

Our Food Security Today and Tomorrow in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation

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
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation

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Institute for Sustainable Food Systems



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The 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 it 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 the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation (THFN), Carcross/Tagish First Nation (CTFN), Yukon farmers, and residents of Dawson, Tagish, Carcross, , and Whitehorse. This report presents results of preliminary research conducted in partnership with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation to find out:

- What the THFN food system looks like currently. Where do people get their food and what are the barriers they face in doing so?
- What concerns do THFN citizens have about the future of their food system?
- What does THFN 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 THFN Executive Council, holding a community dinner to verify results with THFN 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 THFN along with the final report. If further funding is secured to continue the Yukon Food System Design and Planning project, further interviews will be conducted with THFN to finalize the engagement project.

More information about the Yukon Food System Design and Planning project and additional project reports are available at www.yukonfoodsystem.com.

The Project Team

This project was carried out by the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems in partnership with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in 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 THFN included:

- Kent Mullinix – Principal Investigator, *Institute for Sustainable Food Systems*
- Norma Kassi – Community Engagement Lead, *Arctic Institute of Community Based Research*
- Caitriona Feeney – Community Engagement Assistant and Project Researcher, *Institute for Sustainable Food Systems*
- Caitlin Dorward – 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*
- Lynn Rear – Workshop Coordinator

Our Research Process

The Institute for Sustainable Food Systems first contacted Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation Chief Ed Taylor and Councilor Clara Van Bibber in January 2013. Both agreed this project was very important to their region and wanted to be part of the project. In April 2013, the project team met with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Lands and Resources Department, Health and Social Service Department, and Elders and gave presentations about the project. The Lands and Resources Department recommended that the project take place with the Chief's approval.

Research Agreement

In August 2013, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation signed a Collaborative Research Agreement with the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. This Research Agreement is an important document that authorized ISFS and AICBR staff 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 Possession¹) are upheld, in addition to any other individual First Nation protocol; that the participating community fully understands the scope and methodology of the project; and that the roles and



Presentation and Discussion with THFN Council

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

responsibilities of the researcher and the community have been clearly outlined and agreed upon. A copy of this Research Agreement is included at the back of this report.

Interviews and Focus Groups

We held focus groups and interviews in Dawson with 25 THFN citizens and staff between October 2013 and February 2014. These focus groups and interviews were organized by the Project Team in collaboration with THFN staff, who helped to identify participants. The event consisted of focus groups with THFN government staff and community members; presentation and discussion at the THFN Elders Meeting; Introduction with the THFN First Hunt Committee; and presentation and discussion with Chief and Council. 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.

The questions we asked and topics we discussed included:

- *Where do you usually shop for your groceries? Do you usually get your groceries here in Dawson 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?*
- *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?*



Presentation at Elders Meeting

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 THFN Chief and Council. This final version is published with their approval.

What We Heard from THFN Citizens

Getting Food Today

Traditional Ways: Hunting, Fishing, Gathering and Sharing

Obtaining food from the land and water through hunting, fishing and gathering is traditional for THFN. Many people interviewed said that the staple food of THFN people is from the lands and waters, including traditional foods such as caribou, moose, rabbit, bison, fish and berries. This has been the tradition for the community for generations. However, with changing climate and environmental degradation, the community is becoming more aware of the depletion in the animals that they depend on for sustenance, and are taking precautions by only hunting in moderation and consuming only what the season offers.

“Our staple food was from the land. Whatever is offered to us in the season I should say — like we have those fresh roots in the spring when it’s nice and fresh and juicy and sweet.”

Sharing and trading of food is a common practice for THFN. At community events, not only is food being shared, but the interaction and sharing of stories with each other helps with the community’s spiritual development. We heard that the community invested in developing a traditional land based camp with cabins for people to go to for cultural education, including food harvesting, sharing and healing.



