



Native Women's  
Association of Canada



L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada

# Food Policy

**The Native Women's Association of Canada  
Engagement Results**

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## **About NWAC**

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is a national non-profit Indigenous organization representing the political voice of Indigenous women throughout Canada. It was incorporated in 1974 as a result of the activities of local and regional grassroots Native women's associations over many years. NWAC was formed to promote the well-being of Indigenous women within Indigenous and Canadian societies and we focus our efforts on helping women and gender-diverse people overcome sex-based discrimination.

Today, NWAC engages in national and international advocacy measures aimed at legislative and policy reforms that promote equality for Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse people, including LGBTQ2S+ people. Through advocacy, policy, and legislative analysis, we work to preserve Indigenous culture and advance the well-being of all Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people, as well as their families and communities.

NWAC is actively committed to raising the national and international profile on many issues specific to Indigenous women, including access to sexual and reproductive health services, violence, mental health and wellness, and precarious employment and housing, along with the many other barriers Indigenous women face to accessing their basic human rights. As a leader both domestically and on the international stage, NWAC works to improve the human rights of Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse people and remains dedicated to promoting gender equality through research, policy, programs, and practice.

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## Introduction: Food Security and Indigenous Women

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Food is an integral part of Indigenous culture. First Nations, Inuit and Métis traditional foods are connected to their specific land base. Indigenous people's cultural knowledge is tied to the land, water and animals. Indigenous women play an important role in transmitting cultural teachings and knowledge to new generations on how to prepare traditional foods. Each Indigenous community relies on different traditional foods. For example, Inuit rely on hunting seals and fishing for arctic char, which are staples to their diet. Many coastal and interior First Nations in British Columbia rely on salmon for nutrients. Community members from Curve Lake First Nation in Ontario gather wild rice as a staple of their diet. Métis women have traditionally dried and smoked meats and berries. Indigenous people's relationship to food is holistic and sustainable because it is based on mutual respect for the animals they hunt and the fruits and vegetables they harvest.

As a result of the residential school system, pollution of Indigenous traditional lands and of the ongoing effects of colonialism, many teachings regarding traditional Indigenous food systems have not been passed onto new generations. The introduction of western processed foods in Indigenous communities has changed many peoples relationship with food. This has ultimately led many First Nations, Inuit and Métis to collectively consume less traditional foods and as a result, many communities face poorer health outcomes. Part of the reconciliation process in Canada must be an acknowledgment of the damage that the introduction of western processed foods and ongoing environmental degradation has caused to Indigenous communities.

Indigenous women, their children and families face unique barriers to affordable, nutritious and safe food. Therefore, it is important to take gender into account when considering food security. Food Insecurity Policy Research Canada defines food insecurity as "the inadequate or insecure access to food" and "is a serious public health problem in Canada. It negatively impacts physical, mental, and social health." Poverty, food security and other indicators are highly intertwined complex issues as they relate to Indigenous women's ability to access food.

Many Indigenous women experience health problems as a direct result of environmental pollution and the destruction of local food sources (eg. Grassy Narrows and Lubicon Lake First Nations). Métis, First Nations and Inuit women face barriers to hunting and gathering traditional foods because of environmental pollution which has ultimately led to a loss of culture. The barriers that Indigenous women experience are connected to a history of neglect, failed policies of the government, the continued impact of Canada's colonial history, the legacy of the residential school system, and environmental degradation of Indigenous lands.

It is important to consider how access to healthy and nutritious foods differs for urban and rural communities. Indigenous people living in the North are no longer able to rely solely on country foods due to oppressive policies and pollution of the land, water and animals. The cost of supplementary western food in northern communities is unreasonably high because of shipping costs. When nutritious food is available, it is almost always unaffordable, resulting in food insecurity and people relying on unhealthy foods. The Nutrition North Program was established in 2011 by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada to subsidize food costs in Northern communities. However, there are major problems associated with the program including lack of oversight and flawed eligibility criteria, and it has not been able to address the high cost of food in Northern communities. Food insecurity ultimately leads to poorer health, social and economic outcomes.

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*“There has been a decline in the quality of fish due to fish farms off the West coast and that there is pollution in the water. A community garden had been opened on a reserve and the women were so happy to be participating in something that helped the community. Youth learned how to can and make dried food but eventually they lost funding for it. There needs to be more of this up North, how to can and how to grow food.”*

*-Francyne Joe, President of the Native Women’s Association of Canada*

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## **The National Food Policy for Canada**

The Canadian Government is currently developing a National Food Policy for Canada to set national goals relating to food, health, the environment and the economy. The government has sought input on this new policy from the public, industry experts and non-profit organizations in order to create a list of short-term and long-term goals.

Agriculture and Agri-foods Canada invited the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) to provide feedback on how the National Food Policy for Canada should address the needs of Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse people. NWAC worked in collaboration with the federal department on a national engagement project to raise awareness of the new food policy initiative, and to make sure that the voices of Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse people are reflected in the final National Food Policy.

The federal government is focusing on four closely connected themes that have a direct impact on the public:

- increasing access to affordable food
- improving health and food safety
- conserving our soil, water, and air
- growing more high-quality food

NWAC promoted the four themes of the National Food Policy during a roundtable discussion that took place with our organization's Board of Directors and an engagement session with grassroots Indigenous women. The goal of these meetings was to foster discussions about how the National Food Policy for Canada should address the needs of Indigenous women. Social media was used as a tool to raise awareness about the National Food Policy and engage the public on the topic of food security. The results of NWAC's engagement on a National Food Policy for Canada are outlined in this final report.

## **Layout of the Report**

This report is divided into three sections followed by a concluding chapter which lists the key recommendations that have resulted from NWAC's engagement project on a National Food Policy for Canada. The first section outlines the discussions that took place during NWAC's Board of Directors roundtable discussion on food policy, including the development of culturally relevant and gender-specific questions. The following section outlines the responses from grassroots Indigenous women on what they think should be included in the National Food Policy for Canada. The third section provides an analysis of NWAC's social media advocacy and an online survey that helped raise awareness of how food insecurity affects Indigenous women. The concluding chapter outlines the recommendations that address environmental sustainability, access to the land, the need for healthy and affordable food, transferring knowledge of traditional Indigenous foods and improving health outcomes.

