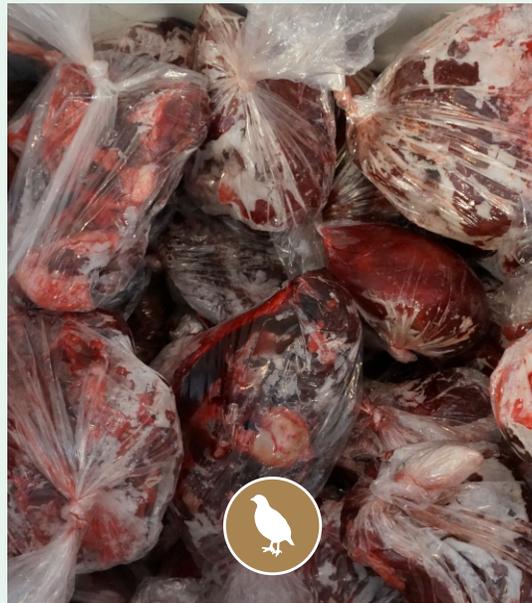
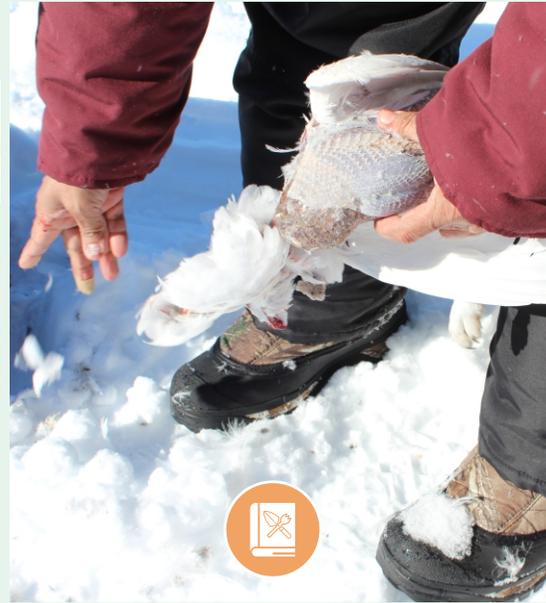


# OUR FOOD NL

Stories, Successes, and Lessons from 2010-18



Food First<sup>NL</sup>

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Hopedale Inuit Community Government
- Rigolet Inuit Community Government
- Town of Pool's Cove
- Town of Rencontre East
- Miawpukek First Nation
- Hamlet of Baker Lake

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- Carly Blake & Carlene Palliser, **Rigolet**
- Laurel Kreuger & Susan Toolooktook, **Baker Lake**
- Darlene Dominie & Josephine Marshall, **Pool's Cove**
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# WELCOME

## **This is the story of the Our Food NL project in Newfoundland & Labrador, and Nunavut.**

It's a story about the capability and resourcefulness of rural, remote, northern, and Indigenous communities to take control of their own food security challenges. The history of the project highlights the importance of food, the strengths of community, the wisdom of tradition, and the power of collaboration.

Our Food NL centers around an innovative Community-Led Food Assessment (CLFA) model which communities can tailor as they move through the process. A CLFA helps a community to identify gaps and strengths in accessing healthy and culturally appropriate food, so they may brainstorm and initiate effective solutions to local food security challenges.

Our Food NL was developed to partner Food First NL with rural, remote, northern, and Indigenous communities in the province that are most impacted by food security challenges. This effort brings together a broad range of partners at the community, regional, provincial, and even national levels who are interested in supporting community-led solutions and action, as a key strategy in the broader effort required to address serious food security challenges facing communities.

This report includes the stories of six communities engaged in Our Food NL, and highlights the project's successes, challenges, and lessons learned, which will be of interest and value to other communities, leaders, decision makers, policy and program planners, and anyone interested in encouraging locally-driven responses to food security.

# ABOUT FOOD FIRST NL

Food First NL is a provincial, non-profit organization that works to ensure access to enough healthy and culturally-appropriate food for all people in Newfoundland & Labrador.

Twenty years of leading food security work, a commitment to collaboration, and a diverse network of partners make Food First NL a leader in advancing food security in this province.

Food First NL focuses its work in three areas:



## Raising Awareness

Increasing understanding and awareness of food security, and its impacts, to increase engagement and action.



## Building Partnerships

Building a diverse network of strategic partners to strengthen food security efforts and create a greater collective impact.



## Catalyzing Action

Catalyzing and supporting food security action across a variety of sectors at the local, regional, and provincial levels.



“The complexity of food security in our province makes one thing clear: There is no one person, policy, or program that can solve this issue. It is an issue that requires a collaborative, multi-faceted approach.”

-Kristie Jameson, Executive Director of Food First NL

# FOOD SECURITY & THE FOOD SYSTEM

**Food security exists** when all people, at all times, have access to enough healthy, safe, and culturally-appropriate food to maintain a healthy and active life. Food security depends on the success of the food system, which includes five elements (shown below).

These elements are connected, and challenges to any of the elements impact food security. Food security exists when all elements of the food system are functioning well together.



**PRODUCTION**  
FISHING, FARMING,  
PROCESSING &  
PACKAGING FOOD



**DISTRIBUTION**  
TRANSPORTING &  
WHOLESALEING  
FOOD



**ACCESS**  
GROWING,  
HARVESTING &  
BUYING FOOD



**CONSUMPTION**  
PREPARING,  
PRESERVING &  
CELEBRATING FOOD



**DISPOSAL**  
COMPOSTING,  
RECYCLING &  
DISPOSAL OF FOOD

# FOOD SECURITY IN NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Newfoundland & Labrador has a rich history of self-reliance and traditions of living off the land and sea. However, substantial demographic challenges and socioeconomic shifts over the last half-century have created significant food security challenges in Newfoundland & Labrador, particularly in rural, remote, northern, and Indigenous communities.

Barriers to food access are aggravated by geographical remoteness, socio-economic inequalities, climate change, and other demographic and cultural factors.

The increasing lack of access to wild food, harvested from the land and water, significantly impacts many communities across the province. The loss of related food skills and traditions is also having a significant cultural impact, especially for Indigenous communities.

It follows that the issues affecting access to healthy and culturally-appropriate food in rural, remote, northern, and Indigenous communities puts residents at greater risk of negative health outcomes, including many chronic diseases.

## Today in Newfoundland & Labrador:



We import roughly 90% of the fresh vegetables we eat.<sup>1</sup>



We have a 2-3 day supply of produce when ferries are delayed.<sup>2</sup>



13.4% of households in our province are food insecure.<sup>3</sup>

## As a result:



We eat fewer vegetables and fruits than people in other provinces.<sup>4</sup>



We have the highest rate of diabetes in the country.<sup>5</sup>



We have the highest rate of heart attacks of any province in Canada.<sup>6</sup>

## However, there is some positive news to share.



People are reconnecting with local foods & traditional foodways.



