

# Our Food Security Today and Tomorrow in Carcross/Tagish First Nation

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*Part of the Yukon Food System Design and Planning Project*

*Prepared by the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems at Kwantlen Polytechnic  
University in Partnership with the Arctic Institute of Community Based Research  
and Carcross/Tagish First Nation*

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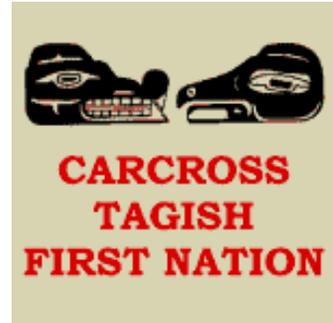


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Institute for Sustainable Food Systems



Arctic Institute of  
Community-Based Research  
*For Northern Health and Well-Being*



Yukon  
Agricultural  
Association



## **The Institute for Sustainable Food Systems**

The Institute for Sustainable Food Systems at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (ISFS) is based on Kwantlen's Richmond campus and operates in conjunction with the Sustainable Agriculture program. The Institute's applied research, extension, and outreach programming focuses on regional-scale, human intensive, ecologically sound food systems as foundational to sustainable community. Our past and current work falls under two categories: MESA projects and Bio-Region Food Systems projects.

Through our MESA ("Municipally Enabled Sustainable Agriculture") projects, we work with municipalities in south-west BC to investigate the direct economic, environmental, and social benefits that could result if municipalities supported small scale agriculture in their communities through policy (such as bylaws allowing urban farming and farm gate sales) and programs (such as education programs and demonstrations). Our work has demonstrated significant potential for increased food security, a reduction of farmland loss to urban sprawl, job creation, and wealth generation.

In our Bio-Region Food Systems projects, we are working to evaluate the potential for a food system sector organized and operating at the eco-region scale and comprised of low input, human intensive, and ecologically sound supply chain components. This eco-regional scale food sector complements the current food system, to improve food self-reliance, minimize environmental impact, improve economic viability of farms and ancillary businesses, contribute to the local economy, create opportunity for the development of small and medium sized businesses and strengthen communities.

More information about ISFS is available at [www.kpu.ca/isfs](http://www.kpu.ca/isfs).

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**This report was reviewed and approved by Carcross/Tagish First  
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# The Yukon Food System Design and Planning Project

## Background and Project Objectives

In September 2012, the Yukon Agricultural Association partnered with the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems to undertake the *Yukon Food System Design and Planning Project*. This was intended to be a multi-year, community-based project to design and plan for a Yukon food system. Through this project we hoped to determine how the Yukon could:

- Increase food security and self-sufficiency through local agriculture and harvesting of traditional foods,
- Enhance the local agri-food economy and create jobs in this sector, and
- Position itself to build capacity for community health and environmental stewardship through the enhancement of Traditional food systems and local agriculture.

To do so, we needed to engage with Yukoners across the Territory, connect them with the project's objectives, and make sure that project findings and recommendations were reflective of Yukoners' perspectives. Before funding to complete the project was lost in March, 2014, we were able to begin engagement projects with Carcross/Tagish First Nation, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Yukon farmers, and residents of Carcross, Tagish, Dawson, and Whitehorse. This report presents results of preliminary research conducted in partnership with Carcross/Tagish First Nation to find out:

- What the CTFN food system looks like currently. Where do people get their food and what are the barriers they face in doing so?
- What concerns do CTFN citizens have about the future of their food system?
- What does CTFN want to see in their food secure future and what needs to happen to get there?

At the time that this report was drafted, engagement activities remaining to be done include conducting additional interviews to build on what is missing, transcribing and analyzing those interviews, verifying preliminary results with CTFN Executive Council, holding a community dinner to verify results with CTFN citizens and others living in the community. After this draft report is verified, all data (interview recordings and transcriptions, and photos) will be returned to CTFN along with the final report. If further funding is secured to continue the Yukon Food System Design project, further interviews will be conducted with CTFN to finalize the engagement project.

More information about the Yukon Food System Design project and additional project reports are available at [www.yukonfoodsystem.com](http://www.yukonfoodsystem.com).

## The Project Team

This project was carried out by the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems in partnership with Carcross/Tagish First Nation and the Arctic Institute for Community-Based Research (AICBR).

The Institute for Sustainable Food Systems (ISFS) is a research group based in Richmond, British Columbia at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. ISFS's focus is on regional food systems and low input, sustainable agriculture. AICBR is a Whitehorse-based, Yukon non-profit organization dedicated to

facilitating and promoting community-based, Northern-led health research activities aimed at improving the health of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Northerners.