# Indigenizing the National Food Policy for Canada

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## Roundtable Engagement on the National Food Policy

NWAC's Board of Directors participated in a roundtable engagement session on December 10, 2017, to discuss Indigenous women's involvement in consultations with Agriculture and Agri-foods Canada on the National Food Policy for Canada. The purpose of the meeting was to develop culturally appropriate and gender-specific questions to then pilot test in grassroots engagement sessions with NWAC's Provincial and Territorial Member Associations (PTMAs). The questions were to be based on the pre-existing online survey questions on "A Food Policy for Canada" released by Agriculture and Agri-foods Canada. Roundtable participants were provided with information about the upcoming National Food Policy for Canada.

Roundtable participants recommended the National Food Policy consider that many Indigenous women experience additional barriers to accessing affordable food. Indigenous women and their communities have become disconnected from traditional hunting and gathering practices due to the ongoing effects of colonialism. Participants noted that Indigenous women are more likely to experience poverty because of the lasting effects of colonialism and ongoing societal discrimination based on race and gender, but also on class. The National Food Policy for Canada must address the intersection between experiencing poverty and the ability to afford healthy and nutritious foods.

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*"One of the biggest issues was children not eating before they came to school. The success rate of our children is an issue and part of that is the food given is empty calories, no quality there. Looking at other issues - grocery and food is the only negotiable part of our budget as we don't get enough money for even a place to live."*

*-Maxine Elter, President of the Alberta Aboriginal Women's Society*

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The focus of the roundtable engagement session was to foster a discussion on how the Canadian Government's survey on a National Food Policy for Canada could be indigenized. In other words, how the National Food Policy should meaningfully reflect the needs of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. The participants emphasized that the forthcoming public survey should address barriers to accessing healthy and nutritious foods and different services available to Indigenous women that help address food insecurity. Another suggestion was for the survey to include questions relating to accessing traditional foods with specific reference to growing food, fishing, trapping or hunting. Below is the complete list of the culturally relevant and

gender-specific questions that were created for Indigenous grassroots organizations to help inform food policy.

## Culturally Relevant and Gender Specific Questions

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1. How many people are present at the engagement session?
2. Are you aware of any barriers to accessing affordable food in your community? If yes, please describe the barriers.
3. Are there any current programs that you are aware of that help Indigenous women access affordable, nutritious food? If yes, are there any ways the Canadian government or Indigenous organizations could support these programs?
4. Is there a specific program or support you require in your community to address a lack of affordable, nutritious food for Indigenous women (eg. food bank)?
5. What direct actions can be taken by the government or Indigenous organizations to address barriers Indigenous women face to accessing affordable, nutritious food?
6. In regards to improving health and food safety which of these four objectives are the most important in your community and why? (Please choose one)
  - a. Ensuring that food is as safe as possible
  - b. Preventing and reducing obesity and chronic diseases
  - c. Making healthier food more available
  - d. Preventing food products with misleading labels or deliberately altered content from entering the market
7. Are there any other concerns you have about health and food safety in your community that are not included in the list of objectives in question six?
8. What are some of the greatest challenges to protecting soil, water, and air in your community?
9. What role do traditional/country foods play in your community specifically for Indigenous women?
10. Do you or anyone in your family grow your own food, fish, trap or hunt on the land? If yes, what are some challenges you face in growing food, fishing, trapping or hunting?
11. Are there any organizations/programs that you are aware of who are working to reduce barriers Indigenous women experience when growing food, fishing, trapping or hunting?
12. What are direct actions that can be taken by the government or Indigenous organizations to address barriers Indigenous women face in growing food, fishing, trapping or hunting?

13. Thinking about the issues facing Indigenous women today, please rank the four themes proposed for *A Food Policy for Canada* by priority to Indigenous women.

*(Please enter a number from 1-4 beside each letter... Number one is of highest priority to Indigenous women and number four is the lowest priority.)*

\_\_\_\_\_ A. Increasing access to affordable food:

Improving Indigenous' Peoples' access to affordable, nutritious, and safe food.

\_\_\_\_\_ B. Improving health and food safety:

Increasing Indigenous Peoples' ability to make healthy and safe food choices.

\_\_\_\_\_ C. Conserving our soil, water, and air:

Using environmentally sustainable practices to ensure Indigenous Peoples' have a long-term, safe, and abundant supply of food.

\_\_\_\_\_ D. Growing more high-quality food:

Ensuring farmers and food processors are able to adapt to changing conditions to provide more safe and healthy food to consumers.

14. Is there anything else you would like to be addressed in the National Food Policy for Canada that is being developed? This could include things you think are missing from the survey, suggestions to address the different issues raised in the survey, or anything else you feel is an important consideration.

## Grassroots Engagement with Indigenous Women

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NWAC's Provincial and Territorial Member Associations (PTMAs) held grassroots engagement sessions between February and April of 2018. Five organizations took part including the Alberta Aboriginal Women's Society, British Columbia Native Women's Association, Newfoundland Native Women's Association, Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation and Nova Scotia Native Women's Association. The number of participants varied at each of the grassroots engagement sessions from 12-47 people. Each of the participating PTMAs discussed and provided notes on responses to the culturally relevant and gender-specific questions that were developed in NWAC's previous roundtable engagement session. A participation survey (see Appendix A) was handed out during the engagement sessions to assess the effectiveness of the questions posed. The PTMAs found the survey questions were effective in fostering discussion on food policy and achieved their goal of being culturally appropriate and gender-specific.

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*“With the passage of time the majority no longer have the land, neither do we farm, raise our own animals. Times have changed, people have moved, families are smaller, we no longer grow our own food, keep our animals for meat, neither do we berry pick and preserve our jams and jellies.”*  
-Participant at Newfoundland Native Women's Association Engagement Session

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The engagement sessions brought forth in-depth discussions on Indigenous peoples' traditional food systems. The Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation's session participants highlighted that wild meat is always served at community feasts and other honoring feasts for missing and murdered Indigenous women. They also noted that they always have soup and bannock at feasts. Some families have traditional meats during the hunting seasons and aim to shoot or trap enough for the year. It was also noted how important it is for Indigenous communities to share food with each other, not only at feasts but to share food in community freezers that anyone can access. Community and family ties are at the core of Indigenous culture and it is important for people to eat together and cook healthy meals. When people are more isolated and live alone they are more likely to access quick instant meals and become distant from their community.