Elders & others are eager to share their skills and knowledge.



There has been an increase in food security action & policy.

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>Gov. of NL, Wholesale and Other Opportunities in the Vegetable Industry. (2011)

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<sup>3</sup>Loopstra, R., Dachner, N., Tarasuk, V. An Exploration of the Unprecedented Decline in the Prevalence of Household Food Insecurity in Newfoundland and Labrador 2007-2012'. (2015)

<sup>4</sup>Public Health Agency of Canada. How Healthy Are Canadians? (2017)

<sup>5</sup>Canadian Diabetes Association. Report on Diabetes in Newfoundland and Labrador. (2016)

<sup>6</sup>Canadian Institute for Health Information. Trends in Income-Related Health Inequalities in Canada. (2016)



## OUR FOOD NL:

### Supporting Community-led Solutions to Local Food Security Challenges

Our Food NL supports rural, remote, northern, and Indigenous communities as they conduct Community-Led Food Assessments (CLFAs). Based on their CLFA findings, communities develop local interventions, generally in the form of new food programs, that increase access to healthy and culturally-appropriate food.

The CLFA approach is based on the premise that people living in a community facing barriers to food security have the deepest understanding of local food issues, and are best placed to develop and implement effective local solutions.

Our Food NL was initially developed through work with the northern Inuit communities of Nunatsiavut. Since 2010, CLFAs have been conducted in Hopedale and Rigolet, and the initiative also provided supports and guidance on food security efforts in other communities in Nunatsiavut. In 2015, a CLFA was conducted in Baker Lake, a northern

Inuit community in Nunavut. In 2017, Our Food NL expanded to host three CLFAs in rural and remote communities of the Coast of Bays region on the island of Newfoundland: Miawpukek First Nation, Pool's Cove, and Rencontre East.

A series of multi-year funding commitments from the Public Health Agency of Canada allowed Our Food NL to assist communities through their CLFA engagement process, and to develop and implement new food programs to respond to local priorities.

Our Food NL has provided participating communities with a solid foundation of support and resources to draw on, as they establish new and expand existing food programs.

Our Food NL has also used a number of strategies to ensure that the CLFA findings are widely shared, and help to inform both policy and program planning at the regional, provincial, and national levels.

# WHAT IS A CLFA?

A Community-Led Food Assessment (CLFA) is an innovative process, which is led by a community Coordinator and locally-established Committee, to identify barriers to accessing healthy food, set priorities for action, and devise interventions that will improve food security. It is a 4-step process:



## Environment Scan:

During this first step, information is gathered on food security and the food system in the community. In Hopedale, the Coordinator collected information on economic, environmental, and health factors relating to food security.



## Asset & Gap Analysis:

With the environmental scan in hand, local residents are engaged in assessing the strengths and opportunities for food security in the community. In Rigolet, the Coordinator hosted focus groups with youth and single mothers to gather their input.



## Community Priority Setting:

As a third step, the community is engaged in identifying priority areas for action that build on strengths to address local challenges. In Pool's Cove, a "meal and movie" night was hosted, where residents began setting priorities for action.



## Action Planning:

In this final step, all the information collected is used to inform the creation of an action plan. In each Our Food NL Community, an Action Planning Meeting was hosted with the local Steering Committee to develop the Action Plan.

The CLFA model and related tools were developed based on learnings from the first CLFA process conducted in Hopedale in 2010, and continue to be refined through ongoing application and learning.

# IMPACT

## Ways the Our Food NL Project has impacted food security

Several positive impacts on food security have been reported through the Our Food NL Project, including:

### Improved access to healthy and culturally-appropriate food.

- **New community food programs have been created**, and existing ones have been enhanced, that improve access to healthy, culturally-appropriate food.
- **Program participants have gained new or enhanced food skills and knowledge**, from healthy cooking to gardening, and have reported improved consumption of healthy food.

### Increased community capacity to advance food security action.

- **Community members report an increased ability to address food security challenges**, and several have participated in policy conversations.
- **Food security has become part of municipal-level planning and policies** in some participating communities.

### Increased food security engagement at regional and provincial levels.

- **There is heightened awareness of food security in the province**, and understanding of food security challenges facing rural, remote, northern, and Indigenous communities.
- **Many ripple effects have been reported** resulting from the project. As one example, some local stores have made efforts to increase their stock of healthy foods.

# OUR FOOD NL: HIGHLIGHTS



2010

**First Community-Led Food Assessment hosted in Hopedale,** with funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada.



2013

**CLFA conducted in Rigolet.** It revealed availability and affordability of healthy food at the local store was a priority, spawning the Good Food Box Program.



2014

**First Good Food Box shipped to Rigolet.** Within 3 months, 64% of the community had used the program.

**A radio call-in contest in Hopedale helps to name the project,** Nikigijavut Hopedalimi, meaning "Our Food in Hopedale" in Inuktitut.

2010



**Community Freezer program in Hopedale was expanded** with new, walk-in freezer, and a new pantry of staple ingredients.

2014



**The first tomato is plucked from a vine,** as a result of the new gardening program in Rigolet. At the end of the growing season, participants reported enhanced confidence in growing their own food.

2015



# FROM THE FIRST 8 YEARS



2015

**5-day CLFA-training session hosted in Baker Lake, Nunavut,** with assistance from the Food Security Coordinators in Rigolet and Hopedale.



MAY 2018

**Baker Lake Niqitsiavut Community Kitchen launched,** including workshops in cooking caribou heads, making Nipku (sundried caribou), and Patquti (caribou marrow in stomach lining).



JUNE 2018

**Miawpukek First Nation launched pre-kindergarten gardening program,** and select future site of their planned Community Farm.

**CLFA surveys conducted in 3 communities in the Coast of Bays:** Pool's Cove (47/50 homes), Rencontre East (44/44 homes), and Miawpukek First Nation (732/960 residents).

JAN 2018



**Pool's Cove established new community garden,** and began to pilot livestock rearing program.

JUNE 2018



**Rencontre East launched community gardening initiatives** and began work on a new fruit tree program, with help of locally-hired students.

JULY 2018





## COMMUNITIES IN ACTION:

### Six Rural, Remote, Northern & Indigenous Communities Using the CLFA Process to Make Change

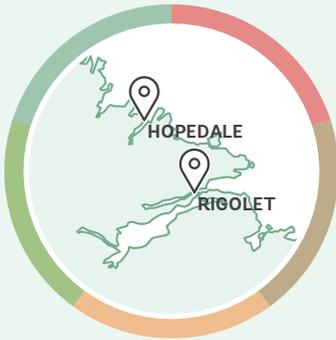
The following pages provide a closer look at how the Community-Led Food Assessment (CLFA) model has been applied in six rural, remote, northern, and Indigenous communities, and the resulting unique interventions that were developed.