The project team members from ISFS, AICBR, and CTFN included:

- Kent Mullinix – Principal Investigator, *Institute for Sustainable Food Systems*
- Norma Kassi – Community Engagement Lead, *Arctic Institute of Community Based Research*
- Caitlin Dorward – Community Engagement Assistant and Project Researcher, *Institute for Sustainable Food Systems*
- Caitriona Feeney – Community Engagement Assistant and Project Researcher, *Institute for Sustainable Food Systems*
- Caroline Chiu – Project Researcher, *Institute for Sustainable Food Systems*
- Rebecca Kilford – Project Researcher, *Institute for Sustainable Food Systems*
- Michelle Parsons – *Carcross/Tagish First Nation Executive Director and Liaison to Project Team*

## Our Research Process

The Institute for Sustainable Food Systems first contacted Carcross/Tagish First Nation Chief Danny Cresswell in January/February 2013 through a letter informing him about the project and requesting a time to meet to discuss further. In May 2013 the Project Team met with Chief and Executive Council of CTFN to give them further information about the project and invite their participation. This included a presentation and round table discussion.

## Research Agreement

In June 2013 the Carcross/Tagish First Nation (CTFN) signed a Collaborative Research Agreement with the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (ISFS). This Research Agreement is an important document that authorized ISFS and AICBR to come into the community to conduct interviews and focus groups. The agreement outlines the protocols for conducting this research and around the ownership of any data that comes out of the research. The agreement ensures that the First Nation principles of OCAP™ (Ownership, Control, Access and Possession<sup>1</sup>) are upheld, in addition to any other individual First Nation protocols; that the participating community fully understands the scope and methodology of the project; and that the roles and responsibilities of the researcher and the community have been clearly outlined and agreed upon.

## Interviews and Focus Groups

We held two focus groups in Carcross and conducted 17 interviews with CTFN citizens between July 2013 and February 2014. These focus groups and interviews were organized by the Project Team in collaboration with CTFN staff, who helped to identify participants. Community members who participated, signed research consent forms allowing information they provided to be included in this report and other reports for the project. We recorded the interviews and focus groups using a digital audio recorder so that we could easily analyze the data later on.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about OCAP™ see <http://fnigc.ca/ocap.html>

The questions we asked and topics we discussed included:

- *Where do you usually shop for your groceries right now? Do you usually get your groceries here in Carcross or do you leave to shop in Whitehorse or elsewhere? How come?*
- *What about other types of food, like Traditional foods, food from local farms, or foods you grow for yourself. Are these an important part of your diet?*
- *Do you eat the same types of foods all year round or does your diet change with the seasons? Do you get your groceries at different places in the winter than you do in the summer? If so, how come?*
- *Have any of you ever experienced a time when it was difficult to get food here in your community? What made it hard to get the food you wanted? If you've never been in that situation yourself, maybe you've heard stories about times in the past when it was difficult to get food?*
- *So far we've been talking about the types of foods you eat right now, like grocery store food, Traditional foods, food you grow for yourself, and food from local farmers. Are you satisfied with the food that is available to you right now in your community through these sources? What would you like to be different about it in the future?*

## Report Writing and Verification

When interviews were completed in February 2014, the recordings of the interviews and focus groups were transcribed and the results reviewed to find common themes in the responses to our questions. A report was drafted for review by CTFN Chief and Council.

CTFN Chief Council approved publication of this final version of the report at their meeting on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014.



***A focus group held at the CTFN culture camp***

## What We Heard from CTFN Citizens

### Getting Food Today

#### Traditional Ways: Hunting, Fishing, and Gathering

Obtaining food from the land and water through hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering is traditional for CTFN. Many people interviewed described these as still being the preferred ways for themselves and their families to get meat, fish, berries, and other foods. Common animals that people hunt and trap include sheep, porcupine, groundhogs, bison, and moose. The decline in caribou population within CTFN Territory means that most people only get caribou when friends or family send it to them from Alaska, NWT, or other areas in the Yukon. Although salmon is an important source of food for CTFN, it is rarely caught within CTFN Territory anymore.

*“We eat all the foods from the land and the water. We hardly ever buy beef or chicken. We mostly eat moose and caribou and if we catch our own fish and live off — and bison.”*

*“My grandma brings caribou down all the time and my mom will cut it up and dry it out, bag it up — that’s a favourite.”*

*“People do go out and harvest every year; it’s pretty active for that — people setting a net. Moose for sure is probably the biggest meat that we get. But also my partner and my dad went up and got bison.”*

*“It’s a lot of work to try and figure out what’s happening there and to keep it sustainable because the moose populations are going down; the caribou population — we haven’t hunted caribou in 15 years.”*

Some people described ways that they preserve traditional foods from the land so that they can be eaten year-round. They talked about freezing, drying, smoking, and canning.