The Alberta Aboriginal Women's Society engagement session report (2018) outlined how their "region also has several recognized traditional female caterers that prepare feasts for events such as celebrations of life, naming, rite of passage, birth and joining of spirit ceremonies." They discussed how young women work for these traditional caterers and traditional women's teachings are passed onto them during food preparation. The Alberta Aboriginal Women's Society emphasized that "shared teachings preserve our culture, customs and tradition."

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*"It is vital that there are educational opportunities for Indigenous women to learn how to secure food, practice ceremony, prepare of food and learn how to budget."*

*-Participant at the Alberta Aboriginal Women's Society Engagement Session*

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A discussion took place during the engagement sessions on the barriers to accessing or transmitting traditional teachings. Participants noted that many Indigenous people from their communities have moved to urban centers and are no longer taught how to trap, hunt and fish. Many Indigenous peoples no longer have knowledge of traditional foods. Moreover, participants believe there needs to be an increase in funding for programs that provide traditional Indigenous foods to First Nations, Métis and Inuit. For example, The Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation specifically said that they need to be able to provide moose, deer, elk and fish in their Day Care and Head Start programs. It was also noted that Indigenous women currently lack access to community gardens. There needs to be increased access to gardens on reserves and in urban centres where the community can access and grow their own fruits and vegetables. There is also a need for funding to help people afford to grow their own food.

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*"For growing foods, the equipment to maintain the garden is too expensive. Lots of times social services workers will tell us 'why not grow a garden if you run out of money for food?' They don't understand that I can't afford a tiller, sometimes not even a rake and a hoe due to the expense! Especially for us that have moved from the reserve into urban areas where there is a space to grow a garden but no money to buy the tools."*

*- Participant at the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation Engagement Session*

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The Indigenous women and gender diverse people who took part in the grassroots engagement sessions identified a main priority of conserving the soil, water, and air quality, and using environmentally sustainable practices to ensure Indigenous peoples

have a long-term, safe, and abundant supply of food. Furthermore, Indigenous women at the grassroots engagement sessions highlighted how it is very difficult to hunt, fish and trap on the land due to the effects of climate change and ongoing environmental pollution. For example, a member of the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation stated that as a result of climate change, the growing season has become very short and they can no longer grow vegetables like corn and the lakes are getting more polluted with algae which is killing the fish supply.

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*“We need to go back to our traditional ways of hunting, fishing, gathering and use of traditional medicines.”*  
*-Participant at the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association Engagement Session*

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The British Columbia Native Women's Association discussed how many Indigenous women in British Columbia rely on salmon as their main food source, but contamination and warmer water is putting this species at risk. Unfortunately, many people reported their communities cannot eat salmon anymore because the waters are so heavily polluted. Additionally, members of the Newfoundland Native Women's Association discussed how forests have been sprayed by chemicals, which have “had a negative effect on the wild animals and the growing of family vegetables, as a means of living and eating as a family.” They also stated that “climate change is having a great impact on the land on which we live, with droughts, excessive water flow, extreme weather condition is causing change that is changing the landscape, and this is affecting how we eat and live and look to the future.” The participants reported that they are being forced to change how they hunt, fish and gather berries and fruits, which is an immense challenge for many Indigenous communities and threatens their ability to transmit important cultural knowledge.

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*“Cost is a big factor, with many clearly identifying that you have individuals who shop in the various grocery stores, at the time of day when a lot of the meats, vegetables and fruits produce, that normally are marked down by 50%. It may be a saving however; it usually means getting the products towards the end of the best before date. It can be a way of getting a TREAT produce, normally not within the budget, but not necessarily a healthy product.”*  
*-Participant at Newfoundland Native Women's Association Engagement Session*

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The Nova Scotia Native Women's Association outlined how there should be more scientific studies on the nutrition of wild game as there a lack of research being done in this area. In addition, there needs to be an increase in information provided to

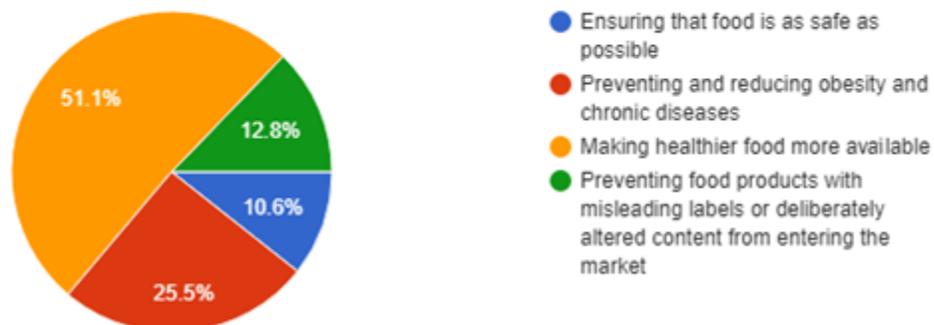
Indigenous communities regarding culturally appropriate healthy eating habits. Moreover, participants noted that many processed food labels are misleading about the contents of the product, and labelling regulations should be changed to reflect these discrepancies. For example, a product can look like meat but in fact contain no meat and sugar is often disguised and not reported properly on the label. Participants stated that the small print size on some labels cannot be read by many elderly people.

Engagement session participants saw improving Indigenous communities' access to affordable, nutritious, and safe food as being another priority. For example, Figure 1 shows that 51.1% of participants at the British Columbia Native Women's Association engagement session identified making healthier food more available as a pressing concern.

**Figure 1**

In regards to improving health and food safety which of these four objectives are the most important in your community?