These community profiles are drawn from project materials and reports, as well as from conversations with community members. Over the fall of 2018, interviews were conducted with two individuals from each community who have been meaningfully engaged in the CLFA process and the resulting interventions in each of the six communities. They were asked to pause and reflect on the entire CLFA process - from the initial planning and engagement

efforts, to the review and sharing of findings with the community, to the identification and implementation of new community programs.

These profiles highlight the individual features of each community, and how the CLFA process unfolds uniquely in each one. They provide lessons on effective practices, challenges encountered, and the work still to be done toward community members' visions for food security in their communities. They also share community perspectives on what value and impact has resulted from the CLFA process. At the core, these are stories of people and organizations dedicated to making positive change for their communities.

## NUNATSIAVUT



### HOPEDALE

Population: 574

### RIGOLET

Population: 305

**Nunatsiavut** is a self-governing Inuit region known for pristine open spaces over much of its vast geography. It spans a large portion of Labrador extending to the northern border of Quebec. Residents of Nunatsiavut live in five small communities along the coastline of northern Labrador. These communities are isolated geographically, with no road linkages between them, or to other areas of the province. Travel in and out of these communities is primarily by air and boat.

## NUNAVUT

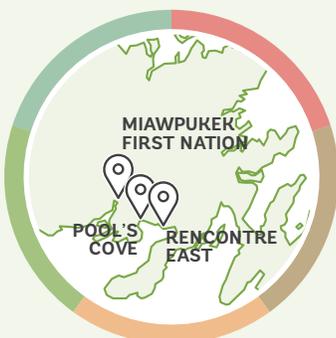


### BAKER LAKE

Population: 2,069

**Nunavut** is the largest and most northern territory in Canada's Arctic. The population, more than 80% of whom are Inuit, resides in 25 communities along the many islands and waterways that make up the region. Baker Lake is a hamlet located over 300 km inland from Hudson Bay and is distinguished as the only inland community in the Canadian Arctic. The community sits at the mouth of the Thelon River on the shore of Baker Lake. With no roads or coastal access, the community is accessible only by air year-round, though residents do use personal boats and skidoos to reach nearby communities.

## COAST OF BAYS



### MIAWPUKEK FIRST NATION

Population: 956

### POOL'S COVE

Population: 193

### RENCONTRE EAST

Population: 135

**The Coast of Bays** is located centrally along the southern shore of the island portion of Newfoundland & Labrador. Travel to this region from the more central hubs of Gander or Grand Falls-Windsor begins with a two-hour drive through the interior of the island along Route 360, passing west of a large expanse of wilderness and wildlife reserves. From there, the 22 communities that make up the Coast of Bays are accessed along local routes, and in small coves and inlets along the coast. Some of these outpost communities, like Rencontre East, can be reached only by a local ferry service or personal boat.

# HOPEDALE

Nunatsiavut

Population: 574



**The northern Inuit community of Hopedale is the trailblazer of the Our Food NL initiative, being the first to test the Community-Led Food Assessment (CLFA) model in Newfoundland & Labrador.**

The Hopedale CLFA started in the winter of 2010. The resulting NiKigijavut Hopedalimi (meaning "Our Food in Hopedale" in Inuktitut) project remains a positive force in the community today, continuing to enhance existing food programs, and explore opportunities for new ones.

At the start of the CLFA process, many community members were not familiar with the concept of "food security," and one of the first challenges of the newly formed Steering Committee was to frame conversations in ways that would have meaning for their community. They also explored creative

approaches to better encourage participation, such as offering food and prizes at meetings, combining a community meeting with a gardening workshop, and hosting two live call-in shows on the local radio station.

The people of Hopedale had a great deal of feedback to share and expressed significant concerns about access to healthy food in the community. One of their main concerns was the increasing lack of access to wild food harvested from the land and sea that has traditionally been the core of the Inuit diet and culture. They also spoke about the lack of nutritious, quality fresh and frozen foods available in the local stores. For many community members on low and fixed incomes, the extremely high cost of store foods combined with a lack of wild food meant that they often did not have adequate food and nutrition.



Marjorie Flowers is the AngajukKâk (Mayor) of the Hopedale Inuit Community Government (HICG), but in her previous position with the Nunatsiavut Government Department of Health and Social Development (DHSD), she was one of the original members of the NiKigijavut Hopedalimi Steering Committee. Reflecting on the impact of the process, she sees that it sparked a more collective awareness and call to action:

**“It was an eye-opener to see how much of an issue food security was. Of course, we knew that there were issues, but seeing the overall results from this process was actually shocking to us. So, then we had to think hard about ways we could start to address them.”**

The CLFA model encouraged community members to think about solutions, and a list of priority actions and program ideas was created under four desired outcomes: increased access to traditional foods,

increased access to healthy fresh and frozen store-bought foods, increased understanding and use of traditional knowledge, skills, and language (engaging youth), and increased food education and awareness.

Juliana Flowers, the project Coordinator in Hopedale, recalls the somewhat daunting sense of urgency that she and the local Committee felt to respond to the needs identified through the CLFA: “We had to prioritize. It was hard, but we knew we couldn’t do everything, and we couldn’t do it all at the same time.”

Fast forward ten years and while the Committee recognizes much more needs to happen to fully tackle food security issues, they can also see that their efforts have had positive impact, especially for the most vulnerable people in Hopedale.

Interventions have included: development of a community gardening program, supporting the development of a youth outreach program, and a significant undertaking to expand the existing community freezer program.

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:



### Community Freezer Expansion

The Hopedale community freezer was established by HICG to share hunted wild game with those who would have limited or no access otherwise. Through the CLFA, community members emphasized the critical need for the program, but also highlighted improvements to the freezer program that would help it better meet the needs of the community.

In response, significant enhancements have been made to the community freezer that: increase the amount and selection of wild food, formalize guidelines to expand eligibility and ensure more frequent access to those who need it most, provide delivery if required, and maintain equipment to better prepare donations to the freezer.



This equipment is also available for use by community members so they can prepare their own harvest. In exchange, they pay a small fee or leave a donation of some of their prepared harvest to the freezer. As well, a new pantry of staple foods was created to complement the wild food in the freezer, to ensure that families are able to prepare complete nutritious meals.

The community freezer expansion effort reflects the traditional Inuit culture of sharing. In addition to donations from local hunters and community

organizations, a large portion of its stock, including moose and char, comes through Nunatsiavut Government programs, while the pantry program is supported through fundraisers, donations, and grants.

Collaboration has been key to this community-led initiative and has made the difference in times of challenge. As an example, when the freezer has broken down, partners have helped to store food and support maintenance costs.



**“With the expanded program, people aren’t so hungry now. They can come here and get their basics. Some people were reluctant to come at first, but the stigma is gone and more people are using the freezer and pantry now. There is an idea that these programs are for the whole community.”**

-Juliana Flowers, Project Coordinator | Hopedale

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## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS: HOPEDALE

Community members identify some key factors that have contributed to the success of the CLFA process and resulting community interventions in Hopedale. These include a dedicated local Steering Committee who have stayed engaged with the work since its start, and a full-time Coordinator to move community programming and interventions forward. Most important are the strong collaborative partnerships with local and regional agencies.