*“She dried soapberries like that. It takes about four days or so to dry it and that’s how they preserve it and then she take about a half-cupful and soak it overnight and then the next day she would whip it up.”*

CTFN Elders and others described important ceremonies that go along with the use of traditional foods. We heard from many people that sharing and trading of traditional foods has been an important practice throughout their history but now does not happen as frequently. Many people explained that they share



***A CTFN Elder shares her smoked salmon with Norma***

food among close family and friends but we did not hear as many stories about sharing or trading food with the wider community or other First Nations.

*“There are gatherings as well. I mean, the berries and stuff — you trade and get the meat and from that. Trade becomes a big part.”*

*“Actually I did some trading already with the different veggies — like I said, the ones that I don’t grow or something. I had some really good tomatoes this year — you know, single slice for a burger and that’s all you need — one slice — nice big tomatoes — juicy, red. I traded those.”*

## Non-Traditional Ways: Purchasing and Growing Food

### Grocery Stores and Restaurants



**One of the newly developed restaurants in downtown Carcross**

CTFN citizens rely on grocery stores in Whitehorse to get fresh fruits and vegetables, bread, milk, canned and dry goods, and other foods. Most people make the trip to Whitehorse to buy the majority of their groceries at the bigger stores there (Loblaws, Extra Foods, Super-A, and others). The drive into Whitehorse isn’t seen as too much of a burden because most people need to go to Whitehorse for other errands or appointments on a semi-regular basis anyway. While in Whitehorse, some people also shop at the Fireweed Market in the summer months, or the newly developing Potluck Food Co-op.

*“And the farmer’s market in town on Thursdays. That’s a good one when you can get the stuff.”*

*“There’s actually a food co-op now that has started as well. You can join in that and they’ll send you a little basket at the end — during the harvest season.”*

We also heard about some of the new cafes and restaurants that have opened in Carcross, however some interviewees felt that these businesses are catering more to tourists than the local residents.

### ***Gardening and the CTFN Community Garden***

Some members of the community are becoming more interested in growing their own food in home gardens. We heard that homegrown food tastes better than what can be bought at the store, and that gardening can be a healthy and fun activity for people of all ages.

*“My little girl loves gardening so that’s an easy one. I mean, she loves camping too, so incorporate it into the family. Make it a fun time instead of just work. It’s not just work.”*

*“When you’re talking about gardening, a lot of people had gardens. Some young people are starting to pick that up now... Some people don’t even know until they taste the stuff that is coming out of the garden this year — they never knew it tasted so good.”*

*“We’ve got a bit of agricultural land in Tagish. You know, there are people growing gardens, getting together and having the market thing going on and that’s a wonderful thing.”*



***The CTFN Community Garden***

The recently re-established CTFN community garden is another place people are getting their fresh veggies in the summer growing season. The community is excited that the garden has been brought back to the community, impressed by how much food can be grown in such a small area, and invested in its future success. Some people would like to see it expand to include plots for families in the future. In the meantime, they appreciate that it has made fresh healthy produce more available to everyone in the community, including lower-income community members, single parents, Elders, and others who might otherwise have a hard time getting this kind of food.

*“They just started the community garden again through the CTFN programming. I bought a nice yellow zucchini there the other day.”*

*“There’s another staff member at CTFN [who] works with Elders a lot so she takes stuff around to the community and helps me distribute. We’ve also been having a stand every Friday for the last few weeks anyway to sell some vegetables to anyone who wants to come and buy some.”*

*“We’ve probably harvested about 100 pounds of zucchini out of this one greenhouse alone and there is still more coming so it has been really productive — the zucchini especially and cucumbers.”*

The support of the CTFN government and the Yukon Government Agriculture Branch greatly helped the community garden get established. Despite some challenges with vandalism and the somewhat “out of the way” location of the garden, people are excited about the potential for the garden to expand in the future. Many people said their favourite garden crops were the root crops, including turnips, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, beets, and onions.

People described how important they believe it is to have locally-grown food available to the community, both because they see it as tastier and healthier than food that is shipped in from outside or purchased at a grocery store and because they believe that relying on food from out-of-territory with limited transportation routes coming into the North creates a fragile food system. The community is looking for ways to be more self-sufficient. Local restaurants are purchasing fresh vegetables in season, and there are other potential economic development opportunities.