47 responses



Engagement participants discussed programs that help increase access to affordable and healthy foods including community freezers, shared gardens and food banks. Currently, there is a lack of funding for Indigenous specific programs and many community food services are inaccessible for people living in rural communities. There is also a negative stigma around accessing the food bank. Many Indigenous women who have experienced racism and sexism at a food bank do not feel comfortable asking or getting help for food from others or the food bank.

The high costs of fresh fruits and vegetables can be a hardship for many Indigenous women, especially those who are living in rural and northern communities. The cost to transport food to rural, remote, and isolated communities significantly increases food prices. Engagement session participants noted there should be subsidies to make food more affordable for people who experience conditions of poverty and better strategies in place to address the unaffordable costs of food in northern and remote communities.

For example, participants at the Newfoundland Native Women's Associations suggested a system that would allow an individual or a family with financial need to purchase nutritious vegetables, milk and fruit at a reduced amount, with the government supplementing the business a portion of the cost (e.g. 50% or 75%). Participants believe this program could help Indigenous women and their communities afford healthy and nutritious foods.

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*“The cost of food is exorbitant within the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is extremely costlier for the Labrador portion of this Province. Another factor for food freshness, on the Island, are the winter months, as storms can cause delays as to when the ferry can cross from Nova Scotia to Newfoundland. This results in fruit and vegetable starting to spoil, resulting in fruits and vegetables not being fresh.”*

*- Participant at Newfoundland Native Women's Association Engagement Session*

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## Social Media and Survey Analysis: Advocating for Food Security

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NWAC used social media as an informational tool to report on how NWAC is involved in the development of a National Food Policy for Canada, and to inform Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people that their feedback is being sought on food policy. There were two phases of this online engagement. The first phase focused on information dissemination and included posts to NWAC's website in addition to Facebook and Twitter. The second phase included information gathering as an online survey was launched to gather input from Indigenous women and gender diverse people on what they think should be the priorities for the National Food Policy for Canada (see online survey questions in Appendix B). The timeline for the social media posts and online survey was from December 2017 to March 2018.

An example of a social media post on food policy engagement is seen in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**



NWAC took a balanced approach to social media and posted about statistics relating to Indigenous women and affordable food while others promoted Indigenous women who are leaders in the restaurant/catering industry. NWAC also produced a series of social media posts that advertised the online food policy survey in March 2018. Each social media post linked to the website of Agriculture and Agri-foods Canada's National Food

Policy for further information. A full list of NWAC's social media posts for food policy engagement can be seen in Appendix C.

The goals listed in the communications plan were: one tweet and Facebook post every week from December 2017 to February 2018, two tweets and Facebook posts each week in March 2018 as the project is wrapping up and the online food policy survey is active and 3000 views per Facebook post for 75% of all Facebook posts, for 75% of all tweets from November 1 2017 to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2018. The majority of the communications plan's goals were met. Social media posts were planned according to the weekly schedule of one post a week from December 2017 to February 2018 with two posts a week in March 2018. The goal was met for the number of Twitter retweets as 75% of the most successful Twitter posts received an average of 20.2 retweets. The Facebook goal of 3000 views was not met as the average of 75% of the most successful posts was 2,174 Facebook views.

There was one social media post that stands out as having received a higher number of views and shares as it reached over 17,000 people on Facebook. The post highlighted in Figure 3 was very successful, most likely due to the shared experience of comparing grocery pricing and an interest in the high cost of food prices in northern communities.

**Figure 3**

**January 26, 2018**  
56% of Inuit women aged 25 and over in Nunavut have been in a household that has faced food insecurity. Groceries cost 81% more in Nunavik than they do in Quebec. The National [#FoodPolicy4Canada](https://www.canada.ca/en/campaign/food-policy.html) must address the inflated price of food in northern [#Indigenous](https://www.canada.ca/en/campaign/food-policy.html) communities.  
Link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/campaign/food-policy.html>



## Online Survey on Food Security and Indigenous Women

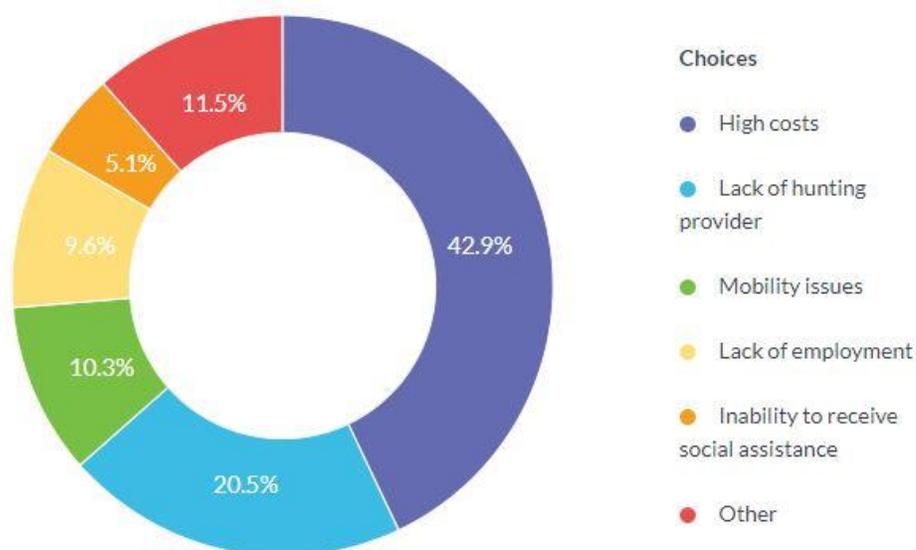
### Demographics

A total of 101 Indigenous women and gender diverse people responded to the survey. The median age for survey participants was 44, and the majority of the people who took the survey identified as Indigenous women although there were a couple of individuals who identified as Two-Spirit and androgynous. A couple of men also took the survey and their input is also included in the statistics in this report. Thirty-nine people self-identified as First Nations (status), 13 as First Nations (non-status), 35 as Métis, 9 as Inuit and 14 people selected other. There was a relatively even split between people living in urban and rural areas as 40.8% selected that they lived in the city, 22.3% chose a rural area, 20.4% selected town, 11.7% selected on reserve, 2.9% were in Inuit Nunangat, 1% chose Métis settlement and 1% selected other. The main regions that survey participants were from included British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Yukon. The majority of survey respondents had some college or university education.

