



THE GROUNDWORK FOR CHANGE

A foundational zine from
the Indigenous Network

Land acknowledgement

Right To Food operates and partners with food organizations from coast to coast to coast. We do this on the lands of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, who have been and continue to be in a reciprocal relationship with the lands, waters, and all beings. This relationship has been embedded in gratitude and respect since time immemorial.

The national office of Right To Food is in Toronto and is on the territory of the Wendat, Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Mississaugas of the Credit. It is now also home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

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Laying the groundwork

An intro from Raymond

An opening letter from Raymond Johnson-Brown, Indigenous Network and Knowledge Sharing Manager.

Hello dear reader,

In August of 2023, I joined Community Food Centres Canada (now Right To Food) to manage the Indigenous Network, a growing group of Indigenous-led/Indigenous-serving community food organizations and programs.

I was filled with excitement and joy at the potential of bringing like-minded Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving organizations together in a collective space for Indigenous resurgence. And as you'll see, the Indigenous Network has achieved much change over even the past year.

The centrepiece of that change is creating a framework that we've named *Groundwork for change*. The framework guides Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving community food organizations in developing programs grounded in Indigenous worldviews.

We've featured the framework in this zine. Inspired by some of the topics in the framework, we've also included some pieces that lay more groundwork for change. This includes further resources that advise on lobbying your MP and securing long-term funding.

So what's a zine and why did we make one?

As self-published magazines with small circulations, zines have a rich history in grassroots movements. They offer a platform for people to speak out in their own voices and air views that are less frequently heard. Zines foster community connections. They challenge mainstream ideas, share knowledge, and inspire action.

This zine looks a bit more polished than traditional zines. It also has the institutional support of Right To Food. But Indigenous food sovereignty hasn't yet been mainstreamed and the Indigenous Network is building an Indigenous resurgence. This zine is part of the groundwork for change.

Wela'liq for picking up this zine. I hope it guides you on your journey.

Raymond

The Indigenous Network

What we've done so far

The Indigenous Network is standing up for Indigenous food sovereignty—and that means making change. Here are highlights of what we've achieved so far this year.

- Bonaventure Fabian, our Two-Spirit Elder, joined us to keep us aligned on our collective journey.
- The network grew to over 225 member organizations that run Indigenous-led and/or Indigenous-serving programs across these lands. (Around two years ago, the network had 49 member organizations!)
- We proudly supported Indigenous leadership and initiatives by distributing grants worth \$1,015,942 to Indigenous-led organizations.
- Our monthly programming engaged over 400 network members. We gave each other relational support, built each other's capacity, and supported each other in advocating for Indigenous food sovereignty.
- We hosted four webinars that showcased four organizations in the Indigenous Network and their different approaches. The audience spanned community food organizations in Community Food Centre Canada's partner network—plus the broader community working across multiple intersections of food sovereignty.
- We launched our first documentary, focusing on Indigenous Network member Teri in Six Nations. The film highlights the need for mainstream media to showcase traditional food systems and sovereignty, diversifying the conversation on income in our country.

"The Indigenous Network has done so much for both my work and mental health. The Elder-led gatherings remind me of the importance of making time to connect to culture. And the check-ins with others in the network help me see how my work in Victoria is a part of a larger picture—a growing Indigenous resurgence."

— Julie Parrell, Victoria Friendship Centre, BC

Defining & deepening Indigenous food sovereignty

A shift in thinking

“Food security is protection, food sovereignty means sitting at my grandmother’s table.”

— Rebecca Sylvestre, Program Manager, Turnor Lake & Birch Narrows Community Food Centre, SK

Understanding food sovereignty requires a shift in thinking.

Food security focuses on access and distribution within existing food systems. It aims to reduce hunger, but does so through reactive solutions shaped by colonial and capitalist structures. While essential, food security does not challenge the root causes of systemic inequity.

Indigenous food sovereignty, on the other hand, is transformative. It asserts our inherent rights to govern our own food systems, based on relationships to land, water, and culture. It is about more than access; it is about control, ceremony, responsibility, and resurgence. Food sovereignty is how we restore our lands and waters and reclaim the systems that have always sustained us. It is a living practice rooted in self-determination.

To support a shared foundation for this work, in 2024 over **190 organizations** from the Indigenous Network participated in Indigenous Education Foundations a four-part learning series co-created with facilitators from **Finding Our Power Together**, an Indigenous youth-led nonprofit.