Dried Salmon

Credit: Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in in Heritage

“I think there was [an organization that had] some funding there — their intent was to have a nice big healing place — cultural place for people to go and feel safe. So they did — they have one, two, three — really nice cabins and a cabin for the caretaker and then lately they purchased — they built one, two, three, four, five — at least six little frame places now and then have a cook shack. They have a smoke shack.”

Community events such as the *Meals on Wheels* program is a community luncheon served and or delivered twice a week for elders of available traditional foods. During the winter meals are prepared and served for the community at large where everyone is welcomed, this is to ensure cultural sharing where no one goes hungry in the community. There are other events such as the *Aboriginal Head Start* program and the *Myth and Medium conference* that bring people together. Also, some people mentioned that hunters would share the foods

harvested with the community and it would often first go to Elders and single parents with children, ensuring that people who cannot go out to hunt have access to Traditional food.

“Also we have access to wild game from the game hunters up in Tombstone — [they] will bring the meat here and then share with the Elders. I know that social programs try to make sure that mothers with children and other people had access to it too and the bounty was shared.”

Non-Traditional Ways: Purchasing and Growing Food

Tr'on dek Hwëch'in First Nation citizens are motivated to create a more resilient and sustainable food system in Dawson through increased local agriculture and community gardens. Members of the community are enthusiastically seeking funds to construct more garden plots and are hoping to get garden beds near the homes of Elders. Not only are THFN people encouraging more personal gardens, they have already invested garden plots at the daycare for children to learn about growing their own food. So, along with increasing food self-sufficiency, educating the young and the community is equally as important.

“We received funding and put in about 28, 3x10 raised garden beds in the homes of Elders who requested it and well, the priority was Elders, families with small children and then general population citizens. So you know, 3x10 — that’s 30 feet of garden times 28 so we really upped the capacity I heard. We have the community garden here, which is exciting and along with the greenhouse, but I was hearing people wanted — they like [to garden] in their yard.”

Similar to other communities in Yukon, they believe that they can no longer fully depend on food that is shipped or trucked into the community from elsewhere. The June 2012 Alaska Highway wash-out was a big reality check for the community and having experienced stores running out of food in merely two to three days has motivated the community to take action. Since Dawson is quite a long way from Whitehorse, some people choose to shop at local stores, namely Bonanza and the general store. However, due to the higher cost of food in Dawson, many people will still make the trip to Whitehorse for larger, bulk purchases.

“Stock up dry goods from Whitehorse. So then people here usually buy all their fresh vegetables right here in this town.”

“So I think that, given that there’s global warming and we live in the permafrost zone and everybody is coming to the realization that you know, we have to look into this issue because if the road infrastructure ever gets washed out or sinks into the ground, then we’re not going to be privileged to get our produce off of a truck or a grocery store anymore.”

Some conveyed that they already do a lot of freezing and canning of food that can be stored and ready for eating throughout the winter. Most importantly, we heard interviewees say that the taste of local food is incomparably superior and it makes the community feel good that their people are eating local and healthily.

“Like most of the gatherings we do — no offense to what’s on the table there — but weddings, funerals — the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in gatherings — that should all be good food on the table. That should be local food. That’s where we feel good.”

Barriers to Food Security

Loss of Traditional Culture and Knowledge

Similar to the concerns of other First Nation communities, the decline in the population of local animals/salmon is a worrying factor for the THFN. The priority for THFN people now is to ensure that there will be enough traditional food species for future generations. Traditional hunting practices have always been practiced in a way that ensures the conservation of wildlife. We heard that, although hunting has decreased in order to facilitate animal/fish population restoration, it would be difficult for THFN to completely stop harvesting because Traditional food is a staple of their diet. As challenging as it may be, THFN citizens are aware that they have to reduce hunting or fishing for certain species until the population has recovered. We heard that some THFN people have voluntarily stopped hunting caribou (forty mile herd) and/or fishing salmon for this purpose.

