



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

# FNHA COMMON LANGUAGE PROJECT REPORT 2026

Traditional Foods, Medicine,  
Nutrition and Food Security

By Collaboration Team: Qwustenuxun Williams,  
Fiona Devereaux, Kathleen Yung

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## GRATITUDE TO KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

We had the honour and privilege to learn and hear from Elders and Knowledge Keepers from all the regions. Words cannot capture our gratitude for their time, wisdom and knowledge. They brought so much to the sessions and inspired the FNHA staff to share. We have captured their reflections and checked with each of them that we have captured their words and reflections in a way that felt good to them.

### NORTHERN REGION

Michelle McDonald  
Liza Sam

### INTERIOR REGION

Fred Fortier  
Steven Teed

### VANCOUVER ISLAND REGION

Tina Wesley  
Fred Hwiemtun Roland  
Tsimka Martin

### FRASER SALISH

Yvonne Tumangday Kaxte  
Other Knowledge Keepers

### VANCOUVER COASTAL

Dan Dan Peters

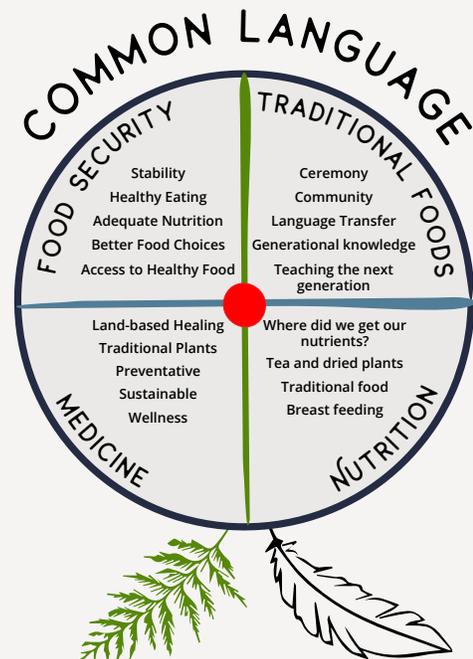
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Photography by Qwustenuxun Williams  
and Fiona Devereaux



**"WHEN I THINK OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE MY GRANDMOTHER AND THE ELDERS FROM OUR COMMUNITY AND FROM THE CENTRAL COAST IT'S SACRED, IT'S JUST SACRED."**

**– BONNIE CAHOOSE**



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**First Nations Health Authority**  
Health through wellness

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) is the health and wellness partner to over 200 diverse First Nations communities and citizens across British Columbia (BC). In 2013, the FNHA began a new era in BC First Nations health governance and health care delivery by taking responsibility for the programs and services formerly delivered by Health Canada. Since then the FNHA has been working to address service gaps through new partnerships, closer collaboration, health systems innovation, reform and redesign of health programs and services for individuals, families, communities and Nations.

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# SETTING THE TABLE

This process of reflection and learning could not have been achieved without the generosity and wisdom of the Elders, Knowledge Holders and FNHA staff. We were filled with gratitude and humility as we listened. We thank you for your time and commitment.

Food is Medicine and we were honoured to explore some common language around FNHA's wellness streams of Eating Healthy. Foods, lands, languages and culture all inform our eating practices. Food is a foundational part of our day and informs much of our wellness programming.

Language is powerful; something deeply connected to our identity and influences our understanding of the world. The English language has limitations and stems from one worldview. Many of the words we use to engage and connect with food comes from this limited and dominant colonial language.

Staff who work on health promotion, primary care, prevention and program planning are encouraged to take time to engage in a reflective pause to consider what informs their understandings around food and Nutrition. The offering to be mindful and intentional about language is essential, as much of our understandings and relationships with food are influenced by our upbringing, our educational systems, and our social and societal influences. This project offered a powerful pause to reflect on some commonly used food-related words within First Nations communities. This project scanned 30 distinct community health plans, regional caucus minutes (2019-2022) and food planning and framework documents to reveal four common words:

## TRADITIONAL FOODS



## FOOD SECURITY



## NUTRITION



## MEDICINE

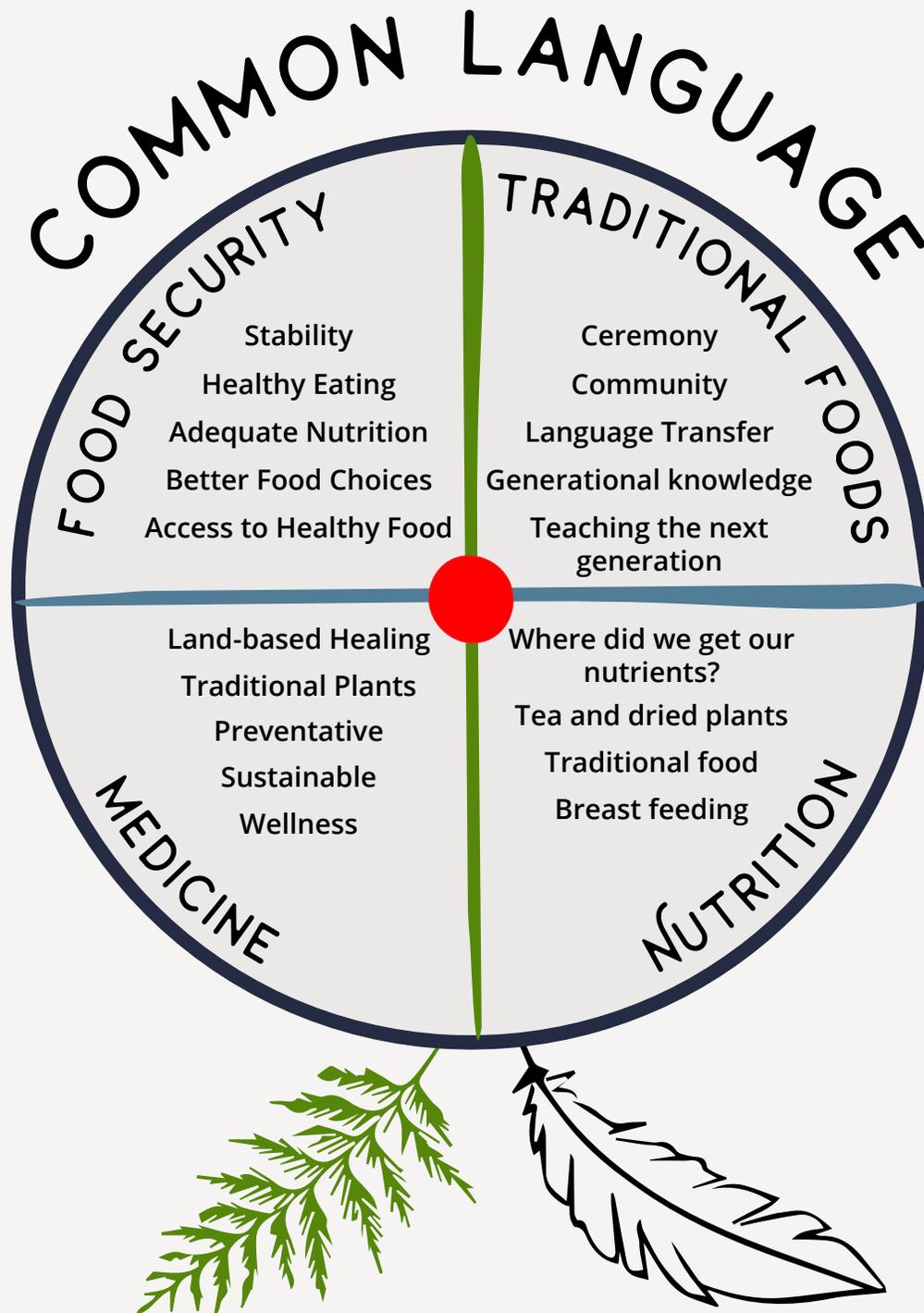


Some may wonder about why the words 'healthy' and 'eating' were not part of this project. Through the document review of community health and wellness plans and Regional caucus minutes, the words 'healthy eating' were rarely used, whereas Food Security, Traditional Foods, Medicine, and Nutrition were much more commonly used. It is important to reflect on what words are used over others and what social, political, cultural and educational factors influence the use of certain words. We saw much of the reflections around food done so in relationships. Food is relational and this was profoundly and broadly reinforced throughout the engagement.

