



NOURISH  
ANCHOR COHORT

2021 -  
2023

# RECONCILIATION IN ACTION

Labrador Anchor Team  
Impact Report



Country Foods on Plates  
in Labrador

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# LABRADOR ANCHOR TEAM

The Labrador Anchor Team's work is situated within the context of the Nourish Anchor Cohort, a two-year national innovation program that ran from 2021 - 2023. The goal of the Anchor Cohort was to support health systems across Canada to develop anchor leadership, signalling their commitment to harness the long-term presence, mission, and resources of health care institutions to anchor wellbeing in their communities through food. The Cohort brought together seven multidisciplinary place-based teams to work on 'portfolios of systems interventions' that activated community assets and explored innovative food for health solutions. The accomplishments outlined in this report reflect their efforts to nudge local and regional health systems toward meaningful transformation in order to promote better health for people and the planet.

The Labrador-Grenfell Health (LGH) and Food First NL (FFNL) collaborative aims to build a network that creates more equitable health outcomes for Indigenous peoples and communities by improving access to traditional foods and food security across LGH regional health authority.\* This geography covers 37,000 people living across Labrador - including the Innu, Inuit and Southern Inuit - as well as communities North of Bartlett's Harbour on the Northern Peninsula.

*\*Note: At the start of the Cohort, LGH was one of four regional health authorities across Newfoundland and Labrador. The province has since moved to a provincial health authority model and now has a single organization governing health services across all four regions.*

The Labrador Anchor Team's approach is based on the understanding that access to traditional foods plays an integral role in the health of Indigenous peoples in Labrador. However, ongoing processes of colonization and the impacts of climate change create significant barriers to accessing these foods as part of maintaining good health and healing in health care settings. This includes the loss of coastal sea ice and volatile weather, which has impeded travel between communities, led to the loss of habitat for plants and wildlife, and made it harder to hunt and fish.

As a result, the team's strategy is to leverage the health authority's food budget of over \$4.8 million to center Indigenous leadership and ways of working, address discrimination against Indigenous peoples in health care, and use the transformative power of food to promote community food security alongside better health outcomes.

# TACKLING WICKED PROBLEMS THROUGH FOOD FOR HEALTH LEVERS

Each team in the Anchor Cohort named a 'Wicked Problem' that they looked to address during their time in the Cohort. Wicked problems were identified through a process of problem space mapping, stakeholder engagement, and surfacing the historical roots of how problems came to be.

## Labrador Anchor Team's Wicked Problem

Indigenous peoples in the Labrador-Grenfell Health Region experience significant barriers to accessing traditional foods. This contributes to inequitable health experiences and outcomes within their communities.

The Labrador Anchor Team identified 11 priority Food for Health Levers to action in their work. The Food for Health Levers were developed by Nourish to frame powerful ways of impacting climate, equity, and community well-being through food in health care. These leverage points help us make connections between our food, health, social, and ecological systems and reach their greatest potential when working in concert.



# INNOVATION IN ACTION

**During the Anchor Cohort, the team employed a collaborative, experimental approach to developing and testing smaller scale ideas at the program and policy level in seven key areas:**

1. Joining a roadshow around Labrador to engage communities in enabling traditional foods access in health care and other public institutions
  2. Surveying patients, residents, families, and communities to understand traditional foods preferences in health care settings and integrating preferred country foods into health care menus
  3. Building relationships and procurement channels to source country foods directly from hunters and gatherers
  4. Collecting stories of who hunted the meat and where it came from to share with patients and residents
  5. Establishing partnerships with local licensed butchers to process wild game
  6. Beginning the process of establishing a local abattoir to help secure a long-term supply
  7. Setting the stage for more local procurement of vegetables by health care institutions, supported by the Pye Centre for Northern Boreal Food Systems.
- The team hopes to advance this intervention further through their participation in the next Nourish Cohort, 2023-2025



Sherry Lee Penney from the Labrador team provides a traditional foods cooking demonstration at the Anchor Cohort gathering in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Summer 2022

# OUTCOMES & IMPACT

The Labrador Anchor Team established a diverse portfolio of **12 mutually reinforcing interventions** that emerged from **42 initial ideas** identified during the planning phase. These include:

The development and testing of four 'niche' innovations:

- **A Traditional Meat Pilot** - expanding access to hunting and partnerships with health care
- The **reintroduction of wild game** into health care menus
- Supporting the creation of a **Wild Game Abattoir** to process locally harvested game
- An ongoing probe to find a way to secure **non-local caribou sustainably** while local hunting was not permitted due to management and protection of the local herd