*“The freshness and the organic value. It just tastes so much different — a tomato off the vine — off the plant versus the tomato in the stores is just like water to juice or something.”*

*“But I’m just also really interested in feeding people locally because we all know how we rely on that highway especially to get our food here and that’s not a good plan I don’t think; that doesn’t make sense for us in the long-term. It uses a lot of fossil fuels. Food has hardly any nutrition in it by the time it gets here because it has been harvested weeks and weeks or months beforehand and it is full of chemical fertilizers and all kinds of different pesticides and herbicides.”*

*“Why do I grow my own food? Well, I guess I got a little girl to think of now*



**A poster for the CTFN Community Garden on the CTFN Building bulletin board**

*and you start to look at the ingredients in a lot of the products out there. Like the other day, I looked at the Vitamin Water that they sell at the store and it's got silicone in it and I was just like — silicone — I decided I'm not drinking this anymore."*

*"Transportation all the way from Mexico to here — tomatoes from there — California; all the way from Australia, wherever; all over the world... When it gets to our plate, it's not even good."*

## Barriers to Food Security

### Loss of Culture and Traditional Knowledge

Many people shared stories of the ceremonies surrounding food that were practiced when they were young, and the deep knowledge that CTFN people had back then about how to live off of the land. They described that much of this has not been practiced for some time, however the knowledge is there to be revitalized. They regard the loss of knowledge as a major barrier to ensuring that everyone in the community has enough healthy food to eat.

There are many complex reasons for this loss of some culture and traditional knowledge. The long lasting impact of Residential Schools was described as having disconnected family members from each other, disconnected individuals from their culture, and prevented Elders from teaching important lessons to the youth. Many people also explained that with the current generation growing up in a more westernized world, many children and youth of today are not very engaged with the traditional ways of hunting and fishing. As well, there are issues about access to land relative to climate change impacts, in addition to the high costs of gas, hunting and fishing equipment. Getting food from the grocery store is so easy that young people don't want to spend the time and energy to go out and hunt, harvest and prepare traditional foods. There is need to further explore ancient methods of sharing to revitalize some of the cultural practices and to ensure food security in the long-term.

*"My father was a great hunter so we had meat and fish and everything all the time. Even in the wintertime, they used to set net under the ice and I don't think the kids know how to do that anymore. We should teach them how to do it."*

*"At that time they would share with one another and all First Nations talked about it. Somehow over the years, that kind of diminished to a point now."*

*"One of the customs that people in the community have gotten away from is the sharing."*



**Smokehouse at the CTFN Culture Camp**

Traditional knowledge and culture is being lost due to environmental changes and land degradation that has resulted in depleted populations of game animals in CTFN Territory. Some citizens explained that due to the depleting number of animals, the community has had to hold back on hunting to facilitate their recovery. As a result, many cultural practices related to hunting are not taking place and the knowledge about them is not being passed on. Some ceremonies, the knowledge around how to respectfully harvest an animal, to take only what you need, and the knowledge of how to prepare and preserve various parts of the animal for food are not be practiced. An example of this is how CTFN Elders feel that catch and release of fish is disrespectful and wasteful.

*“Ceremony was always a part of our — we had ceremony for the moose; ceremony for the geese; ceremony for the swan; ceremony for the sun; ceremony — we did — we did that.”*

*“Building the knowledge about how to properly harvest the moose because a lot of people that have moose and they won’t eat the guts now.”*

*“Don’t play with them. They have a right to live too. But if you catch them, be grateful, but don’t play with them.” So what do we do now? Barbless hook — we’re only playing with them. What happened to our law? How come now everybody is out here in their boats all over the place playing with our fish — playing with them? They’re not eating it.”*

We also heard that communication among Elders and between Elders and youth, which used to be how knowledge was passed down, has diminished today. For example it used to be common practice for Elders to live together for a week annually to discuss the “good and bad from the different places, how good the moose is in some areas, where it’s bad in some areas”. They talked about which areas to hunt and which to allow for recovery.

*“A long time ago, it’s one of our customs that the aunts and uncles and grandpas and grandmas would be the teachers. Over the years, I guess a lot of our — children then have grown up now and have families of their own and somehow they have lost all this; they don’t participate any more. But there are a few of us who still understand how those teachings take place.”*

### **Contamination of Traditional Foods**

Although consuming food from the land and water has always been the way of life, some people expressed concern that industrial development has affected the safety of some traditional foods. Many people that we interviewed voiced their concerns for the safety of fish in their lakes. With the development of mining camps, they believe that lakes around the area have been contaminated.

