



SUSTAIN

Alliance for healthy, just and sustainable food & farming
Working across Indigenous Territories / Ontario

Prioritize Indigenous Food Sovereignty

The issues raised in this brief are of significant importance to all Indigenous communities across Ontario. The impacts of herbicide use and environmental disruptions affect not only the health of ecosystems but also the well-being and cultural practices of Indigenous peoples.

While these concerns are shared across communities, specific challenges have been raised by both Northern and Urban Indigenous groups. We have organized these issues into subsections that reflect the diverse perspectives and priorities of each.

Both Northern and Urban communities emphasize the need for responsible environmental stewardship and policies that respect Indigenous knowledge and rights, as well as the protection of natural resources that are integral to their way of life.

Federal is not the only jurisdiction implicated in Indigenous issues. There are many areas in provincial jurisdiction that affect/impede Indigenous Food Sovereignty including the province exerting jurisdiction over land and waters and provincial policies interfering with the ability to exercise treaty rights. Provincial policy is not developed with Indigenous stakeholders at the centre, so it does not prioritize Indigenous-led initiatives and the rights of Indigenous communities to access and manage traditional food sources

Indigenous Food Sovereignty

The right of Indigenous peoples to have control over their traditional food systems, including the ability to access, protect, and manage the land, water, and resources necessary to support their food practices. These rights emphasize the importance of culturally significant foods, traditional knowledge, and ecological stewardship as central to the health and well-being of Indigenous communities.

Treaty Rights

There are rights and obligations that arise from the treaties signed between Indigenous peoples and the Crown (the government) in Canada. Treaty rights are constitutionally protected under Section 35 of the **Constitution Act, 1982**, and are recognized and affirmed by the courts.

Recommendations include:

- Treaty Rights
- Land Stewardship
- Access to Culturally Important Food
- Ontario Environmental Bill of Rights
- Cultural Competency among Civil Servants
- Market Access
- Glyphosate Use
- Water Protection
- Urban Indigenous Food Sovereignty
- Urban Indigenous Housing

About this document:

This document was developed through a collaborative process with Indigenous organizations and leaders working with Indigenous communities in two working groups. One working group focused on Urban and Southern Ontario and the other on Northern and Remote Regions. Meetings of working groups were facilitated by Indigenous leader Jessica McLaughlin. Writing and research was done by Jade LaFontaine with collaboration and funding from Sustain.

This is not a finished product. It is shared based on the election being called. Sustain is sharing out this work widely, educating voters for the Provincial Election 2025, knowing there is more work to do.

Sustain is a cross-sectoral alliance of organizations that work through collaborative action towards productive, equitable and sustainable food and farming systems that support the health and wellbeing of all people in Ontario/Indigenous Territories.

Next Steps:

Sustain, a settler led organization, is in the process of working with Indigenous-led organizations to secure funding to support Indigenous-led policy work on Indigenous food sovereignty.

To join this working group or any of the networks, please email Rosie at networks@sustainontario.com

Treaty rights

Key Issues:

- Provincial and federal governments do not **respect and incorporate treaty rights** in land and resource management decisions.
- **Current policy does not recognize treaty agreements**, particularly when addressing environmental issues like water protection and land use for food production.
- **Provincial governments often obstruct** First Nations' exercise of treaty rights, particularly in relation to natural resource management and extraction.

Recommendations:

- **Explicitly Reference Treaty Rights in Policy:** Ensure that treaty rights are clearly referenced in provincial policies related to land use, environmental protection, and resource extraction (e.g., mining, forestry), ensuring they are respected in all decision-making.
- **Review and Evaluate Consultation Protocols:** Review the implementation of Duty to consult protocols to ensure that Indigenous communities are meaningfully consulted in land use decisions, especially those impacting shared resources such as water and wildlife.
- **Include Indigenous Governance in Resource Management:** Advocate for the integration of Indigenous governance structures in land and resource management processes, allowing for shared stewardship and decision-making on natural resources.
- **Enforce Treaty Rights in Resource Development:** Support the enforcement of treaty rights in natural resource development, particularly where provincial and federal decisions may override Indigenous rights.
- **Implement the UNDRIP action plan:** Identify and change areas where provincial decisions may override Indigenous rights. See [Chapter 1: Shared Priorities](#) “The goal of this priority area is to ensure a Canada where Colonial laws, policies and practices that have interfered with Indigenous peoples’ self-government are repealed or amended”.
- **Build Collaborative Land Use Agreements:** Foster collaborative land use agreements between governments and Indigenous communities, similar to the