### Analysis

Survey respondents outlined some of the barriers to accessing affordable food in their respective communities. Forty-two point nine per cent of survey participants identified the high costs of food to be the most pressing barrier to accessing healthy/store-bought food. Other pressing concerns included the lack of a hunting provider and mobility issues (see Figure 4).

**Barriers to Accessing Affordable Food (Figure 4)**



Examples of additional barriers to accessing affordable food that some Indigenous women and gender diverse people experience include a lack of value placed on unpaid work and the sustenance economy, a lack of food coming into the community, transportation, and employment barriers (e.g. childcare, low salary, discrimination). Participants also noted challenges in finding locally sourced fresh food, especially traditional foods. There are also hunting regulations that restrict Métis peoples' ability to access wild game.

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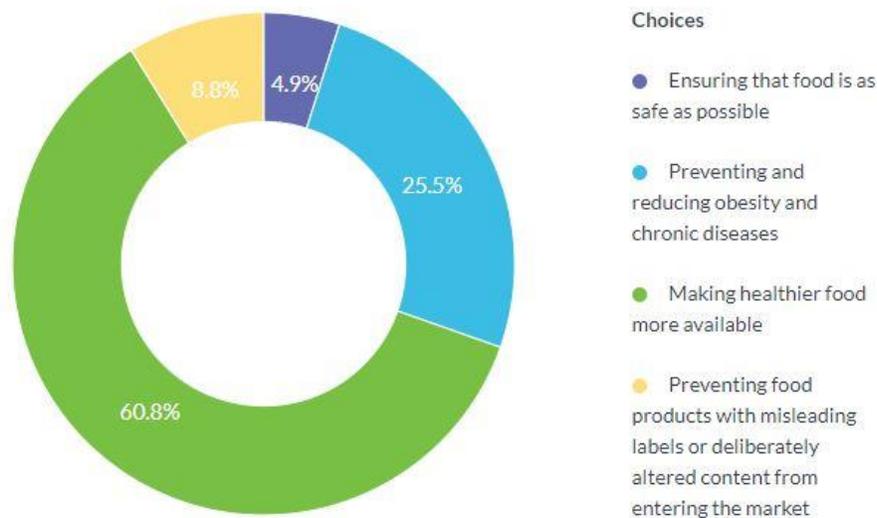
*“I grow a huge garden, my own meat birds, and hunt and fish, as a single mom this allows me to feed my family well on a really low budget.”*

*-Anonymous Survey Respondent*

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Survey participants identified specific programs or supports that could address a lack of affordable, nutritious foods for Indigenous women and their communities. These supports include access to a community vegetable garden or greenhouse, subsidies to account for the high cost of food, and education programs on nutrition and food preparation. Moreover, when asked about improving health and food safety and what objectives are the most important, 60.8% stated making healthier food more available, 25.5% chose preventing and reducing obesity and chronic diseases, 8.8% preventing food with misleading labels or deliberately altered content from entering the market and 4.9% selected ensuring the food is as safe as possible (see Figure 5).

**Improving Health and Food Safety (Figure 5)**



Several survey participants outlined how costly it is to go hunting, fishing or trapping. They highlighted that the amount of organization and money needed to pull off a successful hunt prevents a lot of people from participating. A survey respondent stated that “it would be great to have group hunts group forages that is partially subsidized by the government. I would also like to see more reindeer herds/herders throughout the north. Living far away from traditional territory also doesn't help.” It is very difficult for many Indigenous women to access land or transportation to harvest on the land. It has now become increasingly difficult for Indigenous women and gender diverse people to connect with Elders who have traditional knowledge about cultural foods and food gathering.

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*“I feel greatly empowered being able to select/forage for food. My desire is to pass this knowledge on to others. Knowing where this comes from and the efforts made to harvest teaches us appreciation for the community and it’s gifts.”*

*- Anonymous Survey Respondent*

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Ninety-three point nine per cent of survey participants say they would access teachings and time on the land and harvest their food given the opportunity. Indigenous women discussed at length some of the greatest challenges to protecting soil, water, and air in their communities. They concluded that logging and the resource extraction industry is destroying habitats, which leads to a loss of wildlife (a key food source). Big development corporations have been engaging in resource extraction on Indigenous lands without consultations. There is a lack of adherence by corporations to environmental impact assessment regulations and there has been simultaneous overdevelopment. The soil, water and air have been polluted due to dependence on petroleum products, mining, permafrost, oil spills, terrible waste management, land degradation and resource exploitation. Participants discussed how unceded territory is now largely occupied by settlers who view the land as a commodity. Participants argued that the government has shown that they are unwilling to intervene and protect the environment from harmful resource extraction. The grassroots Indigenous women also outlined that the government has been siding with corporations and pipeline projects rather than taking action to address climate change.

Furthermore, Indigenous women and gender diverse people who participated in the survey identified key concerns about health and food safety in their communities including:

- A growing knowledge gap on plant medicines because of colonization
- A lack of reliable transportation to access healthier food
- Presence of lateral violence in communities that prevents some community members from attending community feasts

- Not enough educational food programs that are specific to the needs of Indigenous women
- Seasonal shortages due to the effects of climate change
- Too much packaged food and a simultaneous lack of accessible healthy food options
- Food banks having mostly unhealthy or expired food
- Packaging/labelling issues
- Local foods are not prioritized over foreign food imports

Indigenous women outlined key recommendations for addressing barriers Indigenous women and gender diverse people face in accessing affordable nutritious food, growing food, fishing, trapping or hunting which include:

- Fund Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations to develop and implement territorial management plans
- Funding for community gardens
- Tax deductions/subsidies on healthy food
- Funding to support educational programs and resources that support women, gender diverse people, and youth to become active in growing their own food, being self-sufficient, and pass on traditional teachings to future generations
- Better policies to promote healthy foods in schools, day-cares, health facilities and government agencies
- Improved resources for people with disabilities to be able to better access healthy and affordable foods
- Respect for land rights and self-governance for all Indigenous people
- Increase in funding and investments for renewable and clean energy
- Policy changes from the government that address the ongoing traumas of colonialism and systemic discrimination. It is important to recognize that there are traumas other than residential schools that still exist.

