

**MNBC MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

MNBC MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Climate Change & Food Access Survey Report



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INTRODUCTION



Through climate change, and more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise in emergencies have brought forward the need to understand global impacts that were previously unforeseen. Food affordability, availability, and accessibility to nutritious and traditional foods, have been important topics in British Columbia (B.C.) and across Canada for several years, especially as it relates to Métis, First Nations, Inuit people and communities as well as rural and remote communities.

Historically, Métis governance and culture were influenced by harvesting activities, like bison hunts and fur trading. Food sources, such as the making of pemmican, fueled harvesting activities. Métis families and communities worked together to provide and produce what they needed for survival from local environments. As their lives have been intricately connected with food, the experiences of Métis are important to understanding the effects of climate change and food access.

It is becoming increasingly needed to understand how access to food is affecting Métis people in B.C. In 2022, Métis Nation British Columbia's (MNBC) Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources administered a survey among Métis titled "Climate Change and Food Access Survey." One of the many goals of the survey was to gain insight into how access to nutritious and traditional foods relates to the current climate and health emergencies.

The following information is data from the Climate Change and Food Access survey. This data is interpreted with other reports from MNBC



and the federal government. This helps provide a holistic understanding of Métis food needs and climate-related concerns. The first portion of the report focuses on the demographic data of survey respondents, including income and housing, to situate the Métis voices being heard in this report. The latter half explores food needs, followed by a discussion of climate-related issues and the next steps for the future.

The voices of Métis inform the narrative below. On behalf of MNBC, *marsii* (thank you) to all who participated in the survey for their energy, time, and honest feedback. We honour your responses and experiences here.

METHODOLOGY

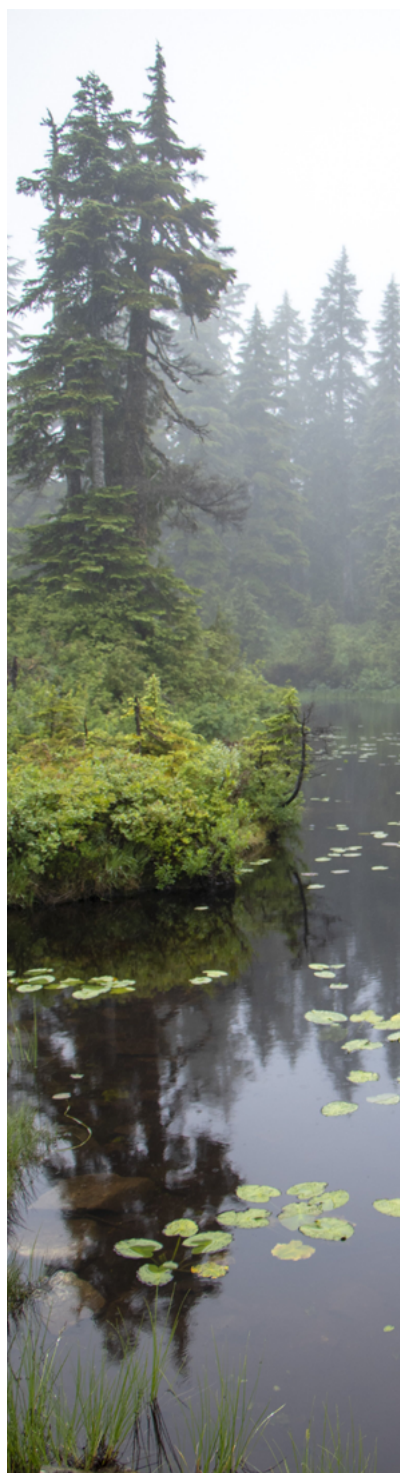


To gain some insight of Métis experience with climate change and food access, a digital survey was distributed to Métis in B.C. The survey included a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions. The survey was first launched at the MNBC Annual General Meeting in 2022, where participants were provided with a QR code to scan to fill out the survey. MNBC Communications also promoted the survey on the MNBC website, social media platforms, and community newsletters. The avenue that saw the most engagement from Métis was social media platforms.

The survey was open for two weeks, and participants were entered into a raffle for four prizes. Each winner received a \$100 gift card to Cabela's. The top two prizes also included other items from Cabela's, including a food vacuum sealer, food scale, etc.



SURVEY FINDINGS



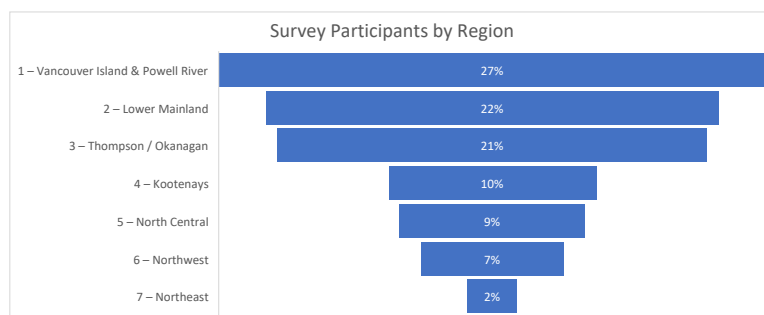
DEMOGRAPHICS

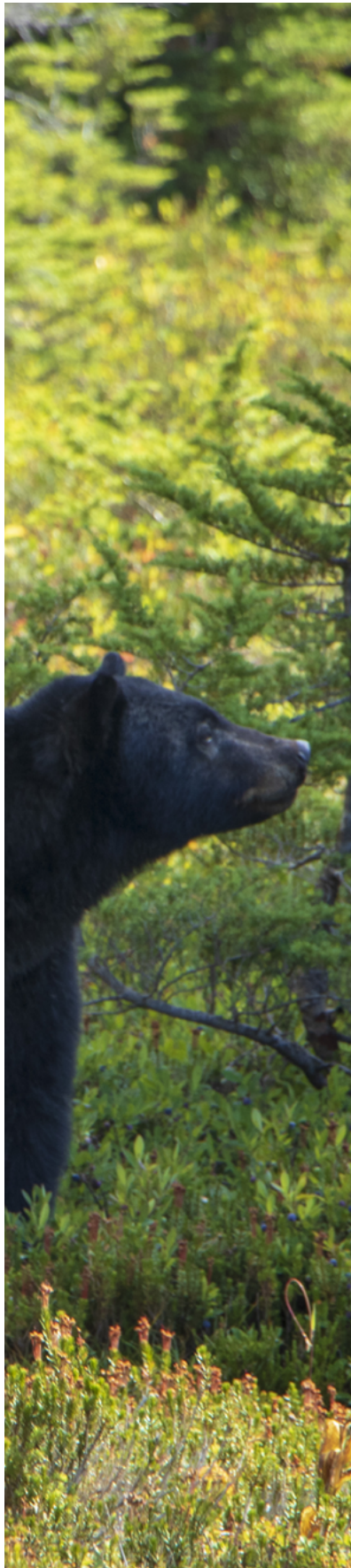
In B.C., approximately 98,000 people self-identify as Métis (Statistics Canada, 2021) and approximately 23,000 people are registered as Métis citizens with Métis Nation British Columbia. The Climate Change and Food Access Survey gathered a total of 282 voices on environmental food security issues. Of these participants, 252 identified as Métis, 23 First Nation, and 7 Inuit. Of the participants, 236 were registered Métis citizens, and 31 were in the application process.

All 7 regions in BC were heard from, with a more robust urban response (201 participants) and a lighter rural response (73 participants). For the purposes of this survey, “urban” refers to areas that had a high density of human structures such as grocery stores, houses, commercial buildings, roads, etc. “Rural” is considered a community that does not have a full-service grocery store, and in which travel to an urban setting is required to purchase food. “Remote” areas are communities located over 350 kilometers from the nearest service centre. Only 8 participants identified as living in remote communities.

Regionally, over 70% of people who completed the survey were located within urban areas of Regions 1 to 3, respectively:

- 1 - Vancouver Island & Powell River
- 2 - Lower Mainland
- 3 - Thompson/Okanagan

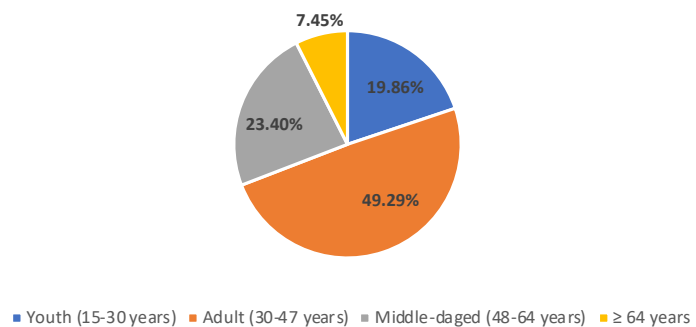




The regions with the least number of participants included Region 6 (Northwest) and Region 7 (Northeast). As a result, the experiences of urban Métis are highlighted more prominently than rural and remote Métis in the survey findings.