The sessions offered space to grow our collective understanding of Indigenous food sovereignty and how it can guide our work.

Here's what we explored together:

- **Part 1: Introduction to Indigenous Sovereignty**
Explored sovereignty across land, food, water, and body, laying the groundwork for interconnected thinking.
- **Part 2: Unsettling Systems of Harm**
Examined how colonial systems continue to shape food and health inequities, and how we might resist and transform them.
- **Part 3: Engaging in Communities of Change**
Focused on building strategies for meaningful, community-rooted engagement and collective healing.
- **Part 4: Supporting Indigenous Resurgence and Futurity**
Highlighted how to support long-term visioning, grounded in Indigenous values and futures.

This foundational series created an accountable and safer space for participants to meet each other where they're at, offering a common language and orientation for continued collaboration. It now serves as a baseline resource for all new members of the Indigenous Network.

"The learning sessions deepened our team's understanding of Indigenous food sovereignty and the harrowing colonial history that has shaped current realities."

— Michelle Reining, Vancouver Food Runners, BC

Interested in having these sessions at your organization? Reach out to Raymond at raymond@righttofood.ca!

Groundwork for change

Indigenous approaches to working together

To support Indigenous food sovereignty, we need co-created programming and a resurgence of traditional food systems. This framework lays the groundwork for that change.

Do you work at an Indigenous-led or an Indigenous-serving community food organization? The Groundwork for change framework can guide you in developing your programs.

The framework was created in 2024 by a group of Indigenous Network members who work at Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving community food organizations across Canada.

Using this framework

You should use the framework in all phases of program development to check in and ensure that your community food programs are grounded in Indigenous worldviews.

The framework lays out **three pillars for creating change** and then gives some underlying **principles**. Check out the **Groundwork for Change Workbook** for concrete ways to put the principles into action and **activities** that address each of the three pillars.

The framework



Embracing Communities for Change

Relationships are the heart of this work. This pillar is about how we gather, who we center, and how we hold each other through it.



Honouring Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Our ways of knowing have always fed us spiritually, culturally, physically. This pillar asks: How do we build programs that carry those teachings forward?



Nurturing Sustainable Life Cycles

This work isn't short-term. We're building systems that last. This pillar is about long-term support, funding, growth, and community ownership.

Five principles (that hold the whole thing up)

Cultivate Ancestral Justice

Support Sustainable Futures

Collaborate for Change

Respect Cultural Dignity

Empower Sovereignty

The pillars for creating change

Embracing communities for change

- Utilize community-gathering initiatives as platforms for sharing experiences, knowledge, and resources.
- Foster solidarity and amplify collective voices.
- Discover the power of community and collaboration among diverse Indigenous groups, allies, and stakeholders with common goals and values.

Honouring Indigenous knowledge systems

- Through collaborative research, active community involvement, and meaningful cultural exchange, ensure the preservation and transmission of Indigenous cultural traditions and practices.
- Respect Indigenous cultural heritage by identifying and honouring traditional knowledge and practices within their geographical contexts.

Nurturing sustainable life cycles

- Develop sustainable strategies and mechanisms to support Indigenous communities and initiatives.
- Secure ongoing long-term funding, build strong partnerships, engage in capacity building, and empower local Indigenous communities to lead and take ownership of programs.
- Advocate for policies that uphold Indigenous sovereignty, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship, envisioning a future shaped by Indigenous perspectives and values.

Principles

Cultivate ancestral justice

- Acknowledge and understand historical injustices and the impacts of settler colonial domination on Indigenous communities.
- Respect Indigenous self-determination over their food systems and traditional knowledge.

Collaborate for change

- Work with Indigenous food sovereigntists, emphasizing Indigenous peoples speaking for themselves.
- Foster mutual respect, understanding, and trust at the heart of collective work.

Support sustainable futures

- Support Indigenous efforts to conserve and protect traditional foods and food systems.
- Recognize unsustainable over-exploitation as a human rights issue affecting Indigenous communities.

Respect cultural dignity

- Uphold the cultural and sustainability dimensions of the right to food.
- Prioritize local production, cultural practices, and participatory approaches in food security initiatives.

Empower sovereignty

- Acknowledge Indigenous sovereignty as an inherent right.
- Facilitate Indigenous self-actualization and community participation in decision-making processes.