**"IF IT IS KNOWLEDGE THAT IS EARNED IN TRADITIONAL WAYS, WHAT IS FNHA'S INFLUENCE AND WHAT IS HEALTH AUTHORITIES AND MINISTRIES INFLUENCE IN THAT WHEN YOU ARE HOLDING SACRED KNOWLEDGE. YOU HAVE TO EARN THAT KNOWLEDGE."**

**– DION THEVARGE**





Visual Created by Qwustenuxun to help inform and guide the engagement process

# SETTING THE TABLE

The engagement process acknowledged that each Region is distinct and has their own understandings and vision for food within their Nations. These collective understandings are shared to inform and guide FNHA's staff and partner's food and Nutrition work. We ground this food and Nutrition learning journey in our individual and collective Indigenous Cultural Safety and Humility learning and unlearning journeys. Food and food systems have been targeted within ongoing colonialism. The teachings and experiences within this engagement reinforce this loss and violence. Many Western food and Nutrition practices were birthed within these colonial harms, including:

- Reserve creation, pollution, resource extraction, colonial policies and restriction of land, food and practices
- Loss of land, waters, and creation of reserve systems all lead to patterns of shame around eating and hunger
- Western food system as the dominant focus within Nutrition education with no reflection on settler colonialism
- Widespread narrative that labels Indigenous peoples as uncivilized with inferior diets
- Residential schools and hospitals - diets were vastly different than home and food was used as punishment
- Nutrition experiments and food was limited in quantity and quality
- Structured and planned design to create colonial dependence on settler foods
- Nutrition education, dietetic practices focusing on Western and colonial food and knowledge systems while undermining Indigenous ways of knowing and being and food systems
- Diseases (diabetes, heart disease, cancer, etc.) are directly related to racism and settler colonialism
- Pathologizing Indigenous people and focusing on "the need" for education and food and Nutrition literacy instead of critical self reflection and Indigenous anti-racism learning
- Individualism vs systemic and structural racism
- Staff working in food-related positions with limited Indigenous Cultural Safety and Humility and Trauma and Violence informed practice understanding and skills

"I HAVE A LOT OF MEDICINES THAT ARE THE BEST MEDICINE EVER AND THAT'S OUR CHILDREN AND OUR RELATIVES AND OUR FRIENDS, OUR TEACHINGS AND OUR CULTURE."

– TINA WESLEY



# SETTING THE TABLE

To conduct this engagement project (August 2022 to spring 2023), Indigenous chef Jared Qwustenuxun Williams (Quw'utsun) and dietitian Fiona Devereaux (white settler, Irish) acted as consultants. Using thematic analysis, an environmental scan began with reviewing FNHA (2019-2022) Regional caucus minutes from all five Regions, 30 distinct Community Health and Wellness Plans, food systems program recommendations and the FNHA Cultural Safety and Humility Standard along with the FNHA Summary Service Plan. Regionally specific themes were highlighted along with quotes and teachings from Elders and Knowledge Keepers. These themes were presented during each Regional engagement. Four words related to Food Security and Nutrition were identified: Traditional Foods, Food Security, Nutrition, and Medicine.

Invitations and a project summary were sent out to FNHA regions and to their central team for three-hour engagement sessions. Each Region identified Elders or Knowledge Keepers they would like invited to one of five engagement sessions during fall 2022.

## SOME OF THE QUESTIONS EXPLORED WITHIN THE ENGAGEMENTS WERE:

- What does this word mean to you?
- What does this mean to your community?
- What do you see in your mind and heart when you hear these words?
- Does it connect to your values, beliefs and the hopes in your Region?
- How can these food definitions link to the priorities within your Region and inform work and action around Traditional Foods, Food Security, Nutrition and Medicine?
- How does food connect with other aspects of health: chronic conditions, self-determination, and social determinants of health.

Sessions were recorded and Elder and Knowledge Keeper reflections were transcribed and presented back to them for clarity and editing (member checking). This report and educational tools were created from the engagement sessions and are intended to help facilitate teachings shared within the engagements. Drafts of the resource tools were shared with each Region for feedback and edits.

**"THE GREAT HARM THAT THE FIELD OF NUTRITION HAS DONE AND THAT THERE IS A GREAT AMOUNT OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO DO BETTER."**

**– TESSIE HARRIS**



# IMPORTANT NOTE PRIOR TO READING:

The above 'Setting the Table' section was written by the authors Qwustenuxun Williams and Fiona Devereaux to provide the context and process that was taken for this project.

The following sections do not necessarily read like a report and this was done intentionally as each write up is created directly from community teachings. Both cross-regional themes for each word (Traditional Foods, Food Security, Nutrition, Medicine) and regional pages for each word were created using the words of participants, centering Knowledge Keepers and FNHA staff. Each paragraph does not read like conventional paragraphs in a report; rather they are themes that arose in conversation regarding that particular word. They were slightly adapted into sentences for flow. We used their words throughout to keep their authentic voices. When direct quotes were used they were put in quotations.

## AS YOU BEGINNING READING ABOUT THESE FOUR WORDS:

### TRADITIONAL FOODS



### FOOD SECURITY



### NUTRITION



### MEDICINE



we hope that you can read them like you are at the table, listening to community talk.

## WE ARE DEEPLY GRATEFUL FOR THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS:

### NORTHERN REGION

Michelle McDonald  
Liza Sam

### INTERIOR REGION

Fred Fortier  
Steven Teed

### VANCOUVER ISLAND REGION

Tina Wesley  
Fred Hwiemtun Raoland  
Tsimka Martin

### FRASER SALISH

Yvonne Tumangday Kaxte  
Other Knowledge Keepers

### VANCOUVER COASTAL

Dan Dan Peters



# CROSS REGIONAL THEMES

# TRADITIONAL FOODS

Traditional Foods are foods that have been harvested by First Nations community members within their territory since time immemorial. The term “Traditional Foods” may imply that these foods are purely traditional, from the past, or unchanging, but this couldn’t be further from the truth. Traditional Foods are still evolving and changing and have been impacted by the introduction of new ingredients and cooking methods. For untold generations, First Nations people tended and harvested Traditional Foods that created intricate and dynamic land-based food systems that have become inseparable from their culture.

Traditional Foods are very healthy. The act of going out to collect them combines wholistic health attributes: the physical aspect of collecting, the social aspect of being with other people, and both the mental and spiritually healthy aspect of gathering and consuming Traditional Foods. Indigenous foods and food systems are truly empowering for Indigenous people. Everything is taught from generation, to generation, to generation, and every single action has a meaning so it is so important to have the knowledge to identify, harvest, process, cook, and eat these foods. This happens while still listening to the teachings, respecting the food, and following protocols. This creates a positive cultural feedback loop that in turn creates wellness in both health and culture.

The harvesting of Traditional Foods is an act of land-based healing. It’s an ingrained need. It’s a calling that we have each year. It’s a spiritual connection because our whole body, our whole spirit, everything needs these foods each year. We need to taste the fish, we need to taste the berries, and just eating it, and just tasting it, has a spiritual connection. Traditional Foods are alive and have a life and a personality, and we are grateful for the life that is given to us.

When you go out and you process Traditional Foods you walk the land, you see the animals, you feel the gratitude, and you’re part of the ceremony. Right from the harvesting, each



new generation is part of the process so that when they eat it they're more connected to the land and to their family. In the end, Traditional Foods are so much more than just food, they are our way of life. How we learn to live with our plants, animals, fish, and our birds.

Colonialism, drought and forest fires combined with lack of access means that many of our Indigenous community members simply cannot acquire Traditional Foods. We also face socioeconomic barriers. Like how many people don't have transportation, gas money, or supplies needed to hunt or forage for food. So either the food isn't there, or they can't access the food, and it's just easier to shop for foods in town.

Food is much like language, innovation, or technology: it evolves. We're not stagnant people, we're not gonna go back to the past. We're gonna use what's in the past in order to decide what's better for us in the future. So, to many Indigenous people, Traditional Foods are going to be new to our palettes. But it's time to reintroduce foods like camas. There's so many things out there that we're reintroducing to bring closer to our homes now. We used to go to the mountain to collect a lot of different plants and Medicines. But we can't get there any more. The traditional territories are becoming so minimal now. Those landscapes have changed since that introduction, that contact, and this is how we continue to evolve with it.



# FOOD SECURITY

Food Security means that everything is full. The freezer is full, the pantry is full, the cupboards are full, the bellies are full and the lunch boxes are all full. Every day of the month, every day of the year, there is no worry, there is no fear, and no anxiety over where your next meal will come from. No worry about what meals you have to miss to ensure your children get enough to eat. Food Security is not having to worry.

Historically, we all took care of each other. It was our way. Our homes once had food everywhere and when we talk about Food Security it's not just for ourselves but for the whole community. It doesn't matter how tough things get, or where people live, we are taught to ensure that we provide for and deliver to, especially to Elders, all our people. We need to bring back the teachings of sharing and taking care of each other. Like how when someone gets their first deer, elk, or moose they would share it, and give it out to everybody in the community. Or when people used to go fishing they would always give out all the fresh fish to the community right away. There is a unique kind of joy and pride that comes from our cultural generosity.

Food Security is having a healthy and abundant ecosystem. We lived knowing everything was connected. So when we talk about Food Security, it is about protecting our food source on the land and within waters. We harvest foods in a way that's sustainable, we have our own laws on how we gather. Food Security means making sure that our foods are there for our future generations.

We have to teach the kids how to gather and how to process our foods. They then learn to gift some of the food back to the community. So that they feel good that it's going to be shared and they take pride in sharing. Some say the freezer and the refrigerator came along and changed all that. One of the translations from their language back to English called it a "Selfish Box". Because it meant that we didn't have to give it all out right away anymore, we could keep it for ourselves.



So in the long term it had lasting effects on our societal attitudes and the spirit of generosity.