Haida Gwaii Strategic Land Use Agreement, to ensure mutual respect for rights and responsibilities.

- **Ensure Funding for Indigenous Leadership:** Leverage funding programs like the Indigenous Leadership funding initiative to support Indigenous-led projects that protect and manage natural resources, aligning with treaty rights.

Existing Examples:

- [Haida Gwaii](#): The Haida Gwaii Strategic Land Use Agreement, which exemplifies collaborative efforts between Indigenous communities and governments to manage land and resources.

Land Stewardship

Key Issues:

- **Lack of co-governance models** and policies that center Indigenous stakeholders in food policy and land stewardship decisions.
- **Barriers to revitalizing Indigenous foodways**, the inability to manage traditional food sources, such as wild game and country foods is one of the barriers to the revitalization of traditional food systems.
- **High costs associated with land access** in remote areas, including expenses for boats, motors, gas, and hunting/trapping tools.
- **Soil contamination** (e.g., DDT, PCBs, heavy metals) prevents safe land use for food production.
- **Mining and land use decisions** impact neighboring First Nations, particularly in areas like the Ring of Fire, with elevated contamination "hot spots" posing health risks when hunting/trapping and fishing in the area.

Recommendations:

- **Co-governance & Indigenous Food Policy:** Develop land stewardship co-governance and food policy co-development in collaboration with Indigenous stakeholders, with the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs (MIA) co-leading efforts and prioritizing Indigenous-led initiatives for food sovereignty. This would require collaboration from various Ontario Ministries.
- **Indigenous-Farmer Land Sharing Network:** Create a land-sharing network, similar to Saskatchewan's Treaty Land Sharing Network, supported by OMAFRA and funding programs like the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF).

- **Amend Crown Land Act:** Prioritize Indigenous communities' access to Crown lands for food sovereignty, including co-management of hunting grounds and wild food harvesting areas, with MIA collaboration.
- **Support Land Safety Testing:** Provide grants for land testing in communities near former industrial or military sites, assessing risks from heavy metals, PCBs, and other contaminants.
- **Reduce Barriers to Land Access:** Address cost barriers by providing subsidies for essential tools (boats, motors, gas) and resources needed for traditional food gathering in remote areas, similar to the federal harvester support program.
- **Invest in Indigenous-led Revitalization of Foodways:** Invest in initiatives that support the use of traditional lands for harvesting country foods
- **Support Indigenous agricultural practices:** Re-examine MIA and OMAFRA policies and amend them in collaboration with communities to support Indigenous agricultural practices.

Existing Examples:

- [U.S. Native American Agriculture Fund \(NAAF\)](#): Supports Native American agricultural projects that promote food sovereignty and sustainable farming practices.
- [Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance \(AFSA\)](#): A farmer-led organization working towards ecologically sound food and agriculture systems, fostering the democratic participation of Indigenous peoples, smallholders, and local communities in decision-making processes.
- [Harvester Support Grant](#): Developed in collaboration with Indigenous and northern partners to support Northerners' own food priorities, while improving conditions for food sovereignty within northern communities.
- [The Comox Valley Land Trust in British Columbia](#) worked on a project that remediate contaminated land for use by local Indigenous groups for traditional food harvesting.
- [Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia](#) partners with Indigenous communities on land conservation, in protecting significant areas while integrating traditional ecological knowledge.
- [The Yukon's First Nations' Hunting Support Program](#) offers transportation subsidies for hunting groups to travel to remote areas for traditional hunting, covering costs for vehicles, fuel, and logistics.

