

Independent Study Unit #1
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Content Focus: Food Security in the North



Image Source: http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674feeding_my_family_plans_aug_25_food_protest_in_nunavut/

Access to healthy, affordable food for residents that reside in remote, northern communities is extremely restrictive. There are a number of variables for this restricted access, ranging from the prohibitive cost for companies to transport food to this part of Canada, even with the aid of food subsidies from the Federal Government, to the short shelf-life of perishable items once they reach their final destination. With high birth rates in the territory of Nunavut, accompanied by high unemployment due to a shortage of both skilled labour and a restrictive job market, important health indicators for the territory continue to fall well below national averages. This unit will allow students to conduct research into the matter concerning Food Security in the Canadian north. Through their research, students will be asked to take a stance on whether enough is being done by our respective governmental bodies to address the issue, or whether the issue of Food Security in the Canadian north will continue to persist due to the remote geographic location of these communities and logistical barriers for companies to price food at a more affordable price. As a culminating task, students will be asked to write a persuasive essay stating their position on the issue of Food Security in the Canadian north.

Lesson Instructions:

Start this unit by pulling up the following links on a whiteboard for your students.

1. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/story/2011/02/10/f-arctic-bay-food-prices.html>
2. http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/06/11/nunavut-food-prices-protest-inuit-poverty_n_1588144.html

These are links to news articles on the high cost of food across communities in Nunavut. Scroll through the pictures that demonstrate the prices of some common food items that can be found in most grocery stores across Canada. In this manner, students can relate these prices to what they would pay for the items where they live. Some of the prices will leave you in a state of disbelief!

Show your students the following stats. They were taken from Statistics Canada from the following link: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-624-x/2013001/article/11763-eng.htm>. Discuss with your students the merits of each point from the Statistics Canada report in relation to inadequate access to healthy and affordable food.

Select health indicators of First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit

- a) *Aboriginal adults have higher obesity rates: First Nations people—26%; Inuit—26%; and Métis—22%; compared to 16% for non-Aboriginal adults.*
- b) *All three Aboriginal groups are more likely to experience household food insecurity than the non-Aboriginal population. The rates were 27% of Inuit, 22% of First Nations people and 15% of Métis compared with 7% of non-Aboriginal people.*
- c) *Inuit are ten times more likely (31%) than non-Aboriginal people (3%) to live in crowded homes—dwellings with more than one person per room—in Canada. While Inuit have traditionally lived in multi-family groupings, a number of reports have suggested that the high rate of families sharing a home may be due to the serious shortage of housing in many communities throughout Nunavut. Inuit are four times more likely to live in homes in need of major repairs (28%) than non-Aboriginal people (7%). Major repairs include defective plumbing or electrical wiring, as well as structural repairs to walls, floors or ceilings.*
- d) *Obesity is recognized as a major public health problem in Canada and the rates are high among Aboriginal people. For adults aged 18 years and older, self-reported height and weight were used to compute body mass index (BMI) to explore obesity. The obesity rate for First Nations people was 26%. It was 22% for Métis, 26% for Inuit and 16% for non-Aboriginal people.*
- e) *Among First Nations people 12 and older, 22% live in households that experience food insecurity, three times the proportion of non-Aboriginal people at 7%. Fifteen percent of Métis, and 27% of Inuit also live in food-insecure households. Food insecurity was a problem for a larger percentage of First Nations females (26%), than First Nations males (16%).*
- f) *The high cost of food in the North contributes to food insecurity. In most isolated communities, it may cost \$360 to \$450 a week to provide a nutritious diet for a family of four, compared with about \$200 to \$250 in the South.*

3. Below are three video links on the issue of Food Security in the Canadian north. You can either watch them together as a class and then discuss their merits, or have students watch them on their own time. If you are to watch one as a class, I would suggest watching “CBC's The National on March 4, 2013,” as it deals with Food Insecurity in Canada in general, and presents an interesting debate on the issue with opposing sides.

CBC Report, August 27th, 2012: Struggling with High Food Prices in Nunavut

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9AXdSRKpc4>

High Food Prices in the North

Pressing for Change in Nunavut

(CBC Report - 27August 2012)

“Struggling with High Food Prices in Nunavut”

CBC's The National on March 4th, 2013

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wzygNKtWGs>



“From CBC's The National on March 4th, 2013, food report's findings dismissed, the federal government is slamming a UN report that says far too many Canadians are going hungry, calling the UN's right-to-food envoy ill-informed. Meanwhile at the Winnipeg Harvest food bank, staff say Canadians should have a basic, legal right to food. And finally, MPs Kellie Leitch, Libby Davies and Carolyn Bennett comment on the report from the United Nations that recommends Canada create a national food strategy.”