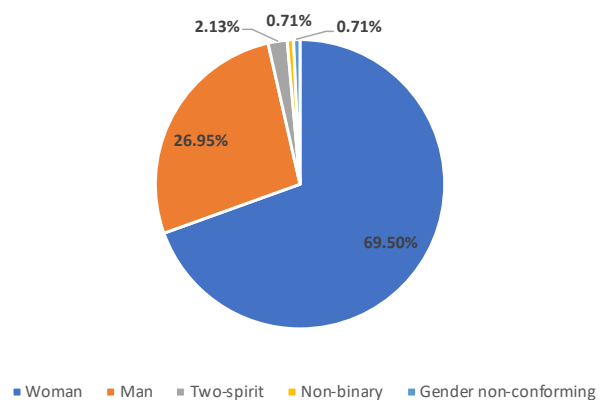
Participants were asked to provide their age range. Almost half of the participants (49%) were between 30-47 years old at 139 participants. There were 66 participants that identified as 48-64 years old, and 56 participants were youth aged 15-30 years old. The lowest age demographic was 64 years and older, which consisted of 21 participants. Therefore, the experiences of Métis in early to mid-adulthood are highlighted in the survey findings.

Age of Survey Participants



In addition, nearly 70% of the respondents self-identify as women and 27% as men. Just over 2% self-identify as Two-Spirit, with non-binary and gender non-conforming folks making up nearly 1.4% of participants. As a result, survey results lean more toward the perspective of Métis women.

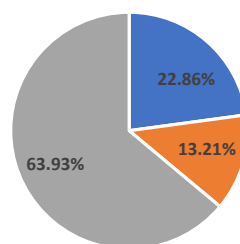
Gender Self-Identity of Participants





Participants were also asked if they were a *Kehtehayak* (Elder) or Knowledge Carrier. Over half of participants did not identify as either but 64 people identified as *Kehtehayak* and an additional 37 people identified as a Knowledge Carrier. It's important in Métis culture to listen and learn from the lived experiences of Elders and Knowledge Carriers. Thus, this survey recognizes and brings forward the wisdom of Elders and Knowledge Carriers to this discussion.

"Do you identify as a Kehtehayak (Elder) or Knowledge Carrier?"



■ Yes, I am an Elder ■ Yes, I am a Knowledge Carrier ■ No, I do not

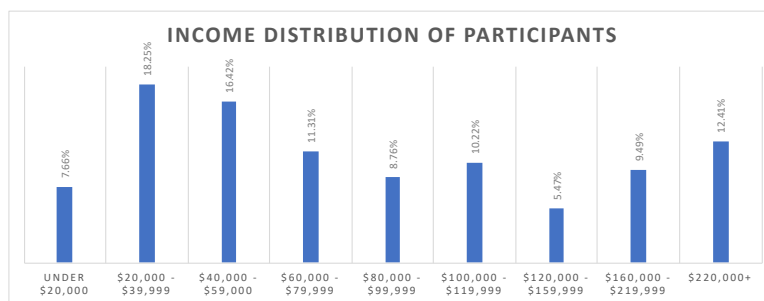
SOCIOECONOMIC INFORMATION



INCOME & HOUSING

Living costs and affordability of basic needs such as food and shelter are at the forefront of political and economic discussions in B.C. This is especially important as the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted food supply chains and housing markets. Coupled with extreme weather events such as wildfires, heat domes, and fluctuating temperatures, the impact of these events disproportionately affects Métis.

To better understand the financial impacts of climate change and food access for Métis, survey participants were asked their household's income range. There was a wide distribution across all income brackets. A higher number of respondents (50) responded with their income range as \$20,000 to \$39,000. Sixty-two percent of participants reported their household income below \$100,000.

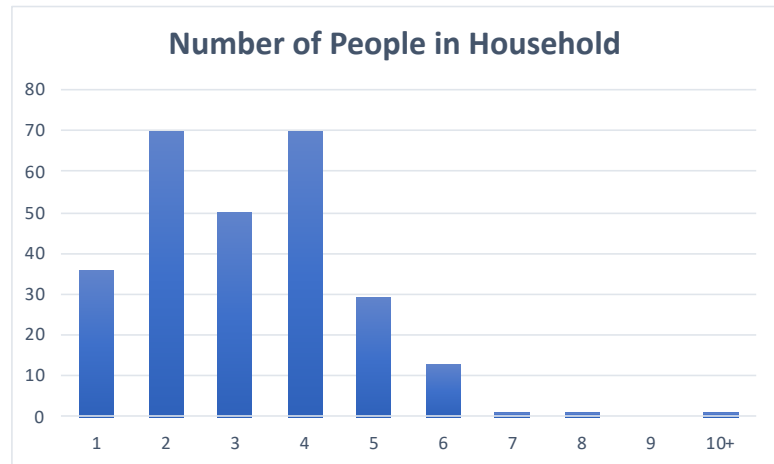


It may be surprising to see Métis households earning over \$100,000 considering the pre-tax median income for Métis in 2016 was \$29,322 (MNBC 2021, p. 27). In comparison, the median pre-tax income of the non-Indigenous population in 2016 was \$33,527. But calculating one's household income is directly related to household size.

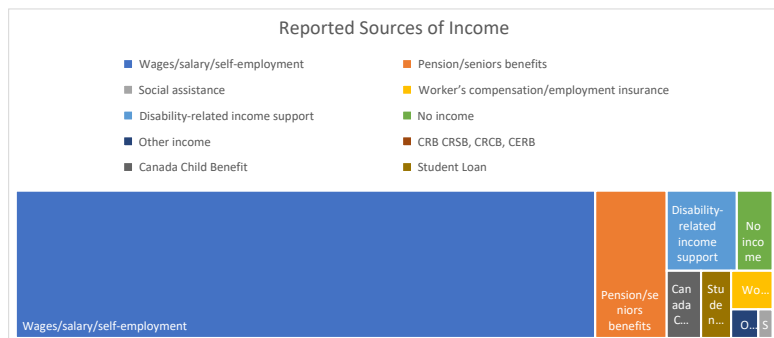
Participants had the option to select how many people live in their household, with a range from 1 to 10+ people. Seventy people stated they live in a household of two people (25%), and an additional seventy people live in a household of four people (25%). Almost 17% of



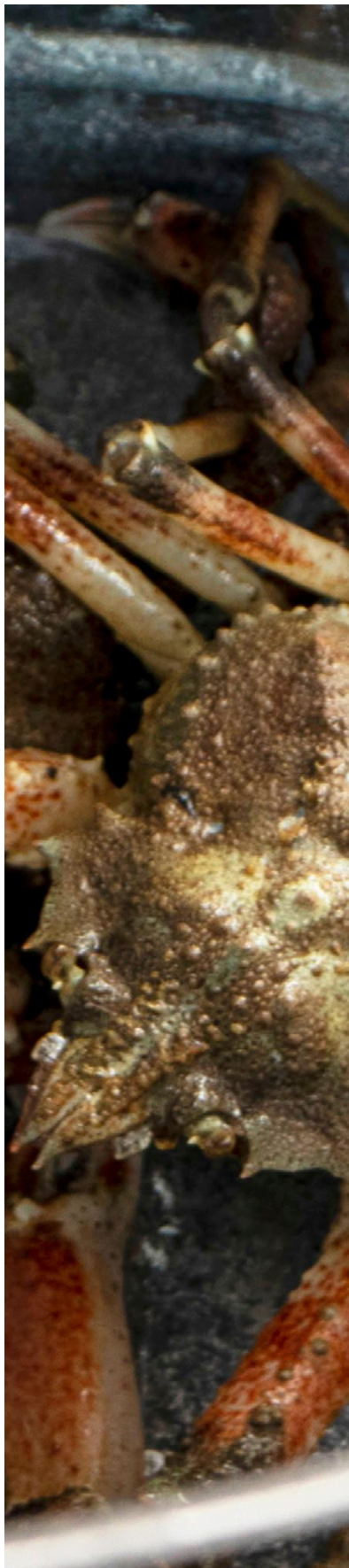
participants stated they lived in a household of 5 or more people (a total of 45 participants). With limited housing stock and rising housing prices in B.C., it stands to reason that a larger household provides a more stable financial situation. It's important to note the possibility that not all members of a household are wage earners (i.e. children, the elderly, etc.), and thus may or may not contribute to a household's income.



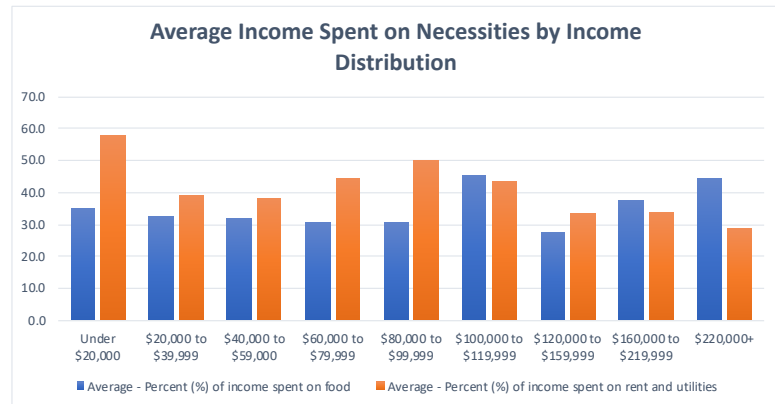
A majority of participants (76%) stated their household's income is from wage employment, salaried jobs, or self-employment. Pension/senior benefits (9%) and disability-related income support (5%) were the second and third highest choices, respectively. Zero respondents stated they earn income via federal aid programs such as Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB), Canada Recover Sickness Benefit (CRSB), etc.



