



EIPCCP

ENGAGEMENT
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
IN CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

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Newsletter

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE, CONSERVATION, AND BIODIVERSITY NEWSLETTER

Indigenous
Communities

Fighting Food Insecurity



iskwêwak, Women:

Women's bodies are astonishing. While men's hormones reset every 24 hours, a woman's hormonal cycle lasts an entire month—an intricate process also known as the menstrual cycle. This component of a woman's life is just one of the many natural wonders that the body seamlessly performs, others being pregnancy, breastfeeding, menopause, etc.

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Being a woman is an incredible, admirable thing; and the hormonal complexities that unravel within our bodies is one element of the remarkable ability to create life. That said, it is extremely important that women nourish their bodies to accommodate the various hormonal changes that occur throughout their lifetime, because as hormones rise and fall, so too do our vitals and needs.

In fact, studies suggest that by eating certain fresh wholefoods during each hormonal stage, women can actually avoid symptoms and illnesses associated with **menstruation**, **pregnancy**, and **menopause**. But the same studies also argue that it is equally important to limit one's consumption of highly processed foods, added sugars, or excess salt as these can exacerbate and accelerate complications.

The good news is that women can take agency over their hormonal experience simply through the foods they eat, but unfortunately, for many Indigenous women, such agency is out of reach.



**CHECK OUT
VITALS BY DAYE**

who developed a beautiful, comprehensive illustration of women's menstrual phases, what nutrients/foods we need during each, and why!



Food Insecurity Across an Indigenous Woman's Lifetime:

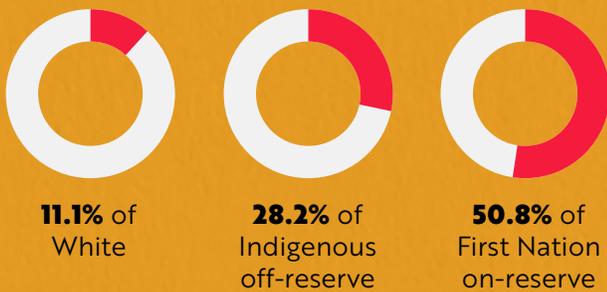
Indigenous women across Turtle Island disproportionately suffer diet-related illnesses like **anemia**, **diabetes**, **PCOS**, **cardiovascular diseases**, and **malnutrition**. **Studies** suggest that there is a direct correlation between Indigenous Peoples' illness rates and a decreased consumption of traditional foods. And we know for certain that **colonialization** has a hand in this, with Indigenous Peoples now finding themselves in marginalized circumstances. From **food deserts** to **poverty traps**, many Indigenous Peoples do not have equal access to sustenance.



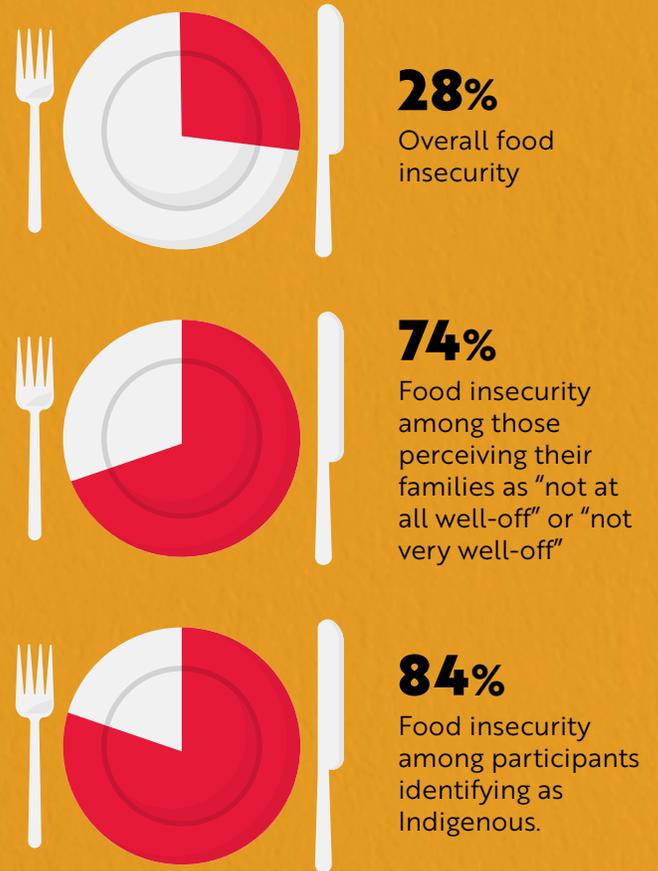
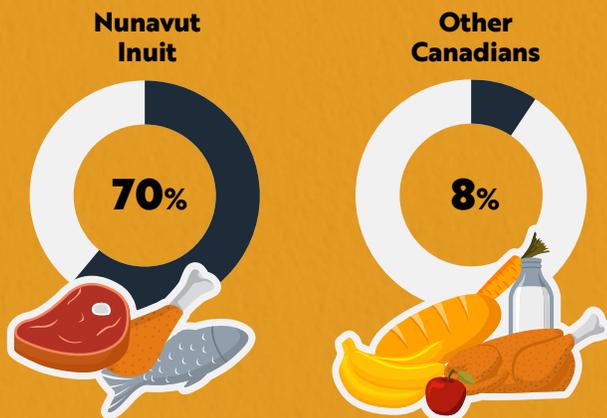
While estimates vary across different regions, there is a general consensus that roughly half of Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island experience **food insecurity**, with some communities reaching rates as high as **92%**.