“We’re requested to voluntarily not to fish or voluntarily not to hunt if there’s some threat. That’s voluntary. That’s not to say you can’t. Last year we went fishing and we set our net in the evening. The next day we checked it and for that day, we got 35 fish and we had to pull it because it was too many for us”



Presentation at local conference about THFN First Fish Program

“Some of us First Nations, we’re the only ones that were able to harvest so we harvest and even if they ask us to volunteer not to — like I say, it’s part of your life; you have to. Now, we’re growing and we don’t go out there and shoot 10 or 20. We go out there and just one or two maybe.”

Environmental Problems

Many of the citizen interviewed mentioned that the community is still feeling the effects of the rampant mining during the Gold Rush. Even though many of the original mining sites closed down years ago, they were closed with little regard to the environment and the surrounding community needs and some people expressed concern that mining sites have left contamination in the environment. To some, this continues to be a concern regarding the mining activities that are occurring in the area.

“I think mining in general — I mean, we missed the last Gold Rush and just basically had to live with what was left; I mean, dirty sites clean-up, impacts on the environment and wildlife.”

Farming and Gardening in a Northern Climate

Yukon is a sub-arctic region and the growing season is relatively short, so it is difficult for the Territory to be fully food self-sufficient throughout the winter times. Fresh produce from local farms and gardens is plentiful in the summer, but scarce in the winter. We heard that some people of the THFN are researching ways to extend the season through methods such as building greenhouses. Some also expressed that it does not make sense to try to fight their surroundings and respect the effects of working in harmony with nature.

One challenge that we heard from the participants was the lack of time to work on their farm or garden while having off-farm work commitments. Especially in the case of Yukon, the population and employment opportunities are the greatest during the summer months because that is high season for most industries; however, summer is also the time to work on farms and gardens. Although this isn't a direct challenge to producing food, we heard some people say that after a day at work, it is much easier to just eat fast food than harvesting from the garden and cooking a meal. So lack of time is a hindrance to eating a certain way and certain foods for some people. It was suggested that TH citizens in their food security strategies look at farming as local economic initiatives in the near future, where produce are marketed to the local as well as surrounding communities.

“You got a plot of ground, but you need your summer months to work the ground so that you can turn it into gardens ... but unless you're a rich person, you can't — you have to work during the summer here because that's when it's the money-making season because everything opens up and there's actually businesses that need your employment, but that's when you have to be on the land developing.”

Food Costs

The population in Dawson fluctuates quite drastically depending on the season and in the summer months; its population is at its peak due to the resource industry and tourists. Along with a fluctuation in population, THFN citizens also find that food prices in the grocery stores also start to increase in the summer months. This creates competition for food and it makes it very expensive for local consumers. Whitehorse stores carry lower food prices and while some people do prefer to shop there, not everyone can afford to travel the long distance on a regular basis.

“In the summertime, there's lots of mining going on so the miners take a lot of the food. So when it comes in, a lot of the food goes out to the mining camps.”

Lack of Health and Nutrition Resources

Some members of the THFN community are concerned by the lack of health-related initiatives in Dawson. One great example of a current initiative is the Prenatal Program which gives \$100/month to the parent to buy healthy foods. The local community feels that the government needs to invest and implement more such programs. One big issue is that there is no permanent, government employed registered dietitian in Dawson. Locals feel that this should be a priority because they currently have to travel to Whitehorse for such services.

People expressed that local doctors and nutritionists should put an emphasis on educating their patients about healthy eating. Participants suggested that since gardening can be a therapeutic activity, the local hospital could have a garden or a greenhouse nearby so that patients could learn and enjoy the garden.

“They have- the CPMP program brings up a dietitian from Whitehorse occasionally, but there is no registered dietitian here. And if people are diagnosed with diabetes, they go to a diabetes education centre in Whitehorse.”

“For instance, if hospital here was dealing with someone who had a heart attack or was obese or had high blood pressure or diabetes, if they would take a little time to talk to them about changing their diet. Because a lot of people don’t even know what really is –constitutes good food.”