*“The one mine — there was sediment that was coming from the mine and it was running right to the lake. Not everybody knew about that, but the people in Carcross knew about it and tried to report it to the mining industry and nothing was done. Of course, a lot of the fish became — well, sick, I guess — they had ulcers; they had sores. There was a time when we couldn’t even eat the whitefish from that lake system.”*

We also heard that wild berries and medicinal plants are getting diseases because of mining. People described the cycle in the food chain that this creates and their concerns about the berries that are consumed by animals, which are then consumed by people.

### **Environmental Problems**

We heard that the development of mines and dams in the area and upstream from CTFN Territory has affected the water levels in CTFN lakes and rivers. People believe that this has deterred salmon from coming back to their Territory to spawn, and see this as one of the reasons for the decline in salmon coming through the M'Clintock. The return of salmon each year used to be reliable but is no longer.



***The return of salmon each year used to be reliable but is no longer***

*“People on that side would hear it and come over and get there with their boats and different things so they can get them for salmon fishing and those things. What the Elders told us — that salmon — they need certain depth of water and all fish are the same, he said; they need certain depth of water for spawning beds to utilize it. But if you lift it up too high and keep it up too high, it doesn’t go back there anymore because the water is too deep. So those are some of the things and we see over the years how the salmon are hardly coming through M’Clintock anymore because all of that is happening there with the dam.”*

The decline in the number of game animals due to human activities and environmental changes is a big concern for CTFN.

*“A long time ago, we used to know by the different time of year whether the moose is going to be over here — this is where the moose are at this time of year or where the fish are going to be running here. We can’t predict that anymore.”*

*“The way our animals are going, it’s slowly going downhill. Myself, I haven’t hunt moose for five years.”*

### **Concerns over the availability of traditional foods**

As a part of their long-term food security strategy, CTFN has always monitored wildlife populations. Interviewees reported concern over rapid depletion of traditional food sources. They said it is very important now to teach children about monitoring the wildlife populations. Some participants said that when there aren’t enough fish and meat, their alternative is fried chicken and hamburgers; these are not the foods they want to feed their children.

*“That’s what we’re teaching them now with our monitoring because we’re telling them, ‘Never, never let these things happen; you have to protect right now.’ A lot of them know that; they*

*know the water and they know what used to exist here. When you look at the global thing, I always tell them to look at the global First Nations' economy — fish, moose — the whole bit. You make sure that all those are healthy all the time.”*

*“I talk a lot about that we don't have animals that we used to — in numbers anyway. We haven't hunt caribou since 1993.”*

### **Cost of Food**

The cost of food, especially fresh fruit and vegetables and anything grown locally, was also mentioned as a concern and barrier to healthy eating. We heard that many people in the community cannot afford to shop at farmers markets, or don't see why they should pay more for food there when they can get it at the grocery store for much cheaper.

*“But you know, they said it's good for the Yukon, but for the ordinary people — ordinary people can't afford the farmer's market stuff because it's priced right out of existence, eh, almost? You almost have to go to Super A.”*

## **Moving Forward: Taking Action toward a Food Secure Future**

### **Pass on Traditional Knowledge to Youth**

Throughout all the interviews and focus groups we conducted as part of this project, one theme was brought up most often by the participants: they value their traditional food system and want knowledge of that system to be passed on to younger generations. Interviewees explained that knowledge has been the foundation of the culture; that verbal communication has always been the way to spread knowledge; and it is the responsibility of Elders and adults to do so.

*“Don't ever die with this knowledge to yourself; you have to pass it on and be responsible as to who you pass it on to. Those are important.”*

Organizing culture camps for children and young adults to attend over the summer is essential in passing on knowledge. These camps are intended to bring youth out on the land to let them learn to be and feel united with the earth. Youth learn everything from hunting on the lands and fishing on the waters, to harvesting and preparing food. In keeping with traditional values, children are taught that in addition to feeding their own family,



***Learning together at the CTFN Culture Camp***

the young and able also have the responsibility of feeding others in the community who are in need. CTFN is trying to incorporate traditional teachings into the local school curriculum. As a response to future uncertainty about availability of traditional foods, interviewees expressed a desire to include gardening programs in schools.

*“Now we’re looking at teaching them how to be hunters for the Elders...that’s the only way we can utilize that with what we have here now.”*

*“I feel is very important to pass that knowledge on to the young people. I think the way we’re set up for it — even through the Umbrella Final Agreement — all these tools that are in there to conserve wildlife — they should be tools built into those things where the education process extends from it. Like with the youth and different things — we’re looking at now — I sit on the renewable resource council. We’re looking at going into the schools up here and teaching them how to conserve wildlife; how to conserve what you have around you — the trees and all those types of things for future needs.”*

Interviewees reported different reasons why it is difficult to pass on traditional knowledge. Presently, CTFN is looking at better ways to pass on traditional knowledge; to engage the youth and to build their interest in learning about traditional foods, hunting, harvesting and preparation. CTFN is also exploring ways that Elders and parents, who have specific traditional knowledge, will be able to share their knowledge and commit time with youth through culture camps.