Right now, food is at that point where we are paying ten dollars for a head of lettuce. Instead, we can grow so many vegetables and share it with people that don't know how to grow. Community gardens could be done in a way where it provides staple fresh foods that people need. There is so much you can gather and use so little energy. We can share our knowledge of how we grow plants. It would be nice to see the younger generations working on their gardens. Getting back to knowing where the food comes from.

Many of our youth don't have access to a vehicle, boats, or the knowledges needed to go out harvesting. Knowledge and access are key for food independence. We still dry clams, smoke and dry fish for the winter. But, we've been affected by Western ways of capitalism and scarcity.



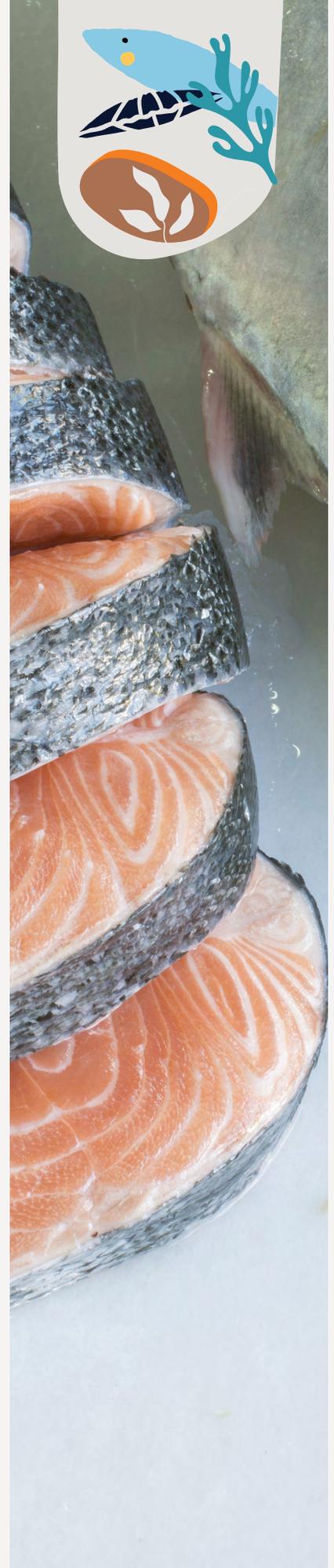
# NUTRITION

The nutritional content of Indigenous foods is widely diverse. Even within the same foods, Nutrition can vary greatly depending on where that food is harvested and how it is prepared. For example, fish from the lower river will be high in fat, but by the time the fish get up into the Interior they have a much lower fat content. Our ancestors had a working knowledge of the Nutrition within our foods. Even generations after contact, our Elders know the Nutrition in our foods. Sometimes when we need a certain mineral or vitamin they will tell us what we need to eat to get better. Nutrition is pulling all of it together and understanding why that food is good for us and creating that link between Nutrition and health.

It's unfortunate that the term "Nutrition" is also related to trauma, as a direct result of the Nutritional experimentation on residential school children, and the intergenerational effects it's had. Our people didn't get here by their own decisions; many were forced into this position. We should also remember that it was the history of Nutrition studies in residential schools that informed a lot of the recommendations in the food guide. Those were studies that were conducted on our malnourished children.

Many of our parents and grandparents that went to residential schools were taught Western Nutrition. Now most of the following generations are lactose intolerant. Dairy just doesn't fit with our Indigenous Nutrition. We have to understand that our body is gauged for certain foods, it's in our DNA. Our bodies are designed for Traditional Foods. When we don't eat those foods, that's when we start to find complications.

Sometimes food is used to cope with trauma. For some, food is the only thing that'll make them happy. It's not healthy but it'll bring a small amount of joy to life on the reserve. Many of us grew up with processed foods and it is a hard thing to kick. We need to raise awareness of how these new filler foods impact our system; the rice, potatoes, sugars, and starches. Our bodies are the same



as our ancestors and we need to eat what they ate. They survived on creek water, berries, meat, fish, and Medicines, all harvested from the land.

The foods that grow in our territories are really good for us. In many places they are still very abundant and highly nutritious. Even more nutritious than the foods that we buy from the store. Yet, we don't harvest them anymore, even though they are growing all over our territory. Instead, in today's contemporary world, we depend on the store and the processed foods. It's time we started connecting the dots to a healthy lifestyle and getting back to the basics of what our Elders did before.



# MEDICINE

Our Medicine is found in many things. Many of our most powerful Medicines are our children, our relatives, our friends, our teachings, and our culture. Traditional Medicine, in our community, is very sacred. It is not shared with anyone unless the Elders feel like they've earned the right. Only certain people are chosen to learn our Medicines. Learning how to gather with respect for the Medicine and understanding the power that Medicine holds is sacred knowledge.

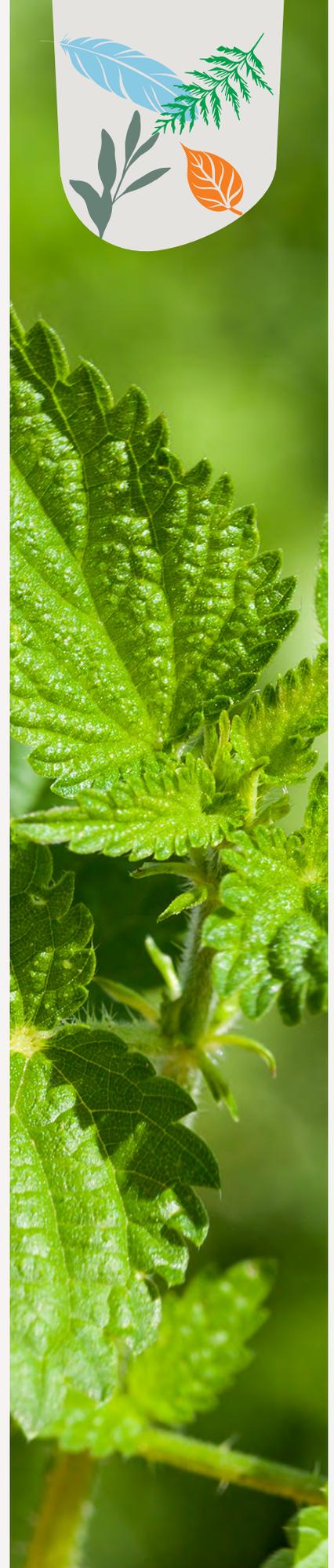
Medicine people are trained to be in the right physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual state before they can go out and harvest. Keeping in mind that everything starts with prayer. We have to believe in prayer to believe in our own healing. That's where the Medicine comes from. Before you even go out to do anything, even the thought of going to pick something or to gather something, it starts with a thought, and it starts with a prayer.

Our Medicine is powerful. It can be compared to Chinese Herbal Medicine. We, too, have many plant Medicines that we've known for thousands of years to be effective in all these different areas. It's hard to imagine where Indigenous Medicine would be if we hadn't been colonized or our Medicines outlawed.

So much around Medicine is about controlling our energy and healing our trauma. Colonization has disrupted access to our Medicines and to Medicine people. With our harvesting sites gone, many don't know where to go anymore. Sometimes people will end up harvesting Medicine from the roadside. But all along the side of the road is the oil, gas, diesel, antifreeze, and everything that washes off the road into the ditch. The poor Medicine is trying to survive and it digs its root system and sucks all that in. So, together with the land we are all healing.



We are relearning our culture, our traditions, our language, our dances, and our songs. Along with all the ways of our people, we are relearning about our traditional Medicines. It is amazing when you finally understand enough and can see the Medicines. Elders say it's just like our relatives coming back. So it is good to see that there are more Indigenous people that are making their own teas, salves, and tinctures. We look forward to a day when there is a greater recognition of the validity of traditional Medicines.



A close-up photograph of a rose branch. The branch is thin and brown, with several bright red, round rose hips. The leaves are green with serrated edges, some showing signs of aging or damage. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a garden or natural setting.

# REGIONAL THEMES



## NORTHERN REGION TRADITIONAL FOODS

Traditional Foods themselves are very healthy. The simple activity of going out to collect traditional food has the physical aspect of collecting, the social aspect of being with other people, and both the mental and spiritual health aspect that is involved when you're gathering and consuming Traditional Foods.

It's the process that connects us directly to the land. Going out and obtaining and securing the food, whether it's on land or in the water. Then after you get it, the process of preparing it, cooking it, curing it, and then enjoying it, in a cultural setting as well. The conversation needs to broaden beyond foods as an item itself, but to an understanding of how the process connects to community as well. Salmon is a traditional food but there is a variety of ways that people cook it. This family cooks it this way, this clan cooks it that way. So understanding that there is not one way to do it, there is a variety. We all have our different strengths in the way we connect to traditional food.

That being said, there's Traditional Foods and how our Elders ate them. Compared to eating Traditional Foods in the way we eat them today. Today we tend to add more sauces, sugars and salts to our food. Now the sad thing is that Traditional Foods are also changing because of climate change and because we aren't getting access. Even when it comes to traditional Medicines, with drought and forest fires, some of our plants are definitely harder to access. It is also socioeconomic, because people might not have vehicles to go out, or gas to go out, or guns to hunt for food and stuff. So they don't have it, either the food isn't there, or they can't access the food, and it's easier to access it in town.