Sharing resources and building on existing strengths are considered the only way to keep moving toward sustainable food self-sufficiency for community members and for the region. It will be important for NiKigijavut Hopedalimi to forge connections with other food security efforts that are emerging as food security gains profile and is increasingly identified as a priority in the region and province.



**“We have to maximize all the resources we have. If the agencies don’t all work together, we lose out. It’s not about any one group. We have to keep the focus on working together for the betterment of the people.”**

-Marjorie Flowers, AngajukKâk (Mayor) | Hopedale Inuit Community Government

# RIGOLET

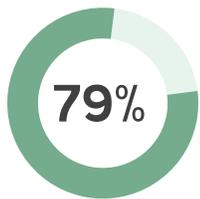
Nunatsiavut

Population: 305



**The community of Rigolet carried out its CLFA between Summer 2013 and Spring 2014, with the benefit of some best practices and guidance from those leading the food security work in Hopedale.**

As the Steering Committee began their planning for engagement in Rigolet, they made it a priority to include those in the community living on lower incomes. They decided that small discussion groups of about six people would create a comfort level for all community members to engage in meaningful conversation. They also provided bunches of fresh vegetables to those who completed the household survey.



The Steering Committee received a 79% response rate to the survey.

(77/98 households visited)

To share the findings back to the community, they delivered newsletters to each household and held a community meeting. The meeting was attended by community residents and representatives from organizations such as the school, church, local store, as well as local and regional government offices.

Carly Blake, a Community Health Aide with the Department of Health and Social Development office in Rigolet, has been active on the local Steering Committee since its inception: “What worked best was engaging the community. It gave people the

chance to share their thoughts. And I think it did raise the profile of food in the community. We thought it was important to offer to give something back as an incentive. People were more willing to do surveys but it also showed that we valued their time and input.”



As in Hopedale, community members in Rigolet spoke about decreasing access to local and wild foods, and the significant implications of change. They expressed concern that traditional food skills were not being passed down to youth to the extent they once were, and that the Inuit tradition of community sharing of harvested foods was happening less, as families were challenged to meet their own needs. Most surprising to the Committee was the overwhelming feedback related to the high price, lack of availability, and low quality of healthy and fresh food available for purchase in the community's only food store.

The community discussed a range of possible approaches to achieve the following three priorities: increased access to preferred traditional foods, new alternatives for purchasing more affordable and nutritious store food, and increased gardening. Through the CLFA process, they also provided suggestions for improvements to several existing food programs in the community.

Carlene Palliser, the Food Security Coordinator in Rigolet at that time, recalls working with Committee members to explore all of the suggested activities that had come forward through the CLFA process:

**“One thing people wanted was a hunter support program. But when we started to work on that, there were too many big factors beyond our control, such as regulations and licensing. We had to look at what things we could realistically do that would have the most impact for the community.”**

The Committee proceeded with development of a backyard gardening program, supporting improvements to the existing community freezer program, and put significant energies into the creation of a bulk buying program for the community that was rolled out before the end of 2014.

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:



### The Good Food Box

The Good Food Box program coordinates monthly bulk buying of produce and unprocessed, frozen meat for community members who wish to participate. Individual orders are placed with the local Food Security Coordinator who then submits the totals to the wholesaler. Once the food order is delivered in the community, the items are sorted and packaged by Committee members for pick up.

Continuous improvements have been made to the program based on feedback from community members, including: offering a range of small, medium, and large boxes to suit various incomes and needs, increasing the amount of fresh and frozen vegetables throughout the year, and allowing participants to order boxes as well as individual bulk

items that they prefer. The Committee has also had to change and add wholesalers to best meet the needs of people using the program.



The price of a Good Food Box reflects the cost of its contents, plus each participant's shared portion of the shipping expenses, with the Nutrition North Subsidy applied. This contributes to the affordability for participants, as well as, the financial sustainability of the program. The program has had consistent uptake by the residents of Rigolet:



63

The all-time high for boxes ordered in one month

1,850

pounds



Total weight of the first Good Food Box order in 2014



## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS: RIGOLET

Committee members feel that their work has begun to improve food security in the community. They also see other ripple effects from the heightened community focus on food. Following the success of the Good Food Box, there have been some noticeable improvements to food quality, variety, and price in the local food store. As well, the church reinstated a food bank program they used to run previously. And the gardening bug seems to be catching on. Several community members not formally involved in the backyard gardening program are availing of the free seeds and equipment available for loan through the initiative. There has been an increase in backyard gardens and a few greenhouses have even appeared in the community in recent years.

Carlene Palliser believes that successes to date would not have been possible without a combined

community effort: “We were lucky to have community members who wanted to see improvements in access to healthy food in the community. The Steering Committee and the gardeners who helped with the backyard gardening program were very committed.”

High turnover in the Food Security Coordinator position has been a challenge, causing disruptions to programming, and the momentum of the Steering Committee. However, Carly Blake is hopeful about continued progress toward a more food-secure community: “Overall, I think it’s a good program. And it is working: people have good quality food in their freezers and more people are learning to garden. It is progress. That is our goal; that people can provide more for themselves.”



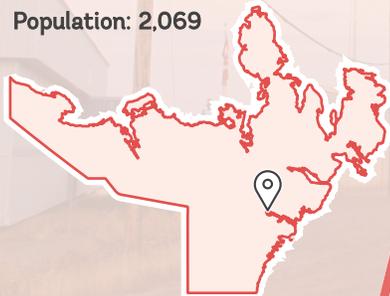
**“The most important lesson I've learned about building community access to healthy food is that one person can't do it alone. Just because we live in isolation doesn't mean that we should do without, or that we do not care to eat healthy.”**

-Carlene Palliser, Former Food Security Coordinator | Rigolet

# BAKER LAKE

Nunavut

Population: 2,069



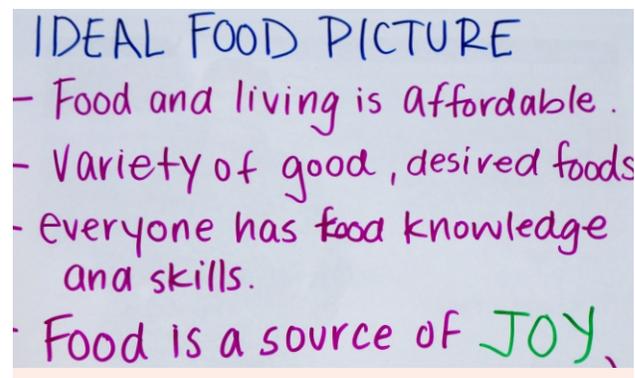
**Baker Lake became engaged in Our Food NL as a result of the project's efforts to share knowledge with other jurisdictions, and via a partnership with the Nunavut Food Security Coalition.**

As a remote Inuit community in a different part of Canada's North, Baker Lake saw value in applying the Community-Led Food Assessment (CLFA) process to engage their own community around similar local food security issues. With the benefit of some culturally relevant experience and tools from Nunatsiavut, partners in Nunavut began their planning process early in 2015.