Promote Access to Culturally Important Food

Key Issues:

- **Legislative barriers** preventing access to country foods in public institutions, especially for food-insecure or health-challenged communities.
- **Restrictions on sharing traditional foods** between Indigenous communities in Northern regions and urban centers, affecting cultural practices.
- **Limited ability to transport** and share country foods across provincial borders.
- **Lack of Indigenous-led food safety certification** programs, affecting Indigenous food systems.
- **Insufficient funding and recognition** for culturally significant foods like wild rice.
- **Need for youth land camps to teach younger generations** about food sovereignty and cultural competency.

Recommendations:

- **Remove Legislative Barriers for Culturally Relevant Food:** Amend Ontario's Health Protection and Promotion Act to allow access to traditional foods in public institutions including hospitals and public service organizations serving Indigenous populations, in collaboration with Indigenous leaders, and building on examples like Nunavut's initiatives and the Meno Ya Win Health Centre.
- **Facilitate Sharing of Traditional Foods:** Create legal frameworks that respect cultural practices while ensuring safe sharing of country foods between Northern and urban Indigenous communities. Collaborate with MTO and MOH.
- **Support Cross-Province Transportation of Traditional Foods:** Develop legal frameworks to allow transportation of wild game, fish, and plants across provincial borders, ensuring adherence to public health and cultural standards, supported by MTO and relevant ministries.
- **Establish Indigenous-led Food Safety Certification Programs:** Support the creation of Indigenous-led food safety programs to strengthen and protect traditional food systems, facilitating safe and sustainable food practices.
- **Create Youth Land Camps:** Develop youth land camps that teach younger generations about food sovereignty and Indigenous cultural practices. These camps would foster cultural competency and help pass down traditional knowledge related to food systems.

- **Include Forest & Freshwater Foods in Ontario's Buy Local Food Act:** Explicitly name important Indigenous foods such as wild rice and other traditional foods to ensure they are protected within Buy Local campaigns. Highlight and fund initiatives that conserve culturally important foods in Buy Local Food reports.

Existing Examples:

- [Nunavut Country Food in Public Institutions](#) The government amended health regulations to ensure country foods are available for communities facing food insecurity or health challenges
- [Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority](#) Miichim, the Traditional Foods Program, offers traditional foods to patients at Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre. Traditional foods are offered to all patients once a week and are prepared in such a way to ensure each meal fits with the majority of their nutritional diets
- [British Columbia's First Nations Health Authority](#) integrates traditional healing with modern medicine in a way that ensures holistic care
- [Nourish Program](#)

Ontario Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR)

Key Issues:

- The Ontario Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) was **developed 30 years ago without Indigenous input**, missing their perspectives on environmental issues.
- **The EBR does not clearly recognize Indigenous rights** or their connection to land and resources, leaving their interests overlooked in environmental decisions.
- **The EBR does not support co-governance models**, which would allow Indigenous communities to actively manage their traditional lands and resources.
- The EBR should better reflect and **protect forest and freshwater foods** within regulations.

Recommendations:

- **Amend the Ontario Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR):** Collaborate with Indigenous communities to amend the EBR to strengthen accountability mechanisms for Indigenous rights, ensuring that Indigenous perspectives are integrated into environmental policies.

