

Working Together to Achieve Healthier Lifestyles in Yukon & Northwest Territories' Communities

Summary Report



Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research

2010-2011 & 2013-2018



www.aicbr.ca

Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research

AICBR is an independent, non-profit research organization based in Whitehorse, Yukon that works in the areas of food security, climate change adaptation, chronic disease prevention, youth engagement and mental health. AICBR works to bridge the gap between the grassroots communities and organizations and decision-makers in order to facilitate action on complex community health issues of relevance to our partners. Our approach prioritizes the principles of community-based research, youth engagement, collective impact, partnership development, community capacity building, knowledge sharing, intersectoral collaboration and evaluation.

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Executive Summary

The *Working Together to Achieve Healthier Lifestyles in Yukon and Northwest Territories' Communities* project involved identifying ways to support, promote and facilitate healthier lifestyles in remote northern Canadian communities, through the strengthening of partnerships between organizations, governments, and communities. The partnerships that were developed fostered healthier lifestyles in Yukon and Northwest Territories' communities by supporting and implementing initiatives that promoted healthier lifestyles, based on the project pillars of healthy eating, active living, health literacy, and food security; and by contributing to policy-level discussions on food security at local, territorial and national levels.

Key project outcomes include:

- ◆ Supporting community-based initiatives focused on healthy eating, active living, health literacy, and youth leadership, which resulted in increased healthy eating and active living behaviours .
- ◆ A baseline healthy living inventory and mapping tool that captures healthy eating and active living programs in Yukon and Northwest Territories communities.
- ◆ Community Gardening Gatherings in both Yukon and Northwest Territories.
- ◆ Co-facilitation of Food Network Yukon bi-monthly meetings.
- ◆ Support to the development of a Yellowknife Food Charter.
- ◆ Increased connectivity and collaboration between multiple sectors.
- ◆ Increased understanding of factors of sustainability and scalability of successful health interventions through a community-based research lens and in a rural, remote, northern context.
- ◆ Hosting of workshops and meetings to bring people together from diverse sectors to work on issues identified as important to advancing healthy lifestyles in the North (Community Gardening, Northern Food Security).

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Introduction

Beginning in 2010, the Public Agency of Canada *Innovation Strategy* provided funding to initiatives across Canada that supported healthy weights. This was done through a phased project approach. The Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research (AICBR) was successful with a year-long Phase 1 project that focused on supporting healthy weight initiatives in Yukon. During this year, multiple partnerships were established with a focus on intersectional collaboration, and community initiatives were undertaken, including family cooking classes, gardening, and active living initiatives. In 2013, AICBR was successful in receiving four-year Phase 2 funding for the *Working Together to Achieve Healthier Lifestyles in Yukon and Northwest Territories' Communities* project. Due to its success, the project was subsequently extended into 2018.

The AHL project focused on northern families and communities in the two territories, and used five principles as the foundation: community-driven, based on strengths and assets, culturally-based, intersectoral collaboration and recognizing health inequities. The four action areas or pillars of the project were healthy eating, active living, health literacy, and food security. The key strategies focused on bi-directional capacity building and leadership development at the community level, partnership development, social marketing and communications, creating supportive environments, and facilitating systems change at the broader societal level. This approach acknowledged that individual behaviour change in communities in the North requires community champions and resources at the local level, as well as policies and systems change at the societal level.

Using a community-based research (CBR) approach, the project built capacity at all levels and developed opportunities for lasting collaborations. Community-based research is developed and implemented as a participatory, collaborative, action-oriented and empowering process, resulting in the coproduction of knowledge to address community priorities and is grounded in community strengths. Principles of CBR are rooted in the values of respect, caring and sharing, and guided the project approach. With a CBR approach, priorities and action items are driven by Northerner's needs and take into account context, relevancy and appropriateness.

The *Achieving Healthier Lifestyles* (AHL) project focused at the systems-level to enhance and strengthen collaboration and networking between and within non-government and government agencies and communities in both the Yukon and Northwest Territories, whose work related to the project pillars. The project's overall objective was to support Northerners in achieving healthier lifestyles, thereby reducing the prevalence of chronic disease, and in particular obesity.