"A LONG TIME AGO THERE WAS THE GREASE TRAIL THAT WENT FROM THE WEST COAST INTO ALBERTA. THERE WAS A LOT OF TRADING AND THERE STILL IS A LOT OF TRADING GOING ON TODAY."

– LIZA SAM

SCAN THE QR CODE



TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## NORTHERN REGION FOOD SECURITY

We don't use the term food sovereignty because it's a colonial term. We prefer food independence. We all took care of each other. It was our traditional way. This way is still strong in many of our communities.

Some of our Elders would say that having freezers is a downfall of our people. Because we save the food for ourselves and we are sharing peoples. Now people preserve their food and store their food as a family group or as an individual. But many people aren't sharing as much as they used to. We need to bring back the teachings of sharing and taking care of each other. Like how when someone gets their first moose they are encouraged to share and give it out to everybody in the community.

One of the healers came and he talked to us about the importance of starting seed banks. There is gonna come a time when we are gonna need seeds. So having seed banks and more communal gardens would both be an important part of food independence. Right now food is at that point where we are paying ten dollars a head for lettuce. While we can grow so many vegetables over the year and share it with people that don't know how to grow. We can even share our knowledge of how we grow plants.

What we are really focused on with our youth is that many of them don't have access to a vehicle, a boat, or the knowledge needed to go out harvesting. Knowledge and access are so key for food independence. We have to teach the kids how to gather and how to process our foods. By processing it with leaders and knowledge holders, that are hands-on, showing them. Then they learn to gift some of the food back to the community. So that they feel good that it's going to be shared and they take pride in that.

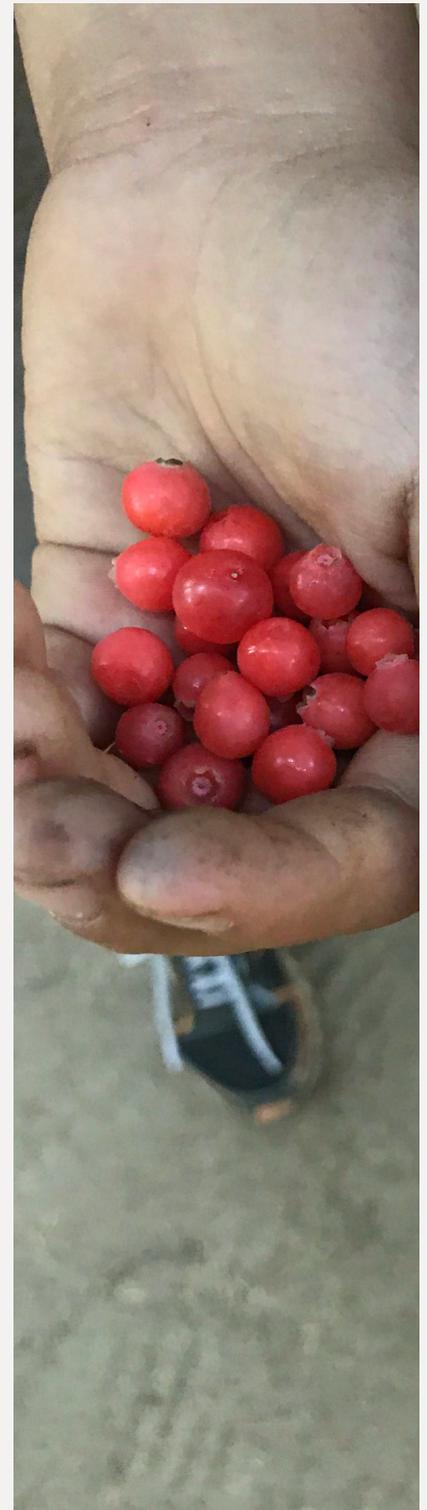
**"SOME OF OUR ELDERS WOULD SAY THAT HAVING FREEZERS IS A DOWNFALL OF OUR PEOPLE. BECAUSE WE SAVE THE FOOD FOR OURSELVES AND WE ARE A SHARING PEOPLE."**

**– LIZA SAM**

SCAN THE QR CODE



**TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE**





## NORTHERN REGION NUTRITION

The Nutritional benefits and contents of Traditional Foods vary across each region. Nutrition value depends on the ecosystems and the different ways foods are prepared. Salmon's Nutrition changes when it is dried, canned, fresh and varies from the north central or from the coast. Each food and its cooking and preserving methods are so different and so the Nutritional contents of the foods will be different. Having a look at our distinct foods within each region would be very interesting and would put a lot of weight behind teaching Nutrition, prenatal and postnatal Nutrition, and starting kids on solids. I think having that knowledge behind our Traditional Foods and our diet pre-contact would reinforce why we use our foods.

Eating our traditional diet is the ideal way for people to eat. We had different teas that we would take, made from barks, leaves, roots, or dried berries. These would be used in fall and winter months so you have that Nutrition going into your body that is missing. We should be eating the foods how our Elders ate them rather than adding the extra calories and the salts and fats that we don't need in some foods.

Many of our parents and grandparents went to residential schools. So they thought they were doing the greatest thing when we always had milk and cereal in our fridge. Now some people have lactose intolerance. When we had them analyze our bear grease they said there was some calcium content in it. So, before we had milk, we had bears. That is where we got our calcium from. It is important we share knowledge like that with all the young families about the impacts that some of these foods have on our bodies. There is so much to learn about how food affects people.

“WE DID A FOOD SURVEY, AND ONE OF THE THINGS WE'RE REALLY FINDING OUT IS THAT THERE ARE A LOT OF ALLERGIES. THINGS LIKE LACTOSE INTOLERANCE. I THINK AS TIME GOES ON SOME OF THESE THINGS, LIKE GLUTEN, WE'RE MORE SENSITIVE TO THINGS LIKE THIS NOW. IT'S REALLY SHOWING UP.

– MICHELLE McDONALD

SCAN THE QR CODE



TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## NORTHERN REGION MEDICINE

There is such a diversity between the different regions, communities, and even within families. The way we use our own laws or our own knowledge that has been passed down could be very different from our neighbours. It's lifelong learning, there is a lot of knowledge you have to learn over time.

Only certain people are chosen to learn this. Learning how to gather with respect for the plant and the power that plant bears is sacred knowledge.

It can be dangerous to mix Western Medicine with traditional Medicine because it could have adverse effects. So our Medicine people work hand in hand with the physicians at our hospital letting them know the power of traditional Medicines.

"SOME OF OUR ELDERS HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE BUT DON'T HAVE THE LEGS TO CRAWL UNDER, OR CRAWL OVER. SO WE ARE THE YOUNG PEOPLE THAT ARE MORE AGILE AND CAN COLLECT FOR THEM AND THEY GIVE US THE KNOWLEDGE. SO GOING OUT WITH AN ELDER AND COLLECTING FOR THEM WITH THEIR KNOWLEDGE, OR COLLECTING FOR PEOPLE THAT CAN'T COLLECT FOR THEMSELVES. HAVING IT AVAILABLE IN A MEDICINE CHEST AT THE HEALTH CENTER."

– LIZA SAM

"EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON EVERYTHING ELSE."

– HAIDA LAW

"IT'S LIFELONG LEARNING, THERE IS A LOT OF KNOWLEDGE YOU HAVE TO LEARN OVER TIME. SOME PEOPLE THINK THEY CAN GO TO A SESSION AND THEY'RE AN EXPERT ON TRADITIONAL MEDICINES. BUT IT IS A LIFELONG JOURNEY OF LEARNING AND THERE'S A LOT INVOLVED IN IT."

– LIZA SAM

SCAN THE QR CODE



TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## INTERIOR REGION TRADITIONAL FOODS

When we are talking about Traditional Foods, maybe the word traditional isn't what we should be using. It's just local organic natural food and using terms like "traditional" fossilizes it. We are still here. Still trying to eat our foods. Which are healthier, non-antibiotic, not factory farmed foods. Foods that had life and a personality. We are grateful for the life that is given to us by these creatures and we respect them all.

Food is much like language, innovation, or practices, it evolves. We're not a stagnant people, we're not gonna go back to the past. We're gonna use what's in the past to create our future.

When we talk about our foods we are really talking about our way of life. How we learn to live with our plants, animals, fish and our birds. It was just an everyday way of life and how we lived and how we survived when we were growing up. There are so many delicious Indigenous foods that we used to eat that would be healthier and better tasting than today's modern food.

"IT'S NICE TO GO AFTER THESE KINDS OF FOODS FROM THE LAND. BUT A LOT OF US HAVE A HARD TIME ACCESSING THOSE FOODS FROM OUR LAND. SIMPLY PUT, YOU CAN'T HAVE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY UNLESS YOU CONTROL THE LAND."

– FRED FORTIER

"I REMEMBER MY GRANDPARENTS SAYING THAT WE HAVE TO GET OUR MEAT READY, WE HAVE TO GET OUR GARDENS READY, WE HAVE TO DO OUR CANNING. WE HAD TO GET EVERYTHING READY SO THAT WE COULD MAKE IT THROUGH THE WINTER."