- **Support Co-Governance in Environmental Decision-Making:** Amend the EBR to support co-governance models between the Ontario government and Indigenous communities, ensuring Indigenous peoples have an active role in managing natural resources and land use. Use co-governance examples like the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA).
- **Establish EBR Indigenous Consultation Processes:** Establish a formal Indigenous consultation process to act as a bridge to co-governance, providing a structured framework for engaging Indigenous communities in environmental decision-making and future amendments to the EBR, and decisions under the Environmental Assessment Act (EAA), inspired by successful frameworks like the Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement. Over time, consultation should evolve towards co-governance, as communities move from providing input to sharing authority in environmental management.
- **Protect Forest and Freshwater Foods:** Amend the EBR to specifically address and protect the rights of Indigenous communities to access and manage forest and freshwater foods within environmental regulations.
- **Review Relevant Policies with Indigenous Communities:** Review the Ontario Environmental Bill of Rights, Environmental Assessment Act, and Crown Forest Sustainability Act in consultation with Indigenous communities to ensure their rights and environmental interests are fully recognized and integrated.
- **Strengthen Environmental Accountability for Indigenous Rights:** Ensure that Indigenous rights are respected in all environmental assessments and land use decisions under the EBR, providing ongoing consultation with Indigenous leaders and communities.

Existing Examples:

- [Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement](#): A co-governance framework that emphasizes Indigenous participation in environmental decision-making
- [The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement \(JBNQA\)](#): A historic agreement that supports co-governance between Indigenous communities and the provincial government for resource management.

Cultural Competency and Health Education

Key Issues:

- **Lack of Indigenous cultural competency** and awareness among civil servants, especially health professionals, leading to gaps in understanding and integrating Indigenous food sovereignty and cultural safety.
- Traditional Indigenous foods are **not adequately integrated into provincial health** education frameworks, affecting health professionals' ability to support Indigenous communities.
- **Insufficient training for civil servants** in health and environmental sectors on Indigenous food systems and cultural practices.
- **Low awareness of the value of traditional foods** in contrast to mainstream food systems.

Recommendations:

- **Develop Cultural Competency Training for Civil Servants:** MIA, in collaboration with Indigenous leaders and the Ministry of Health (MOH), should create province-wide cultural competency and safety training for civil servants, particularly focused on Indigenous food sovereignty. This training should be integrated across all government departments.
- **Integrate Indigenous Food Sovereignty into Health Education:** The Ministry of Health (MOH) should fund programs to train health professionals in Indigenous food sovereignty, cultural safety, and the integration of traditional Indigenous foods into health education, drawing on examples like the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium's initiatives.
- **Update Educational Curricula to Include Indigenous Food Systems:** The Ministry of Education should revise provincial curricula to include Indigenous food sovereignty and cultural safety, particularly in health and environmental education. This will increase understanding of Indigenous food systems, inspired by initiatives like CPAWS Saskatchewan.
- **Increase Awareness of Traditional Foods:** Promote the value of traditional Indigenous foods in contrast to mainstream food systems through public awareness campaigns, educational programs, and initiatives in schools and communities. Ontario Public Health can play an important role

Existing Examples:

- [Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium \(ANTHC\)](#): Cultural competency training programs focused on integrating Indigenous food sovereignty into health services.
- [CPAWS Saskatchewan](#): Working on initiatives to promote food sovereignty and integrate cultural safety into environmental and educational practices.
- [Ontario's Indigenous Foodways and Cultural Humility Resources](#): Efforts to integrate Indigenous cultural humility into health services.
- City of Vancouver's ["Cultural Competency Training for Government Staff"](#)

Market Access

Key Issues:

- **Restrictions on the sale of local fish and meats** off-reserve limit market access for Indigenous food producers.
- **Nutritional labeling regulations are cost-prohibitive** for small-scale Indigenous food producers, particularly those selling wild meats and fish, hindering their ability to participate in the market.
- **Lack of Indigenous-led food handling certification programs** that meet both public health standards and Indigenous cultural practices.
- Existing **consumer protection laws do not adequately support Indigenous food products**, leading to potential misrepresentation in the market.
- **Barriers to equitable market access** for Indigenous food producers in broader food systems.

Recommendations:

- **Amend Regulations on Selling Local Fish and Meats:** OMAFRA should revise provincial regulations that restrict the sale of local fish, meats, and wild game, particularly off-reserve, to provide Indigenous producers with greater market access.
- **Revise Nutritional Labeling for Small-Scale Producers:** OMAFRA should amend nutritional labeling requirements to create more accessible, scale-relevant standards that reduce the financial burden on small-scale Indigenous producers of wild meats and fish.