The AHL project used a strengths-based approach and worked with partners and projects that were already working well. It focused on identifying, supporting, and evaluating community-based activities aimed at reducing health inequalities and supporting healthier lifestyles, with a particular emphasis on rural/remote, northern, and Indigenous communities. Children, youth, families, adults and elders/seniors in both territories were the target populations of the project. The AHL project also focused on reaching professionals, practitioners, and service providers who have a connection to healthy living and food security in Yukon and the Northwest Territories; for example, healthy living organizations (NGOs), relevant government departments (territorial, municipal, federal, Indigenous), college campuses, youth organizations, and food security organizations. In total, 17 communities situated throughout the Yukon and Northwest Territories were directly supported by the project, over 50 partnerships were established, and over 3000 people were reached.



Key Project Activities & Highlights

Food Security

Food security and food sovereignty are pressing issues across the North and have been identified as priority concerns for the health and wellbeing of northern residents, and particularly for Indigenous citizens. Food security was a focal point of the AHL project, and is a critical foundational piece to living a healthy lifestyle. AICBR worked at multiple levels to address northern food insecurity.

Food Security is a major priority for the North. It can't be about 'healthy eating' until 'eating at all' is addressed.

Jody Butler Walker,
AICBR

AICBR hosted multiple meetings and workshops focused on food security, co-facilitated two food security networks, supported food-security related community projects, and followed a community-based approach to researching and advocating for food security and food sovereignty issues; particularly with respect to policy. These activities are detailed in the following sections.

Community Projects

The AHL project supported numerous community-based initiatives led by partners, which focused on healthy eating, active living, food security, and youth leadership. Highlights from Phase 1 and Phase 2 include:

Community Greenhouses and Gardening

- ◆ Community outdoor garden boxes initiative, which included the building of 30 raised garden beds, as well as the offering of multiple seed and planting workshops for Tr'ondëk Hwech'in citizens in Dawson, YT (2010/2011).
- ◆ 'E'Sah Health & Wellness' project, which included healthy lifestyle community events, workshops, and a gardening program in Ross River, YT (2014).
- ◆ Development of a gardening manual for schools in the Northwest Territories.

Healthy Eating

- ◆ Weekly family cooking classes focused on healthy eating, food skills, kitchen safety, and the making of accessible, affordable meals with Selkirk First Nation families, Pelly Crossing, YT (2010-2014).
- ◆ 'Path to Strong People' harvesting and hunting initiative for families, which focused on land-based cultural activities with Selkirk First Nation children in Pelly Crossing, YT (2013).
- ◆ 'Kids in the Kitchen' Yukon-based program focused on fun, hands-on cooking and nutrition education for kids, lead by community facilitators (2015).

Active Living

- ◆ 'Inspired Living Group' focused on healthy lifestyles and positive self image for women living with/at risk for diabetes and obesity (2014).
- ◆ 'Walk the Peel' walking challenge and 'Healthy "U"' walking programs in Mayo, YT that engaged the community in various healthy lifestyle workshops and offered incentives for completing walking challenges (2014, 2017).
- ◆ Rural Healthy Eating Active Living (RHEAL) programs including after-school programs, archery, playgroup programs, yoga and pilates for seniors, and healthy living workshops. in five Yukon communities (2013-2014).



'Healthy U' and Amazing Race participants in Mayo, Yukon.

Youth Leadership

- ◆ Support to youth leadership training conferences and development of a youth leadership facilitation guide in Yukon (2014-2016).
- ◆ Weekday Warriors® after-school program which included recreation, literacy, nutrition, and art in Dawson, YT (2014-2015).



BYTE Leaders in Training conference participants around the campfire; Cover of youth leadership facilitation guide.

Healthy Living Inventory

A major initiative of the AHL project was the development of a healthy living inventory that captured healthy eating and active living programs in communities in both Yukon and Northwest Territories (2014 & 2016). The creation of the inventory was a direct response to recreation leaders and others expressing frustration that there was not one place to find out what active living and healthy eating programs are happening in communities, and the need for a central location for this information.

The inventory was developed into an online mapping tool, through a generous software subscription donation by Esri Canada (ArcGIS online). This facilitated the development of a comprehensive tool that makes the data usable and provides opportunities to share information on programs and services related to active living and healthy eating in Yukon and Northwest Territories.

The inventory can be used to identify gaps and strengths of healthy living programming in the two territories, celebrate success, and may be used as a tool for policy and program development. It is also a useful tool for the classroom, whereby teachers and students can use and expand on the maps and information.



Snapshot of online Healthy Living Inventory in Yukon (www.aicbr.ca).

Healthy Living in My Community

AICBR created a unit package, *Healthy Living in My Community* for teachers in Yukon (and NWT) that builds from the healthy living inventory and brings stories of healthy eating and active living to the classroom, while connecting students to healthy living programs in their community. This initiative focused on finding ways to bring the mapping inventory back to communities through story mapping and experiential learning.

Meetings & Workshops

AICBR facilitated and supported multiple workshops and meetings to bring people together to work on addressing northern food security. These included:

- ◆ Four annual community garden workshops in Yukon, which brought together experienced growers, government representatives (Health, Agriculture, Economic Development) and community members from across the Yukon, as well as from northern British Columbia (Atlin), and Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, to share, network and learn about community gardening and growing in a northern climate (2014-2017).
- ◆ Support to Ecology North in the Northwest Territories to host a NWT Community Gardener workshop (2015) and Fall Harvest Fairs (2015 & 2016).
- ◆ Yukon Food Security Roundtable and Events, which included a two-day roundtable, a public evening panel discussion, and a public open house. Delegates from multiple sectors across the territory came together to share current food security-related activities, identify factors that limit or facilitate food access and availability for Yukon residents, and to prioritize next steps (2016).
- ◆ Workshop to plan what a sustainable food organization for the Northwest Territories could be (2018). This meeting was part of the process of setting up an organization that advocates for and supports sustainable food production in the NWT.
- ◆ AICBR partnered with Yukon Government and others to host a deliberative dialogue on curbing childhood obesity in Yukon. Based on the model used, AICBR was invited to partner with Northwest Territories and Nunavut Public Health Association to do a similar event in the Northwest Territories (2011 & 2017).



Planning the NWT Food Network.

Networks

Networks are a powerful way to develop partnerships and alliances across sectors, in order to tackle complex issues. The AHL project provided opportunities to strengthen and develop local, northern and national networks specific to addressing northern food security.

- ◆ Northern Food Network was established in 2016, through a partnership between AICBR and Food Secure Canada, and provides a space for Northerners to discuss northern food security, share and learn about best practices, and advance collective action on northern food security on a wider scale.
- ◆ Food Network Yukon began in 2012 and is an opportunity for stakeholder groups and concerned citizens to network and exchange knowledge around food and food security in Yukon through bi-monthly meetings. They are an effective means to solicit feedback and advice on Yukon food security initiatives and policy developments.
- ◆ Community Gardeners Network was established as an outcome of the Yukon gatherings, using Facebook as a means for growers to stay connected, learn and share from each other throughout the year.



Participants at a bi-monthly Food Network Yukon meeting.

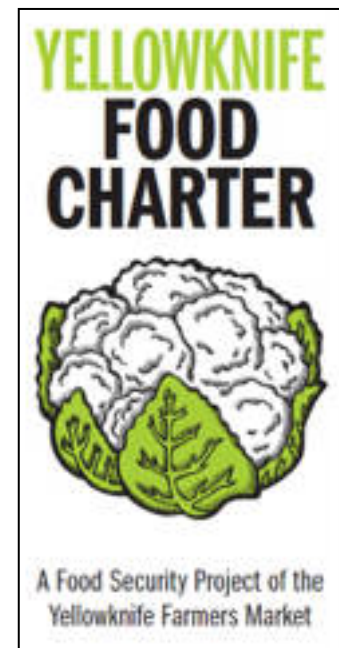
Influencing Policy

The AHL project used multiple mechanisms to contribute to influencing policy related to the pillars of the project. AICBR and partners used community-based approaches to gather information from northerners, which could then be relayed to policymakers.

This was done through meetings, workshops, outreach, and working with the project networks . Example strategies, which the project focused on include Yukon Government Local Food Strategy, City of Whitehorse Local Food & Urban Agriculture Strategy, and Canada's Food Policy for Canada.



Encouraging public input into the national food policy *A Food Policy for Canada* at the Whitehorse Fireweed Farmers Market.



Sustainability

Community projects which took place during Phase 1 and continued in Phase 2 were evaluated and had many lessons learned; particularly related to sustainability and scalability.

Specific case studies were done to better understand sustainability and scalability in a rural, remote, northern context. They included:

- ◆ 'Kids in the Kitchen', Yukon Government Health & Social Services' Health Promotion Unit (YT);
- ◆ Weekday Warriors® after-school program, Boys & Girls Club of Yukon (YT);
- ◆ NDilo and Dettah Community Gardening Mentorship programs, Northern Roots (NWT);
- ◆ 'Growing Garden Education: From Growing Together at Weledah to Beyond', Ecology North (NWT).

Collective Impact

A key focus of the project was to develop and strengthen collaboration between organizations whose work was relevant to the pillars of the project, using a Collective Impact approach. Collective Impact is a process of getting organizations and people to work together differently in pursuit of a clearly defined common goal. This process resonated well with the intent of the Innovation Strategy and the project, where AICBR brought together groups from multiple sectors to work in partnership together to foster healthier lifestyles in Yukon and Northwest Territories' communities. AICBR served as the backbone organization whose role was to facilitate connections and dialogue between partners, provide strategic direction, manage data collection and analysis, provide support, and guide the overall implementation of the project.

Organizations in the North want and recognize the need to work together, and because of the complexity of these issues, recognize that things need to be done differently for effective, sustainable change. It is how we get to that place that there are opportunities for innovation. Throughout the project, AICBR worked to build connections between organizations and government departments at a territorial level.

Communications & Outreach

AICBR knew that in order to create sustained change and to address complex issues, it was necessary to work across sectors and collaborate and partner wherever possible. Consistent communications using a variety of formats was critical. The project used a diverse approach to reach out to multiple audiences including:

- ◆ Core team meetings, which were a regular venue for dialogue between key project partners (government, NGO representatives) in both Yukon and Northwest Territories, where they were able to meet, share, and learn from each other in order to advance work in project pillars of healthy lifestyles.
- ◆ Social media, which was used as a means to connect with people locally, territorially, and nationally, particularly about the issue of northern food security. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn were the main mediums for communication. A powerful tool, social media had far-reaching messaging and outreach.

- [illegible]

Jamie-Lee McKenzie
News Reporter

"Poverty plays a huge role in that, so we want to be looking at food security from a variety of different issues, ensuring that food is healthy, ensuring that food is culturally appropriate," she said.

Food security in Yukon is "our people having enough access to good, healthy, affordable food that they want to eat," said Pratt.

happening in the Yukon already with regards to food security planning, said Pratt. It's also a time for Yukoners to tell the federal government what the food priorities are in the territory.

"As Northerners we're defining our own needs," said Pratt.

At the federal level, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is working to develop a food policy for Canada. ASCR and YAPC want to talk to the community about Yukon food security and how the territory will fit into the national policy that's being developed.

communities have been looking into food security and planning a way forward, said Pratt.

Last year the Yukon government released its food policy, which focuses mainly on increasing local growing and local food production, she said.

AICHI and YAPC hosted a booth to field questions about food security July 20 at the Whitehorse Fireweed Market.

There will also be a free public meal at the Old Fire Hall July 31 to take questions and have a facilitated conversation about food security.

For more information about these policies and events, people can visit aichi.ca or yapc.ca.

Contact Julie Lee McKenzie at julielee@kciinfo-yukon.com

Key Outcomes

The AHL project was a complex initiative with many moving parts. It was sometimes challenging to understand and capture just how much reach and impact that project had in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, as well as nationally. Evaluation results, feedback from project partners and participants, and ongoing opportunities to continue the work around northern food security provide strong evidence of the project's success. Some of the major outcomes are summarized here.

Food Security

AICBR worked on and supported many projects and worked at multiple levels over the last eight years that either focused on or related to northern food security. As a result of the project there is increased attention and focus on northern food security (including strategies, funding support, focused discussion) at local, territorial, and national levels. A major outcome of the project was the creation of a strong and committed network of people from multiple sectors across the North dedicated to addressing northern food insecurity. AICBR continues to contribute to and facilitate discussions around food policy and food sovereignty at a number of levels.

AICBR have been a great support to NWT NGO's working to build on sustainability in the North. Ecology North has been an active partner, and we have benefitted from the support of AICBR to further our work on food security and local food production. Largely because of the support we've received, we are making our goal of starting a new NWT food organization a reality. This new food organization will advocate for food growers and producers, help promote sustainable food systems and work with all levels of government to make the NWT more food secure and build a strong network of food producers. Thanks AICBR!

Craig Scott, Executive Director Ecology North

The Yukon Food Security Roundtable that AICBR hosted in 2016 was a foundational event from which food security-related discussions and actions continue to build from. Much of the work currently being undertaken in the Yukon has arose from key recommendations from the Yukon Food Security Roundtable, which shows the positive momentum built from this initiative. This highlight the benefits and relevancy

of work that can be achieved when priorities for the territories are driven by northerners and when we build on what has already been done.

AICBR is also recognized nationally as an integral organization for addressing northern food security. This is evidenced by our invitations and contributions to national food policy discussions, local discussions on food security, as well as interest from other regions on our approaches. We continue to be very successful in bringing people together to discuss these issues and to raise awareness of food insecurity in the North among various groups.

Community food security projects that were supported through the AHL project were also successful; for example, the Yellowknife-based school gardening program was expanded to other schools in the city during the project period. Yukon Government Agriculture Branch expressed interest in funding the community gardener gatherings post project, as there is strong evidence of increased knowledge at the community-level to grow foods, with evidence of increased production, as a result of the community garden gatherings.

Thanks to AICBR's experience and growing reputation, new opportunities to collaborate continue to emerge. These opportunities are predominately resultant of the work and outcomes from the AHL project. For example, AICBR will be working with Food Secure Canada to contribute to a National Indigenous Economic Development Board study on northern sustainable food systems. The work AICBR has led and continues to contribute to has formed a foundation for future food security, food systems, and food sovereignty initiatives. It is our position that future work on informing sustainable northern food systems needs to be tied to this foundation of knowledge and be built from a position of strength.

- Great to have representatives from so many communities, different stages of garden development and types of gardens.
- My brain is working overtime with ideas for our own community garden.
- Very informative whether you're a novice or experienced. A super amount of skilled individuals who are helpful and passionate about gardening.

Community Garden Gathering Participants

Community Projects



Community and territorial initiatives have supported increasing healthy eating and active living behaviours with multiple groups. For example, Yukon-based 'Kids in the Kitchen', 'Walk the Peel' and 'Healthy U' walking programs, Selkirk First Nation family cooking classes, 'E'Sah Health & Wellness' project, the Northwest Territories' N'Dilo and Dettah community gardening mentorship programs. and Weledeh school garden programs have impacted Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and youth, families, adults and Elders with respect to supporting healthier lifestyles. These types of community-based initiatives led by our partners not only influenced healthy eating and active living behaviours, but also support cultural, social, and mental wellbeing.



As a result of the family cooking classes and 'Kids in the Kitchen' program, kids are interested in healthy foods and are cooking more at home; young families have increased capacity to cook healthy meals from scratch based on resources that are available in their community and ingredients that are affordable; and there is an overall increased confidence in food skills, which leads to increased consumption of healthy foods. The programs have also been successful in becoming sustainable. The Selkirk First Nation family cooking nights is now part of the Selkirk First Nation Wellness and Parenting Program, and 'Kids in the Kitchen' is now offered through a local non-profit organization (Recreation & Parks Association of Yukon) and is administered outside of the territorial government.



Healthy Living Inventory

Healthy living data was collected in both 2014 and 2016 for both Yukon and the Northwest Territories. While the inventory did not capture all programs in all communities, the maps provide a snapshot of the types of programs that are available. This has been documented as a valuable tool not only for community health representatives and recreation directors, but also funders, government departments and policy makers. The maps are currently being expanded to include sustainable food initiatives.

Recreation directors in Teslin and Tagish, Yukon referred to the Yukon Healthy Living Inventory Map when planning programs for community members. Prenatal Nutrition Program leaders and participants in Watson Lake, Whitehorse, Dawson City, Carcross, and Teslin used the Yukon Healthy Living Inventory Map to connect participants and staff with healthy cooking, gardening programs and active living programs in their communities. Program staff said they found the map easy to use and very helpful in raising their awareness of other community efforts to promote healthy lifestyles and to gather ideas for program planning for their community members. Community members were able to connect with other established health eating and active living programs to help work on lifestyle changes.

Jennifer Daniels, Yukon-based Maternal Newborn Infant Health Dietitian for the Canada Prenatal Nutritional Program

Healthy Living in My Community

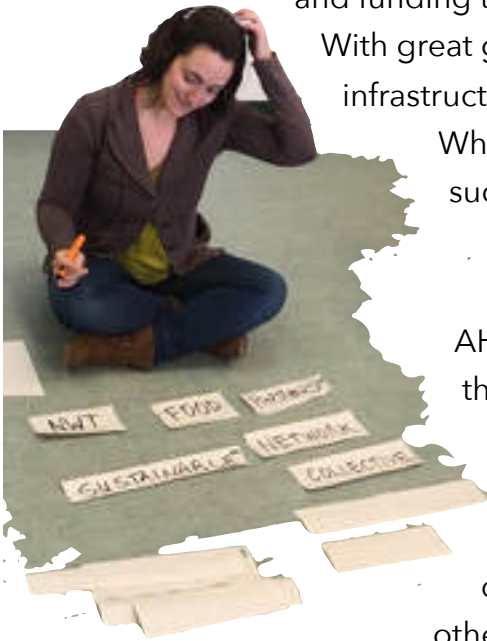
Building on the Healthy Living Inventory, we developed a free, six-lesson unit plan for teachers which integrates storytelling, mapping and healthy lifestyles education, with hands-on, experiential learning. The unit fulfills a number of curriculum requirements and connect kids to healthy eating, active living and other health programming in their communities.

Story map examples were created and are on the AICBR website to demonstrate the variety of stories that can be told about healthy living in the territories and to increase use and engagement with the inventory maps and programs. One featured story map

Meetings & Workshops

Northern-based organizations can be more isolated from opportunities, partnerships, and funding that organizations in southern Canada have regular access to. With great geographic distances and limited transportation infrastructure, travel in the North can be very expensive and limited.

While technology provides new mechanisms to communicate, such as through webinars or teleconferences, opportunities for northerners to meet face to face is very important for building relationships and establishing trust. Throughout the AHL project we were able to bring communities together through multiple meetings and workshops. These meetings and workshops provided the forum for relationships to be built and strengthened between various sectors and communities, providing a foundation for new collaborations to develop that may not have happened otherwise.



The Yukon Food Security Roundtable, and other meetings throughout the project were very successful in bringing together people to discuss and raise awareness on issues such as northern food security. The Roundtable brought together nearly 80 people from across the territory, including representation from 16 Yukon communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous government officials, the non-profit sector, academics, food producers, and concerned citizens. A common vision statement, five priorities and 50 recommendations for addressing food security in Yukon emerged from the gathering and continue to guide food security initiatives and discussions.

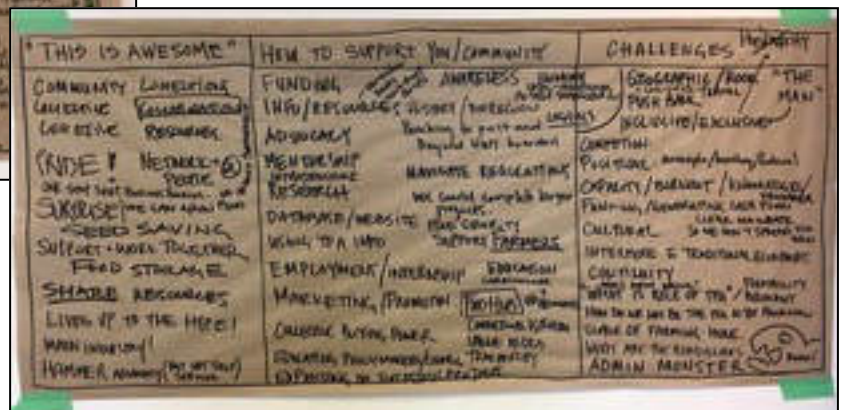
Vision for a Food Secure Yukon

We believe in a food secure, food producing and food sharing Yukon where the land and the waters are harvested and protected. Through the wise use of resources, every person has dignified, affordable access to sufficient food to sustain a healthy, happy, and productive life. Yukon leaders and citizens work collaboratively to ensure food is generated by a robust network of local gardeners, farmers, hobby growers, hunters and fishers, businesses and advanced systems that preserve and distribute food.

In the Northwest Territories, a highly successful two-day workshop was held in March 2018, where a working group of food producers and people interested in food systems in the NWT was formed to decide what a sustainable food organization could look like and to move forward with establishing it. The meeting got the working group to the point where they are ready to launch the organization,-the NWT Food Network. The mission of the organization will be to nurture and promote food systems in the NWT by building and celebrating a collaborative food culture that honours northern ecosystems and values.



NWT Food Network planning.



As a result of the meetings and workshops throughout the project, AICBR had opportunities to develop new partnerships and received increasing attention and recognition. For example, a partnership with the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation resulted in their participation and co-hosting of a food security panel at the Yukon Food Security Roundtable in 2016; a successful grant application to bring three northerners to the Food Secure Canada National Assembly in Toronto in October, 2016; and opportunities to participate with other Trudeau initiatives, including contributions to national publications. This type of partnership is extremely valuable and will continue to provide important opportunities for the North in the future.

Networks

Networks are a powerful way to develop partnerships and alliances across sectors, in order to tackle complex issues. The AHL project provided opportunity to strengthen and develop local, northern and national networks specific to addressing northern food security.

Food Network Yukon has over 75 members and has evolved over the last six years, to not only be a forum to discuss food issues, but to also provide a collective voice on food security issues in the North. It has become a meaningful agent to engage with food security and food system experts on projects and policy development. The Network has worked in partnership with other organizations on food security projects, such as a feasibility assessment for a community food hub, as a part of the AHL project, and a food costing project in Yukon communities.



The Northern Food Network has over **#150** members and has been a venue for sharing stories of food security and promoting dialogue between Northerners and southern allies on issues related to food, agriculture, environment, and health. Since its inception, six webinars/teleconferences with speakers from across the North have been held. The partnership between Food Secure Canada and AICBR for this network has also opened up opportunities for AICBR to gain a more national recognition of its work on northern food security.



Influencing Policy

The AHL project was successful in influencing policies at the local, territorial, and national level. Yukon Government developed a 'Local Food Strategy for Yukon', of which AICBR was able to support community discussions through the community garden gatherings and through Food Network Yukon meetings. AICBR contributed to the City of Whitehorse 'Local Food & Urban Agriculture Strategy', by sharing information at public events and encouraging and providing feedback during consultation stages. Outcomes of the Yukon Food Security Roundtable (2016) continue to inform northern discussions, policies and programs.



Dotocracy to prioritize Yukon food issues at the Yukon Food Security Roundtable; Community gardener input into the 'Local Food Strategy for Yukon'.



The AHL project supported the development of the Yellowknife Food Charter. The Charter, was endorsed by the City of Yellowknife, and officially launched in 2016, with nearly 100 individuals, organizations, and businesses. supporting it. The Charter and associated activities raised the profile of food security issues in Yellowknife within government and political realms, influencing government departments of the need to elevate the discussion around food security and community wellness, quality of life issues and food access.

At the national level, op-ed's, recommendations documents, and meetings regarding national food policy development and northern food insecurity raised awareness within the federal government about the dire circumstances and complexities around northern food insecurity, and the need for a more comprehensive, northern-based approach, with respect to consultation, program structures, funding, and policies. The Northern Food Network was integral for facilitating community events and input into the national food policy. In 2017, AICBR and the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition with support from Food Secure Canada and the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation hosted three community events, to engage Yukoners in discussions about their priorities for the national 'A Food Policy for Canada'. Outcomes included advocating for a strong focus on northern food security and raising northern voices as part of the emerging policy. A clear message was that people are more interested in policies that will drive community-based actions and will have real, positive, and sustainable change on northern food systems. Results from this engagement were incorporated into a Yukon-specific report for the federal government, as well as contributed to a submission from Food Secure Canada.



Yukon Food Security Roundtable poster.

Sustainability

The sustainability and scalability of successful interventions is dependent on unique factors specific to a northern, rural, remote context. From the case studies that were done through the AHL project, we have learned that one “healthy living program” cannot be replicated the same way in every context. The most replicable components have been the community engagement and participation in design and delivery, and the need for supports for community leaders through mentorship and resources. Organizational and policy-level support further sustains and facilitates scale-up. Other lessons learned are about cultural and geographic differences, lack of policies at government levels to support community initiatives, and the requirements for funding and other supports. The great number of successes demonstrate what could happen when initiatives are built into the work (and budgets) of organizations and communities.

Case studies on programs such as ‘Kids in the Kitchen’ informed subsequent programming, and sustainability recommendations from the report were implemented; including the transfer of the program from the territorial government to a local non-profit organization. Similarly, results from the Weekday Warriors[®] program also informed future programming. The Weledah school garden program case study in 2015/2016 informed programming for 2016/2017, with a new program and curriculum developed to serve schools throughout the Northwest Territories and expansion of the program to other schools in Yellowknife. Outcomes and recommendations of a visioning exercise with the school garden program continue to inform the program.

Through the case studies, we learned that every community is different and it is very important to pay attention to and have a good understanding of community context when trying to understand what works or doesn't work in a community. Every program or initiative works differently in every community. A key lesson was that it cannot be expected that if something works well in one community that it will work just as well or happen the same way in another.

Collective Impact

As a backbone organization AICBR prioritized partnership development and the

AICBR has been key to bringing organizations together and identifying potential partnerships. If AICBR was not around we may not be aware of a lot of the healthier lifestyles initiatives in the North. AICBR has fostered collaboration between organizations and has helped strengthen partnerships.