Percentage of households in Canada that are food-insecure



Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, 2017-2018; First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2018



To put this into context, for many Indigenous communities, the nearest grocery store is a distant commute, some averaging more than a **50-minute drive each way**. In such cases, the only local retail food is found in convenience stores or gas stations, which offer limited and low-grade foods. This dilemma becomes yet more difficult when food is financially out of reach. Think about the situation of northern Indigenous communities where the cost of food is exceptionally higher because of transport. In such regions, food is usually only available at one local wholesale store, so the only option is to pay the high prices of whichever items you can afford. As a result, nearly **70% of Nunavut's Inuit population** suffer food insecurity.



Cost of Food in Southern Canada versus Northern Canada

100% PURE ORANGE JUICE



RED POTATOES



CABBAGE



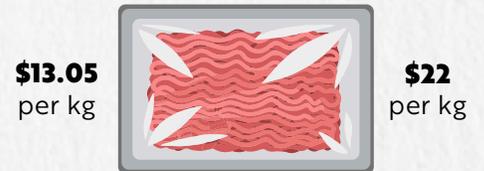
BEEF PATTIES



ALL PURPOSE FLOUR



GROUND BEEF



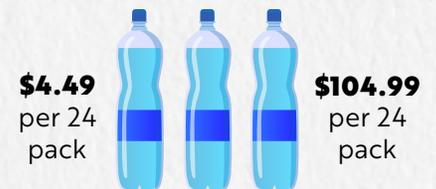
BANANAS



FROZEN CRISPY CHICKEN



NESTLE WATER BOTTLES



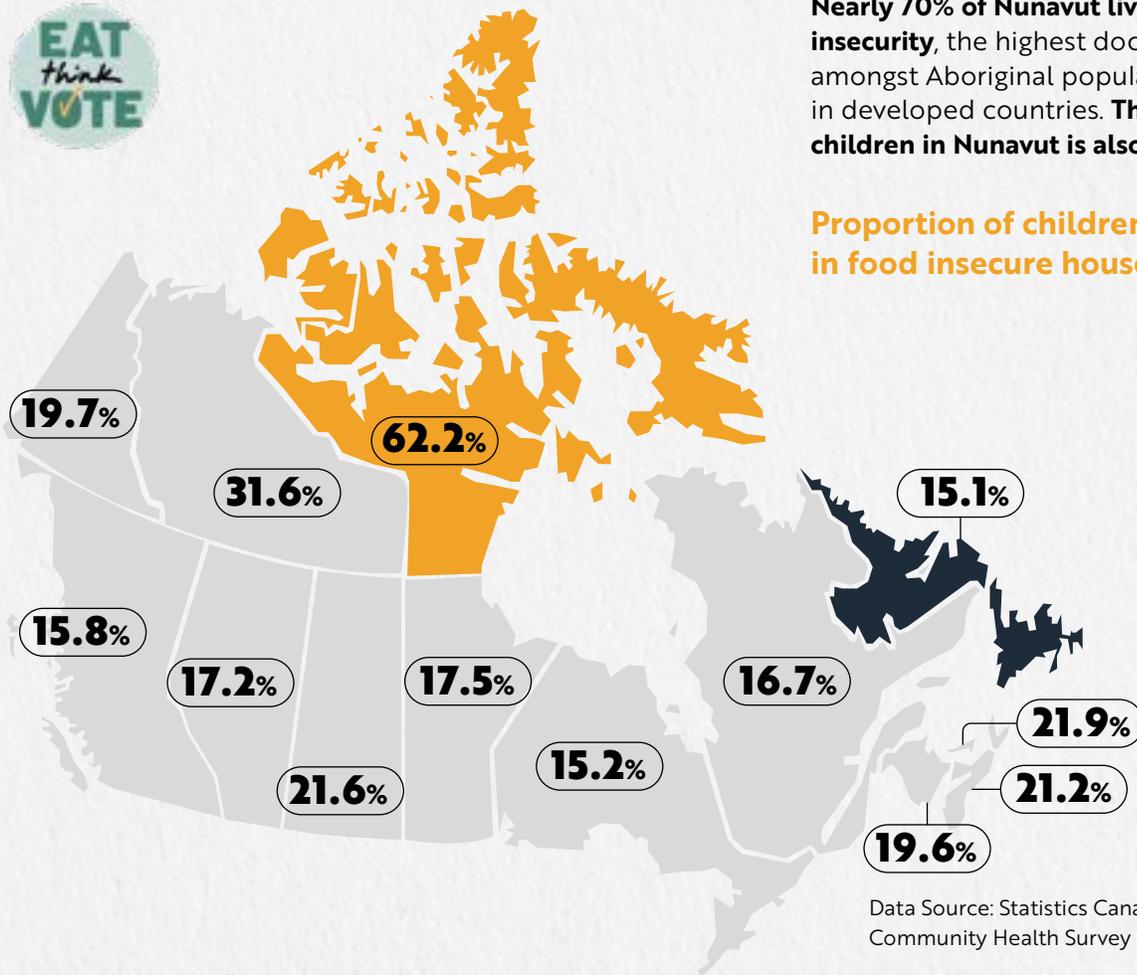
Prices on the left depict average cost of items in Southern Canada (data from Edmonton and Fort McMurry). Prices on the right depict average cost of items in Northern Canada (data from Nunuvut and Fort Chipewyan).