Laurel Kreuger, Coordinator of the Baker Lake Prenatal Nutrition Program, has been on the Niqitsiavut (meaning "Our Good Food" in Inuktitut) Committee since its start. She believes the community was well-engaged in the CLFA process: "By using so many different approaches, we reached

a lot of different people in the community, from Elders to single moms to workers at the mine and more. It was also beneficial that local Inuit people were working with the project. Our Coordinator, and those hired to help with the household surveys, could speak in both Inuktitut and English. This made it comfortable for everyone to be included."

Methods used in the Baker Lake CLFA included: informal home visits and one-on-one conversations with community members, group community consultations, cooking demonstrations and displays in local stores and public spaces, several consultations through the local radio station, and a Household Food Security Survey. The survey yielded responses from 193 of the community's approximate 580 households (33%). The process wrapped up with two community action planning days in the fall of 2015, to review findings and discuss how Niqitsiavut Baker Lake should respond.



As in Nunatsiavut, community members in Baker Lake expressed concern that local harvesting of wild game, fish, and edible plants is decreasing, as are related knowledge, skills, and traditions of community sharing. As people have become more reliant on store-bought food, there is a lack of knowledge about its nutritional value. Many, especially those living on low incomes, regularly opt for the cheapest, which are often the more highly processed options. Additionally, many of the most vulnerable people in the community run short on money and food each month, resulting in the need to borrow or visit the local food bank to avoid hunger. Residents of Baker Lake also expressed concerns about the connection between the lack of access to adequate and nutritious food and increases in related health and mental health issues.

While the CLFA fostered important conversation, the local Committee identified one flaw in the process as it rolled out in Baker Lake. Just as the time came for the Committee to share the findings back to the community, the project lost its Coordinator. Without dedicated staff support, the Committee simply could not undertake the level of activity they had planned to share all that was heard with the

community.

Despite these challenges, those who participated in community action planning, toward the end of the process, engaged in meaningful conversation about what was heard and what kind of responses they wanted to see in the community. Priorities included: a community kitchen, gardening program, traditional harvesting and related skills programs, increased communal sharing of wild food, exploration of bulk buying, and education about food nutrition. Community members also provided feedback about other needs in the community, such as improvements to the existing food bank, and consistent and culturally-sensitive mental health and addictions counselling.

Due to continued turnover in the Coordinator position, and pauses as funding contributions to the project were confirmed, the Niqitsiavut Committee decided to launch just one program, and had to roll out activities over 2017 in a piecemeal fashion. However, the Committee was greatly encouraged to hire a new and enthusiastic Food Security Coordinator and an Assistant in 2018, and have since seen the program advance significantly.

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:



### Niqitsiavut Community Kitchen

The primary goal of the Community Kitchen in Baker Lake is to provide hands-on practice and skills in traditional methods of preparing local, wild foods. Workshops have been held on such techniques as butchering muskox and caribou, grinding meat, and making nipku (dried caribou).

Following these classes, cooking workshops are often held using traditional ingredients. Many of these have been held outdoors, such as workshops on the beach using traditional methods to roast caribou legs and make bannock.



The Coordinator recruits community members with traditional cooking skills to assist with these food preparation workshops, and has had a local hunter assist with leading a field trip where local high school students learned how to hunt and skin caribou.

The Niqitsiavut Community Kitchen also provides skills development sessions focused on contemporary, store-bought foods, including nutritional information and budgeting tips, as well as healthy cooking skills and recipes.

All these activities increase access to nutritious food through community sharing, both during and following the workshops. The program has also participated in community health fairs, partnering with other organizations to cook up huge pots of

muskox chili or fish chowder made from local lake trout. The food is shared with the community, along with recipes and nutrition information. Following most events, the Coordinator shares photos on Facebook, continuing to increase awareness, interest, and participation in the program. Not surprisingly, the Niqitsiavut Community Kitchen events are usually full.

Finding adequate and consistent space to deliver programs has been an ongoing challenge in the small and remote community, where infrastructure is limited and space is at a premium. Currently, the program has secured a very good location that provides a kitchen area, work tables, and room for storage. Committee and staff are hopeful it remains available to them for a long time to come.

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## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS: BAKER LAKE

In spite of challenges and delays, the future is promising for Niqitsiavut Baker Lake.

With suitable space, a dedicated Committee, and well-respected and skilled staff in place, the team looks forward to being able to do more proactive and long-term planning, as well as, find new and effective ways to engage the community.

Susan Toolooktook, the Baker Lake Food Security Coordinator, shares:

**“The Niqitsiavut food security program activities have been very well received. People are very interested in learning to prepare and preserve traditional country foods. It's important to advertise as much as possible and continue to get the community's input on the programs they want to see.”**



# POOL'S COVE

Coast of Bays

Population: 193



The Mayor of Pool's Cove, Darlene Dominie, was one of nine community members who sat on a local Food Security Committee to begin planning how the Community-Led Food Assessment (CLFA) process could work in Pool's Cove.

The Committee was unsure about whether local residents would be interested in the issues of food security so they set out to make their CLFA as informative, enjoyable and welcoming as possible.

Between January and April 2018, the Committee led four focus groups at community events that they hosted to bring residents together to talk about food: a community supper, a seniors' brunch, a seniors' night out, and a parent appreciation night. At the highly successful parent appreciation night, youth prepared a meal that they served in gratitude to their

parents. At each of these events, information was shared about food security and residents discussed access to food in their community.

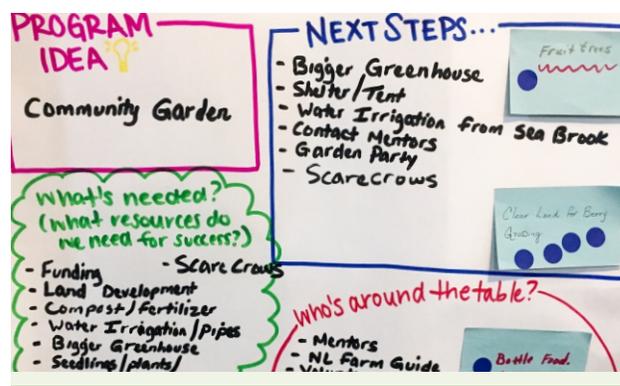
Those in attendance were invited to complete short individual surveys, which 22 did. A community-wide household survey was also conducted.



The food security committee received a 94% response rate to the household survey.

(47/50 households)

When results from all CLFA activities were compiled, a community meal and movie was held to share the findings and begin exploring solutions.



