

Examining Local Food Procurement, Adaptive Capacity and Resilience
to Environmental Change in Fort Providence, Northwest Territories, Canada

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Abstract:

Rural Indigenous communities across northern Canada are experiencing high rates of food insecurity as a result of interconnected socio-cultural, economic and environmental challenges. The loss of traditional ecological knowledge, high costs of market foods and lack of infrastructural capacity, is creating multifaceted challenges for isolated, northern communities. Climate change is causing stress on the ability of northern Indigenous communities to acquire, access and utilize food that is culturally relevant and sustainable. This research explores local food procurement activities in the community of Fort Providence, a small Dene-Métis community located in Northwest Territories, Canada. The objective of this research was to consult with key community members to understand the detrimental effects climate change is having on land-based food procurement; but also, to understand the complex socio-cultural, economic and environmental challenges relating to food security. This study utilizes Indigenous Methodology to guide all aspects of the research. Semi-structured interviews with Elders, land-users, and expert community members were utilized in order to integrate the opinions and needs of the community into this research project. Topics of land-based and alternative food procurement and their associated challenges were explored. Strategies to manage food insecurity, promote local food procurement and to create a clear picture of community perspectives in addressing barriers to adaptation, were also explored. From the viewpoint of local residents, this research identifies the barriers to local food procurement and recognizes the multifaceted challenges of food insecurity in the community. The results will inform policies that reflect the needs of local residents, address the distinct socio-cultural, economic and environmental challenges in engaging in local food procurement, and support overall community resilience and adaptive capacities. This research demonstrates that local food procurement is a critical aspect to support food security initiatives, community-wide resilience and adaptive capacities to environmental change in Fort Providence, Northwest Territories, Canada.

Keywords: Northern Food Security, Land-based food procurement, Indigenous Methodology, climate change