- **Support Indigenous Food Handling Certification:** The Ministry of Indigenous Affairs (MIA), in partnership with OMAFRA, should establish Indigenous-led food handling certification programs that ensure both food safety and adherence to Indigenous cultural practices, facilitating broader market access for traditional foods.
- **Facilitate Market Access for Indigenous Producers:** OMAFRA should provide resources and create pathways for Indigenous food producers to overcome barriers in selling traditional foods, including wild meats and fish, in mainstream food markets.
- **Promote Collaborative Efforts for Market Access:** Encourage collaboration between Indigenous communities, government ministries, and market platforms to create better opportunities and reduce regulatory barriers, similar to the efforts seen in the Treaty Land Sharing Network in Saskatchewan.

Existing Examples:

- [Saskatchewan, Canada – Treaty Land Sharing Network](#): Efforts to address market access barriers and improve food sovereignty through land-sharing initiatives for Indigenous food producers.
- [Alaska Subsistence Program](#): The Alaska Subsistence Program, which supports Indigenous communities in preserving and accessing traditional foods.
- [Foundation North – Food Sovereignty and Equitable Food Systems](#): Efforts in New Zealand to promote food sovereignty and equitable food systems for Indigenous communities.

Issues Specifically Identified by Northern Indigenous Communities

Glyphosate

Key Issues:

- **Glyphosate use in forestry** and along highways harms moose populations, disrupts traditional plant medicines, and has been linked to cancer.

- Glyphosate is banned in urban areas, yet it **continues to be used in regions where Indigenous communities hunt** and harvest traditional foods, raising concerns about the impact to wildlife and food security
- **Lack of adequate recognition** of Indigenous rights by various Ontario Ministries.
- Glyphosate **spraying in forestry management** near moose habitats and has consequences for wildlife (e.g., [moose starvation](#), and [low birth success rates](#)).
- There are concerns about **runoff from forestry** use of glyphosate contaminating water and ecosystems

Recommendations:

- **Ban Glyphosate use along highways:** The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) should eliminate the use of glyphosate in highway maintenance to protect wildlife, and traditional plant medicines.
- **Ban Glyphosate use in forestry:** Amend Provincial Forest Management Plans (FMPs) to eliminate the use of glyphosate in forestry operations to protect ecosystems, including moose habitat, traditional plant medicines and other wildlife habitat.
- **Develop Buffer Zones and Stricter Environmental Assessments:** Establish provincial guidelines for buffer zones around ecologically sensitive areas and require more rigorous environmental assessments before approving herbicide use.
- **Advocate for a Federal Glyphosate Ban:** Push for federal legislation to ban glyphosate to raise regulatory standards and end the cycle of provincial reliance on federal approval.
- **Support Indigenous-led Alternatives to Herbicides:** Fund Indigenous-led, sustainable alternatives to glyphosate spraying through programs like the Herbicide Alternatives Program (HAP) and work with the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs (MIA) and MNRF to integrate these practices into forest management.
- **Recognize Indigenous Rights in Agricultural Policies:** Amend OMAFRA policies to ensure recognition of Indigenous rights, enhance consultation with Indigenous communities, and increase environmental accountability in agricultural practices.
- **Collaborate with Indigenous Communities on Environmental Regulations:** Review and amend the Ontario Pesticides Act (OPA), Forest Management Plans (FMPs), and Ontario Environmental Assessment Act (OEAA) in collaboration with

Indigenous communities to prioritize environmental sustainability and respect for Indigenous rights

Existing Examples:

- [New Zealand Alternatives to Glyphosate](#): Indigenous-led initiatives promoting food sovereignty and sustainable land-use practices
- [Mexican Citrus Farmers](#) using agroecology as alternative to glyphosate use

Water Protections

Key Issues:

- **Agricultural runoff, sewage, and industrial contamination** (e.g., pipelines, open-pit mining, nuclear waste storage) pose significant threats to water quality.
- The need for stronger water **protections against harmful pollutants**, such as glyphosate, Agent Orange, and other chemicals.
- Indigenous communities are **deeply reliant on clean water for food sources** (e.g., fish, berries) and cultural practices, making water protection crucial.
- **Geopolitical challenges surrounding shared waterways**, such as the Ring of Fire, and the impact of mining decisions on neighboring nations' water resources.
- **Aligning Indigenous treaty rights with water protections** in policy development, particularly in light of UNDRIP Articles 24 and 25, which emphasize water and food sovereignty.