### **Revitalize Traditional Customs and Skills for Long-Term Food Security**

This section talks about the revitalization of customs and skills that the participants need to ensure that CTFN will have enough healthy food in the future. It is essential that food preparation and preservation techniques are brought back and taught to the younger generations. With a changing climate, traditional techniques such as fish cutting/filleting, animal harvesting, drying meat, and canning, are different. The art of these cultural techniques are being adapted to seasonal changes and need to continue to be passed on.

*“It’s really important on how you smoke it. They have to be taught that too really good.”*

People suggested that ceremonies and celebratory events such as community feasts and get-togethers need to be reinstated and happen more frequently, as these events connect community members to each other and to their shared culture. This is all part of the sharing culture.



***Smoking fish at the CTFN Culture Camp***

*“Just get everybody to come and help cook; preserve it and then they each of them take some home.”*

Lastly, the ancient methods of making tools and equipment such as canoes and fishnets need to be passed on to children and youth.

### **Grow More Food Locally in Farms and Gardens**

The June 2012 washout of the Alaska Highway was an eye-opening event. Because of it, many people in the community now see how vulnerable their food supply is as most of it comes from “outside”.

*“Take a look at what happened last year ... it washed out. It didn’t take too long before you had nothing in the storage. What’s going to happen if something more devastating than that happens? This is where we need to go, where we’re more self-sufficient, rather than depending everything on Loblaws and stuff like that. So I think it’s very important that we start to look at developing ourselves to a point where we can be more self-sufficient than depending on everything else.”*

*“That wash-out just really opened a lot of eyes, I think — when the roads — all three main veins into the Yukon got washed out and then all of a sudden everybody panicked and within the three days that it was shut down, Superstore managed to empty their shelves and they had to start flying food in. It’s a real eye-opener for sure.”*



**Newspaper headlines and empty grocery shelves during the June 2012 washout of the Alaska Highway**

As a result, many CTFN members see a need for the First Nation to take back control over their food supply. They want to see more food produced locally, and more community members engaged in farming and gardening. With the decrease in wildlife populations, some see livestock production as being an important part of CTFN's future, in addition to growing vegetables. Trading and bartering has been a major part of their culture in the past and the discussions of sharing among Yukon First Nations was brought up by several citizens.

*"Gardening, for one thing. Do our own gardening. I was telling — CTFN is looking at it now. Find a good place where there's soil — a lot of big patches of it — and maybe clear it out and develop little family gardening plots, you know? Maybe five or six plots for first year and each of the families could come in and look after their own gardens, eh, and those things. Things like that would really, really help."*

*"I think everybody should have a garden in their backyard; maybe in the greenhouse. Have a system of composting and recycling — being more aware of how to do that so that it becomes common knowledge; that's for the vegetables."*

*"You know, if they have a big enough garden, for instance, they could even trade some of those vegetables with Vuntut Gwitchin, for instance, for caribou meat in the fall, because they're trying to preserve their caribou and trying to multiply it. Of course, everybody is hungry for caribou out there and they can't kill any caribou for themselves so they have to make a trade somehow for caribou meat and that would be a great way to do it."*

We also heard people say they want to ensure that any food production does not harm the environment.

We heard about the importance of involving all members of the community, including youth and Elders, in gardening or farming projects. One participant shared that he had an idea called "moveable harvest" where people have planters on wheels, so it's easy to transport. They will begin seeding in a communal greenhouse, and then once the plant is ready to be outside, the planter can be wheeled to either their house or the outdoors. Some felt that farming and gardening could encourage economic development for the community as it could provide jobs and because some local restaurants are already very supportive of local growers.

*"We talk about gardening... We talk about food sustainability a lot. He talked to me about that. Kevin was saying if Elders want plant in dirt, each one of them — we'll haul them the plant dirt; it won't cost them nothing. He said we would do this like we used to as a community project. He said we'll have a picnic while we're doing it and have fun while we're doing it. And getting together and talking about things."*

*"I think you would have to pay people to work there because people can't work for nothing. They have bills to pay."*

*“You know, in a bigger community like Carcross, they can actually put those people to work and give them jobs to help with the garden and to help send them out fishing and trapping or hunting.”*



***Eggplants flourishing in the greenhouse at the CTFN  
Community Garden***

As described in earlier sections, we heard from many participants that they were excited about the newly re-established CTFN community garden and are hopeful that the community gardening programming will continue and expand in the future.