In addition, respondents spend an average of 40% of their income on rent and utilities. According to the Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation, housing is considered affordable if it costs less than 30% of one's pre-tax income (CMHC 2018). With housing taking up a considerable portion of one's household income, other basic necessities such as food are impacted, as well as traditional food harvesting practices. Participants also indicated they spend an average of 35% of their income on food.

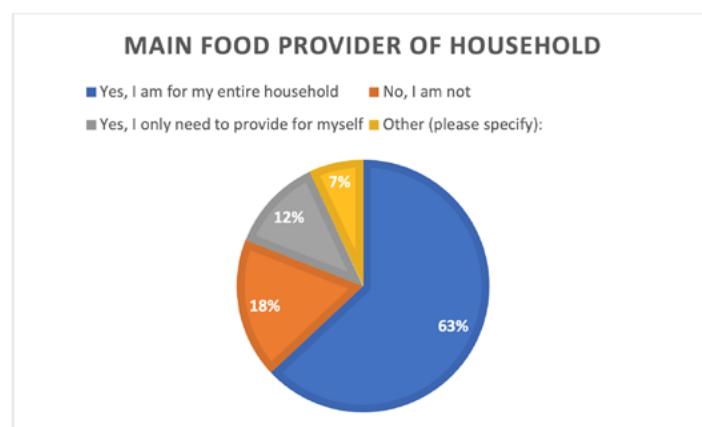


Combined, participants spend an average of 75% of their household's income on rent/utilities and food.

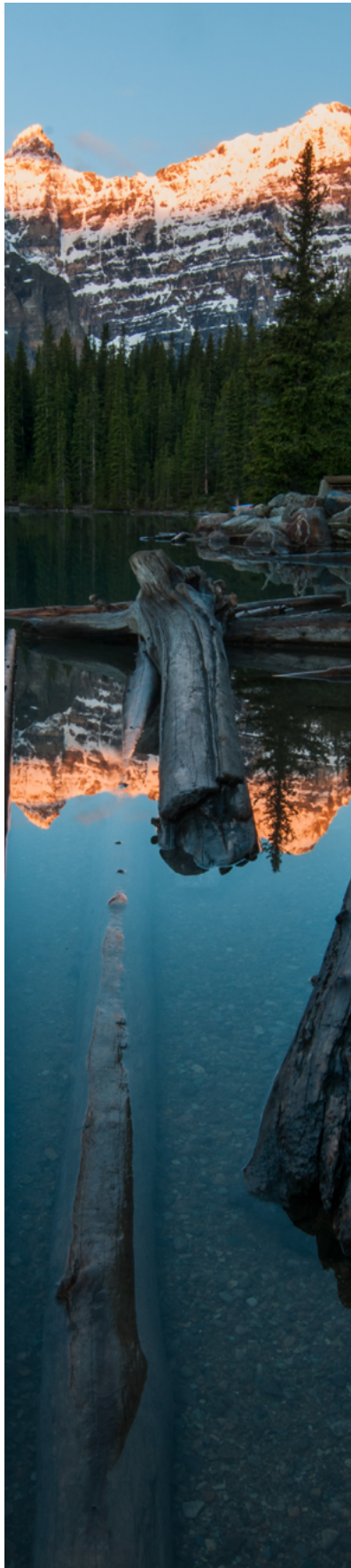


FOOD

Historically, due to colonial/assimilative policies, Métis were discouraged from practicing or passing down traditional knowledge to their children and grandchildren. This includes food, traditional harvesting behaviours (hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering), and protocols. Métis relied on themselves and others to provide basic needs including food, shelter, clothing, etc. (MNBC, 2021, pg. 26). These values of Métis independence, self-reliance, and resourcefulness are carried into present day behaviours. Métis today are attempting to reclaim and (re) learn these traditional ways of knowing. This includes connecting with Métis traditional foods.



To demonstrate how Métis are connecting and accessing food, survey respondents were asked if they provide for their household. One-hundred seventy-two participants said, yes, they do provide for their entire household. Many "Other" responses focused on sharing

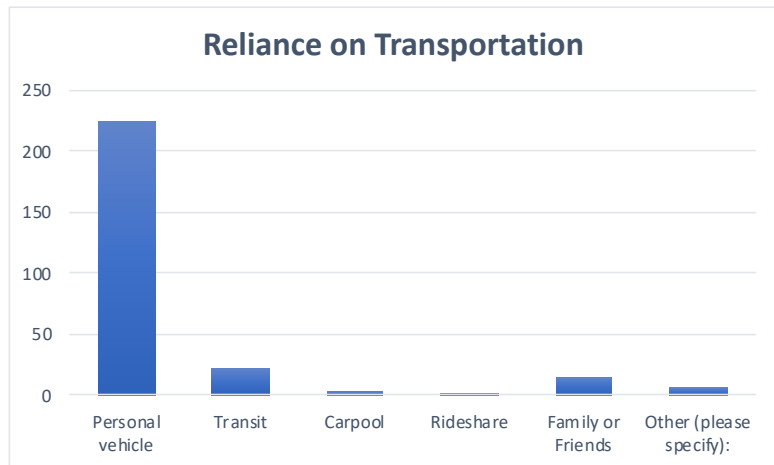


this responsibility with others in their household including partners, roommates, or others.

In an open-ended question about their biggest concern, about 65% of responses reiterated that the cost of food was their biggest worry. Inflation (price increases) and low wages were cited alongside cost. Other answers included health issues such as diabetes, allergies, accessing nutritious food, availability and protocols for harvesting, etc.

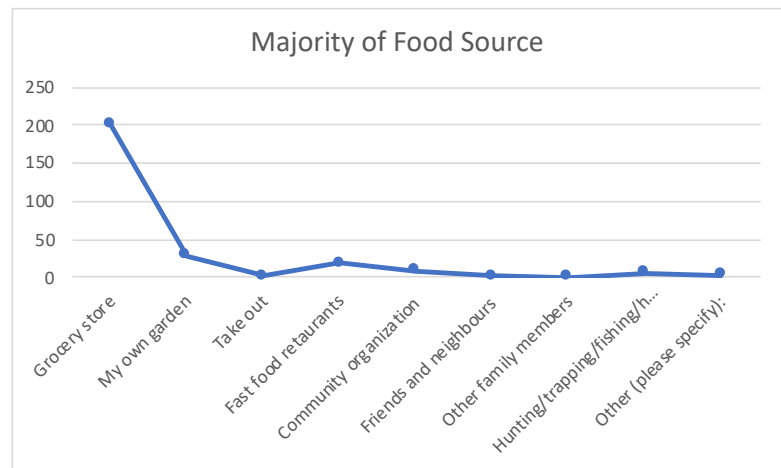
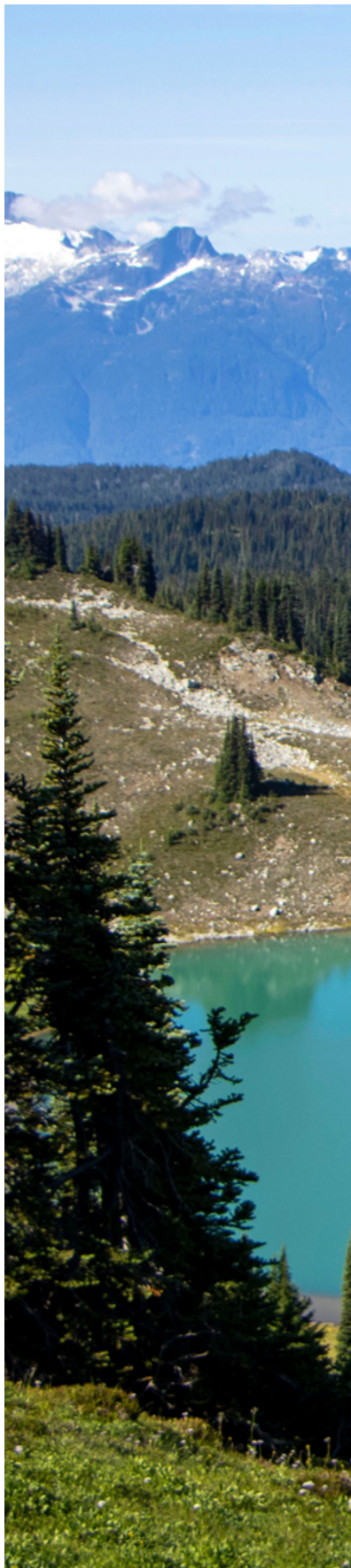
ACCESS

While the cost of food threatens the relationship between Métis and traditional foods, Métis must also consider the cost of fuel when obtaining or accessing food. About 82% of Métis rely on a personal vehicle for transportation. The use of transit (8%) and leaning on transportation from family or friends (5%) were the next highest choices. “Other” answers consisted of 2% of responses and varied from taxis, walking, ebikes, etc.