– DEBRA ROBBINS

SCAN THE QR CODE



TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## INTERIOR REGION FOOD SECURITY

Our ancestors looked after our plants, foods, animals and fish. Food Security is having a healthy and abundant ecosystem. We lived knowing everything was connected. So when we talk about Food Security, we are talking about protecting our food sources on the land and waters. The concept of Food Security brings up thoughts on how we harvest our foods, our plants, our animals, our salmon, and all our different fishes. We do it in a way that is sustainable. We have our own laws on how we gather these things. Food Security means making sure that those foods are going to be there for our future generations.

When colonization introduced cows and cattle they were brought up to our alpiners. In the alpiners was an area where we harvested our Skwenkwins, our wild potatoes, so in the years and decades that the cattle were grazing on the alpiners they really trampled our Skwenkwins. And when we went up to take a look at the different known patches they were noted that the Skwenkwins were extremely small now. Before, when we were harvesting and tending them, they were a pretty good size.

Everything is connected and failing to look at it in a holistic way will set us up for failure in the long run. So, having a healthy ecosystem is so important for any kind of Food Security. This is why we are taught gathering protocols, like when to pick and when to not pick, and why. Or when to hunt and when not to hunt, and why.

“FOOD SECURITY IS ABOUT WHAT IS COMING FROM THE LAND. YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO PRODUCE THAT FOOD BECAUSE IF THAT STORE SHUTS DOWN FOR TWO WEEKS YOU’RE OUT OF FOOD.”

– FRED FORTIER

“FOOD SECURITY IS ACTUALLY HOW WE ARE LOOKING AFTER OUR PLANTS AND FOODS AND ANIMALS AND FISH.”

– NORA BILLY

SCAN THE QR CODE



TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## INTERIOR REGION NUTRITION

Nutrition is about feeding our bodies the right things. We have to decolonize our eating practices. Instead of eating three meals a day, maybe we should be eating a whole dry fish a day. Maybe it's eating some bone marrow, which is the most Nutritional part you can get out of a deer, moose, elk, or a caribou.

It's unfortunate that term Nutrition is so related to trauma, as a result of the Nutritional experimentation on residential school children, and the intergenerational effects it's had. Our people didn't get here by their own decisions; many were forced into this position.

Sometimes food is used to cope with that trauma. For some, food is the only thing that'll make them happy. It's not healthy but it'll bring a small amount of joy to life on the reserve. Many of us grew up with processed foods and it is a hard thing to kick.

How our berries on our land are really good for us, like saskatoons. They are very abundant and nutritious as berries. Even more nutritious than other berries that we actually buy from the store. But we don't pick saskatoons anymore, even though they are growing all over our territory.

"THEY'RE LIKE, 'WHERE'S THE BANNOCK?' AND I'M LIKE, 'I AM NOT SERVING YOU BANNOCK ANYMORE, THAT'S NOT TRADITIONAL, AND THAT'S NOT GOOD FOR YOU SO YOU ARE NOT GETTING IT.' THEY'LL THROW A FUSS BUT I AM LIKE, 'AUNTIE, I WANT TO SEE YOU LIVE TO BE 80. I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU DIE YOUNG. SO I AM NOT DOING THAT ANYMORE.'"

– STEVEN TEED

"WE HAVE TO DECOLONIZE OUR EATING PRACTICES."

– FRED FORTIER

SCAN THE QR CODE



TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## INTERIOR REGION MEDICINE

Medicine is a gift. In order to give this gift you must receive a gift in return. That's a basic principle, a law that we have, and that protects our Medicines from becoming commodified. I think we have to have an understanding of the protocols for the use of these Medicines. I think that is critical. There is knowledge that I have that I will not share because it is protected knowledge. Much of our Medicine knowledge is underground and still is today.

Everything starts with prayer. We have to believe in prayer to believe in our own healing. That's where the Medicine comes from. Before you even go out to do anything, even the thought of going to pick something or to gather something, it starts with a thought and it starts with a prayer.

Our Medicine is powerful, and it works very well. It's sort of like Chinese Herbal Medicine. Where there's stores filled with a buffet of herbal Medicines that they've known for thousands of years to be effective in all these different areas. That's where we would be, except we were colonized and so much was lost.

"MEDICINE IS A REAL COLONIZED TERM BECAUSE THE WHOLE TERM STARTS WITH PRAYER."

– NORA BILLY

"A LOT OF OUR MEDICINES ARE PREVENTATIVE MEDICINES. THE MAJORITY OF THEM ARE."

– FRED FORTIER

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TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## VANCOUVER ISLAND REGION TRADITIONAL FOODS

Everything that you do is taught from generation to generation to generation, and every single thing has meaning. Every single procedure that is done has meaning and it's very purposeful. The protocols around foods are an essential part of what it means to have Traditional Foods. These protocols are a valid form of traditional knowledge and these traditional harvesting practices are science. They are not just "like science;" they are actual scientific practices that have been used for centuries.

Traditional Foods are empowering for Indigenous people. Having the knowledge to identify, harvest, process, cook and eat these foods. While still listening to the teachings, respecting the food, and following protocols. Creates a positive cultural feedback loop that in turn creates wellness in both health and culture.

In our territories we always knew when the fish were coming. We knew when they were coming to lay their eggs. We knew when the tides were high or what to harvest and what season. We always took only what we needed.

Everything came back abundantly.

Now we're trying to reintroduce things like camas. There's so many things out there that we're reintroducing to bring it close to our homes now. We used to go to the mountain to collect a lot of different plants and Medicines. But we can't get in any more. The traditional territories are becoming so minimal now. Those landscapes have changed since that introduction, that contact, and this is how we continue to evolve with it.

"IT'S VERY FAR FOR ME TO GO HOME AND I COULDN'T GO OUT AND HARVEST FOOD IN NITINAHT LAKE WITHOUT GOING THROUGH THE NARROWS.

– KRISTA JOSEPH

SCAN THE QR CODE



TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## VANCOUVER ISLAND REGION FOOD SECURITY

Food Security is planting seeds for the next generation. Being able to hand down our knowledge and teachings to our young ones. When they go out and harvest with you, or learn how to fish during fishing season, or help to do repairs on the smokehouse, or go get the wood for the smokehouse, it's all so important. Bring the nieces and nephews, bring the cousins, bring their friends who are down the road on the rez. Handing it down to them while they are still young is key. Always gather them up at fishing season to go put the net out or to clean the sticks.

Our homes once had food everywhere and when we talk about Food Security it's not just for ourselves but for other community members. It doesn't matter how tough things get, or where people live, we are taught to ensure that we provide for our people and deliver to them, especially our Elders, all our people.

We still dry clams and smoke and dry fish for the winter. But we've been affected by Western ways, capitalism and scarcity. When people used to go fishing they would always give out all the fresh fish to the community right away. There is a unique kind of joy and pride that comes from our cultural generosity. But some say the freezer and the refrigerator came along and changed all that. Because it meant that we didn't have to give it all out right away anymore. We could keep it for ourselves. So in the long term it had lasting effects on our societal attitudes and the spirit of generosity.

"FOOD SECURITY IS PLANTING THE SEEDS IN THOSE YOUNG MUNUS (CHILDREN) AND THAT THEY CAN CARRY ON WITH WHAT WE ARE DOING."

– TINA WESLEY

"THIS LELUM (HOME) HERE HAS FOOD EVERYWHERE AND THAT'S THE THING WE LOOK AT, IS FOR THAT SECURITY, NOT ONLY FOR MYSELF HERE, BUT FOR OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS."

– FRED HWIEMTUN ROLAND

SCAN THE QR CODE



TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## VANCOUVER ISLAND REGION NUTRITION

Our ancestors had a working knowledge of the Nutrition in our food. Even generations after contact, our Elders still know the different Nutrition in our foods. In this new world, everybody tries to correct us on our dietary requirements. Our bodies are designed for our foods. When we don't eat those foods, that's when we start to find complications. We have to understand that our body is gauged for certain things, it's in our DNA. In school we're taught about the Canadian food guide. But the food guide says we should eat dairy and drink milk. When's the last time you milked a deer, a salmon, or a bear? Dairy just doesn't fit in with our Nutrition.

We should also remember that it was the history of Nutrition studies in residential schools that informed a lot of the recommendations in the food guide. Those were studies that were conducted on our malnourished children.

Many of us are curious to know and to have our foods to be studied more. But we are also nervous and protective because when you think about superfoods, and the superfoods movement, it really puts foods, cultures, and societies in danger. Much like how quinoa was a food very specific to certain people and then when it got marketed as a superfood that's rich in protein then because of capitalism the people whose traditional food it is don't have access to it anymore.

"THERE'S SCIENCE TO THE NUTRITION OF OUR FOOD. I'VE HEARD FROM ELDERS WHO SAY THINGS LIKE THE SEA URCHIN (ŠAČKAAPX) AND THEY WOULD KNOW THE NUTRITION VALUE. IF YOU HAD LOW IRON YOU'D EAT A CERTAIN THING. OR IF YOU NEEDED A CERTAIN VITAMIN LIKE POTASSIUM THEY WOULD KNOW WHAT YOU NEED."