*“People are really interested in [the CTFN Community Garden] and they love the garden and they come up to look at it and are excited about it. A lot of Elders are really excited to have, like, turnips — big, huge, fresh turnips and things that are their favourites.”*

We also heard that the location was a concern for some. People mentioned that the community garden has been vandalized and that equipment has been stolen. To prevent vandalism some suggested that young people could be hired as security guards. This would provide them with employment and might inspire them to get involved in gardening as well.

### **Build Community Infrastructure for Food Storage and Preservation**

A lack of infrastructure is a barrier to having reliable access to healthy food in the community. People would like to have access to shared facilities such as storage, root cellars and a communal kitchen. With these in place, food that is grown or harvested by the community could be processed, preserved and stored for consumption throughout the year.

*“I think we were talking about doing a big root cellar so we can put our vegetables in — not only just the vegetables, but stuff that we jar. Canned — like the fruit and vegetables, berries and stuff like that.”*

*“Root crops and get the pantries going. The garden really takes off and they could bury a 40-foot C-can in the dirt and fill it up for the winter and keep it coming; that would be great. I mean that would be a larger scale than what they have now, but to keep the whole community going anyway.”*

*“We had talked about having a big building that would be totally hygienic so that you could wash everything... There would be like a huge big kitchen to either can or preserve or whatever it*

*is you can do with it. Then there would be another spot that was added on... walk-in freezers and there would be somebody in charge of it..."*

### **Develop Supportive Policy and Regulations**

Although there is a lot that CTFN citizens and the CTFN government can take action on themselves, we heard about important policy and regulatory actions that the Yukon and Federal Governments could also be taking.

CTFN citizens are concerned about how easy it is for non-CTFN members to access their Traditional Territory and the land on which they hunt, fish, and harvest food and medicinal plants. Despite the declining animal populations, hunters are still able to come from the outside. Some of the outside hunters are trophy hunters who do not hunt for sustenance purposes. As with recreational fishing, it is affecting game availability for CTFN. CTFN have expressed their concern regarding this issue as they feel that their right to access healthy, traditional and nutritious food is being limited. They also think that the ease with which non-First Nations access the land for hunting undermines First Nations ability to determine what kind of foods and food system they have. CTFN members want to see better limitations placed on the access to local resources and wildlife by non-CTFN members and to prevent over-development, which they see as negatively impacting the environment. They are very concerned about their declining traditional food sources and would like to be able to enforce traditional methods of conservation.

*"If we're talking about some kind of sustainability from the land and the water, then surely I have to ask the question of why can anybody from anywhere else in the world come here and kill our animals and not be interested at all with what they do with the meat. They come and kill everything, right? The bears, the moose, the caribou, the sheep, the goats — everything — and they're not eating it."*

*"We're having trouble with fishing. We've been trying to deal with fishing for years and years. We shut down the fishing derbies out of Tagish and different things because of that. The whole Southern Lakes is suffering from trophy fish."*

*"Once you put one road in there; next year somebody branches off a year after; pretty soon, you have a whole slew of roads back in the wilderness. This is a problem we're having here. We have access all over the place and all our traditional foods and whatnot that we used to depend on — you can't get it anymore; it's just too much access."*

We also heard concerns about the way Yukon Government monitors wildlife populations; in particular the practice of using helicopters; participants reported that helicopter use can scare away the animals and sometimes cause the adult animals to abandon their young. Some people suggested that a co-management strategy needs to be implemented to ensure better wildlife management in the future.

Some CTFN members stated that in order to protect the wildlife habitats and water sources, they will need to stand firm against mining companies coming in.

CTFN believe that the spirits of animals are in their blood. CTFN make it a law that animals and fish are to be respected and that people are to be grateful for their existence. To see animals being killed for recreational purposes is unacceptable. Participants reported their hopes that Yukon Government will do more to respect and support the preservation of traditional values and put more effort into protecting traditional lands for First Nations.

*“What happened to our law? How come now everybody is out here in their boats all over the place playing with our fish — playing with them? They’re not eating it.”*

*“It’s food and water — that’s right. It’s a tough question... But it’s all significant now and real, but too big for the focus of government or bureaucrats — their focus is much smaller than that. And that’s where I think we need to first take a look at.”*

## **Conclusions and Next Steps**

We heard from CTFN citizens that food holds an important place in CTFN culture and the future of the community. Securing continued access to Traditional food in the future is a fundamental piece of ensuring food security for the community. More and more people are also interested in incorporating food grown in local gardens and farms into their diets and see community farming as being a part of CTFN’s sustainable, food secure future. Next steps forward will be determined in consultation with CTFN Executive Council.