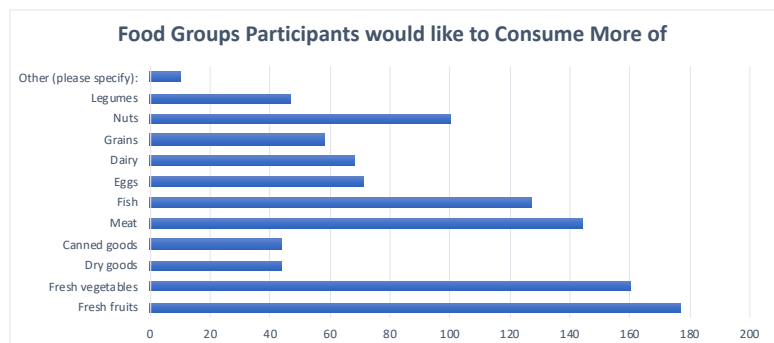
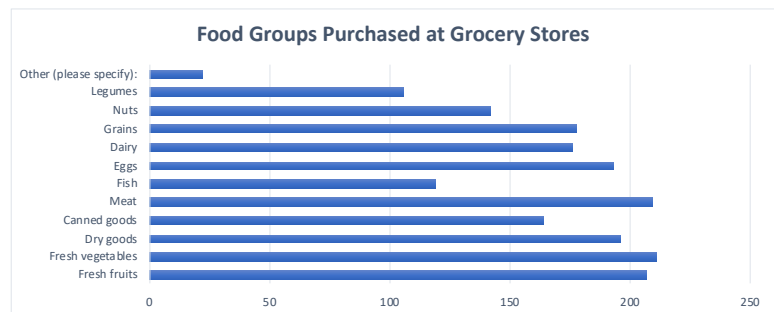


As gas prices in B.C. remain high compared to other provinces in Canada, Métis must consider all costs that go into buying and accessing food. This is especially important for almost 30% of survey respondents that must travel over 30 minutes or over 50km to access nutritious food.

Participants were asked where they obtain the majority of their food and about 75% of respondents stated grocery stores. This answer was followed by “My Own Garden” at 11% and fast-food restaurants at 7%. A few participants rely on sources such as community organizations (3%) and hunting/trapping/fishing/harvesting (2%).



In addition to learning about the challenges Métis face to access food, participants were asked about their food habits. When asked what foods they normally purchase when grocery shopping, participants noted a variety of options. The three highest food groups chosen, in descending order, were fresh vegetables (211 participants), meat (209), and fresh fruits (207). Fish (119) and legumes (106) were the least selected options. “Other” responses included baking materials like flour, snacks such as chips, and non-food items like toiletries. There were also written responses that specified grocery shopping was done in accordance with allergies (gluten free, dairy free, etc.) or dietary restrictions (vegan, diabetes, etc.).





As shown in the previous graphic, participants followed up by also selecting which food groups they'd like to consume more if they could. Again, participants had the option to select multiple choices. Fresh fruits (177 participants), fresh vegetables (160), and meat (144) remained at the top of the food groups chosen. Participants said they wanted to consume more fish (127) and nuts (100). When compared with what groceries are currently purchased, these food items are purchased less than most other food groups.

NUTRITION

The foods Métis access dictates what meals are prepared in their households. In order to understand how nutritious or non-nutritious foods are incorporated into Métis diets, respondents were provided a space to discuss what a typical meal looks like in their households. Approximately 78% of replies stated vegetables were incorporated into their meals. In addition, 70% of responses included some type of protein, including meat and fish. Participants also noted eating carbohydrates (64%) including pasta, potatoes, and rice. Other items were salads (15%) and soups/stews (9%). As stated in anonymous participant comments below, some people indicated they can only afford low-cost meats. In other cases, participants use carbohydrates, such as pasta, to make a larger meal that goes further while feeding a large family. These meal plans are more affordable for those on a budget.

"Chicken and salad or pasta for volume to feed the family."

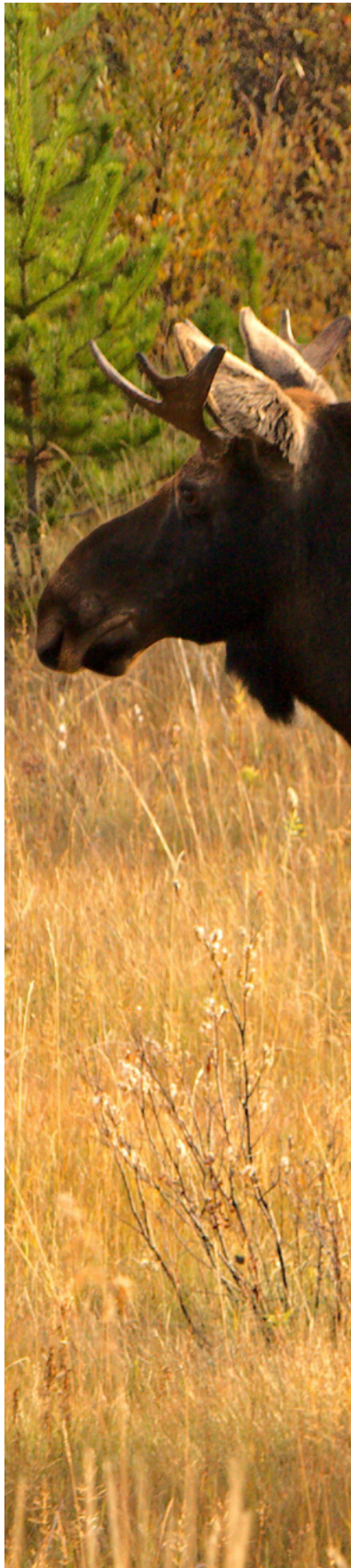
"With inflation and serious sticker shock at the grocery store, I am bulking up spaghetti sauces, stews, and soups with lots offered lentils and less meat."

"I only buy 'Enjoy Tonight' products which have expired so they are discounted. I usually eat a salad with feta cheese on it."

"Potatoes or rice, one veg (carrots/peas/can corn/beans/peppers or salad) and a meat usually chicken thigh or cheap stir fry beef on sale. Or spaghetti and salad dinner. Sometimes pulled pork or crockpot soups."

"Some kind of meat (if we have it or can afford it), some type of vegetable (canned or fresh), grain (quinoa or rice)"

"Usually we have a meat, sometimes pasta or veggie dish depending how we are feeling, majority of the time we have meat for dinner -



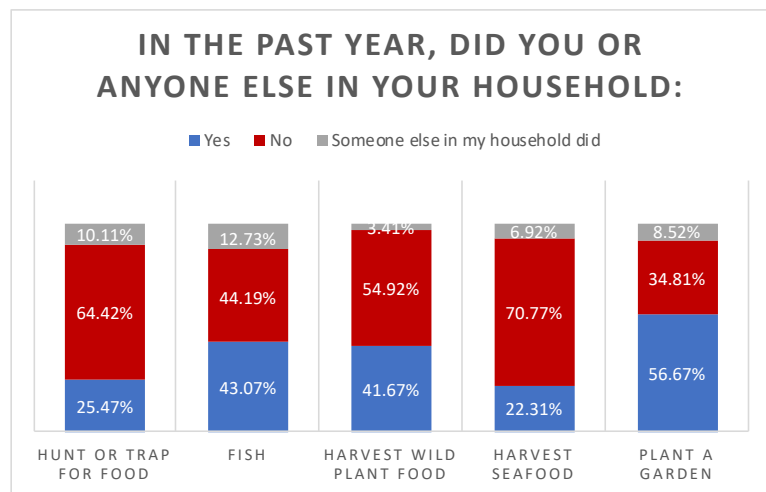
which is expensive. Usually pasta will have homemade veggie cream sauce, or feta cold pasta etc.”

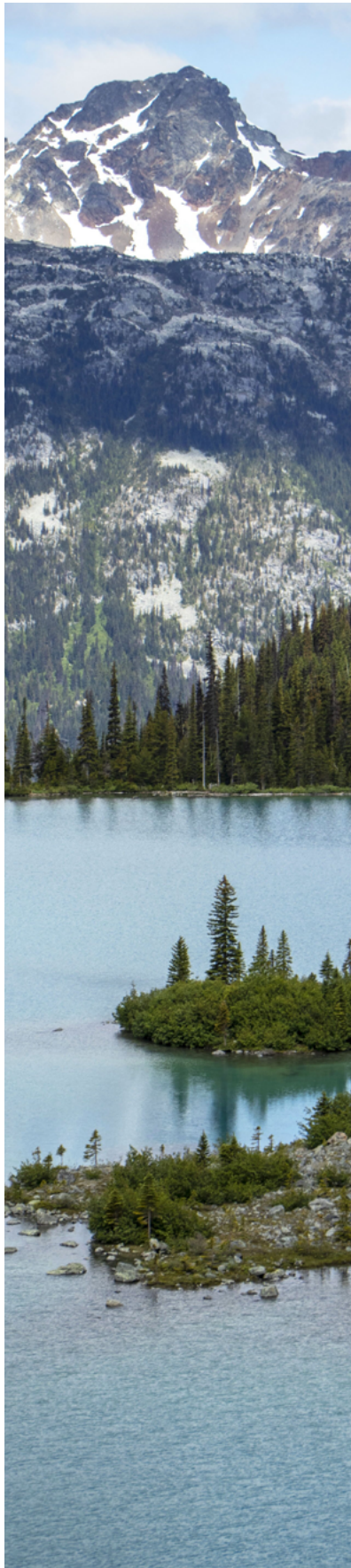
This story of food access and affordability that’s been told by participants so far is concerning. Métis are sacrificing nutritious foods in their diets to afford feeding themselves and those in their households. But the resourcefulness of Métis is evident. The practicing of traditional harvesting activities such as hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering provides Métis with food agency and a connection to culture.