“I would imagine that if you went to any of the doctors, let’s say more the older ones and you ask them to give you give me a guide on what’s healthy, they’d give you that standard Canadian food guide.”

Whitehorse has recently developed a program at their hospital which includes serving traditional foods to First Nations people. THFN people expressed that a similar program could be started in the hospital here in Dawson.

“Whitehorse has a program for First Nations people, you can get meat while in the hospital, traditional foods diet, so that rather than whatever you can get, you can get traditional meat in the hospital.”

Moving Forward: Taking Action toward a Food Secure Future

Grow More Food Locally

Members of the THFN community feel that due to climate change, and changes to the environment and the land, there is a need for increased agriculture to ensure food security and food availability in the future. Many of the THFN citizens interviewed expressed interest in utilizing viable land that has already been cleared for any further food production rather than clear cutting more of the forests within the community. This way, forests can be preserved and country foods can be harvested.

“There is so much in the forests that we can utilize there for food, there’s ways that we can work with the land, instead of just clearing everything, and also there’s so much land that has already been cleared that’s not being used for farm land, that should be used for farming, that we could use for farming.”

Several people indicated that they are open to the idea of having a farming co-op model where people invest in a big piece of land, then split it up into several plots for people to individually to farm. The focus should be on small-scale farming and the harvest will be shared and sold.

Build Community Infrastructure for Food Sales, Storage and Preservation

We heard people say that they would like to invest in greenhouses, farms and community gardens to satisfy food needs and create jobs. Currently, the farmers market, happening twice a week, is very popular among the community.

“I think Selkirk has big gardens and greenhouses and they use their work opportunity program to employ people who can’t get jobs elsewhere and so there’s two good things happening there — so employment there. That might be something that Tr’ondëk would love to consider.”

The need for infrastructure improvements was a concern for many people. With the short growing season and the high dependency of food sourced from “outside”, many members of the community said that there is a need for more storage for food and facilities that can grow food over the winter. Not only will this allow the locals to have access to some local food during off-season, but it is also a strategic plan for any emergency food relief event.

“If our growing season is in the summer, and that’s when the berries are out and everything, the whole purpose is gathering it all and storing it through the winter, right? That’s how people here used to have to live, right, to some extent? So I’d say cheap fuel and seasonal storage are some pretty big barriers.”

“There needs to have some form of food storage — develop a strategic plan on how they would address [a situation like this].”

“I think that, you know, there are some vegetables that we can grow to keep through the winter — if there are root cellars — but that’s limited. So another barrier is that we don’t have knowledge and education for facilities for a hydroponic facility to grow throughout the winter.”

Pass on Traditional Knowledge

This section talks about the customs that the participants thought need to either be maintained or brought back to ensure that the THFN people will have enough to eat in the future. Continued teaching to the young people that every part of the animal is to be consumed is very important in traditional culture. To keep this tradition and knowledge among the community, culture camps for children need to be maintained, including “first hunt” and “first fish” programs. It is through these programs that children learn the customs of honouring and consuming from the land and water.

“Our kids today — our kids were raised — they weren’t raised with those kinds of foods I was raised with. They were raised with food from the store. Before, us and our household, we grew up — my kids grew up with wild meat and salmon and fish — like a lot of food from land — not saying — we don’t eat it every day but we do eat it, like it’s part of our meal.”

“I find it really sad when I see people and they don’t even give thanks for their food; they don’t think of where it has come from and they just shovel it in and let’s just shovel it in.”

“Well, we honour them. That’s the kind of food we eat after the first fish feast — we have the feast. We honour them. All those kids that go to the first hunt or the moose hunt, we honour them. Or the first fish camp. When we have a feast with them, we honour them.”

We heard some members of the THFN community suggest that community dinners and events need to be continued because these are the times when people come together to share and heal. It is also at community events where food is shared among everyone, most importantly the Elders and single parents. It is important in

THFN tradition that people care for one another and have less of an individualist mindset, because having strong relationships is the foundation of creating a sustainable and resilient community.