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*“I’m raised in urban locations far from my home territories and do not know how to skin a caribou or gut a whitefish.”*

*- Anonymous Survey Respondent*

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## Conclusion

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A list of key recommendations for the National Food Policy for Canada was developed with input from NWAC's Board of Directors, discussions from the grassroots engagement sessions and feedback from NWAC's online survey. These recommendations address Indigenous women's needs in relation to environmental sustainability, access to the land, the need for healthy and affordable food and transferring knowledge of traditional Indigenous foods.

### Recommendations for the National Food Policy for Canada

#### Access to the Land

- First Nation, Métis and Inuit people must be able to hunt and fish at any time of the year for sustenance while following the conservation rules.
- Enforcement agencies should be aware of Indigenous-specific hunting and fishing rules and provide training to officers enforcing conservation and licensing.
- The National Food Policy must include sustainable long-term goals to address food scarcity in northern communities and the high cost of food.

#### Funding for Culturally Appropriate, Nutritious and Safe Foods

- There needs to be an increase in funding for programs that provide traditional Indigenous foods to First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. For example, the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation outlined the need to provide moose, deer, elk, and fish in their daycare and Aboriginal Head Start programs.
- There must be subsidies to make food more affordable for people who experience conditions of poverty. The cost factor of fresh fruits and vegetables can be a hardship for many Indigenous people who do not have adequate financial or social supports.
- Government grants to Indigenous organizations for event organization should allow for the purchase of cultural foods. Many government grants disallow the purchase of food and do not take into consideration that food is an essential part of community building.
- The National Food Policy must include sustainable long-term goals to address food scarcity in northern communities and increased funding to subsidize the high cost of food for more communities than what is covered by Nutrition North.

#### Research, Business and Industry Development

- The National Food Policy needs to specifically address how to help Indigenous farmers and information should be specifically provided to Indigenous people on how to start a business.
- Food labelling regulations should be changed to be clearer in understanding, easier to read, and properly reflect the contents of the product (ie. sugars).

- There needs to be an increase of scientific studies on the nutrition of wild game as there is currently a lack of research in this area.
- The Food Guide for First Nations, Inuit and Métis must be updated along with the launch of a new Canada's Food Guide.

### **Addressing the Needs of Indigenous Women**

- The National Food Policy for Canada should contain a section or theme specific to Indigenous peoples in Canada. It needs to be indigenized and should take into consideration the needs of Indigenous peoples living on reserve, in rural communities or in cities.
- The National Food Policy should contain a specific section on the needs of rural communities. Special considerations include the affordability of food, transportation costs, foods being spoiled or lacking freshness because of long transportation time and service accessibility issues.
- The National Food Policy should recognize that it is more difficult in general for Indigenous peoples to access the culturally-specific services they need because of a lack of these services and a fear to self-identify due to fear of racial prejudice.
- The National Food Policy must look at the way traditional food practices are disrupted and include solutions that enhance the ability of Indigenous women and gender diverse people to practice and transmit their cultures to their children.
- The National Food Policy must improve the well-being of Indigenous women and families, actions need to reflect a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous people that respect the unique experiences of Indigenous women.

## Appendix A, Participation Survey

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*Record the results of the participation survey. The questions that were given to participants are shown below. (point-form is fine - attach additional sheets as needed)*

1. Do you feel the survey questions were effective or ineffective in fostering discussion on food policy? (Please circle your response)

Effective

Ineffective

2. Were the survey questions culturally appropriate and gender-specific? (Please circle your response)

Yes

No

3. Are there any questions you would have added to the survey? (Please write your response in the lines below)

## Appendix B, Online Survey Questions

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1. What is your age?
2. What gender do you identify as?
3. Which do you identify as? Check all that apply.
  - a. First Nations (status)
  - b. First Nations (non-status)
  - c. Inuit
  - d. Métis
  - e. Other
4. Where do you live?
  - a. On reserve
  - b. Rural area
  - c. Town
  - d. City
  - e. Métis settlement
  - f. Inuit community (Inuit Nunangat)
  - g. Other
5. Do you identify as a member of a specific Indigenous nation and/or treaty group?  
If yes please state which nation and/or treaty group.
6. Which province/territory do you live in?
  - a. Alberta
  - b. British Columbia
  - c. Manitoba
  - d. New Brunswick
  - e. Newfoundland and Labrador
  - f. Northwest Territories
  - g. Nova Scotia
  - h. Nunavut
  - i. Nunatsiavut
  - j. Inuvialuit
  - k. Nunavik
  - l. Ontario
  - m. Prince Edward Island
  - n. Quebec
  - o. Saskatchewan
  - p. Yukon
7. What is your education level?
  - a. Elementary School
  - b. Some High School
  - c. High School

- d. Some College/University
  - e. College/University
  - f. Skilled Trade/Specialized Training
  - g. Post Graduate Degree/Diploma
  - h. Other
8. Do you face any of the following barriers to accessing affordable food in your community? (Check all that apply)
    - a. High costs
    - b. Lack of hunting provider
    - c. Mobility issues
    - d. Lack of employment
    - e. Inability to receive social assistance
    - f. Other (list in the comment box below)
  9. Are there any current programs that you are aware of that help Indigenous women access affordable, nutritious food? If yes, are there any ways the Canadian government or Indigenous organizations could support these programs?
  10. Is there a specific program or support you require in your community to address a lack of affordable, nutritious food for Indigenous women? (Check all that apply)
    - a. Community freezer
    - b. Food bank
    - c. Subsidies for the high cost of food
    - d. School breakfast and/or lunch program
    - e. Educational programs on nutrition and food prep.
    - f. Access to a community vegetable garden or greenhouse
    - g. Access to a Dietician
    - h. Other (list in the comment box below)
  11. In regards to improving health and food safety which of these four objectives are the most important in your community and why?
    - a. Ensuring that food is as safe as possible.
    - b. Preventing and reducing obesity and chronic diseases.
    - c. Making healthier food more available.
    - d. Preventing food products with misleading labels or deliberately altered content from entering the market.
  12. Are there any other concerns you have about health and food safety in your community?
  13. What are some of the greatest challenges to protecting soil, water, and air in your community?
  14. Do you rely on traditional/land-based/country foods? If yes, what role do they play in your family or community?
    - a. Yes b. No