SUBSISTENCE PRACTICES: HUNTING, TRAPPING, FISHING AND GATHERING

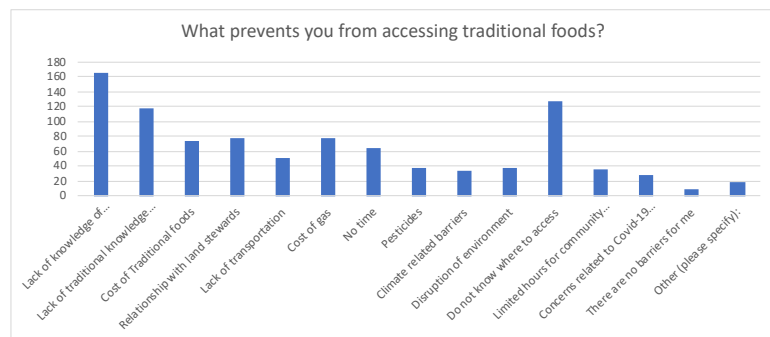
Subsistence practices refer to behaviours as means of survival such as accessing and obtaining food. For Métis, traditional subsistence practices include hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering. When asking participants how important these activities are for them, 56% responded that it is either “very important” or “extremely important.” An additional 23% said it was “moderately important.”

Unfortunately, about half of respondents did not participate in the hunting/trapping of food or the harvesting of seafood or wild plants. But more than half of participants or those in their household either fished or planted a garden in the past year. This data reveals some of the intricacies of participating in Métis subsistence behaviours. The data also speaks to the experiences more of urban Métis who may not have as much access to land or places where wild plants and animals thrive. Generally, activities like fishing and planting gardens are more easily accessible activities for Métis.

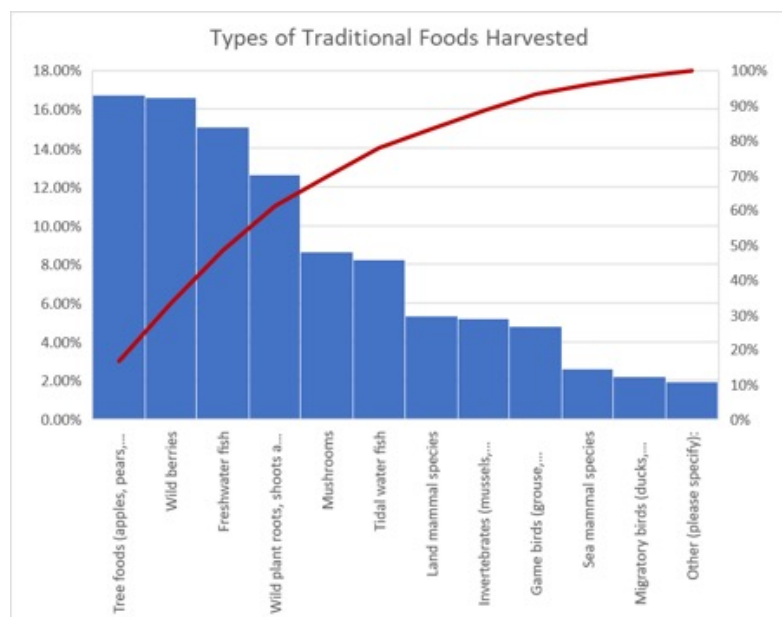




These sentiments are echoed in the following graph, where participants were asked what prevents them from accessing traditional foods. The top reasons include the lack of knowledge of traditional foods (17%), lack of knowledge where to access traditional foods (13%), and lack of traditional knowledge and protocols to harvest in a respectful way (12%). Cost of gas (8%) and one's relationship with land stewards (First Nations relatives) (8%) were also indicated as barriers. Less than 1% of participants said they experience no barriers. "Other" responses included no traditional grounds on which to hunt or harvest, dietary restrictions, and physical limitations to partake in subsistence activities.

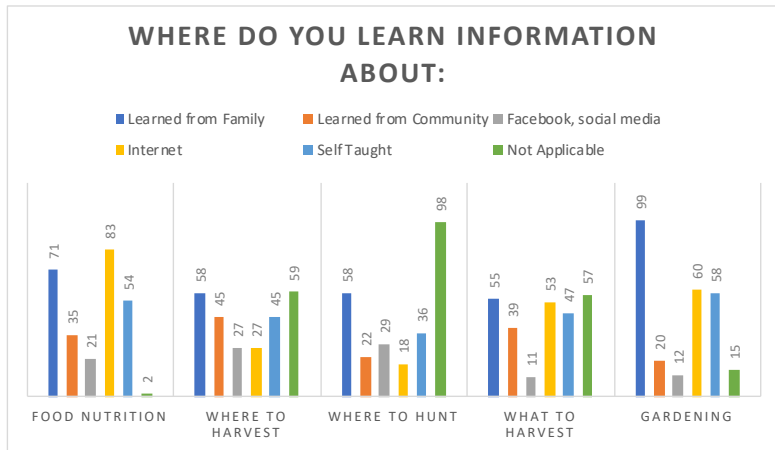


Participants had the option to select the specific foods hunted, trapped, or harvested over the last year in their household. Tree foods (121 participants), wild berries (118), and freshwater fish (108) were among the highest chosen foods. Hunted or trapped foods such as game birds (35), sea mammals (19), and migratory birds (16) were the least chosen from the options. "Other" responses mainly focused on foods harvested from planted gardens like peppers, tomatoes, etc.





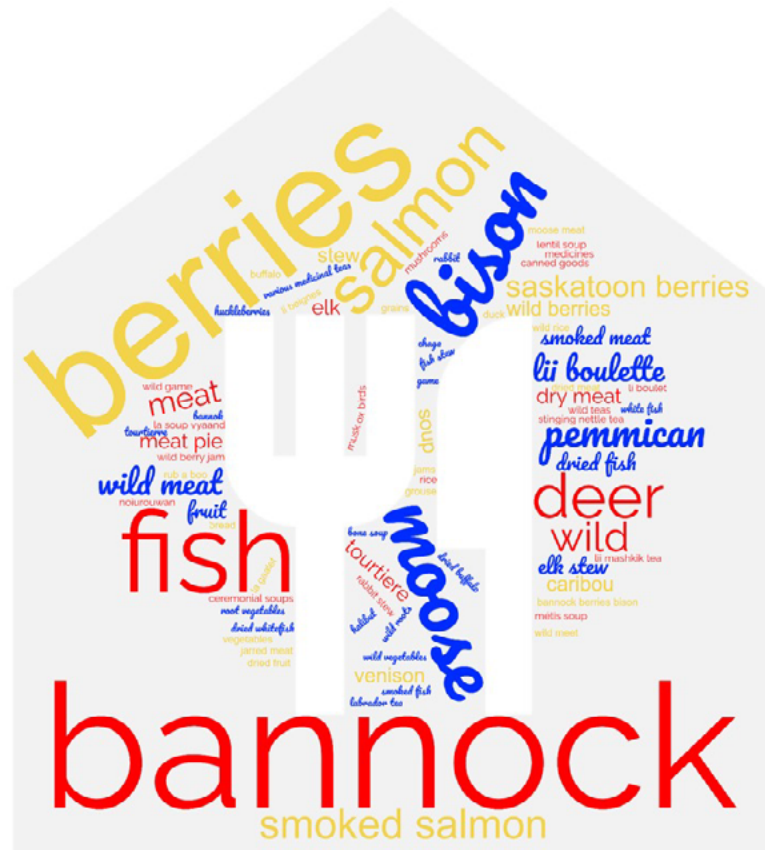
The reliance on personal or community gardens is significant for Métis in B.C. Eighty-two percent of survey respondents said they had eaten vegetables or fruits from a personal or community garden in the past year. For those that maintain gardens, about 37% of participants stated they learned this skill from family, where about 22% are self-taught, and an additional 23% learned about gardening from the internet. In fact, learning skills from family, the internet, or being self-taught were among some of the most popular sources for learning about food nutrition, where to harvest and hunt, and what to harvest.



Some learning resources are more accessible and reliable than others. One hundred and seventy-four participants were interested in learning more information on how to harvest traditional foods, and 170 participants wanted to learn where to harvest. It's especially important for 134 participants that traditional food knowledge is taught by Elders and the BC Métis Assembly of Natural Resources (BCMANR) Captains. Participation in community food events (169) along with the purchasing of traditional foods (166) was also of importance.

Approximately 66% of Métis in B.C. reported consuming traditional foods in the last year. Of these traditional foods, participants indicated they had consumed bannock (54%), berries (18%), bison (17%), fish (15%), and salmon (9%). Foods such as pemmican (4%) and moose (8%) were also eaten. The graphic below displays the traditional foods consumed by participants in the past year. The size of the word indicates how many people ate that food. For instance, the word "Bannock" is the largest because a large portion of participants indicated eating it in the past year.