The CLFA revealed that 98% of respondents wanted to see changes to food access, and 96% felt that the community would benefit from improved access to healthy foods. The primary concern identified was the lack of adequate and affordable healthy food in the community's one store. 69% of respondents reported that they regularly travel outside of the community to purchase healthy food, which is significant given that the nearest grocery store is 55km away. Concern was also raised that seniors, people without a vehicle, and/or those living on low incomes were most negatively impacted by lack of access to healthy food.

Priorities identified for community action included: improved access to fresh and local produce, increased access to local meat and eggs, and sharing of locally harvested game, fish, and berries with

seniors and others in need. This last priority was intended to build on the local assets of abundant wild food, and the significant number of households (64%) still active in hunting, fishing and/or gathering.

Darlene and others attribute the success of the engagement process to the dedication of the community's Food Security Coordinator, Josephine Marshall. In her other role as Deputy Mayor, Josephine understood that significant outreach would be required, not only to gather input for the CLFA, but also to recruit community members to assist with future community programs. Indeed, residents of all ages have become engaged in the three programs that have been, or are set to be launched in Pool's Cove: a community garden, a community freezer, and a community livestock program.

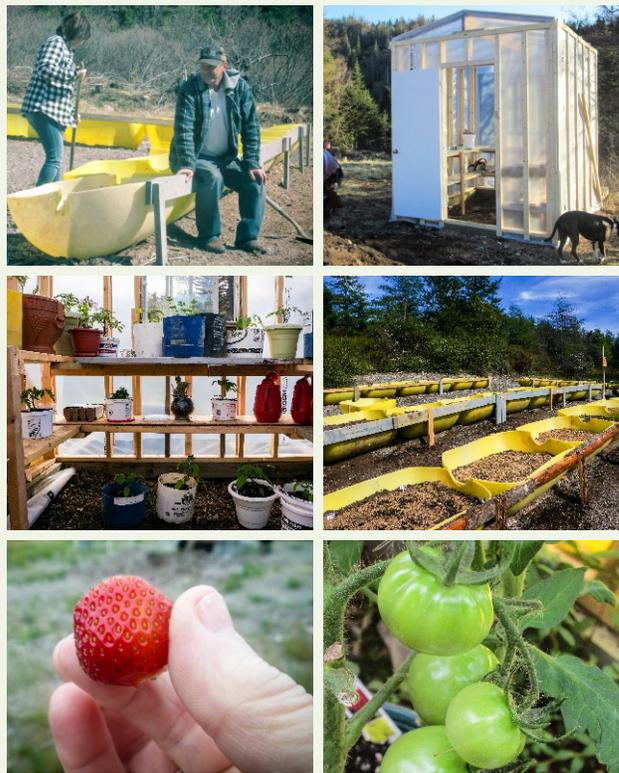
## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Community Garden



As planning for a community garden got underway, it was discovered that there were many people in the community with extensive skills and knowledge about gardening, from the not-too-long-ago time when gardening in Pool's Cove was the norm. Their contributions have been critical to the project, especially as Pool's Cove raced to prepare for the 2018 growing season.

A site for the community garden was provided by a Pool's Cove resident with a large expanse of cleared, unused land. Volunteers installed a pump, feeding two long hoses from a nearby brook, to allow the garden to be easily and regularly watered. Another ingenious solution came about when a community member spotted a mass of large, industrial-grade plastic buoys at the community dump, discarded by a local aquaculture operation. Once reclaimed and washed, the deep, convex shape and large size of the buoys made them ideal for repurposing as garden beds. A flourishing community garden was created

relatively quickly from 72 of these bright yellow buoys, and several more were shared with curious residents who stopped by to see the transformation, and wanted to take their own buoy home for planting.



Substantial time and energy was invested into ensuring that the first year of Pool's Cove community garden was a success. An 8x10 greenhouse was built and the garden produced tomatoes, lettuce, peas, kale, cabbage, and a whole range of root vegetables. Thanks to several gardening mentors in the community, residents gained hands-on learning on topics such as preparing soil, recognizing weeds, and what to do when blight appears.

At harvest time, the Coordinator made sure that everyone in the community got "a little taste of the garden." Produce was shared with seniors in the community and incorporated into community meals. As well, the project began to host preserving sessions, as a way to revive these traditional skills and maximize the local harvest. Jars of local salsa and jam have been shared with seniors and will

continue to be distributed throughout the year along with donations to the new community freezer. One very skilled woman in the community taught others how to sew toppers for jam jars, and they prepared a special batch to be given as a gift at Christmas time.

Plans have already been laid for the garden's second growing season, which include a bigger greenhouse, and starting in the spring with indoor seed starting. Darlene Dominie is excited to keep learning:

**"When I saw my own little garden growing, I couldn't believe it. I couldn't get over how things were coming up. I didn't know that a turnip grew on top of the ground!"**

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## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS: POOL'S COVE

Community members have observed many changes in Pool's Cove over the past year that they believe have flowed directly from the CLFA engagement.

Many new backyard gardens, and a few greenhouses, have appeared, and people are donating wild food of all kinds to the community freezer. Fruit from trees, that were not previously harvested, is now being shared among residents and eaten.

Also, the local store owner has made noticeable efforts to increase the diversity and availability of fresh and nutritious food options in Pool's Cove, and an adult exercise class has started up.

Reflecting on the CLFA process, the only thing that Darlene Dominie could think of that might have been done differently, is to have better explained to the community, early on in the process, that the engagement and planning activities would take some time, because a few community members began to wonder when they would start seeing visible action in the community. Overall, however, she is pleasantly surprised by the transformation that has begun in Pool's Cove: "It's brought the sharing aspect back in our community. We've seen such a boost in our community, [including] respect and care for seniors. It's like we're coming back to generations before, living sustainably from the gardens and the earth."



**"It's like we woke up around food, and everything has changed in Pool's Cove. It's just amazing. I've learned so much about gardening and livestock. There is a much greater recognition here now about how important it is to be eating healthy food."**

- Josephine Marshall, Food Security Coordinator | Pool's Cove

# MIAWPUKEK FIRST NATION

Coast of Bays

Population: 956



**The Mi'kmaw community of Miawpukek, unlike most small, rural communities in Newfoundland & Labrador, continues to grow in population, with a large base of youth and young adults.**

So, it was not surprising that engaging with children and youth was a priority in their Community-led Food Assessment (CLFA) process. The local Food Security Committee was created to include a broad base of perspectives, including school-aged youth.

Between January and March of 2018, the Committee engaged 732 of 960 residents in the CLFA, through a household food security survey and eight focus groups. The survey was delivered in-person to many homes, especially those with residents known to have mobility issues, and were also made available through local offices, the clinic, and other public areas. In total, 284 households completed the survey. Two focus groups were held in conjunction with community meals for Elders, and six others were held with junior and senior high school students.