From Igloos to Microwaves

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_L-BFCcbMc



“Abbygail Noah was driven south from Nunavut by a desire for an education, and by the high food prices in the north, where 70% of the population is food insecure. Abbygail blames the high cost of food on changes in the Inuit culture. Before the Inuit lived off the land -- but that has now changed due to a reliance on imported goods and services. Today in Ottawa, Abbygail is struggling to support herself and her three-month old son, Thomas. Unable to find work in the capital, and unable to afford to fly home, she says she's trapped.”

After finishing the videos, facilitate a discussion with your class concerning their initial thoughts on the topic. Some sample questions may be:

1. Do your students think the issue of food security in the north correlates with the health indicators provided from Statistics Canada? Why or why not?
2. How aware of this issue were they before learning about it in class?
3. Is it the government's responsibility to find a solution to alleviate the continuing rise in the cost of food?
4. Should access to healthy, affordable food be a basic human right, not only for northern residents, but as evidenced in the "CBC's The National on March 4, 2013," for all Canadians?
5. Should further food subsidies be provided to lower the cost of food transportation to northern communities?
6. As Canadian citizens, why should we be concerned about this issue? Our government, collectively, spends a lot of money supporting United Nations food/housing initiatives overseas. Why isn't the same support being shown in Canada?
7. Below is another point raised in the Statistics Canada report:

"Diabetes is one of many health issues related to obesity. According to the Canadian Diabetes Association, most people with diabetes are overweight or obese, and Aboriginal people face a high risk of developing the disease. Although diabetes was rare among the Aboriginal population in North America prior to 1940, it has now reached epidemic levels in some communities"

8. Ask your students to theorize why diabetes was rare among the Aboriginal population in North America prior to 1940. What do they think some of the reasons for this could have been?
9. On the following pages are a series of news articles and resources that your students can use for initial research to assist them in formulating an opinion on food security in the north. It is up to the teacher to set a time-frame on the submission of this project. Encourage your students to take a constructively critical stance in their writing, and try to offer up their own solution that may alleviate some of the issues touched upon in this unit.

1. **Up Here Magazine, December 2012**

"I don't want kids to be hungry.: In a starving territory, Leese Papatsie launched a rebellion."

By Katherine Laidlaw

<http://www.uphere.ca/node/828>

2. **Feed My Family Initiative**

Excerpt: *"The majority of people in the Northern Regions of North America are carrying enormous burdens, and are trying our best with limited means and resources to feed our families and to build a more sustainable future. We face complex challenges, systemic barriers and a slew of compounding factors that affect all living costs. We are not able to employ many of the usual fixes for food insecurity, especially in the short-term (such as greenhouses), due to extreme cold conditions, limited sunlight, remoteness of our fly-in communities, and mostly because of the blindingly high construction and maintenance costs."*

<http://www.feedingmyfamily.org/>

3. **Sun News, June 9th, 2012**

"Inuit angry over high food prices but unwilling to move"

By Daniel Proussalidis

<http://www.sunnewsnetwork.ca/sunnews/politics/archives/2012/06/20120609-171021.html>

4. **The Globe and Mail: Special Report, Friday April 1st, 2011**

"The trials of Nunavut: Lament for an Arctic nation."

By Patrick White

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/nunavut/the-trials-of-nunavut-lament-for-an-arctic-nation/article547265/?page=1>

5. **CBC News North, February 20th, 2012**

"Nutrition North food subsidy program under fire."

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/story/2012/02/20/north-nutrition-north-letter.html>

6. **Statistics Canada: Select health indicators of First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit**

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-624-x/2013001/article/11763-eng.htm>

7. **Inuit Tuttarvingat: Food Security**

Excerpt: “Health is much more than the absence of disease. A number of factors have an impact on the health of individuals and communities, including income, economic development, housing, environment, food security, education and self-determination.”

<http://www.naho.ca/inuit/health-determinants/food-security/>

8. **The Globe and Mail, June 8th, 2012**

“Inuit Organize Widespread Protest Over Hunger, Food Cost.”

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/inuit-organize-widespread-protest-over-hunger-food-cost/article4243673/>

9. **Health Canada: First Nations and Inuit Health**

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/index-eng.php>