The variety of local and wild foods listed above reiterates the how food and culture are intricately connected for Métis. Below are quotes from

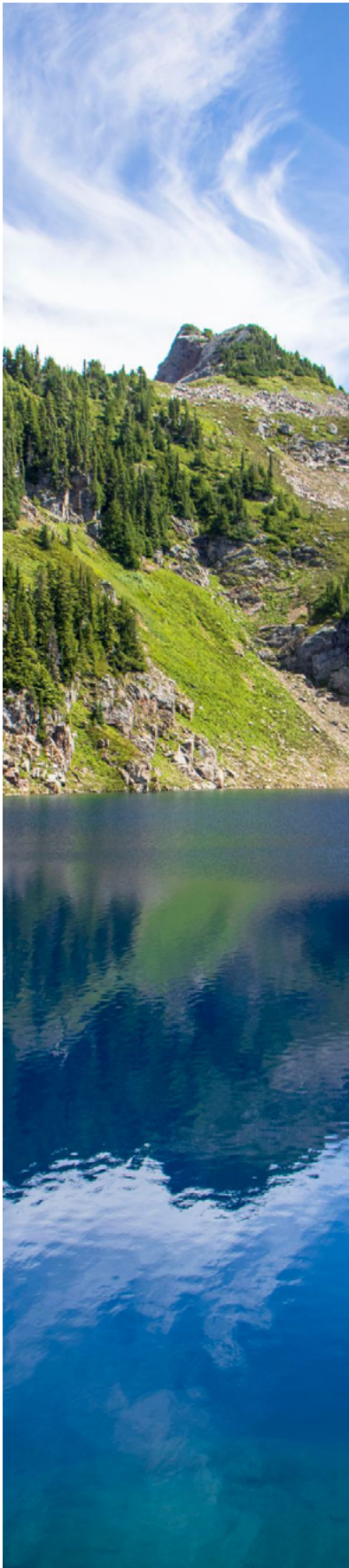


anonymous participants who express what this cultural connection to food means for Métis, and the barriers they face in nurturing that relationship:

"I believe it can be very difficult for people to focus on culture and identity when they are focused on surviving by finding food - of course there are traditional foods and food which can be obtained through hunting and gathering, but that is not accessible for many people. Many people must go to the grocery store, which have very high prices, or the food banks, which often lack nutritious foods. Those who are focused on finding cheap, nutritious food may not be as focused on connecting with their culture or how food plays into culture."

"[The relationship is] Paramount; threatened, but resilient and circumstantial."

"[The relation between food and Métis identity] is an important part of our culture. The dining room was where planning and business took place usually over dinner. Métis people are rooted in sharing their resources with each other during winter months, providing for one another. Food is a central pillar to Métis culture and identity."



"It's all about respect for all relations - Métis peoples have been displaced but we always have the land there for us. I would say that food is integral to our culture because it is a way in which we come together for a hot meal, provide for each other, and continue showing our respect to the land."

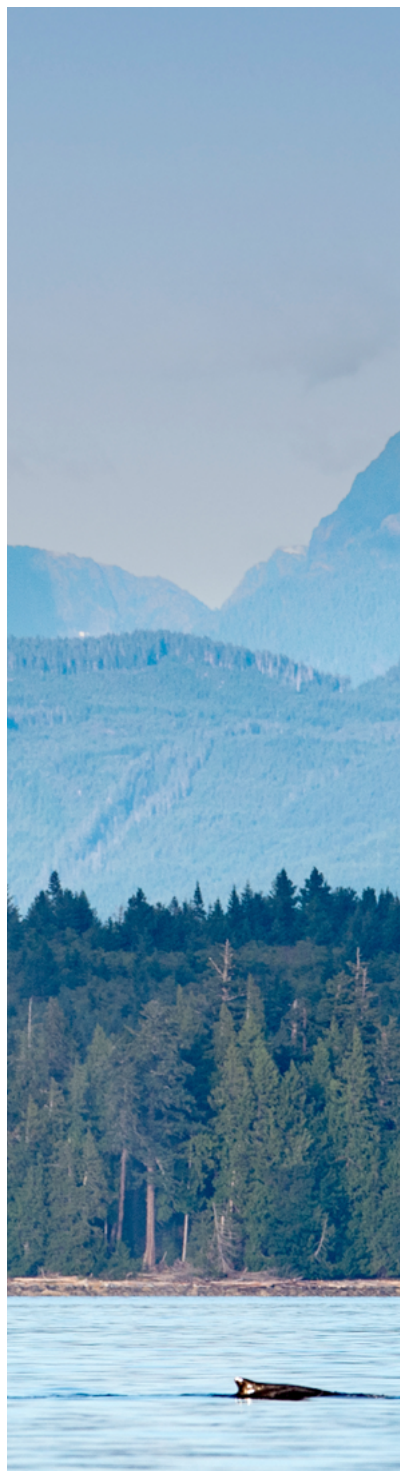
"I think food is an important connection to all cultures, including Métis. It brings people together in community. It brings us out on the land. It makes us feel gratitude. It is extremely important to our identity as Métis people. The lack of connection to the land and our food attributes to health problems, including physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional."

"I believe it can be very difficult for people to focus on culture and identity when they are focused on surviving by finding food - of course there are traditional foods and food which can be obtained through hunting and gathering, but that is not accessible for many people. Many people must go to the grocery store, which have very high prices, or the food banks, which often lack nutritious foods. Those who are focused on finding cheap, nutritious food may not be as focused on connecting with their culture or how food plays into culture."

"I think our bodies still remember the food our ancestors consumed. Proper harvesting pays greater respect to the land and creatures that dwell on it, and honours that spirit; our elders have stories that are connected to each animal and plant, and that brings us closer to land, culture and identity. When we don't have access to those resources, I think we see more sickness in our people."

"[The relationship is] Important, but broken by modern society/colonization. We lack time for harvesting and preserving foods and gardening and many families stopped teaching their children how to do these things."

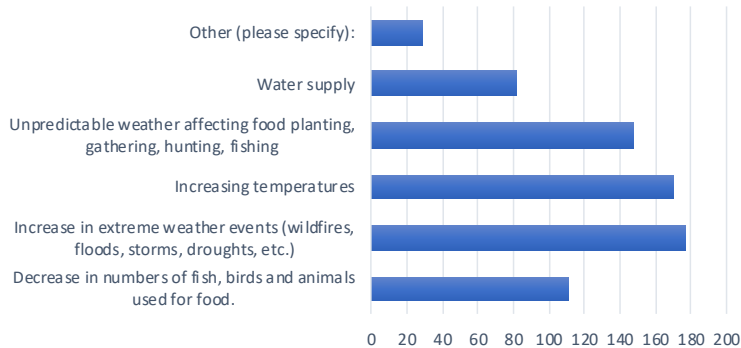
CLIMATE CHANGE & EMERGENCIES



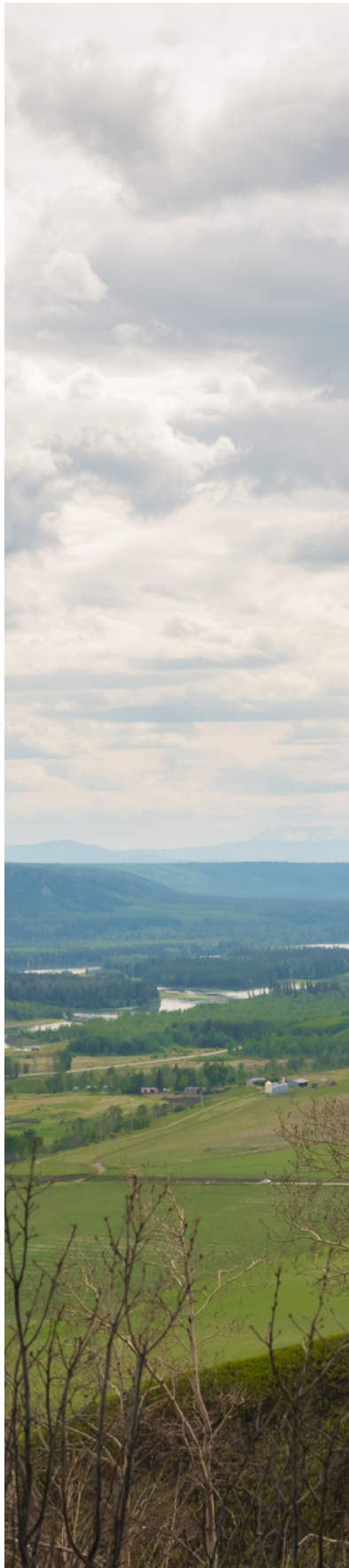
IMPACT ON FOOD ACCESS AND QUALITY

The cost and availability of food, as well as the way Métis practice subsistence behaviors, are impacted by climate change. For almost 80% of respondents, climate change is extremely important to very important. In most cases, these people have also seen the impacts of climate change on their environment, including their harvesting grounds and gardens. In fact, 90% of participants stated they've seen the impact of climate change on their environment, weather food systems, and/or land base. Respondents noted increases in extreme weather events, increasing temperatures, unpredictable weather which effects subsistence practices, and more as major impacts to food systems in B.C. Some participants also stated how increasing urbanization affects food supply and government policies restrict subsistence practices (limited harvesting areas).