Brenda Jeddore is a teacher at that local school and she also sits on the Food Security Committee. She reports that including students in the CLFA was an important and powerful part of the process:

**“I got to see sides of students that I hadn't before. I recall hearing one child share his experience of hunting and trapping with his family and realizing that this is a whole level of**

**this child's experience and knowledge that he's never really had the chance to share in a classroom setting. There is so much for children to learn but also, so much they can contribute.”**



CLFA findings revealed that 91% of respondents felt that the community would benefit from increased access to healthy foods and that 32% found it “difficult or very difficult” to regularly access adequate and healthy food. Once again, significant concerns were identified about the lack of affordable and high-quality food available in the community’s local stores, with 32% reporting that they regularly travel outside the community to buy food. Most community members identified Elders as facing the biggest challenges to accessing healthy food, and both Elders and youth specifically highlighted decreasing access to traditional and cultural foods.

Severn Jeddore is the local Food Security Coordinator in Miawpukek and believes that the CLFA process was effective in gathering the community’s input; she noted that some tweaks were made to ensure that the concepts and language being used were meaningful for everyone: “I think we all learned a lot about what food security is and what it

means in our community. Delivering the surveys one-on-one provided a really good chance to talk with people about that. We also kind of used the first few surveys as a test, and from there we decided to do some edits to make sure it was in clear language that was understandable to everyone.”

Priorities for improving food security in the community included: increasing the amount of food grown locally, increasing community members’ food-related skills and knowledge (especially among children and youth), and developing a community freezer program. In response, the local Food Security Committee has begun rolling out three initiatives: A community garden, a program dedicated to sharing food-related skills with children and youth, and an ongoing community food engagement program, which will continue to infuse planning, policy, and program development in the community with consideration of food security.

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:



### Sharing Food Skills & Knowledge with Children and Youth

The goal of this program is to build long-term food self-sufficiency by ensuring that children and youth in the community are gaining practical skills and knowledge related to food. It will test new initiatives and enhance existing programs, and an ongoing priority will be to engage Elders and other community members in sharing traditional food skills in areas such as hunting, fishing, foraging, gardening, and cooking. Engaging, hands-on learning for youth will take place in the community, on the land and water, and, as the program kicked off its very first few months, they started right in the school!

In the late spring of 2018, the Food Security Coordinator and a community member with extensive gardening skills piloted a growing program with the local pre-Kindergarten class.

They visited the class and showed students how to plant seeds for a range of vegetables in small pots of soil, and provided all of the children with the chance to plant seeds. Then they learned what was involved in making sure that the seeds would grow to become strong enough to be planted outdoors, and were tasked with the regular watering and care of the pots until early summer when the plants were transferred outdoors into larger containers.





In spite of the challenges of that year's growing season, there were many vegetables coming up in containers, and the children were very enthusiastic about their role in the whole initiative.

Next year, this program will be expanded significantly in partnership with the school. When seedlings are ready to be transplanted outdoors, they will be planted by students of all ages, in the school plot of a brand new community garden. The initiative tested with the pre-Kindergarten class will be repeated, but this time, with only one type of seed. This will simplify the process for students as all the seedlings will require the same amount and frequency of watering.

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## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS: MIAWPUKEK FIRST NATION

The Food Security Committee in Miawpukek is busy preparing for the coming growing season and the launch of the new community garden. A large tract of land was allocated and cleared in the fall of 2018 and will be split into three portions: One section will grow food to be shared with Elders and community members in need, the second will provide plots for individuals and families interested in growing their own food, and the third will include a greenhouse and garden for the school.

Severn Jeddore is delighted to hear the enthusiasm of the students in the school about the upcoming project, and believes this is because they have been included in the community's food security planning right from the start:

**“They were really happy that we were asking their opinion. They liked being included in the process the way that the adults were. This has had a big impact. They really understand why these projects are**

**important, and I think they feel like they have some ownership in it too.”**

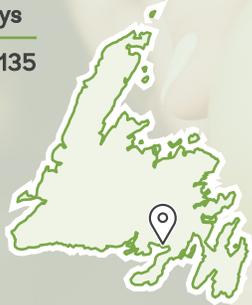
Brenda Jeddore and the other Food Security Committee members have been encouraged by the level of engagement with this project overall in the community, and look forward to seeing their initiatives get underway in year two.

“We have the land and resources here and it's wonderful to see all that's happening now with this project. I didn't know there were even people in our community who had such expertise in growing. The issues of food and food security are more visible now, and people who haven't come forward for things in the past are coming forward around this. And there is even more potential to engage our Elders in all of this. They are willing and helpful and they have the skills and the knowledge that we need. And we can think more about how to engage some of our most vulnerable populations. There is so much potential for the community with this, even beyond producing fresh, healthy food.”

# RENCONTRE EAST

Coast of Bays

Population: 135



**Members of the Food Security Committee in Rencontre East believe that outreach activities are just as important in a small community of 135 people as they are anywhere.**

They wanted a comprehensive Community-led Food Assessment (CLFA) that was informed by as many community members as possible, and to ensure that no one in the small community felt left out of the process. Deann Trainor, Committee member:

“We worked hard to get people’s input. It’s a small town and we all know each other, yes, but you don’t always interact closely with everyone, and you don’t know what people really think. In the end, I think we heard even more than we expected.”

To this end, over January-March 2018, the Food Security Coordinator knocked on the door of every

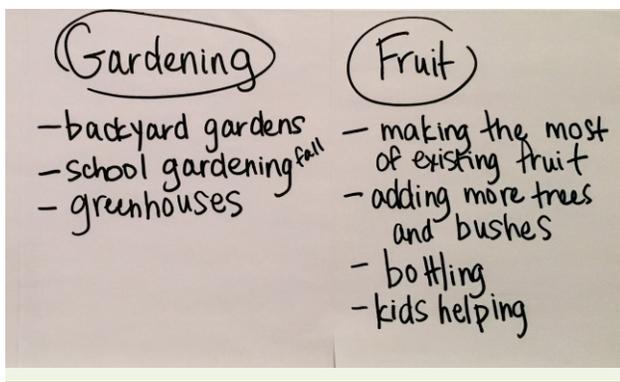
house in Rencontre East to invite residents to complete the Household Food Security Survey. She assisted with completing the survey if that was desired, but in most cases, she left it with the promise to return for pick-up one week later.



The household food security survey had a 100% response rate.

(44/44 households)

In addition, two focus groups were held, one with seniors and one with students. Once all results were summarized, a community brunch was held to share the findings, and to get people thinking about what new food programs would have the most impact.



Findings from the Rencontre East CLFA were similar to those in the other two participating Coast of Bays towns. 86% of participants wanted to see changes to food access in the community. They spoke particularly about the lack of fresh produce available in the two small local stores, and 51% reported regularly shopping outside the community, which requires a ferry ride of more than an hour. Again, seniors and others with low incomes and/or without access to a vehicle were identified as being most negatively impacted. Seniors also spoke about a lack of suitably-sized and affordable portions of fresh foods, especially for those living alone. Priorities identified to increase community food access included: increased gardening and other options to increase access to fresh produce, increased food skills and knowledge, and improvements to the ferry service to and from the community.