15. Do you or anyone in your family grow your own food, fish, trap or hunt on the land? If yes, what are some challenges you face in growing food, fishing, trapping or hunting? If no, does living far away from your Traditional Territory affect your ability to harvest food?
- a. Yes b. No  
(include comment box for survey participants to fill out)
16. Have Residential schools or the 60s scoop impacted what you know about traditions and harvesting (fishing, trapping, hunting, medicines, etc.)?
- a. Yes b. No  
(include comment box for survey participants to fill out)
17. If you could access teachings and time on the land, would you harvest for food?
- a. Yes b. No  
(include comment box for survey participants to fill out)
18. Are there any organizations/programs that you are aware of who are working to reduce barriers Indigenous women experience when growing food, fishing, trapping or hunting? If yes, please list some of the organizations/programs that you are familiar with.
- a. Yes b. No  
(include comment box for survey participants to fill out)
19. What direct actions can be taken by the government or Indigenous organizations to address barriers Indigenous women face in accessing affordable nutritious food, growing food, fishing, trapping or hunting?
20. Is there anything else you would like to be addressed by NWAC relating to food insecurity? This could include things you think are missing from the survey, suggestions to address the different issues raised in the survey, or anything else you feel is an important consideration.

## Appendix C, Social Media Posts

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**December 6, 2017**

NWAC is working to ensure that Indigenous women's voices are reflected in Canada's National Food Policy currently being developed. For more information: <https://www.canada.ca/en/campaign/food-policy.html>  
#FoodPolicy4Canada #FoodSecurity #AffordableFood #Indigenous



**December 14, 2017**

Text: 33% of Indigenous households in Canada experience food insecurity compared to 9% of non-Indigenous households (Statistic source: Best Start Resource Centre Report, 2012)- the National #FoodPolicy4Canada must ensure that affordable food is available to indigenous women, children and their families. To learn more about Canada's Consultations on Food Policy, please visit: <https://www.canada.ca/en/campaign/food-policy.html>



### January 4, 2018

Text: Indigenous women are taking the lead at feast cafe bistro with a focus on serving affordable and locally sourced meals to the community which is a goal of the #foodpolicy4Canada. #Indigenous #feastcafebistro

Link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/campaign/food-policy.html>



### January 26, 2018

56% of Inuit women aged 25 and over in Nunavut have been in a household that has faced food insecurity. Groceries cost 81% more in Nunavik than they do in Quebec. The National #FoodPolicy4Canada must address the inflated price of food in northern #Indigenous communities.

Link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/campaign/food-policy.html>



Statistics Source: Statistics Canada, February 2017 Report:

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2017001/article/14774-eng.htm>

Photo Source: <https://ipolitics.ca/article/northerners-turn-e-commerce-amid-high-food-costs/>

**February 3, 2018**

One in two #Indigenous women raising children on their own and living off-reserve have experienced food insecurity. NWAC is advocating that the National #FoodPolicy4Canada must consider how gender impacts access to #affordablefood. For more info: <http://ow.ly/SvHW30iamUj> #cdnpoli



**February 13, 2018**

Happy #CdnAgDay! The three sister's stew is a traditional #Indigenous dish that is healthy and delicious! NWAC advocates for access to affordable nutritious foods and must be addressed in the National #FoodPolicy4Canada.

Recipe: <https://woodlandfoods.com/recipes/spicy-three-sisters-stew>



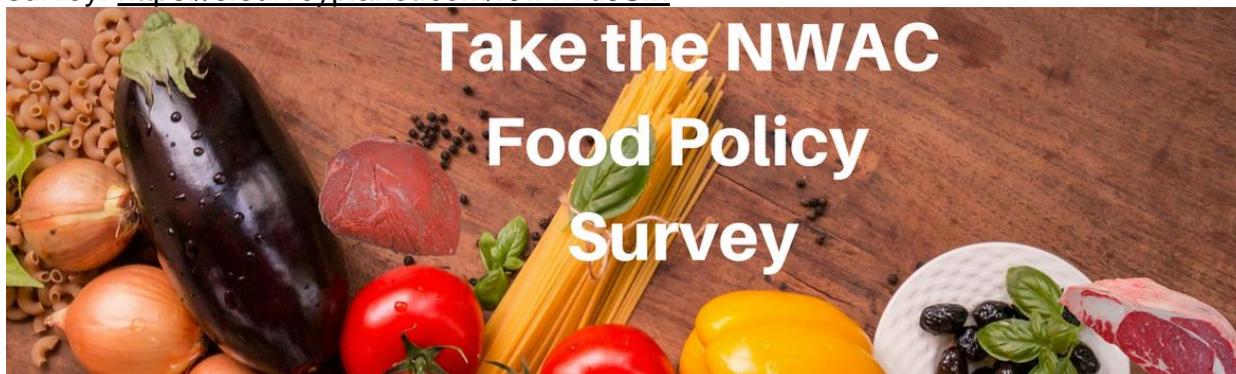
**March 5, 2018**

Indigenous women at Wawatay Catering are taking leadership roles in their community and promoting locally sourced and nutritious meals which is a goal of the #FoodPolicy4Canada. Link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/campaign/food-policy.html> #Indigenous #Women#cdnpoli #Cdnhealth



**March 5, 2018**

NWAC wants to hear from you. We want to hear directly from #Indigenouswomen on ideas to reduce food insecurity in communities across #Canada. Your answers will inform a larger Food Policy Strategy & contribute to the creation of the #FoodPolicy4Canada. Please complete the survey: <https://s.surveypal.com/r/JwYYuJSM>



**March 6, 2018**

NWAC's Food Policy Strategy Survey is underway and First Nations, #Inuit& #Métis women we want to hear from you! How do we reduce food insecurity in #Indigenous communities across Canada? Your voice is important and will help inform the #FoodPolicy4Canada! Please complete the survey: <https://s.surveyplanet.com/rJwYYuJSM>



