

# WASWANAPI FOOD SECURITY WORKSHOP REPORT

## REPORT PURPOSE

This report summarizes the food security workshop held in Waswanipi on April 12 and 15, 2011. It is one part of the research for a project titled *First Nations Food Security: Piloting the Promising Practices tool and understanding community perceptions of food security*. Dr. Noreen Willows from the University of Alberta is the lead investigator of the project. The research is supported by the Cree Nation of Waswanipi and the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (Quebec). Funding was provided by the First Nation and Inuit Health of Health Canada and the Cree Health Board.

## SPECIAL THANKS

We would like to thank the people from the Maamuu Nakaahetaau group who helped with scheduling and contacting the community. Also, a special thanks to our on-the-ground community contact Irene Otter who worked with us to contact participants, to organize the workshops, and to make introductions.

## WHAT IS THE FOOD SECURITY WORKSHOP?

- It is an *action-based* workshop
- It acknowledges that community members have knowledge about the food insecurity issues present in the community and have ideas of what changes are needed to tackle these issues
- It acknowledges that the community has many positive assets (i.e., building, spaces, knowledgeable people) that can be used and improved to enhance food security in the community
- It aims to develop a community-specific action plan to promote food security in the community

Through facilitated group discussions, community participants:

- Identify the coping strategies people in the community often use when there is not enough food in the house or money to buy food.
- Explore community strengths and challenges in providing services, programs, and resources to tackle the issue of food insecurity in their community and promote food security
- Identify and prioritized potential areas in the community environment that could promote food security
- Develop an action plan based on a list of identified and prioritized actions that could promote food security in the community

## WASWANAPI FOOD SECURITY WORKSHOP PROCES

DATE: April 12 and 15, 2011

PLACE: MSDC Office, Waswanipi

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 6 participants across the two days

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS: Staff members from the Clinic, the Band Office, the Cultural Centre, and Brighter Futures

### PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Food Security Workshop was to bring together community members of the Cree Nation of Waswanipi to identify the lived experiences of food insecurity in their community and create a Waswanipi-specific action plan to improve the promotion of food security.

### PROCESS:

Step 1: Participant work focused on answering the question, What do people do in your community when there is not enough food or money to buy food?

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Part A: i) As a group, participants list actions/coping strategies that people regularly use when they have food insecurity. The strategies were grouped into four categories, Dietary Change, Increase Short-Term Household Food Availability, Decrease Number of People to be Fed, Food Rationing Strategies.

Part B: i) Participants individually rank the list of actions/coping strategies in terms of severity or seriousness. That is, what level of hardship is a person experiencing or how unpleasant would it be for a person to use each action/coping strategy.

There were other workshops/conferences and year-end reports needing attention which meant that despite the great efforts made to recruit participants for the workshop participation was low. However, step 1 work is geared for large or small groups, so we were able to complete this step.

Step 2: Participant work focused on answering the question, What can be done in your community, school, and home to make sure that people have enough affordable and healthy food to eat?

Part A: i) In small groups participants talk about and list areas for potential actions in the community that would promote food security.

ii) Using a democratic process called dot-mocracy, the larger group decide which of the combined actions identified by the smaller groups were the top five priorities for the community.

Part B: i) Participants work together to create a community action plan to achieve the top five priority actions.

For Step 2 work a minimum of 8 participants was required. A minimum of 8 is best for generating inter-group discussion and list development, because it ensures the process has a large number of people with different backgrounds and ideas.

Those participants present on the second day, April 15, of the workshop, which was three participants, did Part A: i) work, but we were unable to do Part A: ii) and all of Part B. We think that the listing done by participants for Part A: i) is a good start in listing ideas, but suggest that more work is needed for Part A: i).

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

We think that a one day or a one-and-a-half day follow-up workshop would complete the food security discussion process. However, it is essential that 8 or more participants are involved in any follow-up workshop. We suggest that the work required in any follow-up workshop include:

1. A review of the list of coping strategies identified in Step 1 by the April 12 participants in order to identify any missing strategies. Once the review is done, participants would go through the ranking process for each coping strategy. This will provide an even better representation of how community members think and feel about the use of each coping strategy in their community.
2. the full process outlined for Step 2. For Part A: i) work, the participants in the small groups for the follow-up should add to the list created by the April 15 participants. This will integrate the work already started on April 15 into the follow-up workshop.