Peggy Caines, the Food Security Coordinator in

Rencontre East, believes that personal household visits were the key to engagement, but that sharing the research findings back with everyone at the well-attended community brunch was the real “game-changer”:

**“Having everyone together at the brunch and hearing those results really started to bring everything together. That’s where people started to get excited about what we could do together as a community.”**

Since that time, the Food Security Committee settled on launching three programs: a backyard gardening and composting program, a food education and skills program, and a fruit program.

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:

### Fruit Program



The aim of the fruit program in Rencontre East is to increase the amount of fresh and affordable fruit available to residents. The first priority of the program was to identify what fruit was already growing locally so that community members could better access it. During the summer, as local fruit trees were in bloom, a group of students were hired to help Peggy find, identify, and catalogue all fruit-producing trees and shrubs growing in the area, both on private property and in the wild. This first activity resulted in some surprises for many in the community, identifying plums, cherries, pears, nearly 30 apple trees and even a hazel nut tree!

In this spirit of community sharing, Peggy decided to uproot a line of rhubarb plants that have been in her family for more than 150 years and replant them in raised beds where the whole community could access

them. A beautifully illustrated sign now marks “The Rencontre East Heritage Rhubarb Garden,” which has encouraged others in the community to share stories about plants that have been on their family lands for decades.



The fruit program has already yielded great benefits in its first summer, but the Committee isn't slowing down. Plans are in place for the coming growing season to plant strawberry and blueberry patches near the rhubarb garden, that will also be large enough for everyone to harvest from. The

Committee is exploring options for bulk-ordering shipments of fresh fruit to improve local access and variety year-round. As well, the fresh fruit now available in Rencontre East will be used to pass on traditional skills of cooking, baking, and bottling preserves.



**“I love the fruit trees! It seems like all of a sudden there is all of this fruit in the community that so many weren't aware of! So much was going to waste before, but they have been identified now, and everyone is encouraged to go and pick from them.”**

-Deann Trainor, Food Security Committee Member | Rencontre East

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## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS: RENCONTRE EAST

Deann is a member of the Food Security Committee and is also the owner of a convenience store in Rencontre East. She has been very interested in increasing the variety of fresh produce offered in her store, because of the heightened dialogue and growing interest in healthy food in Rencontre East due to the CLFA. She has created a very successful points system where customers accumulate points by purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables, and at the end of the month, the customer with the most points receives a prize. As well, in response to the CLFA findings, she began offering single/smaller portions

of fruits and vegetables to respond to the feedback from seniors. Her store also provided tastings of less common fruits and vegetables that are new to some people in the community. All of this activity was seen to have double benefit, for her store and for access to fresh and healthy food in the community. Peggy says this is a great example of the important role that local stores can play in helping to promote access to more fresh and healthy food in small, remote communities like Rencontre East. She encourages other communities to try to engage local store owners in their food security efforts:



**“It was important to try to get our local store owners involved in this from the start. Small communities like ours rely heavily on our local stores. There is a lot we can do ourselves, but the more we can bring in other partners and businesses, the better off we all are.”**

-Peggy Caines, Food Security Coordinator | Rencontre East



# LESSONS FROM OUR FOOD NL:

## Key Elements For a Successful CLFA

There is no “one size fits all” model when working with rural, remote, northern, and Indigenous communities, because each one is so unique. At a minimum, a successful community-led food assessment requires:

### 1 Community-Wide Engagement in Early Stages

Community leaders and project partners have been in awe of the level of engagement they receive when starting community-wide discussion on improvements to food security. This extensive engagement has been critical in harnessing community enthusiasm to inform food programs that are effective and well-received.

### 2 Local Coordinator & Committee Leading Work

Communities understand local challenges better than anyone, and this project has shown that with the right support, they have the power to address them. Empowering key figures in a community to take ownership of the Community-led Food Assessment approach has been a formula for establishing transformative programs.

### 3 Backbone Organization to Provide Support

Just as the Community-led Food Assessment approach is unique in each community, the support and orientation for individual Food Security Coordinators must be tailored to their unique strengths and needs. Food First NL provided training and support to Food Security Coordinators through each phase of the CLFA process.

### 4 Strategic Partnerships to Strengthen Projects

Partnerships with community governments are core to the success of Our Food NL, and greatly improve the shift to local ownership and the sustainability of the projects. Additional strategic partnerships with community, government, and local businesses have provided further practical supports that enhance the impact of the community-driven work.

# LOOKING FORWARD

## Building Off the Success of Our Food NL

### **Our Food NL has shown the power of communities to advance food security.**

The Our Food NL project has proven that people living in communities facing food security challenges are the ones best placed to develop effective solutions to overcome local barriers. Through Our Food NL, Food First NL has seen that often all a community needs are some resources and support to help them realize their vision.

The project has also seen that rural, remote, northern, and Indigenous communities have enormous community spirit. This collaborative capacity has proven vital to supporting communities in developing locally-driven and owned programs.

It is the “Community-Led” in the Community-Led Food Assessment model that makes it unique, and work so well.

Severn Jeddore, previous Food Security Coordinator in Miawpukek First Nation shared, “It was Food First NL’s CLFA tools, but we implemented it to suit our community. When people think of our community garden, they think of it as ours. It was really important that people knew it would roll out the way we need it here.”

### **Our Food NL has improved food security in rural, remote, northern, and Indigenous communities.**

Achieving food security is a complex endeavour that cannot be accomplished by any one policy or program. Improving distribution of food to communities, enhancing food knowledge and skills among residents, and increasing household income are each one part of the solution to food security, but alone will not address the issue. It is an issue that requires a collaborative and multifaceted approach.

That’s why the Our Food NL project has worked to improve access to healthy and culturally-appropriate

food in numerous ways. From improving the availability of healthy food in communities, to improving knowledge of healthy eating and traditional food skills, to developing local infrastructure (such as gardens, freezers, and kitchens) to advance food security.

The project has accomplished a lot. And while any one of these outcomes are significant, it is the cumulative impact of this community-driven work that leads to long-term, transformative change.

An example of this has been the ripple effect in Rigolet. The Good Food Box Program inspired the local retailer to enhance its offerings, and a resurgence of conversations on food security led to the re-establishment of a local Food Bank.

### **The success of Our Food NL provides a strong foundation for future food security work.**

The Our Food NL project has sparked new ideas and conversations on food security in the province.

The positive stories coming out of the Our Food NL project have raised awareness of food security in the province, and have deepened our understanding of the unique food security challenges faced in rural, remote, northern, and Indigenous communities.

As a result, lessons from the first eight years of this project can be used to inform more effective action on food security in Newfoundland & Labrador. This includes the future work of Food First NL.

Throughout its eight years of overseeing the Our Food NL project, Food First NL has seen firsthand that communities understand local food security challenges better than anyone, and have the power to address these challenges. Food First NL will continue to use this knowledge to meaningfully support communities across the province to advance food security.



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