– KRISTA JOSEPH

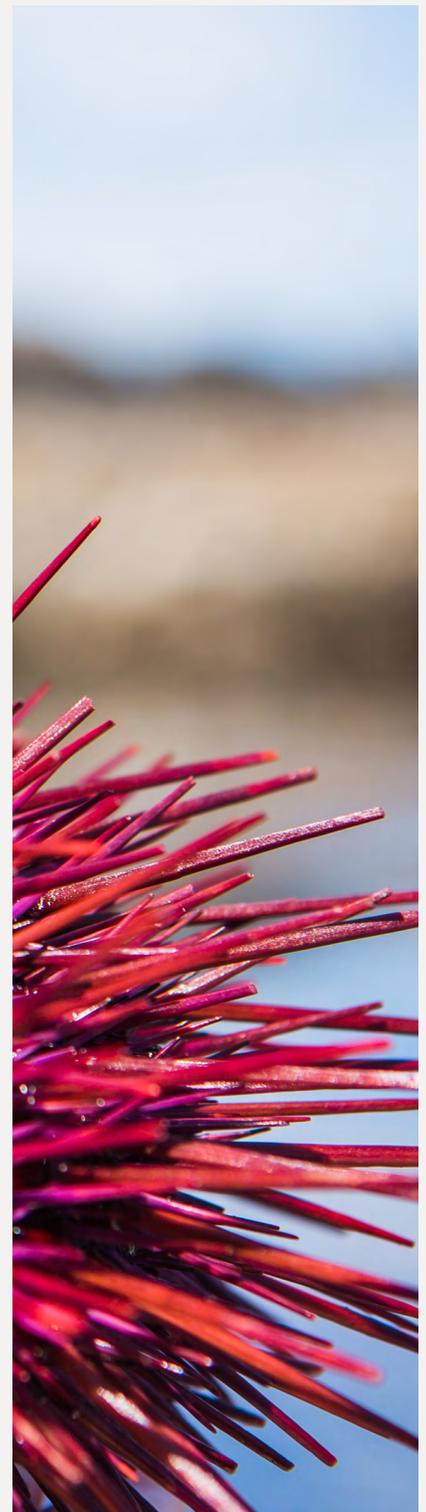
"I REALLY THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO KEEP THE QUESTION IN MIND WHEN WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, AND TALKING ABOUT FOOD AND NUTRITION. ASKING THE QUESTION, 'WHAT ARE THE CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THIS FOOD, AND THE PROTECTION OF THIS FOOD AGAINST WESTERN EXPLOITATION?'"

– TSIMKA MARTIN

SCAN THE QR CODE



TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## VANCOUVER ISLAND REGION MEDICINE

Medicine can be found in many things. In regards to our foods, our people, over the thousands of years they knew what they were doing because they would never find or ever hear of sickness. They always knew what to take, they knew what to feed their people. But as diseases and sickness came they knew what to do and how to take care of the people. That's our Indian tea and making Medicines and taking them and ingesting them or eating certain things.

One of the things we always teach people when we are working with plant Medicines is to have good feelings when you are collecting Medicines. When you are going to collect and take care of Medicines you have to take care of yourself. Then when we are out on the land harvesting plants in a good way, we remember to introduce ourselves. When we don't introduce ourselves to them and you just walk over and pull a plant out, that plant is in trauma and the whole plant family is in trauma. So when you are collecting Medicine you always make sure you are in a good space to go into that family to make communication, to make a relation. Plants are no different than humans. They're born, they grow, and they die.

So much around Medicine is about energy and trauma. Colonization has disrupted our access to those Medicines and to those Medicine people. With our Medicine harvesting sites gone, many don't know where to go anymore. Sometimes people will end up harvesting on the side of the road. But on the side of the road every year is all the oil, gas, diesel, antifreeze, everything washes off all year long and into that ditch. The poor Medicine is trying to survive and it digs its roots system and sucks all that in. You can put the Medicine in warm water and you'll see the blue green streak in it, that's gas, oil, and antifreeze.

"I HAVE A LOT OF MEDICINES THAT ARE THE BEST MEDICINE EVER AND THAT'S OUR CHILDREN AND OUR RELATIVES AND OUR FRIENDS, OUR TEACHINGS AND OUR CULTURE."

– TINA WESLEY

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TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## VANCOUVER COASTAL REGION TRADITIONAL FOODS

Traditional Foods are seasonal. In the winter we would eat salt fish, in the spring we would go trout fishing, gather berries in the spring, fish in the summer, harvest mushrooms in the fall, collect plants in almost every season. Up on the high alpiners all kinds of plants, mint, ginger, small highland potatoes. Medicine that we could use and harvest throughout the good season to be used through the winter.

It's an ingrained need. It's a calling that we have each year. It's a spiritual connection because our whole body, our whole spirit, everything needs those foods each year. It needs to taste the hákwa7, needs to taste fish, needs to taste xúsum, and just eating it, and just tasting it, it's a spiritual connection.

Traditional food harvesting is an act of land-based healing. When you go out and you process it, when you go out and you walk the land, you see the animals, and the blood, sweat and tears, the gratification, and the ceremony. Right from the harvesting, each new generation is part of the process so that when they eat it they're that much more connected to the land and to their family. In the end, Traditional Foods are so much more than just food, they are love and creation that fills us so much more.

"I SHOWED MY DAUGHTER WILD STRAWBERRIES WHEN THEY WERE OUT AND SHE'S NOW FOREVER LOOKING FOR STRAWBERRIES."

– DAN DAN PETERS

"WHEN I THINK OF TRADITIONAL FOODS I THINK OF THE FOODS MY GRANDPARENTS ATE, OUR ANCESTORS ATE."

– BONNIE CAHOOSE

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TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## VANCOUVER COASTAL REGION FOOD SECURITY

Food Security is ensuring that everyone has access to healthy foods and to Traditional Foods. But in today's world, where traditional harvesting might not be practiced as much, our society leans heavily on market foods. Combined with the high rates of poverty on the reserves, Food Security might not be as strong as we wish it to be. To be healthy you need healthy food. To be secure in your mind, your health and physically, you need good food. In order to create healthy communities we need to eat healthy.

Community gardens could be done in a way where it provides staple fresh foods that people need to eat like corn, carrots, beans, peas, squash, berries, cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers. Simple staples like fresh garden foods that are grown right on the land and for community. There is so much you can gather and use so little energy.

Food Security means that everything is full. The freezer is full, the canning pantry is full, the cupboards are full, the bellies are full, the lunch boxes are full. Every day of the month, every day of the year, there is no worry, there is no fear, and there is no anxiety of where your next meal is going to come from or what meals you have to miss to ensure your children get enough to eat. Food Security is not having to worry.

“WHEN I THINK OF FOOD SECURITY I JUST WANT EVERYONE TO BE FULL.”

– BONNIE CAHOOSE

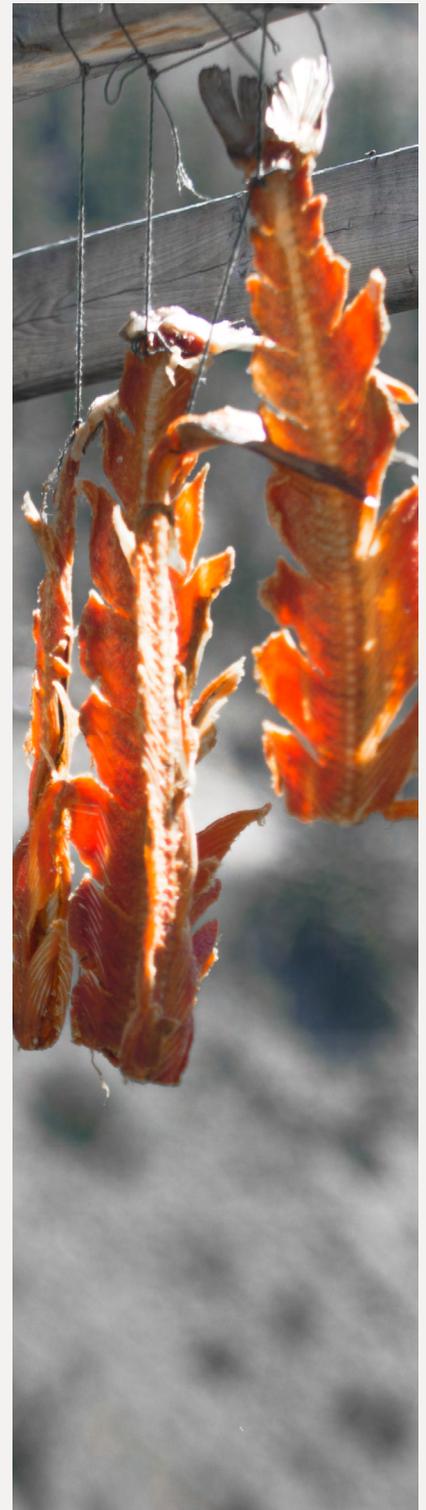
“FOOD SECURITY SECURITY, TO ME, WOULD BE SECURING A LAND BASE. TRADITIONALLY, FOODS ARE OUT ON THE LAND.”

