-sufficiency among low-income, first-time parents and their children. Although considered novel in North America, home visitation for all first time parents and children under the age of three has been a basic feature of health-care delivery systems in Denmark since the 1930s and is a basic feature of health-care delivery systems in other European countries, such as Finland, Germany, and the Netherlands.¹⁰⁷ Home visitations are intended to provide health education, preventive care, and social support services to young children and their parents alongside health services including cash and non-cash benefits, housing supports, child-care services, and social services as needed by the family. Home visitations are also a basic feature of the health-care delivery system in large communities in Greenland, where nurses visit the households of all first-time parents with the goal of providing education and direct support to families.

There are examples of such programs in Inuit Nunangat. The Ilagiilluta (let's be family) community-based program in Nunavik offers promotion and prevention activities aimed at ensuring the health and well-being of children and their families. The program includes the distribution of food coupons to increase access to healthy store-bought food during pregnancy and the post-natal period, and to reduce the impacts of food insecurity on mothers and their children. The coupon distribution process also provides multiple opportunities for support and education to foster the optimal development of children and to improve their overall health. The Nunatsiavut Government provides the culturally appropriate delivery of the provincial Healthy Beginnings Program. The program is free of charge and provided on a voluntary and confidential basis to families in Nunatsiavut with children from birth to five years of age.

The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is the best known and evaluated nurse home-visiting program in North America, where such initiatives are viewed as public health interventions. It was developed in the United States, where it is being implemented in 46 states, and it is also being implemented and evaluated in British Columbia and Ontario, among other jurisdictions outside the United States. Similar evidence-based home-visiting interventions targeting vulnerable populations, such as the Minding the Baby home visitation program developed at Yale University,¹⁰⁸ as well as the Triple P–Positive Parenting Program, utilize the same basic approach in an effort to create positive lifelong outcomes in children through early and direct intervention.¹⁰⁹



The NFP is designed to transform the lives of first-time mothers and their infants through ongoing home visits from registered nurses that focus on providing the care and support families need to have a healthy pregnancy, provide responsible and competent care for their children, and become more economically self-sufficient. From pregnancy until the child turns two years of age, Nurse-Family Partnership Nurse Home Visitors establish trusting relationships with the first-time mothers and empower them to achieve a better life for their families and themselves. This evidence-based intervention is recognized as a best practice by the Canadian Public Health Agency following randomized controlled trials that suggest that participants experience a number of benefits that include reductions in child abuse and neglect, fewer subsequent pregnancies, fewer arrests of the mother, and reductions in child arrests at age 15.¹¹⁰

The costs of administering the NFP vary by jurisdiction; however, the positive economic returns on investment to governments can be significant. Analysis of the cost-benefits of the intervention carried out in 2005 found a net benefit to society of US \$34,148 (in 2003 dollars) per higher-risk family served, with the bulk of the savings accruing to government, equating to a \$5.70 return for every dollar invested.¹¹¹

Public health interventions designed to impart parenting skills and develop core capabilities in low-income parents can help end cycles of adversity, trauma, and poverty. Such interventions have, in some cases, proven effective in helping to foster healthier and more nurturing environments for children and in supporting skills associated with self-regulation in parents. Such skills are transferrable to the workplace and necessary for success in other facets of life. Parents who themselves may have grown up in stressful, abusive, or unpredictable environments often struggle to manage parenting or other stressful situations in the home and workplace. Interventions that help adults build up their core capabilities including the ability to plan, focus, exercise self-control, awareness, and flexibility, can help break cycles of poverty and have lifelong positive impacts for adults and their children.¹¹²

Notes

- 1 The 2007–2008 Inuit Health Survey (IHS) classified 62.6% of Inuit households as food insecure compared with 7.7% of all Canadian households. The 2007–2008 IHS included the participation of Inuit households in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, and Nunatsiavut. The 2004 Nunavik Health Survey (Qanuippitaa?) was carried out in Nunavik using different survey methods; In recent years, the Nunatsiavut Government released the results of a household food security survey revealing that food insecurity rates in Nunatsiavut are higher than the rates recorded in the 2007–2008 IHS. The food security results of the 2017 Nunavik Inuit Health Survey are available in the following report; Philippe Robert et al., “Respiratory Health” (2020), p. 53, Nunavik Inuit Health Survey 2017 Qanuilirpitaa? How are we now? Quebec: Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) & Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ), accessed May 13, 2021, https://nrbhss.ca/sites/default/files/health_surveys/A12174_RESI_Respiratory_Health_EP5.pdf; Qanuippitaa? The National IHS, led jointly by ITK, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR), Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut, and independent of the 2004 Nunavik survey and 2007/8 survey in the ISR, Nunavut, and Nunatsiavut will be conducted every five years and led entirely by Inuit; Helga Saudny, Donna Leggee, and Grace Egeland, “Design and Methods of the Adult Inuit Health Survey 2007–2008,” *International Journal of Circumpolar Health* 71 (2012), accessed February 3, 2021, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3500824>; Nunatsiavut Government, “Household Food Security Survey Results Released,” news release, May 23, 2017, accessed March 7, 2021, <https://www.nunatsiavut.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/NEWS-RELEASE-Food-security-survey-results-released.pdf>; “Health Surveys,” Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services, accessed March 7, 2021, <https://nrbhss.ca/en/health-surveys>.
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