“Whatever we harvest, we share with Elders and if there’s enough too, I believe that maybe some of the harvest go to single parents. I’m not sure. But a lot of us still harvest. We still hunt. We still fish.”

Educating the Youth

In many interviews with the THFN people, many emphasized the need to train and educate the young because the community’s future depends on them. Especially in farming, succession is an issue right now as farmers are reaching retirement, yet whether there will be enough passionate young farmers to take their place is uncertain.

Many participants from the interview stated that it is essential to incorporate farming and gardening courses into the school curriculum. THFN people hope that exposing youth to agriculture will inspire some of them to make it their career. In addition, nutrition and cooking programs are important because young people need to first understand the basis of healthy eating.

“We would need interaction with the teenagers in high schools, giving them bits of information or something that they can hold onto, to say, “Hey man, that’s going to be my job.” So to keep in contact with the teenagers that are going to follow through on what we’re talking about — there has to be communication there.”

“If you could create that need for healthy food and really make people wanting to have healthy food, then you know as a farmer — oh, they’re really going to buy this. Let’s seed another row of this. They’re really going to dig it. That’s a big motivation.”

“Food preparation is good education as well because for example, I reduced my expenditure on food by probably — I cut it more than in half just by changing what I eat. I still eat healthy; I just don’t eat all of these things that are sort of unnecessary. Marketing pushes a lot of food on you that you don’t need.”



Elders and Youth at a Cultural Celebration



**Children participating in First Hunt activities
Photo courtesy of Trondek Heritage Website**

Recently, the THFN and Yukon government signed an agreement stating that both parties can share the responsibilities of the education curriculum in the TH territory. With THFN having a say in the school curriculum, some suggested that it would be great to include on-the-field lessons, to teach young people how to operate machines and to share skills through workshops. This will help with succession planning as the community intends to include farmers with years of knowledge, encouraging them to spread and teach those who are passionate and interested before they become lost.

In regards to traditional knowledge, it is important that children listen and remember the stories told by Elders, which means that Elders also have to commit to teaching the young people. Currently, the THFN community can see that children are very interested and engaged in community events. When traditional knowledge is passed down, the children understand and connect at a deeper level about the traditional way of life and eating.

“It’s also really about educating and educating people — like stories like what you just said about the traditional way of eating — for me I feel is really, really important — like that’s part of my passion to reignite that within our communities — the sacred way of living the old ways — to reignite that respect for the food and respect for the generations and for me.”

“So when I talk to school kids, they ask different question because they say climate change — what’s our future look like? That’s a hard question. What could we do to survive? All these are not easy questions. So I told them last time...right now I think you young people should go to government, can start stuff — caribou, moose, beef, dry vegetables, dry elk... and everything.”

“Kids coming out — giving their fish away and everyone getting to enjoy it. Everybody — the kids understand the value of that fish; everyone else understands where it comes from; they’re appreciative of it and grateful for it. That’s fun; it’s fun for everyone.”

Develop Supportive Policy and Regulations

Limiting access

Some of the THFN citizens we interviewed feel that the government is giving their land and water rights to too many out-of-Territory people. The populations of wild animals and wild fish are already diminishing and local people are already having a difficult time hunting for sustenance, so they believe that the government needs to limit the access of non-locals and non-First Nations to these limited resources.

“[The Caribou] all come over and now they want to open hunting to non-First Nations. They don’t know what’s going to happen in the fall. Maybe [the caribou are] not going to come back over. So they don’t know. They should give it at least two years, three years to see what’s going on. But they were everywhere.”

Land allocation

The difficulty of acquiring land is often a prohibiting factor in starting a farm, and there is a perception that sometimes land is allocated to people who are not serious about utilizing the land for production. The participants want a system in place that prevents people from obtaining big pieces of agricultural land, only then to later subdivide it, making farming not desirable on those plots.