– DAN DAN PETER

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TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## VANCOUVER COASTAL REGION NUTRITION

Contact introduced us to rice, sugar, and flour. Then the Indian Act forced us into poverty and struggle. It came down to, “how do we make a small amount of food last?” The inevitable answer is that we add in these new foods that stretch our Traditional Foods and make them go farther. When we add in rice, potatoes, and bread, we can make a deer roast last a week’s worth of meals. It’s such a “*devastation of necessity*” that we have to do that.

It ties directly to the social determinants of health. When you’re having struggles, when you’re in poverty, or if you don’t have a home, chances are you’re not going to have good mental health or good food on a regular basis.

We need to raise awareness of how these new filler foods impact our system; the rice, potatoes, sugar, and starch. Our bodies are the same as our ancestors and what they grew up and survived on was creek water, berries, meat, fish and Medicines all from the land. A lot of it comes down to access. Access to the main food groups like meat and vegetables—in a decolonized and more Indigenous lens—is improved when we have access to our Traditional Foods.

In today’s contemporary world, we are dependent on the store, processed food. Again, it’s connecting those dots to the healthy lifestyle to getting back to the basics of what was done before.

“WHEN I THINK OF NUTRITION TRADITIONALLY, I THINK OF THE FOOD THAT MY GRANDPARENTS AND ALL THEIR PREDECESSORS ATE. FOODS THAT WEREN’T TOUCHED, OR CONTAMINATED. IT WAS JUST THE WAY TO LIVE AND SURVIVE AND THEY WERE SO HEALTHY.”

– BONNIE CAHOOSE

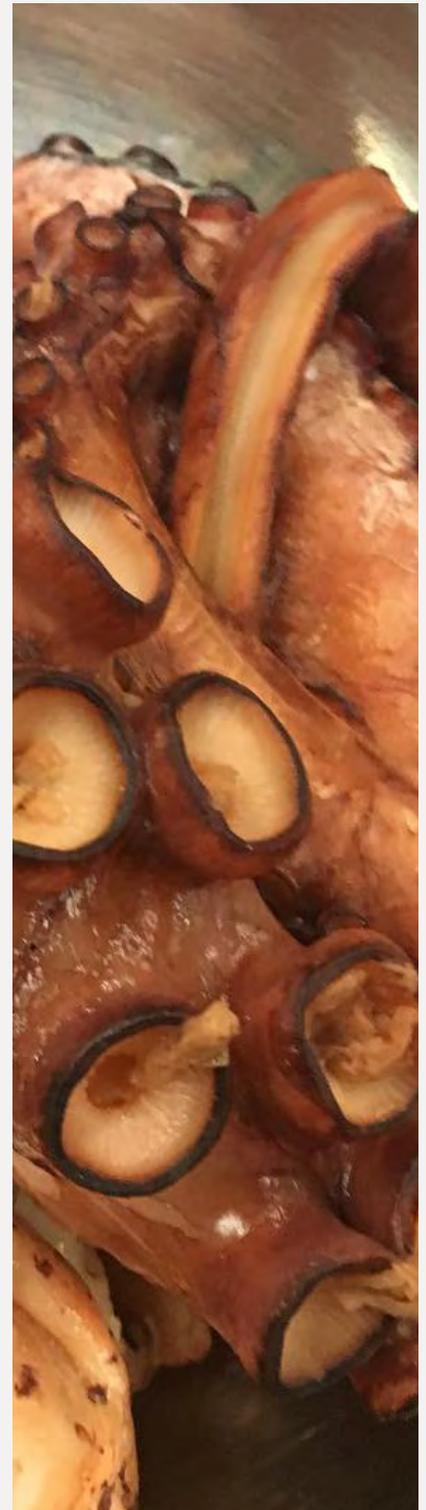
“FISH SOUP ON A WINTER DAY. BERRIES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SUMMER ON A HOT DAY. COLD WATER FROM THE CREEK. CERTAIN PROCESSED FOODS, DRIED FISH, CANNED DEER MEAT, FRESH VEGETABLES, BRIARS IN THE SPRING. COW PARSNIP IN AUGUST, WILD STRAWBERRIES IN JULY. THESE ALL REMIND ME OF NUTRITION.”

– DAN DAN PETER

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TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## VANCOUVER COASTAL REGION MEDICINE

Traditional Medicine, in our community and in the central coast, is sacred. It is not shared with anyone unless the Elders feel like they've earned the right to have earned that knowledge. Our Medicine is something that you don't just speak freely of. Medicine people have to be in the right sound body, mind, and spirit, to go out and collect and harvest. Just like when you cook food, you have to put good energy into it when you are harvesting. We have herbalists who gather and make teas and Medicines, and salves and tinctures and everything. They know, and have learned ways, to help with different conditions.

We're so enmeshed now with the Western world and modern world and it's just a part of our daily lives. We have these challenges with our health and wellness because of what was brought, the foreign things that were brought into our lives, into our diets. Now we have diabetes, heart conditions, and high blood pressure, mental health issues, and challenges.

We would love to see that a lot of the pills or prescription medications are eliminated and instead use our own traditional Medicines from our herbalists and from our Medicine people. It's a good dream, a good goal, a good aim to get to that point.

"I GO AND PICK CERTAIN THINGS EVERY YEAR NOW AND I WANT TO KEEP LEARNING MORE."

– DARLA JOHN

"WHEN I THINK OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE, MY GRANDMOTHER AND THE ELDERS FROM OUR COMMUNITY AND FROM THE CENTRAL COAST [SAY] IT'S SACRED. IT'S JUST SACRED."

– BONNIE CAHOOSE

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TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## FRASER SALISH REGION TRADITIONAL FOODS

When we talk about the term Traditional Foods the word “introduction” comes up. Introduction, because our region has a huge urban population. Our heads and hearts say Traditional Foods are right and we want to go back to eating that way. That is our goal and end result. Yet many urban communities don’t have people that hunt or gather. So many Traditional Foods are going to be new to our palette.

The relationship with Traditional Foods from birth to end of life is essential. Over the course of recent history we have moved away from our teachings and lifestyle due to colonialism and traumas that were placed on us. Exposure to Traditional Foods such as fish, at a very young age, helps aide in their growth, their senses, as well as helps our children understand the seasons, natural cycles, preparation and importance of harvesting.

It would be good to see the use, and implementation of, the Sto:lo seasonal calendar. So, when institutions were planning their curriculum or themes within their facilities they would also consider areas of times when it is to be out on the land. In our longhouse, one of the Elders used to get up and talk. He would say, “what are we gonna do if the Safeway wasn’t there? We don’t have to always rely on mainstream society.” That’s all he would talk about. “What if we have to go to the high mountains and provide for ourselves?” So, we need to learn about herbal Medicine and hunting and fishing. We can’t always rely on other people to bring us our food.

“I THINK WHEN I TRY NEW FOODS MY HEAD AND TASTE BUDS, WHICH ARE PROGRAMMED TO WESTERN COLONIAL FOODS, AUTOMATICALLY SAY I AM NOT GOING TO LIKE IT.”

– ANONYMOUS

“LET’S PLANT FRUIT TREES AND PROSPEROUS PLANTS IN OUR COMMUNITIES FOR USE.”

– ANONYMOUS

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TO HEAR  
THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE





## FRASER SALISH REGION FOOD SECURITY

We were thrust into having to think about Food Security when Covid first hit and everything shut down. We had to coordinate with food companies to deliver large food orders into our communities. It was frantic at the beginning.

It would be good to have some type of Indigenous foods premise regulation, as currently it is a barrier to Food Security when working with our foods. Many of the programs that are out there happen to be licensed through the child care licensing regulations or under provincial food regulations. So, the challenge is not only access but it's also the regulations. We must be allowed to serve our traditional plants, foods, and Medicines to our people. Like how the people that go to the longhouse are always preparing, freezing, canning, smoking fish and sharing our foods.

Thinking of Food Security, it would be nice to see the younger generations working on their gardens. Getting back to knowing where the food comes from.

"MY FATHER-IN-LAW IS OUT IN HIS GARDEN EVERY SPRING WITH HIS LITTLE HOE AND HE DIGS UP HIS GARDEN. THAT'S HIS PRIDE AND JOY, THAT'S HIS LIFE, HIS WORLD. WHEN I THINK OF FOOD SECURITY I THINK IT WOULD BE NICE TO SEE THE YOUNGER GENERATION WORKING UP THEIR OWN GARDEN."

– ANONYMOUS

"ANOTHER THING WE LOST WAS SALTING FISH."

– YVONNE TUMANGDAY KAXTE

"WE WERE FORCED TO FACE THIS NEW REALITY AND NOT FULLY PREPARED."

– ANONYMOUS (DURING COVID-19)

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## FRASER SALISH REGION NUTRITION

There is a gap in education around Nutrition. When we have physical education class there should be more food and Nutrition discussion. Because physical education class talks about why moving is good for you, but it doesn't holistically encompass a healthy lifestyle and Nutrition is a really big component of that.

Nutrition is something that we have a lot of in our communities. We just need education about it. We know that we have foods that are good for us for specific purposes. Nutrition is pulling all of it together and understanding why that food is good for us and creating that link between Nutrition and mental health.