Recommendations:

- **Continue to fund actions identified in collaboration with communities to provide FN communities with access to safe drinking water** including operator training, source protection planning in communities and direct funding for infrastructure. See [Stronger Healthier Communities Action Plan](#)
- **Enforce Stronger Water Protections:** Strengthen regulations to prevent agricultural runoff, industrial contamination, and the construction of pipelines near waterways, ensuring water quality is maintained.
- **Incorporate Treaty Rights:** Integrate Indigenous Treaty Rights into water protection policies, especially in areas impacted by mining or large-scale development, to safeguard shared water resources.

- **Collaborate with Water Protection Agency:** Ontario should collaborate with the Canada Water Agency and advocate for co-governance agreements with First Nations to protect water quality across the province, ensuring that water systems are safeguarded from contaminants and pollution.
- **Integrate Nibi Treaty Principles:** Incorporate the [Nibi Treaty](#) principles into federal and provincial water governance frameworks to protect water sources from industrial contamination and promote Indigenous water stewardship.
- **Collaborate on Geopolitical Water Issues:** Address geopolitical challenges related to shared waterways, in areas such as the Ring of Fire, by facilitating discussions and agreements that prioritize sustainable water management.
- **Promote Indigenous-Led Water Governance:** Empower Indigenous communities to take a leading role in the protection and governance of their water resources, recognizing their inherent rights and knowledge in managing water systems.

Existing Examples:

- [Yukon](#): Ongoing work on Yukon Waters Personhood, ensuring legal protection for water resources.
- [New Zealand](#): The Whanganui River was granted legal personhood, providing long-term protection for the waterway.

Issues Specifically Identified by Urban Indigenous Communities

Urban Food Sovereignty and Food Insecurity

Key Issues:

- In 2022, **41% of Indigenous children** aged 1 to 14 years (excluding those living on reserve) **were living in food insecure households**
- **Lack of consistent, long-term funding for food security programs** such as food pantries, traditional food initiatives, and community gardens, hindering the sustainability of Indigenous food systems.
- **Urban Indigenous communities don't have consistent access to nutritious, culturally relevant food.** This is amplified in urban centers where many different

Indigenous people from various nations live and who might not have access to harvest their traditional foods for example: Mi'kmaq and seafood.

- **Need for better support for resurgence of Indigenous food ways in urban Indigenous populations** to ensure food security, cultural connection, belonging and health
- **Insufficient space in urban centers for growing traditional foods**
- **Lack of co-governance models** and policies that center urban Indigenous stakeholders in food and land policy decisions.
- Currently **access to traditional lands and resources is not sufficient** for resilient Indigenous food systems.
- **Lack of education and support for Indigenous communities to grow their own food**, including seed gathering and home gardening.
- **Fragmentation of Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives**, often with insufficient, ongoing funding and siloed efforts.
- Aboriginal Health Access Centres (AHACs) and Indigenous Friendship Centres play a crucial role in addressing these issues, **they often lack sufficient, consistent funding to fully scale their efforts** and are not included in policy decisions
- **Pollution and Environmental Barriers**: Issues regarding pollution (gas stations, factories, historic pollution) that prevent growing food on certain lands.