Tips from our Network

Tip #1

Engage with Indigenous communities in person and bring gifts that are significant and meaningful for your relationship as a gesture of respect and appreciation.

Tip #2

Demonstrate patience: Understand the cyclical nature of community processes and don't come into the relationship with objectives.

Tip #3

Educate organizations and personnel about trauma-informed care, colonial history, and Indigenous identity without adopting a white saviour complex. Promote transparency in roles, processes, and intentions.

Tip #4

Approach engagement with a "with, not for" mentality, respecting Indigenous autonomy and agency. Foster coalition building and community partnerships to support Indigenous resurgence and futurity.

Digital videos for further learning

As part of the *Groundwork for Change* journey, we created a short documentary featuring Teri from Six Nations. In this video, Teri shares how Indigenous food sovereignty is lived and practiced in her community, bringing the principles of the framework to life through story, land, and relationship.

In addition to this documentary, our Indigenous Network YouTube playlist offers a growing collection of webinars and panel discussions. These videos explore food sovereignty through Indigenous lenses, highlighting cultural resilience, community-led solutions, and the work of Indigenous organizations across the country.

Whether you're looking to deepen your understanding, spark new ideas, or simply listen and learn, these videos offer powerful tools for reflection and action.

Watch our playlist on YouTube: [**@righttofoodcanada**](#)

Principles into action

Five steps to lobbying your MP

Want change? Lobbying your MP can be a great strategy. Here's some advice and resources on how to do it, courtesy of the Poverty Action Unit at Right To Food.

Lobbying your MP may seem daunting but it is doable—and we have resources to help you out!

First up, if you're looking for policies to push, check out the latest Indigenous food sovereignty policy priorities from across the country at tinyurl.com/IndigenousFS.

Then download our MP Advocacy Campaign Kit at tinyurl.com/MP-advocacy. You can use the tools to guide your advocacy, following these five steps:

- 1. Plan your event and invite your MP.** Have an event coming up? Check out the link above for an invitation template to encourage your MP to participate. Or if you need event inspiration, take a look at the event ideas in there.
- 2. Get some pointers on lobbying.** Our advocacy kit has tips on how to approach the interaction with your MP.
- 3. Pass on some stats to your MP.** Visit FoodSecurityNow.ca, a website we launched in 2024. It contains local data on poverty and food insecurity for every federal riding. The data includes demographic breakdowns that illustrate the vast inequalities in our society, including a comparison of poverty rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Look up your riding and hand your MP a printout of your riding profile.
- 4. Keep your community in the loop.** Don't forget to share your advocacy work with your community on social media. You'll find templates in our MP Advocacy Campaign Kit.
- 5. Follow up with your MP.** Wrap it all up with a follow-up note to your MP. The kit contains a template for that too!

The Poverty Action Unit (PAU) develops policy solutions, builds capacity for advocacy at the community level, and mobilizes for federal income and social policy changes to address food insecurity. Connect with PAU at pau@righttofood.ca.

Nurturing sustainable life cycles

Five tips to getting long-term funding

Getting long-term funding is key to laying the groundwork for change. The Development team at Right To Food has some tips to help you out.

Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving organizations play a crucial role in supporting Indigenous food sovereignty. To ensure the longevity of these organizations, securing long-term funding is essential.

Here are some quick tips to help you navigate the funding landscape:

1. **Build relationships with funders.** Funding isn't just about applying for grants—it's about building relationships and trust. Once that trust is established the focus can then shift to nurturing that relationship. Engage with funders early and often, keeping them informed about your work and its impact. You'll need to personalize your engagement for each donor but it's worth investing the time: This relationship building can lead to multi-year funding and renewed support.
2. **Diversify your funding sources.** Relying on a single source of funding is risky. Diversify by applying for multiple grants, seeking private donations, and exploring partnerships with other organizations. This approach ensures a more sustainable funding base.
3. **Highlight cultural relevance.** Emphasize how your program aligns with Indigenous knowledge systems and practices. Funders are increasingly recognizing the importance of culturally relevant programming, and this can set your application apart from others.
4. **Demonstrate long-term impact.** Funders want to see that their money will make a difference over time. In your applications, include clear metrics and evidence of your program's long-term impact. Show how your work contributes to sustainable life cycles within your community.
5. **Leverage community support.** Community backing can strengthen your funding applications. Include letters of support, testimonials, and evidence of community involvement to show funders that your program is deeply rooted in the community.