## OUTCOMES

### MAIN RESULTS:

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- The most often used actions/coping strategies for the community were identified and ranked in terms of severity (see Appendix A).
- The child health action plan process was started. The beginning list for Step 2, Part A: i) is provided in Appendix B.

**APPENDIX A: Food Security Coping Strategies, Step 1**  
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<b>Common actions/coping strategies that people use when they are food insecure, ranked in terms of the severity of the action</b>	
SCALE: 1=not very severe 2=somewhat severe 3=severe 4=very severe	
*Means that people do this for cultural reasons as well as when they are food insecure	
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Coping Strategy</b>
1	NOT APPLICABLE
2	Send child or children go to eat with friends or relatives
2	Limit portion size at mealtimes
2	Restrict consumption by adults in order for small children to eat
2	People will send extra food to those they know need it
2	Use part of savings to buy food
2	Skip a loan payment to have money to buy food
2	Children work for food (work is exchanged for food or for money for food)
2	Gather wild food, fish or hunt
2	People take food home with them at feasts*
2	Ask for a ride to go get groceries
2	Rely on sharing of traditional food (ex. Elders)
2	Children ask for adults other than parents for food; adults will buy/give children food who they know are hungry
2	Rely on less preferred foods and less expensive foods
2	Consume less variety of food
2.5	Borrow food from friends or relatives
3	Restrict the number of meals eaten in a day
3	Purchase food on credit
3	Depend on aid from outside of the household (food bank, *go to feasts, go to government departments)
3	Steal from family
3	Kids eat more junk/low quality food
3.5	Stealing from others (not family)
3.5	Steal food when hungry
4	Children are not fed/go hungry because their parents have an addiction problem (drinking)
4	People eat spoiled or expired food

**Actions to increase food security in the community identified by participants (not in order of importance)**

1. Inform people what are affordable and healthy foods
2. Cooking workshops for pregnant mothers, how to eat during/after pregnancy, breastfeeding
3. Cooking workshops for diabetics and those on dialysis
4. Budgeting workshops
5. Workshop on food preparation, safety (safe storing and expiration), especially traditional foods
6. Encourage the hunting program (for youth) to provide and prepare traditional food for the community and how to share
7. Enforce budgeting workshop before being accepted for welfare
8. Tradeshow on food
9. Create policy so that there is school lunch program for all students at the primary and secondary school
10. Make rides accessible so that people can go to town to get groceries (have a bus)
11. Create a volunteer manpower support system to run programs (or find money to pay them)
12. People who utilize the programs could become the manpower
13. Use the people (offenders) with 'justice community hours' to as role of volunteers in food security programs
14. Grow a garden, build a greenhouse
15. Find solutions for re-grouping/improving the food bank program
16. Develop a meals-on-wheels program
17. Store to provide more healthy snack options, to bring up front the healthy foods (make more exposure of healthy foods than unhealthy foods), and to provide taste testing opportunities of healthy food options
18. Include as part of educational workshops a discussion on nutrition and healthy foods
19. Centralize coordination of events and calendars, so information and planning workshops do not overlap
20. Policy to be proactive instead of reactive (deal with a possible situation before it happens)
21. Create in-home programs to teach nutrition, and healthy food and eating (both good foods and bad foods)
22. Lobby to restaurant, catering services, and arena concession to provide more healthy food options on the menu

**APPENDIX B: Action Plan Development, Step 2**  
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23. Have a decent grocery store in the community (i.e., a larger chain, that has fresh fruit and veggies, fresh meats, etc.)
24. Have a junk food policy in public building and promote healthy eating through providing healthy vending machines in public places
25. Program teaching healthy exercise and eating for different age categories and physical ability
26. A weight loss strategy program or clinic that focuses on lifestyle changes (i.e., balanced eating, good physical activity)
27. Ongoing community program promoting exercise by organizing regular activities (i.e., walking or running group)
28. Take home foods (milk, dairy products) for children to bring home from daycare 2-3 times a week
29. Down the River facilities, use them for the community kitchen programs. (Also make the kitchen at the clinic available).
30. Need place, instructor, equipment for an activity center for over people over 50 yrs
  - School
  - Peoples basement
31. Continue with the Drop the Pop program