Recommendations:

- **Indigenous Food Sovereignty and Food Security Policy**: Develop a comprehensive food sovereignty and security policy to ensure equitable access to nutritious, culturally relevant food for urban Indigenous populations. OMAFRA, Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing should collaborate with Indigenous-led organizations to create a supportive framework. Follow the principles set out in the [Urban Indigenous Action Plan](#)
- **Promote and Fund Urban Indigenous-Led Initiatives**: Fund community gardens, traditional food education, and food distribution models led by Indigenous organizations.
- **Support Sustainable Urban Indigenous Agriculture**: Fund Indigenous-led Urban agriculture projects that integrate traditional ecological knowledge and focus on self-sustaining, culturally relevant, and environmentally sustainable food systems.
- **Partnerships for Local Food Systems**: Leverage partnerships between municipal governments, Indigenous organizations, and the agricultural sector to improve food security in Urban Indigenous populations

- **Develop Inclusive Food Security Programs:** Create food security programs that reflect the diverse traditional diets of urban Indigenous communities in collaboration with AHACs and Indigenous Friendship Centres.
- **Develop Inclusive and Effective Policy Solutions:** Ensure that food security policies are inclusive of urban Indigenous populations and reflect their diverse cultural food practices. This would involve addressing legislative and regulatory barriers that prevent the full participation of Indigenous communities in food sovereignty efforts.
- **Training and Workshops:** Fund workshops and training programs on growing traditional foods, seed gathering, and sustainable agriculture.
- **Ongoing Funding for Health and Urban Food Programs:** Establish dedicated, ongoing funding for AHACs and Indigenous Friendship Centres to support food sovereignty, food security, and health initiatives, including diabetes prevention and traditional food access programs.
- **Streamline and Coordinate Funding:** Streamline funding mechanisms to reduce fragmentation, ensuring that funding supports coordinated and holistic approaches to food security, integrating traditional and modern food systems.
- **Encourage Collaboration Among Stakeholders:** Facilitate partnerships between Indigenous organizations, local governments, and NGOs to coordinate food security programs.

Existing Examples:

- [The Vancouver Urban Food Security Program](#)
- [The Native Seeds/SEARCH Program](#) in Arizona successfully supports Indigenous communities by preserving and sharing seeds for traditional plants, enabling communities to grow their food in urban and rural settings
- [The Northern Food Security Coalition \(NFSC\)](#): Brings together multiple stakeholders, including federal, provincial, and Indigenous organizations, to address food sovereignty and security challenges in Northern communities, which often include urban Indigenous populations
- [Food Matters Manitoba](#): Working with organizations and individuals throughout the province, they are able to conduct policy scans, collate existing research, and commission research and analysis. Their background papers, reports and briefings provide timely information for political leaders, industry and community organizations.

Housing

Key Issues:

- **The Urban Indigenous population in Ontario is growing**, and they face increasingly complex housing challenges.
- Although on-reserve housing is the responsibility of First Nations governments, Ontario's Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing delivers funding programs through bilateral agreements with the Federal government including housing for off-reserve Indigenous populations. See [Housing Announcement](#)

Recommendations:

- **Continue to prioritize off-reserve Indigenous housing** in future funding programs within [Federal-Ontario Housing agreements](#)
- **Indigenous-Led Housing Strategy:** Create a strategy led by Indigenous people to find appropriate housing solutions for Indigenous populations in urban areas.
- **Integrate Food Production in Housing:** New housing should incorporate spaces for community or individual food production.
- **Support Indigenous-Led Housing Organizations:** Provide resources and funding to Indigenous organizations focused on urban housing.
- **Build 22,000 subsidized Indigenous-owned housing units** over the next 10 years to address core housing needs in Ontario, at a total cost of \$7.3 billion as outlined by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA) Urban and Rural Indigenous Housing Plan for Ontario
- **Engage the private sector through tax incentives** and other opportunities to support Indigenous housing development.
- Create cultural support programs and **foster Indigenous leadership in housing sector** management.

Existing Examples:

- [Mkaana-wii-giwe'aad \(Finding Their Way Home\) Program](#): Focuses on Indigenous housing solutions.
- [Ontario Aboriginal Housing](#): Supports Indigenous housing development and solutions.

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