AUTHORSHIP AND CORRESPONDENCE

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BACKGROUND
The objectives of this 2013/2014 research project were to:
1. Better understand food security issues in Pictou Landing First Nation;
2. Provide direction for future CFS work in Pictou Landing and beyond;
3. Build capacity with the community for research and policy development;
4. Develop research models and tools for other Mi'kmaq communities.

The research consisted of four main components:
1. Compiling an inventory of resources available in the community;
2. Developing better understanding of food accessibility in the community;
3. Conducting qualitative research (through story-sharing and photovoice);
4. Further contribute to dissemination of healthy eating resources.

KEY FINDINGS
- Residents of Pictou Landing pointed to Boat Harbour pollution (coming from the Pictou County Pulp Mill) as a continued issue that permeates many aspects of their lives. In terms of food security, Boat Harbour pollution is perceived to severely limit both access to traditional foods (such as wild game, seafood, and berries) and ability to grow food on reserve (due to fears of soil contamination).
- **Physical access** to healthy food is problematic. There is only one convenience store in the community that carries mostly high-calorie, low-nutrient foods. The closest grocery stores are a twenty-minute ride from Pictou Landing. There is a pressing need for creative alternatives that can improve access to safe and nutritious foods.
- **Economic access** is also problematic. For those on income assistance in particular, it is not always easy to afford a nutritious diet, and this can be compounded by the need for transportation, limited budgeting skills, limited cooking skills, and/or limited access to traditional foods.
- Other concerns included: **limited physical activity, link between good nutrition and learning** (for school-aged children), **need for more community gardens, relative accessibility of “junk” food, and need for more skill-building/skill preservation** in budgeting, shopping, growing, harvesting (e.g., hunting; fishing; mushroom, berry, and medicinal plant picking), meal-planning, cooking, canning, and so on.
- A number of **assets and resources** already exist in the community but the awareness and use need to be increased; e.g. The Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative, Pictou County Health Authority (including Community Food Mentor training); the school meal program (run very effectively on a limited budget); community gardens; the local knowledge embedded with elders and the school kitchen staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for consideration at local level:
- Bring back Tapitat Market (roadside stand with seasonal vegetables)
- More community gardens/ greenhouse/ raised bed gardens
- Partnering with a farm to grow produce
- Good food box program (bulk-buying of fresh produce)
- Food bank for emergency relief (interim solution)
- Budgeting classes
- Make greater use of the existing Food Mentoring Program
- More inter-generational events where youth can learn traditional foodways (e.g., hunting, fishing, mushroom/berry/medicinal plant picking, etc.) from elders
- Find ways to organize events such as regular cooking and canning classes, gardening workshops, and organized moose hunts for women and youth
- Food deliveries and/or meals-on-wheels for elders
- Shuttle service for grocery shopping
- More healthy foods in the existing store
- Community freezers/ storage (for wild game and bulk buying)
- Improved after-hours access to the gymnasium for youth
- More food education in the curriculum – e.g., hands-on garden work and visits to farms
- School food policy
- Involve all school kids in meal/snack preparation or menu planning
- School kitchen staff – utilize their knowledge without overworking them
- Continue disseminating information on existing resources about healthy eating

Recommendations for higher levels of government (Mi'kmaq, county, provincial and federal)
- There is a need for all levels of government to take food insecurity seriously – those in position of power rarely experience such challenges and there is a need to bring food (in)security more effectively to the forefront of social policy
- Offer programs that can support all of the above recommendations in Pictou Landing and in other Mi'kmaq communities
- Offer programs that can support greater access to physical activities
- Take the issue of Boat Harbour pollution seriously at all levels of government and start to remedy the environmental damage
- Adjust social assistance rates for lone parent families to allow for purchase of nutritious diet.