**March 8, 2018**

Do you want to help us ensure Indigenous women's voices are heard by the Canadian Government & reflected in the #FoodPolicy4Canada? If you haven't already, please take a few minutes to complete NWAC's Food Policy Strategy Survey here: <https://goo.gl/Ai9fEf> #Indigenous #cdnpoli



**March 10, 2018**

NWAC's Food Policy Strategy #Survey has been created so that we can hear directly from #Indigenous women on how to reduce food insecurity! Your answers will inform a larger Food Policy Strategy & contribute to the creation of the #FoodPolicy4Canada. <https://goo.gl/HrPDbV>



**March 14, 2018**

If you haven't already filled NWAC's Food Policy Strategy survey, please take a few minutes to share your opinions. Your feedback is important and will help inform the National #FoodPolicy4Canada! <https://s.surveypplanet.com/rJwYYuJSM> #Indigenous #c  
dnpoli #food #women



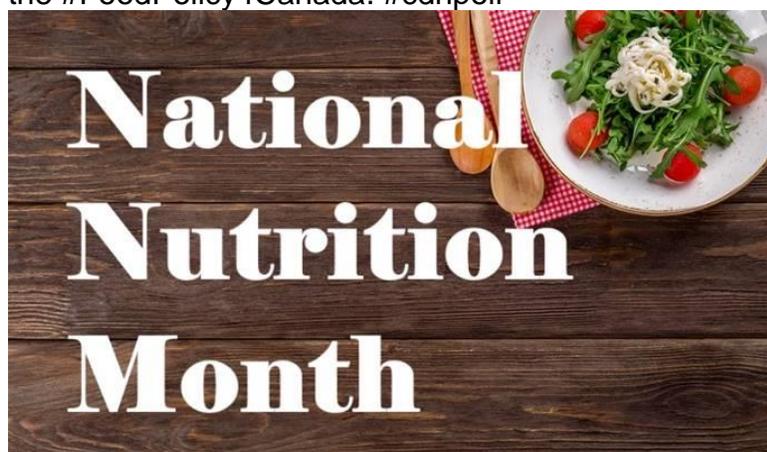
**March 17, 2018**

If you haven't already filled out NWAC's Food Policy Strategy #Survey, please complete this survey – it would really help us to ensure #Indigenouswomen's voices are heard by the Canadian Government and reflected in the #FoodPolicy4Canada! <https://s.surveypplanet.com/rJwYYuJSM> #cdnpoli#women



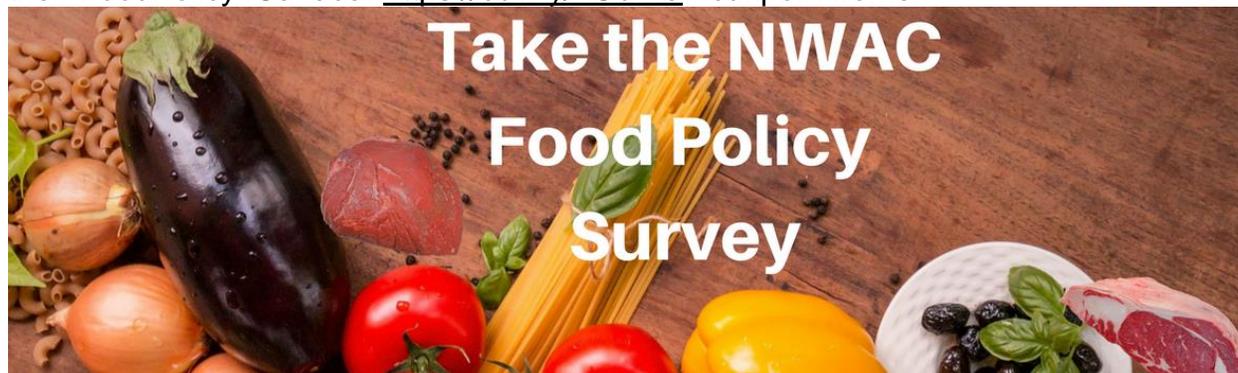
**March 18, 2018**

It's #NationalNutritionMonth. Traditional food sources play an important role in culture and community health. #Indigenous women & gender diverse persons have the right to safe and nutritious foods. NWAC is making sure your voices are heard in the #FoodPolicy4Canada. #cdnpoli



**March 20, 2018**

We want to make sure your voice is heard! If you haven't already, help us out by filling out NWAC\_CA's Food Policy Strategy #Survey, your views will directly influence the #FoodPolicy4Canada! <https://buff.ly/2Gbllna> #cdnpoli#women



**March 22, 2018**

Traditional food sources play an important role in culture & community health. #Indigenous women & gender diverse persons have the right to safe & nutritious foods and that's why @NWAC\_CA needs to hear from you! Share your thoughts with us below #FoodPolicy4Canada. #cdnpoli#NationalNutritionMonth



**March 23, 2018**

There are only a few days left to fill out Native Women's Association of Canada 's Food Policy Strategy survey! If you haven't already, please take a few minutes to share your opinions before it closes on March 25th. Your feedback is extremely important! #INDIGENOUS #FoodPolicy4Canada#Indigenouswomen



**March 26, 2018**

Thank you to everyone who participated in NWAC's Food Policy Strategy Survey! Your feedback will be included in a final report from NWAC on what should be included in the National #FoodPolicy4Canada! #INDIGENOUS#IndigenousPeople



**March 28, 2018**

“18% of Métis women have lived in a household that has experienced food insecurity. The National #FoodPolicy4Canada must address how indigenous women face greater barriers to putting healthy and nutritious food on the table for their children.”

Source: Arriagada, Paula. (2016). Statistics Canada. Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report.



**March 31, 2018**

“17.8 % of First Nations adults living on reserve have chosen not to eat when hungry due to a lack of money. The National #FoodPolicy4Canada must ensure that #affordablefood is available to indigenous women, children and their families.”

Source: Schutter, Olivier. (2012). United Nations Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food.

Link: <https://buff.ly/2GUCy2n>