Specific Food Impacts due to Climate Change

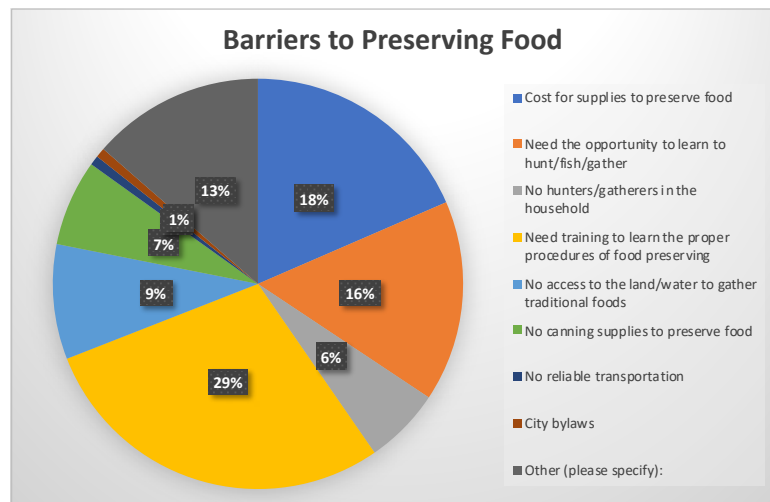


Sustainable food practices become ever so important to preserving and continuing to nurture local ecosystems in B.C. When asked if they practice sustainable harvesting of plants and animals, 68% of participants said they did while 32% said they did not. For those that do practice sustainable harvesting, they were asked which practices they



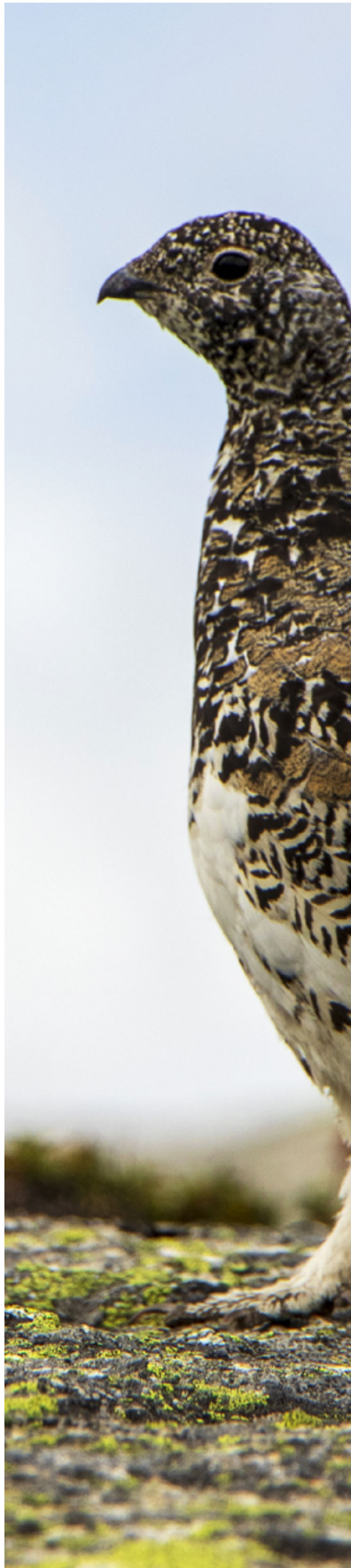
participate in. Answers varied but some answers included gardening, greenhouse gardening, supporting local farmers, composting, following the hunting and harvesting guidelines of land stewards, etc. The most common response to this question was “only taking what is needed,” meaning participants gather what is needed to sustain them and their families, while allowing the plant/animals to continue to grow and leaving enough food for other animals.

Due to the now ever-changing, unpredictable nature of one’s climate, more sustainable food practices such as canning and preserving foods become an important practice. Canning and the preservation of foods falls are helpful when preparing for natural disasters, pandemics, or food emergencies. About 69% of participants stated they practice preserving and canning food. But this behaviour is impacted by food and supply costs and lack of knowledge transference. Twenty-nine percent of Métis (76 participants) feel the lack of knowledge pertaining to canning and preserving food is their biggest barrier. The second biggest barrier was the cost of supplies to preserve food (18% or 49 participants). “Other” responses included limited time for preserving food, lack of space to can and store food, and physical limitations (growing older, diverse abilities, etc.)



Traditional and modern methods of preserving food is important to Métis, with 169 respondents saying they would like to learn more about these practices.

Participants were given an opportunity to speak on ways to overcome barriers for all community members to preserve their own foods. Survey respondent had insightful answers, found in the anonymous comments below:



“Access, resources, teachings, services and provisions for all systems tied to the food preservation process: we need to invest in non-human relations that sustain us, we need to invest in our hunters/gathers that procure our relations that sustain us, we need to invest in traditions and teach our food preservationists, we need to provide access for those of us who do not hunt/gather/preserve to barter, get offerings, received free and purchased foods”

“Community spaces or rentals to practice preserving foods; programs to educate on hunting, gardening, canning, et.; food security partnerships and programming (ie good food boxes); educational content that takes into account limited space in rental units “Create starter kits and workshops to teach them how to use them properly. They would also be taking home the canning they create at the end of the workshop. I attended a local workshop, took my goods home and a binder with information. It was the best thing I ever did, I completely enjoy canning now and do it as often as possible.”

“Hold canning session to teach people and then perhaps have community kitchen sessions where people can come together to do it, share the cost and the work.”

“Schools have land, and typically on unsprayed land, as well as indigenous education departments. This is something that I think could be brought into schools for our métis students, as well as of course First Nations and Inuit. The schools also typically have food culture courses and it would be great to bring Canning into these classes, if it’s not already there. MNBC’s certainly could offer this to our youth and our communities in general, either in person or via zoom. It needs to be very well planned out, though. It needs to be planned to allow time for people to grow, harvest, and then can. It’s not the sort of workshop that can be planned with only a months notice. It requires a different kind of thinking, and I have every confidence that we can manage it.”

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

In the event of an emergency, climate related or otherwise, how prepared are Métis? When asked if they have back food and water storage in an emergency event, only 53% of respondents said they were prepared. About 43% of people said they were not prepared while an additional 4% said they were unsure.



Emergency preparedness needs to happen at all levels including individual, local (community), and provincial. Looking toward the future, about one-quarter of participants (25%) were confident that their communities did not have any plans to monitor climate-related outcomes such as chronic illness, food insecurity and climate anxiety. An additional 42% were unsure if their community had made any plans. But there is a need to learn more about emergency preparedness with 127 participants stating an interest in this topic.

CONCLUSION



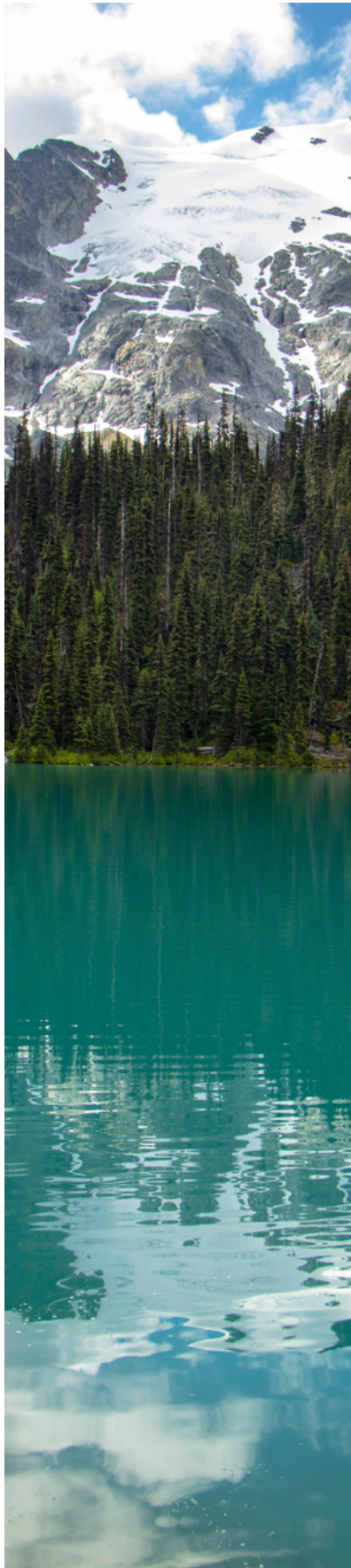
As food (in)security, climate change, and various emergencies persist, government and community leaders must listen to the lived experiences of Métis to combat these issues. By meeting their concerns with holistic programs and policies, Métis will be able to live healthier lives with a sense of security that they can rely on local food systems for their individual and community needs. In turn, these programs will also help Métis be prepared for emergencies (food and climate related). Métis participants anonymously provided suggestions for improving food security, including:

"Go into specific communities and find out their specific needs. Every community is different and there isn't an approach that will work for all. Work with Chartered Community presidents to find the best solutions. I would also like to see a focus on cultural burning in partnership with local indigenous nations and modern gardening ideas such as food forests in communities."

"I think it's a great idea to teach people how to garden and preserve food. However, I think it's important to recognize this will not be accessible for all people, so ensuring there is a food system in place which can help people in urban, rural, or remote communities access nutritious foods would be beneficial. Perhaps partnering with grocery stores (similar to Loop program) to make food hampers full of nutritious food that is otherwise going to be thrown away - possibly having these food hampers handed out at Chartered Communities or shipped to people."