Fraser Salish has the highest urban population in the province and so many of our families live in poverty. They just don't have enough income to buy nutritious foods, so they eat the filler foods. We have single parents that know nothing of Nutrition and Food Security. How do we teach these kids what even we don't know?

Nutrition brings us back to the topic of Traditional Foods and the lack of access, land base, and knowledge.

"WHEN I WAS A YOUNG MOTHER I USED TO FISH AND MY BROTHERS USED TO HUNT AND WE USED TO EAT THAT KIND OF FOOD. BUT WE DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO IT NOW, NOT IN CHILLIWACK."

— ANONYMOUS

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## FRASER SALISH REGION MEDICINE

We are relearning our culture and our traditions. So we are relearning our language, our dances and songs, all the ways of our people. We are relearning about our Medicines and it is amazing. Elder's say it's just like your friends coming back. When you look out the window and you're seeing Medicines, they say they're like your brothers and sisters and they came back. Whatever you need is growing outside your front door.

There are more and more individuals within our region that are making their own teas, salves, and tinctures. They are promoting it through their community to individuals. We look forward to a day when there is greater recognition of the validity of traditional Medicines.

Many of our foods do carry medicinal properties for us and it's time we relearn what they are. It's just that getting access can be difficult when we don't want to inadvertently step into someone else's territory without having those permissions.

"OUR PEOPLE KNEW SO MANY WONDERFUL THINGS."

– YVONNE TUMANGDAY KAXTE

"AND OF COURSE FOOD IS MEDICINE. IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT."

– YVONNE TUMANGDAY KAXTE

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THE KNOWLEDGE  
KEEPERS VOICE



# MOVING FORWARD

As we process these reflections and teachings we will need to be mindful and intentional in how we integrate this learning into practice. There was much generosity and emotional labour from all who shared their knowledge, wisdom and experiences with food.

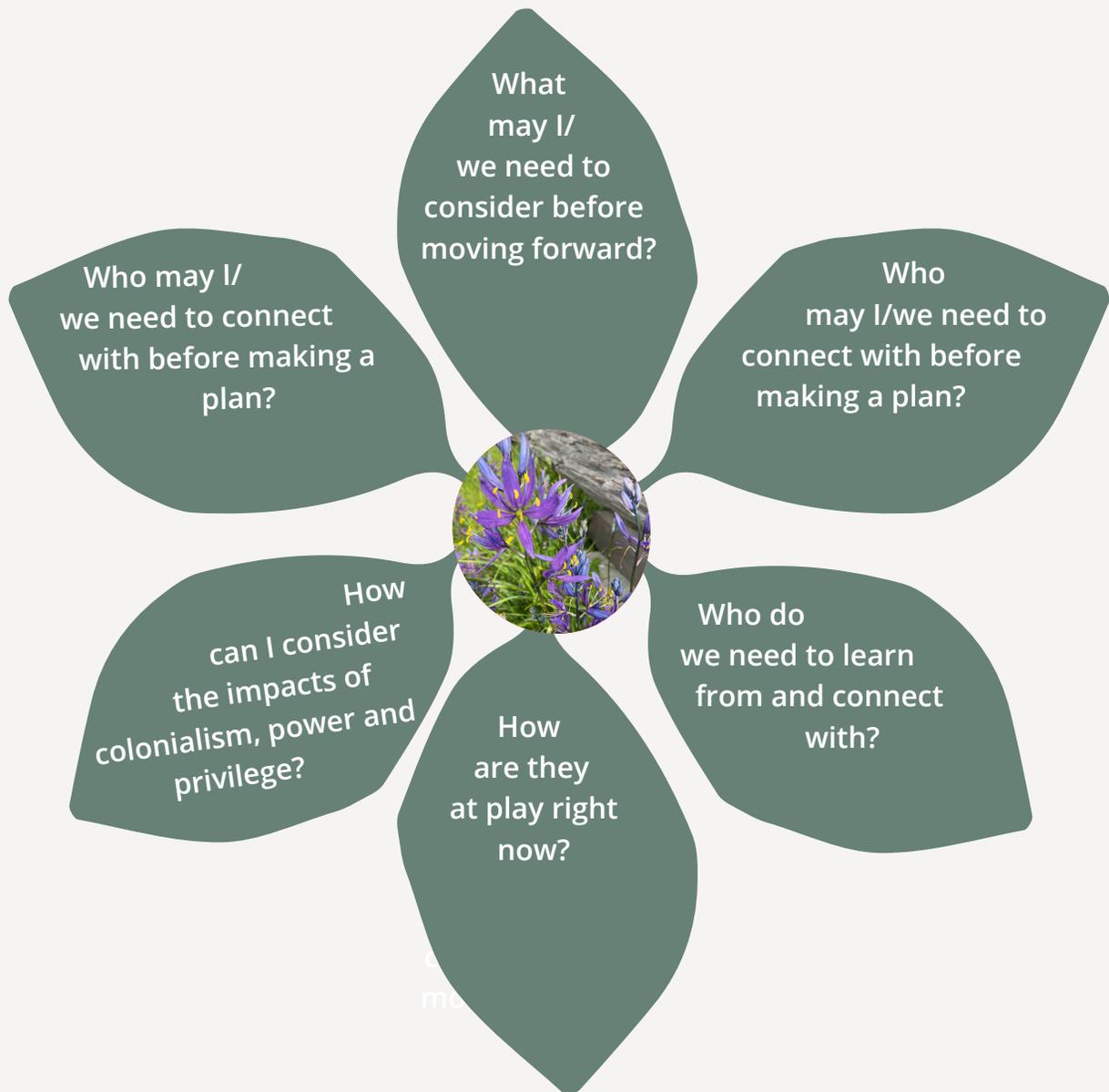
## IN WHAT WAYS CAN WE HONOUR THIS WORK MOVING FORWARD?



“I THINK THE PRACTICAL WAY THAT “TRADITIONAL FOODS” IS OFTEN USED IN POLICY AND RESEARCH IS JUST A WAY TO IDENTIFY SPECIFICALLY THESE THINGS ARE NOTED AS IMPORTANT TO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY AND BECAUSE WE’VE PUT THEM UNDER THIS LABEL WE CREATE MORE ARGUMENT FOR SUPPORT TO PROTECT OR DELINEATE THESE PARTICULAR THINGS. IN A WORLD WITH FULL INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND COMMUNITY CONTROL OVER THE LAND AND ACCESS YOU WOULDN’T NEED THOSE WORDS BECAUSE COMMUNITIES WOULD SAY THESE ARE THE FOODS WE CARE ABOUT AND THESE ARE THE FOODS THIS IS WHAT IS IMPORTANT.

– MAERY KAPLAN–HALLAM

**REFLECT:** Have you integrated a pause in your work? Before taking action, have you asked yourself and others some reflective questions?



# REFLECTIONS

This project provided the opportunity to pause and reflect on food and some commonly used terms. The engagement sessions explored commonly used terms around food and asked what they meant to First Nations people and their communities. The generosity of these reflections must be honoured as we engage in our work. Some over-arching themes:

- Sacredness, it's a spiritual connection
- Foods is relational, it ties us to our lands, waters, forests and each other
- Food Sovereignty - self-determination and having food everywhere and anytime
- Acknowledgment of disconnection and loss due to colonialism and genocide
- Listen, reflect and build understanding of the contexts within communities
- Food is about intergenerational connections and food knowledge evolves
- The harvesting and connection to Traditional Foods is an act of land-based healing
- Food practices support our mind, body and spiritual wellness
- Abundant and vibrant ecosystems
- Food Security is about protecting our food source on the land
- Indigenous foods and food systems are truly empowering for us
- Traditional Foods are alive and have a life and a personality all their own
- Over time and after considered thought, work to build trust and relationships to see the immense strengths and capacities within each individual and each community
- Be aware of your socialization and any biases, stereotypes and myths that are alive in you
- Many of our most powerful Medicines are our children, our relatives, our friends, our teachings, and our culture. In our community, traditional Medicine is very sacred

## HOW CAN WE RESPECT THESE REFLECTIONS TO CREATE CULTURAL SAFETY AND HUMILITY AROUND FOOD AND FOOD SYSTEMS?

(Please see reflective questions in our toolkit for more information)

Do you know what the traditional food ecosystems within your area are?

Have you explored restoration projects and the impacts of colonialism and climate change?

How has the history of Nutrition professionals vanishing Indigenous food systems and prioritized market foods informed your work?

How can we acknowledge the multi-layered contexts and histories around food?

Are you committed to unlearning and learning the historical and current contexts around food in your area?

Are you taking courses and learning about Cultural Safety and Humility in your Learning Journey around food?

"THERE IS A WHOLE CULTURAL SAFETY PIECE AROUND TRADITIONAL FOOD."

– DION THEVARGE



Through the final engagement and validation meeting with all the five Regions and Central teams, a list of key themes are below. This feedback includes, questioning FNHA's role in supporting this work on food moving forward, as well as what is FNHA's mandate to address and support food work.

### SOME KEY THEMES WERE:

