



# THE GROUNDWORK FOR CHANGE

2024 Indigenous Network Zine

# Land acknowledgement

Community Food Centres Canada operates and partners with food organizations from coast to coast to coast. We do this on the lands of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, who have been and continue to be in a reciprocal relationship with the lands, waters, and all beings. This relationship has been embedded in gratitude and respect since time immemorial.

The national office of Community Food Centres Canada is in Toronto and is on the territory of the Wendat, Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Mississaugas of the Credit. It is now also home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

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# Laying the groundwork:

## An intro from Raymond

*An opening letter from Raymond Johnson-Brown,  
Indigenous Network and Knowledge Sharing Manager.*

Hello dear reader,

In August of 2023, I joined Community Food Centres Canada to manage the Indigenous Network, a growing group of Indigenous-led/Indigenous-serving community food organizations and programs.

I was filled with excitement and joy at the potential of bringing like-minded Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving organizations together in a collective space for Indigenous resurgence. And as you'll see, the Indigenous Network has achieved much change over even the past year.

The centrepiece of that change is creating a framework that we've named *Groundwork for change*. The framework guides Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving community food organizations in developing programs grounded in Indigenous worldviews.

We've featured the framework in this zine. Inspired by some of the topics in the framework, we've also included some pieces that lay more groundwork for change. This includes further resources that advise on lobbying your MP and securing long-term funding.

So what's a zine and why did we make one?

As self-published magazines with small circulations, zines have a rich history in grassroots movements. They offer a platform for people to speak out in their own voices and air views that are less frequently heard. Zines foster community connections. They challenge mainstream ideas, share knowledge, and inspire action.

This zine looks a bit more polished than traditional zines. It also has the institutional support of Community Food Centres Canada. But Indigenous food sovereignty hasn't yet been mainstreamed and the Indigenous Network is building an Indigenous resurgence. This zine is part of the groundwork for change.

Wela'liq for picking up this zine. I hope it guides you on your journey.

Raymond

October 2024

# The Indigenous Network:

## The change we've made in 2024

*The Indigenous Network is standing up for Indigenous food sovereignty—and that means making change. Here are highlights of what we've achieved so far this year.*

- Bonaventure Fabian, our Two-Spirit Elder, joined us to keep us aligned on our collective journey.
- The network grew to over 225 member organizations that run Indigenous-led and/or Indigenous-serving programs across these lands. (Around two years ago, the network had 49 member organizations!)
- We proudly supported Indigenous leadership and initiatives by distributing grants worth \$1,015,942 to Indigenous-led organizations.
- Our monthly programming engaged over 400 network members. We gave each other relational support, built each other's capacity, and supported each other in advocating for Indigenous food sovereignty.
- We hosted four webinars that showcased four organizations in the Indigenous Network and their different approaches. The audience spanned community food organizations in Community Food Centre Canada's partner network—plus the broader community working across multiple intersections of food sovereignty.
- We launched our first documentary, focusing on Indigenous Network member Teri in Six Nations. The film highlights the need for mainstream media to showcase traditional food systems and sovereignty, diversifying the conversation on income in our country.

*“The Indigenous Network has done so much for both my work and mental health. The Elder-led gatherings remind me of the importance of making time to connect to culture. And the check-ins with others in the network help me see how my work in Victoria is a part of a larger picture—a growing Indigenous resurgence.”*

—Julie Parrell, Victoria Friendship Centre, BC

# Groundwork for change:

## Indigenous approaches to working together

*To support Indigenous food sovereignty, we need co-created programming and a resurgence of traditional food systems. This framework lays the groundwork for that change.*

Do you work at an Indigenous-led or an Indigenous-serving community food organization? The Groundwork for change framework can guide you in developing your programs.

The framework was created earlier this year. Its creators? A group of Indigenous Network members who work at Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving community food organizations.

### Using this framework

You should use the framework in all phases of program development to check in and ensure that your community food programs are grounded in Indigenous worldviews.

The framework has four levels. It lays out **three pillars for creating change** and then gives some underlying **principles**. After that, we get concrete: The framework gives **strategies** that put the principles into action and **activities** that address each of the three pillars.

## 1. The pillars for creating change

### Embracing communities for change

- Utilize community-gathering initiatives as platforms for sharing experiences, knowledge, and resources.
- Foster solidarity and amplify collective voices.
- Discover the power of community and collaboration among diverse Indigenous groups, allies, and stakeholders with common goals and values.

### Honouring Indigenous knowledge systems

- Through collaborative research, active community involvement, and meaningful cultural exchange, ensure the preservation and transmission of Indigenous cultural traditions and practices.
- Respect Indigenous cultural heritage by identifying and honouring traditional knowledge and practices within their geographical contexts.

### **Nurturing sustainable life cycles**

- Develop sustainable strategies and mechanisms to support Indigenous communities and initiatives.
- Secure ongoing long-term funding, build strong partnerships, engage in capacity building, and empower local Indigenous communities to lead and take ownership of programs.
- Advocate for policies that uphold Indigenous sovereignty, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship, envisioning a future shaped by Indigenous perspectives and values.

## **2. Principles**

### **Cultivate ancestral justice**

- Acknowledge and understand historical injustices and the impacts of settler colonial domination on Indigenous communities.
- Respect Indigenous self-determination over their food systems and traditional knowledge.

### **Collaborate for change**

- Work with Indigenous food sovereigntists, emphasizing Indigenous peoples speaking for themselves.
- Foster mutual respect, understanding, and trust at the heart of collective work.

### **Support sustainable futures**

- Support Indigenous efforts to conserve and protect traditional foods and food systems.
- Recognize unsustainable over-exploitation as a human rights issue affecting Indigenous communities.

### **Respect cultural dignity**

- Uphold the cultural and sustainability dimensions of the right to food.
- Prioritize local production, cultural practices, and participatory approaches in food security initiatives.

### **Empower sovereignty**

- Acknowledge Indigenous sovereignty as an inherent right.
- Facilitate Indigenous self-actualization and community participation in decision-making processes.

### **3. Principles into action**

#### **Engagement protocol**

- Engage with Indigenous communities in person, following community protocols and customs informed by your relationship with the communities.
- Bring gifts that are significant and meaningful for your relationship as a gesture of respect and appreciation.

#### **Relationship building**

- Engage with diverse Indigenous community members who make up the community your organization is within to build meaningful relationships over time.
- Demonstrate patience: Understand the cyclical nature of community processes and don't come into the relationship with objectives.

#### **Education and awareness**

- Educate organizations and personnel about trauma-informed care, colonial history, and Indigenous identity without adopting a white saviour complex.
- Promote transparency in roles, processes, and intentions.

#### **Respect for traditional knowledge**

- Prioritize Indigenous oral traditions and knowledge, valuing intergenerational wisdom.
- Incorporate tried and tested traditional foods and practices authentically.

#### **Community empowerment and consensus**

- Embrace consensus-building processes that prioritize diverse voices and intergenerational knowledge.
- Ensure inclusivity and transparency in decision making and policy development.

#### **Non-interference and support**

- Approach engagement with a “with, not for” mentality, respecting Indigenous autonomy and agency.
- Foster coalition building and community partnerships to support Indigenous resurgence and futurity.



## 4. Activities

Here is a list of questions to consider as you build out programs, processes, and collective moments together. The questions allow for reflection and pause to make sure Indigenous knowledge systems are being considered at each step.

### Embracing communities for change

- Is there a (formal or informal) gathering space?
- Is there active participation in community gatherings?
- Is there a diverse representation of Indigenous groups, allies, and stakeholders?
- Is there open dialogue and exchange of ideas among participants?
- Are bonds and relationships among participants being strengthened?
- Is there a willingness to share resources, including traditional Indigenous knowledge?
- Are collective voices amplified through gatherings?
- Are collaborative projects and initiatives emerging?
- Are tangible actions and initiatives being implemented?
- Is there shared decision-making power within the group?
- Are cultural elements incorporated into gatherings?
- Is there active solicitation of feedback and reflection?

### Honouring Indigenous knowledge systems

- Is co-owned and collaborative research being conducted to identify traditional Indigenous knowledge and food systems?
- Are communities actively engaged in revitalization efforts?
- Is cultural exchange occurring to uncover Indigenous food traditions?
- Are Indigenous food practices and values being honoured?
- Is there a focus on preserving traditional Indigenous knowledge?
- Is there an emphasis on transmitting traditional Indigenous knowledge to future generations?

- Is there recognition and respect for Indigenous cultures and their knowledge systems?
- Are traditional Indigenous food systems being integrated into contemporary practices?
- Is there ongoing evaluation and adaptation of revitalization strategies based on community feedback?

### **Nurturing sustainable life cycles**

- Is there a strategy in place for securing long-term funding for your program and its initiatives?
- Are partnerships being established to support the program's sustainability?
- Is capacity building occurring within the program and among local communities?
- Are local Indigenous communities empowered to take ownership of the program?
- Is there advocacy for policies supporting Indigenous food sovereignty, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship?
- Are there measurable outcomes demonstrating the program's impact?
- Is there ongoing monitoring and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of sustainability efforts?
- Are stakeholders actively involved in decision-making processes related to sustainability?
- Is there transparency in how resources are allocated and utilized?
- Is there adaptation and innovation in response to changing circumstances and needs?

# Learning about Indigenous food sovereignty

*Earlier this year, Indigenous Network members did four foundational trainings to deepen their understanding of Indigenous food sovereignty.*

Throughout 2024, 190 organizations in the Indigenous Network took a four-part Indigenous Education Foundations Overview course. We worked with multiple facilitators from Finding Our Power Together, an Indigenous-led non-profit that empowers Indigenous youth across Turtle Island, to set the foundation of how we come together across our unique communities.

Here's what each session covered:

- **Part 1: Introduction to Indigenous sovereignty.** This session introduced the concept of Indigenous sovereignty and explored its various dimensions, including land, food, water, and body sovereignty.
- **Part 2: Unsettling systems of harm.** We focused on identifying and challenging systems of harm and oppression that impact Indigenous communities. We then learned about navigating and advocating within these systems.
- **Part 3: Engaging in communities of change.** This session delved into community engagement strategies, highlighting effective ways to foster change and resilience within Indigenous communities.
- **Part 4: Supporting Indigenous resurgence and futurity.** To wrap things up, we focused on actionable strategies for supporting Indigenous resurgence and futurity, and applying these concepts in our communities.

Overall, these trainings provided a space to bridge the knowledge gaps present when Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving organizations come together for a collective goal. By establishing a common approach that enabled each community and learner to show up where they were at, conversations were able to be an accountable and safer space for a diverse set of participants.

This program will continue in future years as a baseline knowledge resource for new Indigenous Network members.

*“The learning sessions deepened our team’s understanding of Indigenous food sovereignty and the harrowing colonial history that has shaped current realities.”*

— Michelle Reining, Vancouver Food Runners

Interested in having these sessions at your organization?  
Reach out to Raymond at [raymond@cfccanada.ca](mailto:raymond@cfccanada.ca)!

## Digital videos to explore

Explore our Indigenous Network YouTube playlist, where you’ll find a growing collection of panels and webinars dedicated to Indigenous food sovereignty.

These videos delve into the importance of understanding food security through an Indigenous lens. They highlight cultural resilience, community-led solutions, and the pursuit of systemic change.

Whether you’re interested in advocacy, healing, or learning about innovative approaches to supporting Indigenous-led efforts, our playlist offers knowledge and inspiration.

**[Watch our YouTube playlist](#)**

# Nurturing sustainable life cycles:

## Five tips to getting long-term funding

*Getting long-term funding is key to laying the groundwork for change. The Development team at Community Food Centres Canada has some tips to help you out.*

Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving organizations play a crucial role in supporting Indigenous food sovereignty. To ensure the longevity of these organizations, securing long-term funding is essential.

Here are some quick tips to help you navigate the funding landscape:

- 1. Build relationships with funders.** Funding isn't just about applying for grants—it's about building relationships and trust. Once that trust is established the focus can then shift to nurturing that relationship. Engage with funders early and often, keeping them informed about your work and its impact. You'll need to personalize your engagement for each donor but it's worth investing the time: This relationship building can lead to multi-year funding and renewed support.
- 2. Diversify your funding sources.** Relying on a single source of funding is risky. Diversify by applying for multiple grants, seeking private donations, and exploring partnerships with other organizations. This approach ensures a more sustainable funding base.
- 3. Highlight cultural relevance.** Emphasize how your program aligns with Indigenous knowledge systems and practices. Funders are increasingly recognizing the importance of culturally relevant programming, and this can set your application apart from others.
- 4. Demonstrate long-term impact.** Funders want to see that their money will make a difference over time. In your applications, include clear metrics and evidence of your program's long-term impact. Show how your work contributes to sustainable life cycles within your community.
- 5. Leverage community support.** Community backing can strengthen your funding applications. Include letters of support, testimonials, and evidence of community involvement to show funders that your program is deeply rooted in the community.

Check out our [list of funding opportunities](#) for Indigenous-led programs.

# Advocating for change:

## Five steps to lobbying your MP

*Want change? Lobbying your MP can be a great strategy. Here's some advice and resources on how to do it, courtesy of the Poverty Action Unit at Community Food Centres Canada.*

Lobbying your MP may seem daunting but it is doable—and we have resources to help you out!

First up, if you're looking for policies to push, check out the latest **Indigenous food sovereignty policy priorities** from across the country.

Then download our **MP Campaign Kit**. You can use the tools to guide your advocacy, following these five steps:

- 1. Plan your event and invite your MP.** Have an event coming up? Use our **invitation template** to invite your MP to participate. Or if you need event inspiration, check out our **event ideas** and watch our workshop on **community engagement**.
- 2. Get some pointers on lobbying.** We have **tips** on how to approach the interaction with your MP, and a workshop on **talking to MPs**.
- 3. Pass on some stats to your MP.** Visit **FoodSecurityNow.ca**, a website we launched in the summer. It contains local data on poverty and food insecurity for every federal riding. The data includes demographic breakdowns that illustrate the vast inequalities in our society, including a comparison of poverty rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Look up your riding and hand your MP a printout of your riding profile.
- 4. Keep your community in the loop.** Don't forget to share your advocacy work with your community on social media using **our templates**.
- 5. Follow up with your MP.** Wrap it all up with a follow-up note to your MP. The kit contains a **template** for that too!

*The Poverty Action Unit develops policy solutions, builds capacity for advocacy at the community level, and mobilizes for federal income and social policy changes to address food insecurity.*

## Indigenous Network

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**community food centres**  
**CANADA** good food is just the beginning

## About Community Food Centres Canada

Community Food Centres Canada resources and strengthens the community food sector and mobilizes with our partners across the country for progressive policy change.

We believe in a country where the right to food is realized for all and where every community has a place for food that nurtures health and well-being, belonging, and social justice.

Learn more at [cfccanada.ca](http://cfccanada.ca)

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