"Métis Community kitchens & cupboards for low-income families & Elders. Teaching families & Elders how to make healthy meals on fixed incomes."

"Work together with First Nation people to gain a better understanding of what Métis people can do to be good guests on the lands our people lodge on. Work with knowledge keepers to record knowledge that can then be distributed. Develop programming



to teach traditional practices, with priority for youth in/from care or who do not otherwise have opportunities to learn from family. Create capacity within chartered communities to run programming, and preserve and store food. Continue to advocate for equity for Métis people in all areas of society. Invest in wide-spread good food boxes. Develop programming to provide grocery hampers, or partner with a chain store to provide gift cards for Métis people struggling with groceries."

"I think we need more community garden spaces that are created around sustainability. Garden spaces that give that back to the environment & eco system. Maybe more initiatives where community gardeners can grow food for people who are lower income, at no cost. Seed saving & sharing initiatives. Gardening workshops on how to get started."

Métis respondents are advocating for sustainable programs that are localized and serve all Métis. They also point out that this can only be accomplished by working in partnership with MNBC, Métis Chartered Communities, and with their First Nation relatives. There are already programs that attempt to serve nutritious, local foods, but without long-term funding, these programs are unreliable. By attending to the needs of Métis can MNBC, government partners, and external organizations find effective solutions to the complex, interrelated issues that are climate change, food access, and emergency preparedness.

DATA GAPS

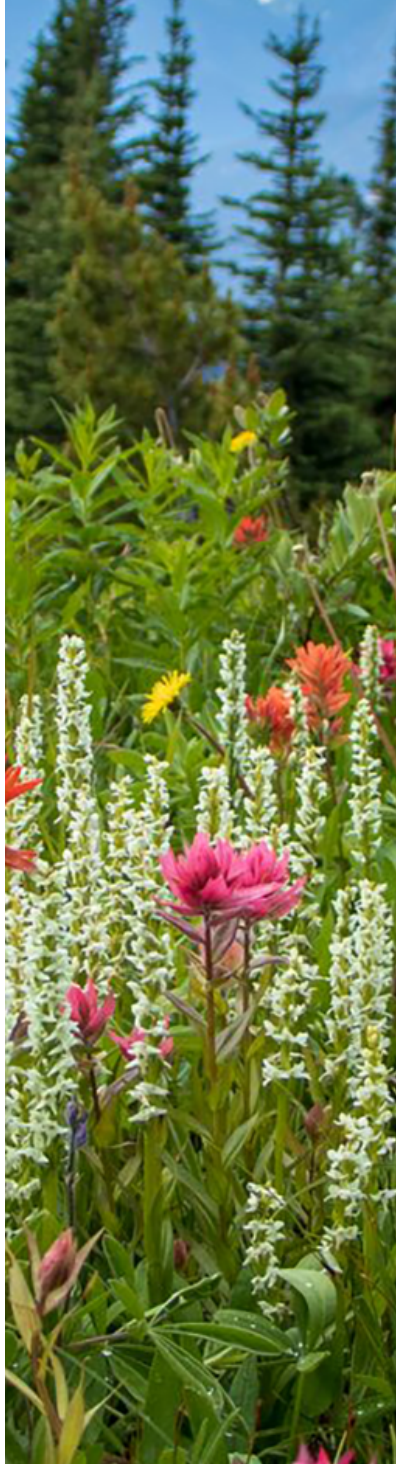
Although important data was captured in this survey, the small sample of Métis that participated does not fully capture all Métis voices. For instance, the climate and food needs of rural Métis must be examined more thoroughly for a more wholistic understanding of the Métis experience. In addition, a robust understanding of the experiences of Two-Spirit, non-Binary, and other gender diverse Métis are missing from this analysis.

Also, because more Métis who self-identify as a woman participated in the survey, it begs the question if Métis women are more aware or are impacted more considerably by climate change and food insecurity than other Métis genders. This also applies to the Elders and Knowledge Carriers that took part in the survey. Do they, too, feel the impact more significantly than other age groups? More exploration is needed in these areas.



Out of 282 participants, only 109 answers were recorded for the question identifying what traditional foods were consumed by participants in the last year. Some of the 172 participants who opted not to answer (about 61% of total participants), were those that had selected they had not consumed traditional foods in the past year. Curiously, it would help to understand the traditional food knowledge of Métis in B.C. For instance, do Métis have difficulty identifying cultural foods? If this is the case, an educational resource guide on Métis traditional foods is needed.

NEXT STEPS



PAST & CURRENT INITIATIVES

Food systems will continue to be affected by climate change and other emergencies. A robust response is needed to address these concerns.

MNBC and Métis community members recognize food security as a priority for Métis health and wellbeing. As such, the creation, promotion, and continuation of programs that address climate concerns and food insecurity is vital. MNBC's Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources has seen success in programs such as the MNBC Home Garden Project and the MNBC Harvester Relief Program. Both projects were funded by federal sources.

Seeing an emergency need to support Métis citizens with food security during the Covid-19 pandemic, the MNBC Home Garden Project was launched in 2021. In the first year, the pilot program supported 100 Métis households in B.C., of which 82% of participants felt their garden contributed to food security in their household. The program provides a gardening manual, seed kits, and a small grant to purchase soil and gardening tools¹. This program also provides the benefits of access to nutritional foods, saving on food costs for fresh produce, connection to culture, mental health improvement, etc. About 36% of survey respondents said they participated in this program in 2022, with an additional 32% of participants who said they didn't participate but would like to in the future. In 2022, the program supported 150 Métis households, and in 2023 the program is supporting 300 households. The program is now also including a pilot project to support our declining pollinator population. Fifty (50) Métis households were provided with mason bees and supplies to help with the pollination of food gardens and flowering plants.

The MNBC Harvester Relief Program supported over 250 Métis land users who were unable to harvest or access land during Covid-19 restrictions.

² The official announcement can be found online here: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023AF0016-000277>



Through this program, harvesters were able to access a small grant to either assist in the purchasing of harvesting supplies or food. Some of the items the funding was used toward included butchering of wild game, fishing gear, ammunition, freezer costs, etc.

There is a need for these programs to continue and support Métis in B.C. As such, MNBC will work together with the B.C. and federal government to **secure long-term sustainable funding**. On March 7, 2023, the B.C. government announced \$200 million in funding for food security to help British Columbians access more affordable, local food². Under the direction of the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the province plans to direct some of these funds to Indigenous communities to improve local food security, with a specific focus on rural and remote communities. The B.C. Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction is also charged with helping Indigenous communities with food distribution and access.

LOOKING FORWARD

In addition to the historic funding by the B.C. government, MNBC plans to work with government partners and organizations to combat food insecurity, climate change, and emergencies. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources recommends that the following next steps be considered at MNBC as part of the work on food security for Métis people in BC.

MNBC Strategic Planning on Food Security

- Ensure Food Security/sovereignty is a priority at MNBC and create ways to support its development within the Nation (e.g., creation of a dedicated ministry, adding the priority to an existing ministry, etc.)
- Define “food insecurity”, “food security”, and “food sovereignty” at MNBC to ensure an equal understanding of the language across all levels at MNBC.
- Determine MNBC’s overarching priorities and goals on food security as part of the organization’s strategic plan.
- List all current food security initiatives across all MNBC ministries and align with overarching goals and priorities.
- Develop internal capacity-building within MNBC to support the food security/sovereignty needs of Métis in B.C.
- Develop region-specific programs that support food sustainability in local economies, especially in Métis communities experiencing “food deserts” and those in rural and remote areas.

² The official announcement can be found online here: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023AF0016-000277>



Priorities for Ministry of Environmental Protection & Natural Resources

Food security for this Ministry encompasses many Métis traditional harvesting skills and knowledge: hunting, fishing, gathering, trapping and gardening. These skills are at the core of the following ministerial recommendations.

- Set goals for food security under the Ministry of Environmental Protection & Natural Resources:
 - Strengthen Métis people's access to traditional skills and knowledge.
 - Create opportunities to access cultural and traditional foods.
 - Develop skills towards self-sufficiency and reduce reliance on modern food distribution systems.
 - Provide support for Chartered Communities efforts in food security.
 - Support work at the core of environmental protection such as climate change and species at risk mitigation.
 - Explore sustainable food access options, and preserving the Métis way of life, by working towards negotiating various harvesting accommodation agreements.
- Review current and upcoming ministerial projects on food security and determine if their format aligns with MNBC's and the Ministry's goals and strategies.
- As part of emergency preparedness, develop short- and long-term strategies to address food shortages and emergency situations in Métis communities.
 - Prioritize cultural connection and community values in food and emergency preparedness strategies (i.e., food-sharing practices, kinship networks, etc.).
 - Work with Métis Chartered Communities to distinguish the distinct needs of local Métis and work in tandem with communities to create robust, sustainable food and emergency programming.

Prioritizing food security for Métis in B.C. will have lasting effects in areas of environmental protection, emergency preparedness, cultural connection, mental health, and more. By accomplishing these next steps, Métis in B.C. will feel secure in their local food systems and prepared for emergencies.

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