“This is a big problem because they gave away all this agricultural land to people in this area, prime agriculture land and people grabbed it and they are not farming it. Some kind of something, some sort of regulation, to tell those people that they need to farm that land if they’re going to be on farmland, you got to farm it, you know.”

The THFN community is working with the lands department authorities in allocating agriculture land, so that these lands can be used in the most productive ways possible. They want to assign these lands to those who are passionate about sustainable farming and can help create a food-secure community. Another perceived issue is that Yukon government agriculture policies are more geared towards commercial production of hay and grazing land, not so much for small-scale farming. In addition, if a farmer wants to hold agriculture land, the government requires them to clear away a big portion of the land, at least 50%. For one, this act ruins the land because some prefers taking an agro-forestry approach, and second, it is very expensive for new farmers to clear away that quantity of land. Hence, some interview participants’ felt that these policies were supporting big farm operations, but not everyone thinks agriculture should be solely that way, especially in Yukon.

“If you want to claim agriculture land, there’s a regulation that you have to clear 100 acres or something like that and seed it. And I feel like they really strongly need to rethink that because I don’t think it’s necessary to clear the forest, I think that there’s so much cleared land right now, that we need to find that land and that’s where we need to grow our agriculture. We should preserve the forest for traditional uses.”

“Their whole policy is to clear like 75 acres or something and we’re saying, no because part of our business is wild foods and stuff, you know. And then they would ‘well, then you can go to Farm Credit Canada’, but then Farm Credit Canada wants you to put an insane amount of money that a young farmer cannot afford to put down. So there’s a problem.”

Another suggestion discussed by interview participants was the possibility of the Agriculture Branch and the department of Energy, Mines and Resources (EMR) working together. The EMR has projects occurring in the areas where there is productive agriculture land and miners go in and clear and strip the land. Since agriculture policies require agriculture land holders to clear away land, it would be effective for the Agriculture Branch and EMR to co-ordinate by placing soil back in certain areas and make it available for future agriculture. The participants feel that this cooperation would be beneficial to both parties and enhance the community.

“The Agriculture branch [could] ensure that the reclamation standards, say, for those projects on the Indian River that intersect with the best soil in the region — has soil absolutely being put back and available for agriculture in the future which could easily be a synergistic — it could be a beneficial relationship because [these are] the places miners are going [into] and stripping — clearing the land.”

Access to water

A specific issue that several participants mentioned was the Department of Community Services’ *Rural Domestic Water Well Program* whereby people can apply to get funding to put in wells. While many feel that this is a beneficial program, it is limited and that there is room for expansion. Currently, this program is only applicable to those who plan to install a well, so installation of any other infrastructure, such as a weir and pump is not eligible. Therefore, some members of the THFN would like to see this policy being expanded to include other

methods of water access; this would lift a big financial strain on farmers who are trying to start a small farm operation.

“You have to have a well, like if your water access is your barrier; the solution according to them is a well. But if you have another solution like a pump, they won’t fund that, they’ll only fund the well. So if they were to expand that policy to include other ways to get water than just a well, it would’ve worked for us.”

“If the farm was on the river, then they can take a pump from the river to irrigate their land right. But now they’ve, they want to protect the river, which it makes sense to protect the river right, because even if you’re using chemicals on the river too, then that’s going to the river and contaminate it. So it’s good to protect the river, but then you don’t have that option of using that water source for your irrigation.”

Conclusions and Next Steps

We heard from THFN that ensuring that there are ample local, healthy and affordable food options within the community is extremely important for the future of the community. Additionally, continuing an emphasis on traditional food practices and passing down traditional knowledge to the youth of the community is essential for the continuation of traditional methods of sourcing food and strengthening THFN culture. The community is interested in expanding the amount of community gardens, agricultural land and greenhouses as long as the land utilized for production of food is used for local consumption and does not result in large parcels of land being cleared. It was agreed with THFN that this document be supported by Chief and Council prior to final publication.

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 of 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: 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?**