(Member of Core Team)

building of authentic relationships between government departments, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, the business sector, and communities. Through the project's territorial Core Teams, various government departments, health practitioners, non-governmental organizations and others regularly came together to share their work, learn from each other and plan

collectively for streamlining work for mutually enforcing action towards their common goals. The biggest changes seen from this approach have been improved communication, better trust and interpretation of the issues, knowledge mobilization, and strengthening of relationships and understanding of each partner's role in advancing health and wellbeing of Northerners. The project increased awareness of different organizations working on similar issues, and brought together different people and organizations who may not have known each other before, or considered working together. There is evidence of a greater network of organizations with people who are more inclined to explore opportunities to work together. One exciting outcome is the decision to explore adopting the Collective Impact approach in the Northwest Territories with the establishment of a new sustainable food organization. The concept of Collective Impact is understood also as a mechanism to coordinate resources and attention between all partners and communities. What we have learned is that achieving more transformative change at the community-level will require bridging the gap between the systems-level with communities and organizations that work within. The full impact of the Collective Impact approach is yet to be realized as this approach can take several years before real change is sustainable; this demonstrates the absolute necessity for ongoing investment into this approach. Indeed, there is great momentum built, but more work is needed in this area to nourish the collaboration and move towards mutually reinforcing activities, common progress measures, and a common agenda. These steps will ultimately help

to encourage stakeholders to build healthier, more coordinated and cohesive public policies that promote health and reduce inequalities.

The AHL Core Teams identified the value of Collective Impact and the benefits of strong partnerships for the sustainability of initiatives.

- ◆ Increase the pool of skills, resources, knowledge and experience available
- ◆ There are more interested and vested parties who share a common vision
- ◆ Increase the longevity of actions that go beyond 'project' based activities
- ◆ Create synergy and mutually reinforce (consistent, repetitive messaging)
- ◆ More partners reach more people
- ◆ Reduce overlap



Communications & Outreach

Our website and growing presence on social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) has been steadily increasing with positive feedback and growth in the number of followers.

Through our social media and website for example, our posts can reach up to thousands of people. We currently have 259 Facebook “likes” on our organizational page and 263 Facebook followers, 368 Twitter followers and 45 LinkedIn followers. Over the course of the project, we presented at **26** conferences, reaching over 1300 people. Over **40** different publications and communications materials were produced. Many can be found on our website, www.aicbr.ca.



AICBR did outreach and presentations in a variety of settings.

Looking Ahead

AICBR chose to take a systems-level, Collective Impact approach with the AHL project, as this approach can be used to address complex issues by bringing together multiple sectors to work together for sustained change; however, this approach can take several years to achieve successful outcomes, and is resource intensive. It is important that for others who are interested in exploring this approach, that they ensure that the funders are fully supportive and recognize the limitations with respect to evaluation and expectations of individual behaviour change outcomes when taking a systems-approach. From this project, we have learned that organizations working on a common agenda can create a supportive environment for programs of mutual interest to the organizations. What it fails to do is recognize that nothing can happen in communities, unless there are local champions or communities are connected and cohesive, so that programs can be adjusted to fit the local cultural context, and so that local people become aware of the opportunities and can alert organizations when efficiencies are possible. This role of communities puts them as the decision-makers, which is especially appropriate for Indigenous communities. Ongoing financial support, resources, and training opportunities for champions in rural and remote communities is necessary for sustained success.

The overall success of this project offers the foundation for AICBR to continue its work to bring together multiple partners, engage communities and citizens, seek political commitment to sustainability and scalability of northern-based healthy lifestyle initiatives, and build programming that responds to community assets and needs. The systems-level approach AICBR used to address northern issues of food security and healthy lifestyles further offers an opportunity to advance federal, territorial, and local priorities in the North.

The crisis of northern food insecurity is well documented and has been identified as a priority by both current and previous federal government leaders, however to date realistic solutions have been elusive. The lack of progress over several decades speaks to the inherent challenges faced by interventions developed in the South for those living and implementing them in the North. This highlights the critical importance of northerners being directly involved in developing relevant and timely

solutions that lead to sustainable outcomes for northerners. AICBR is well positioned to continue to build on the momentum and move forward, if adequate resources are made available. AICBR anticipates continuing with the Collective Impact approach and expanding our work on northern food security. We believe that the vision, collaboration and funding that PHAC put into the Innovation Strategy positions both PHAC and AICBR well to demonstrate the gains that are simply not possible with short-term funding and lack of vision. These gains continue to lead to northern-based successes on the challenging issues of healthy weights, healthy lifestyles and northern food security.