## Appendix I: Interview and Focus Group Script

1. [10 mins] We are doing work in communities across the Yukon to improve food security and make it easier for Yukoners to get the type food they prefer to eat. In the focus group today we'd first like to talk about what kind of food you are eating now, and how or where you get it, and then later on we'll talk about what you'd prefer to be eating and what would need to change in your community in order for you to get that kind of food.

**To start us off, let's talk about where you usually shop for your groceries right now. Do you usually get your groceries here in your community or do you leave to shop in Whitehorse or elsewhere? How come?**

*Prompts: availability, selection, quantity or quality...*

2. [30 mins] **What about other types of food, like Traditional foods, food from local farms, or foods you grow for yourself. Are these an important part of your diet?**

*Follow up Q's on Traditional Food*

- a. Where do you usually hunt, fish, or gather?
- b. How much of yours and your family's diet is made up of Traditional foods that have been hunted, gathered, or fished?
- c. Do you ever trade Traditional foods with other people in or outside of your community?
- d. Do you have any concern about consuming Traditional foods such as moose or caribou?

*Follow up Q's on gardening*

- e. What about gardening - do you grow any of your own food? How come? *Prompts: cost/savings, have time/no time, fun, healthy, space availability*
- f. How much of yours and your family's diet is made up of food that you grow for yourself?

*Follow up Q's on local farms*

- g. Do you ever get any food like veggies, meat, or eggs from local farms around your community? How come? *Prompts: Prompts: quality, know how it's produced, price, convenience, health considerations, sustainability considerations*
- h. How important is it to you that this local food is available?
- i. Where do you get it? *Prompts: farmers market, CSA, grocery store, farm gate*
- j. Do you care about what kind of farming practices these farmers use, for example whether or not they are organic farmers?
- k. Is there any other place that it's common to get food from in your community that we haven't talked about?

3. **Do you eat the same types of foods all year round or does your diet change with the seasons? Do you get your groceries at different places in the winter than you do in the summer? If so, how come?**
  
4. [20 mins] **Have any of you ever experienced a time when it was difficult to get food here in your community? What made it hard to get the food you wanted? If you've never been in that situation yourself, maybe you've heard stories about times in the past when it was difficult to get food?** *Prompts: Limited selection at the store, didn't have access to the equipment I needed to gather Traditional food, declining availability of Traditional foods, highway was closed...*  
*Follow up Q's*
  - a. Have you heard of any customs that people used in the past to ensure that everyone had enough to eat? *Prompts: sharing, trading, teaching the next generation*
  - b. Can you think of any (other) customs that we could use to ensure everyone has enough to eat today or in the future?
  - c. Do you have any ideas about how we can ensure these customs are in place or continue into the future?
  
5. [30-40 mins] **So far we've been talking about the types of foods you eat right now, like grocery store food, Traditional foods, food you grow for yourself, and food from local farmers. Are you satisfied with the food that is available to you right now in your community through these sources?**

*Follow up Q's*

- a. [groceries] You said earlier that you usually leave the community to get your groceries. Would you prefer to shop here in your own community?  
 Can you describe a grocery store that you would like to shop at in your community?  
*Prompts: better selection, more variety, fresher produce, healthier foods...*  
*OR* You said earlier that you do most of your grocery shopping here in the community. Are you getting the type of food you need here?  
 IF NO - Can you describe a grocery store that you would like to shop at in your community?
- b. [Traditional foods] You told me earlier that Traditional foods are very important to you. Is there any way for people in need, like single parents with children, to get Traditional foods in your community?  
 Is there anything that would allow you to get more Traditional foods for you or your family?  
 Are you concerned about there being enough Traditional food to sustain your community in the future?
- c. [Local farms] You said earlier that you try to buy food from local farmers. How important is it to you that this local food is available?

Do you care about what kind of farming practices they are using, for example whether or not they are organic farmers?

*OR* you said earlier that you never buy any food from local farmers. Is that something you wish you could do in the future?

IF YES - What kind of food would you like to buy from them?

Do you care about what kind of farming practices they are using, for example whether or not they are organic farmers?

Do you think anyone living in the community right now would be interested in farming?

Would you like your First Nation to have its own farm and what would it take to make that happen?

*[Gardening]* You said earlier that you grow some of your own food in a garden/community garden. Would you like to grow more of your own food? What would help you be able to grow more of your own food?

*OR* You said earlier that you don't have a garden where you grow any of your own food. Are you interested in gardening? Why or why not? What would help you be able to grow your own food?

- 6. [close] Those are all the questions we wanted to ask you today. Did we miss anything important that you'd like to share with us? Do you have any questions?**