For many Indigenous women, **supplementing** one's body is much more complicated than simply running to the store and buying whatever nutrient-dense foods her body needs at the time. In fact, the word **sustaining** might be more appropriate, because while Indigenous women do everything in their capacity to sufficiently feed themselves and their families, they are forced to do so within the limitations and restrictions that are beyond their immediate control. And with climate change at a daunting rise, traditional food sources are at an all-time risk:

For example, we are seeing salmon disappearing, forests burning, algae blooms spreading, and caribou under threat.

The result: More than ever, Indigenous women's bodies are paying the price of food insecurity, with rates of **disease and infertility** on the rise.





Nearly 70% of Nunavut lives in food insecurity, the highest documented rate amongst Aboriginal populations residing in developed countries. The rate for children in Nunavut is also high at 62%.

Proportion of children who lived in food insecure households

Data Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2012

Documentary

Harvesting Hope: In Northern Manitoba Communities

WATCH this documentary to hear from Indigenous communities themselves about their experience with food insecurity and how they are addressing it.





Indigenous Food Insecurity Met with Community-Based, Culturally Informed Solutions

Many have argued that the specific conditions of **Indigenous** food insecurity can only be overcome with self-determination and achieving food sovereignty—the ability to choose what food is available and having control over one’s diet. The best way to achieve this is by returning to our ancestral roots: sustainable agriculture, hunting and trapping, fishing, trading, and sharing in community-based ways.

An exceptional example of this is the ***Healthy Roots Program***, which was initiated in the Haudenosaunee community of Six Nations to promote traditional food consumption and to address food insecurity. It was started by Adrienne Lickers Xavier and her mother, Kitty R. Lynn Lickers, who together carried out many projects to help feed their community. They believed that money was not the only means to achieve food security and/or sovereignty, but rather, they could innovate solutions within their community as a unified self-determined operation.

▶ Adrienne Lickers Xavier in the middle and her mother, Kitty R. Lynn Lickers, on the right.



In 2011, they launched the ***Our Sustenance*** project, which was a community farmers’ market and garden. Over the years it has grown to include a 6,000-square-foot greenhouse, an herb garden, canning and gardening classes, a community kitchen, an herbal apothecary, and ***more***. The mother-daughter duo also helped develop a:



Good Food Box program



Weekly market where \$10 = 10 items (1 item always being a cultural food)



Garden program that would supply community members with everything needed to start and annually continue one’s own backyard or patio garden



Soup Share, where once a week for 6 weeks, individuals who signed up would receive a parcel at their door that included all the supplies and ingredients for the soup of the week

The same night, participants would log onto a zoom call for a two-hour “kitchen gathering” where Kitty Lickers would show how to make the soup, share cultural knowledge, and essentially bring the community together with food and culture.



Video Seminar

Food Security from an Indigenous Perspective

Watch to learn more about the projects offered by Adrienne Lickers Xavier and her mother, Kitty R. Lynn Lickers, as well as other Indigenous-led initiatives to fight food insecurity within the community.



Community-based agricultural practices are a great way to ensure food security. For Indigenous Peoples, it is also a great act of decolonization which nourishes our communities, our cultures, and the land. Six Nations exemplifies the empowerment that can be found by leaning on our Indigenous ways to improve modern hardships and insecurity. Producing food in the community presents an opportunity to connect to Mother Earth and our ancestors, address climate change by increasing biodiversity, and, of course, feeding and healing our people so that we may continue for another seven generations, and then some.

Resource:

Get in touch with the ***Indigenous Food Systems Network*** (ISFP), which is dedicated to helping communities achieve self-determined food security.