For a list of funding opportunities for Indigenous-led programs, visit righttofood.ca/indigenous-grants.

Carrying it forward

A final word

As we close the first edition of *The Groundwork for Change*, we know that the work is only beginning.

This zine isn't a summary, it's a seed being planted in the ground. It's a gathering of learnings, practices, and tools that are rooted in Indigenous worldviews that ask each of us to show up with intention, humility, and courage. Whether you are an Elder, youth, farmer, advocate, or community organizer, this work belongs to all of us.

But how do we take these ideas and put them into practice?

That's where the **Groundwork for Change Workbook** comes in. Designed as a companion to this zine, the workbook has concrete activities, reflection prompts, and tools for living out the pillars and principles in your everyday programming. It's for organizations, individuals, and communities who want to move from learning to collective action.

Download the workbook here:
righttofood.ca/groundwork-for-change

Let this be an invitation to you to continue to deepen the work and bring others alongside you on that journey. To hold space for joy, complexity, and transformation. When we ground ourselves in Indigenous knowledge and collective care, we plant the seeds for something beautiful.

We can't wait to see how you bring this to life in your communities.

In Solidarity,

The Indigenous Network at Right To Food



Indigenous Network member organizations

GJ Multicultural Services Society (MCS) | Archway Community Services | York Region Food Network | North Hastings Community Cupboard | Bow Valley Food Alliance | Canadian Mental Health Association Simcoe County Branch | Community Development Council of Quinte | Athabasca Health Authority | SaltWater Community Association Inc. | Benwell Enrichment Center | Bethel Outreach Community Services | Youth Empowerment Assistance Centre (YEAC) and Senior Empowerment Assistance Centre (SEAC) | International Center For Family Welfare (ICFW) | Langford Conservancy | Town of Bridgewater | Halton Food for Thought | Food for Life Canada | Community Support Centre Haldimand Norfolk | The Oladele Foundation/ African Cancer Support Group | Better Days Foundation | Teach to Grow Canada Foundation | Wings of Hope | Leftovers Foundation | Pamir Canadian Multiculturalism Council | Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Association | BROWN BAGGING FOR CALGARY STREET KIDS SOCIETY | carya | Highfield Regenerative Farm | rare Charitable Research Reserve | Camperville Family Resource Centre Inc. | The Nourish and Develop Foundation | SSVP Carbonear Foodbank | Meals on Wheels PEI | Cold Lake First Nations | Collingwood Youth Centre | Low Entropy | Tamarack Cottage (Interior Health, MHSU) | Community Connections Society of Southeast BC | Mobile Food Market | Nourish Nova Scotia | Healthy Families, Healthy Babies - Dawson Shelter Society | Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte | Nourish Cowichan Society | Cowichan Green Community | Free Play for Kids | Campus Food Bank | New Grocery Movement | The Mustard Seed Edmonton | Stonegate Community Health Centre | David McAnthony Gibson Foundation (GlobalMedic) | Flat Bay Band Inc. | Greater Fredericton Social Innovation | Multicultural Association of Fredericton | Under One Sky Friendship Centre | Greener Village | Food For All NB | Aliments pour tous NB | People for a Healthy Community | Partenaires du secteur Aylmer | Access of West Michigan | Greater Sudbury Environmental Network | Lakeside Hope House o/a Hope House Guelph | Chalmers Community Services Centre | North End Community Health Association | Chebucto Family Centre, a service of The Home of the Guardian Angel | Compass Community Health | LIFT Church | 541 Eatery & Exchange | NunatuKavut Community Council | Labrador Friendship Centre | Hay River Committee for Persons with Disabilities | Senden Agricultural Resource Centre | Oldtown Storytellers' Society | Stoney Trail Wellness Centre | Heal with Horses | Everdale | Hope Community Services | Sirivik | Kaslo Community Services Society | Otonabee-South Monaghan Food Cupboard - Keene United Church | Kenora Chiefs Advisory Ogimaawabitoong | Community Resource Centre | Healthy Kimberley Food Recovery Depot | Loving Spoonful | Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre | Woodland Wellness Center | Loudoun Hunger Relief | Interfaith Food Bank Society of Lethbridge | United Way for the City of Kawartha Lakes | Noojmowin Teg Health Centre | Igbo Association of London and Area | Urban Roots London | Northwest London Resource Centre | Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre | South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre | Madawaska Maliseet First Nation | South East Grey Community Health Centre | Madadijwan E.D.C | Community Food Connections Association | United Way Simcoe Muskoka | Georgian Bay Food Network | Roots to Table Food Security Network | Kara-Kata Afrobeat Society of Canada | FRUITFUL HOUSE FAMILY CHURCH | Seva Food Bank | Ecosource | Innovation Assistance | Native Friendship Centre of Montréal | Refuah V'Chesed | Collectif La DAL | Les Fruits Défendus | Stoney Nakoda Nation | Midwest Food Resource Project Inc. | Neighbourlink North York | The Sharing Place Food Centre | African, Caribbean & Black Wellness Resource Centre | Tungasuvvingat Inuit | Parkdale Food Centre | Bethany Hope Centre | Caldwell Family Centre Inc. | United Way of Bruce Grey | Alberta Food Matters | County Food Hub | Table de Quartier Sud de l'Ouest-de-l'île | Canadian Mental Health Port Alberni Branch | Kuu-us Crisis Line Society | Community Health Centres of Northumberland | Portapique Hall | Prince Albert Metis Women's Association Inc. | Rama First Nation Food Bank | Metepenagiag Health Centre | Bethlehem Apostolic Church | The Sharing Farm Society | Richmond Family Place Society | Richmond Food Bank Society | Green Light NB Enviro Club Feu Vert | Comité d'Action Sociale de Saint-Joseph-du-Lac | Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre | CHEP Good Food Inc. | Birchmount Community Action Council | East Scarborough Storefront | Malvern Family Resource Centre | Scarborough Food Security Initiative | Ballard Food Bank | University District Food Bank | Sunshine Coast Community Services Society | Birds Culture Camp Corp. | Major Uplifting Project | Way Forward Apostolic Ministries International | Start Me Up Niagara | Food First NL | Sudbury Shared Harvest | Kingdom Acts Foundation | Alex House | Georgina Community Food Pantry | Thunder Bay District Health Unit | Anti-Hunger Coalition Timmins | The Meeting Place Tobermory | Colleaga | Kenyan Canadian Association | Madison Community Services | The 519 | Alexandra Park Community Centre | Hand Up From Hunger Toronto | Parkdale Community Foodbank | Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre | Agincourt Community Services Association | All Saints Church Community Centre | Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Community Health Centre | Regent Park Community Health Centre | Scadding Court Community Centre | Church of the Holy Trinity - Guildwood | West Toronto Photography Group | Riverdale Housing Animation Programs | GREENEST CITY | Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services | summerlunch+ (MakeWay) | Homes First | Growing Neighbourhoods Foundation | All Saints Church Homes for Tomorrow Society | Dixon Hall | TNG Community Services | East York Meals on Wheels | Flemingdon Health Centre | Colchester Community Support Society | Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre | Unique Get Together Society | Downtown Eastside Women's Centre | Little Mountain Neighbourhood House | Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House | Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House | South Vancouver Neighbourhood House | Farm to Cafeteria Canada Society | Food Stash Foundation | Vancouver Fruit Tree Project | The KidSafe Project Society | Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society | Village Vancouver Transition Society | West End Seniors' Network | Grandview Woodland Food Connection | Vancouver Coastal Health - Healthiest Babies Possible | Jewish Family Services | Growing Chefs | A Better Life Foundation | Kiwassa Neighbourhood Services Association | Vancouver Food Runners | Vaughan Community Health Centre | Living Edge Community Church | Connections Place Clubhouse | FED Urban Agriculture Society | Shelbourne Community Kitchen Society | FRP-BC | Victoria Community Food Hub | The Rock Soup Greenhouse and Food Bank | Somali HelpAge Association | Riverwood Church | African Communities of Manitoba Inc. (ACOMI) | PROGRAMME JEUNESSE ICI CORP. | Thrive Community Support Circle | Fireweed Food Co-op | FortWhyte Farms | The West Central Women's Resource Centre

Indigenous Network

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RIGHT TO FOOD

About Right To Food

Right To Food resources and strengthens the community food sector and mobilizes with our partners across the country for progressive policy change.

We believe in a country where the right to food is realized for all and where every community has a place for food that nurtures health and well-being, belonging, and social justice.

Learn more at righttofood.ca

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