A variety of 'nudges' leading to **five systems changes** to make these innovations possible and more sustainable:

- Early exploration of how to secure **CanadaGap Certification** - a key to ensuring food safety and scaling local production to access foods from local suppliers
- Supporting a local farmer in their Environmental Impact Assessment, which led to the certification of the **Wild Meat Abattoir**
- The exploration of culturally appropriate ways to **compensate harvesters** for their harvest
- Supporting the **recognition of Indigenous Knowledge** in the context of food inspection and safety
- Laying the groundwork for other local institutions to **implement country food** in their food service operations



# OUTCOMES & IMPACT



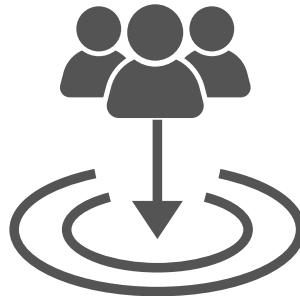
11 country food meals served to 71 long-term care residents by the end of summer 2023



Harvesters were satisfied and happy to be able to harvest food that would be shared with Elders



Increased awareness of the regulatory pathway to accessing country food in an institutional setting, with processes in place to procure these foods.



100% patient satisfaction with locally procured and culturally prepared country food meals. The only complaint received was wanting even more caribou meat in the soup!



The unmeasurable - yet significant - value of the steps taken towards reconciliation with Indigenous communities, harvesters, and the broader community in Labrador, including greater understanding that country food has a valuable place in the overall menu planning process

The real significance of the Labrador Anchor Team's work is likely to be realized in the future, as the tangible progress made in Goose Bay not only spurs continuous experimentation in that community, but serves as an inspiration and exemplar to stimulate innovative work on expanding access to traditional foods in other communities and institutions in the region and across the new provincial health authority.

## LOOKING FORWARD

The Labrador Anchor Team intends to continue providing country foods to long-term care residents in Happy Valley-Goose Bay more frequently as they are available throughout the seasons, and their goal is to expand country food offerings to more institutions throughout the Labrador-Grenfell zone of the new provincial health authority over the coming years. This will require additional coordination and an increase in the supply of country foods, so the details of how those foods will be secured will be work for the team participating in the next Nourish Cohort from 2023-2025. Thanks to their participation in the first Anchor Cohort, they feel the enabling conditions have shifted for this work to gain momentum. Labrador-Grenfell Health worked very closely with Indigenous groups, local hunters, NL Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, Wildlife Division, NL Department of Health and Community Services and others, to ensure appropriate policies and procedures have been followed to allow country foods safely into health care facilities - as with all foods served to patients and residents in these settings. In the early days of the Nourish project they were unsure if they would ever see the reality of country food to plate within long-term care, and they are incredibly proud of this accomplishment. They also intend to continue advocating and working with provincial legislation to make processes more accommodating for local hunters acquiring permits to sell wild game.

**Want to learn more? Reach out to the Labrador Anchor Team about their work, or contact [Nourish](#) if you're inspired to lead change in your own community.**

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# LABRADOR ANCHOR TEAM SNAPSHOT

## Labrador-Grenfell Health (LGH)

LGH was one of Newfoundland and Labrador's four regional health authorities at the start of the Cohort, covering Labrador and all communities north of Bartlett's Harbour on the Northern Peninsula. By the end of the Cohort, Newfoundland and Labrador had re-organized their health services into one provincial health authority: Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services. Labrador-Grenfell is now one of the regional zones.

### Participating Sites:

The Labrador Health Centre  
Happy Valley-Goose Bay Long Term Care



**25 beds at the health centre**  
**71 beds at the long-term care home**

## Food First NL (FFNL)

Provincial non-profit organization that collaborates with communities and organizations across Newfoundland and Labrador to advance food security. Food First NL's mission is to actively promote comprehensive, community-based solutions to ensure access to adequate and healthy food for all people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

### Other Organizations Involved:

- Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Nunatsiavut Government
- NunaKatiget Inuit Community Corporation Inc.
- NunatuKavut Community Council
- Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation

## Number of Meals Impacted

11 additional country food meals have been served to long-term care residents to date, as a result of funds provided through Nourish grants. The team's goal is to incorporate additional country food meals on a minimum bi-weekly basis (with hopes of more frequently in the future) according to their ability to sustainably source enough country foods throughout the seasons.



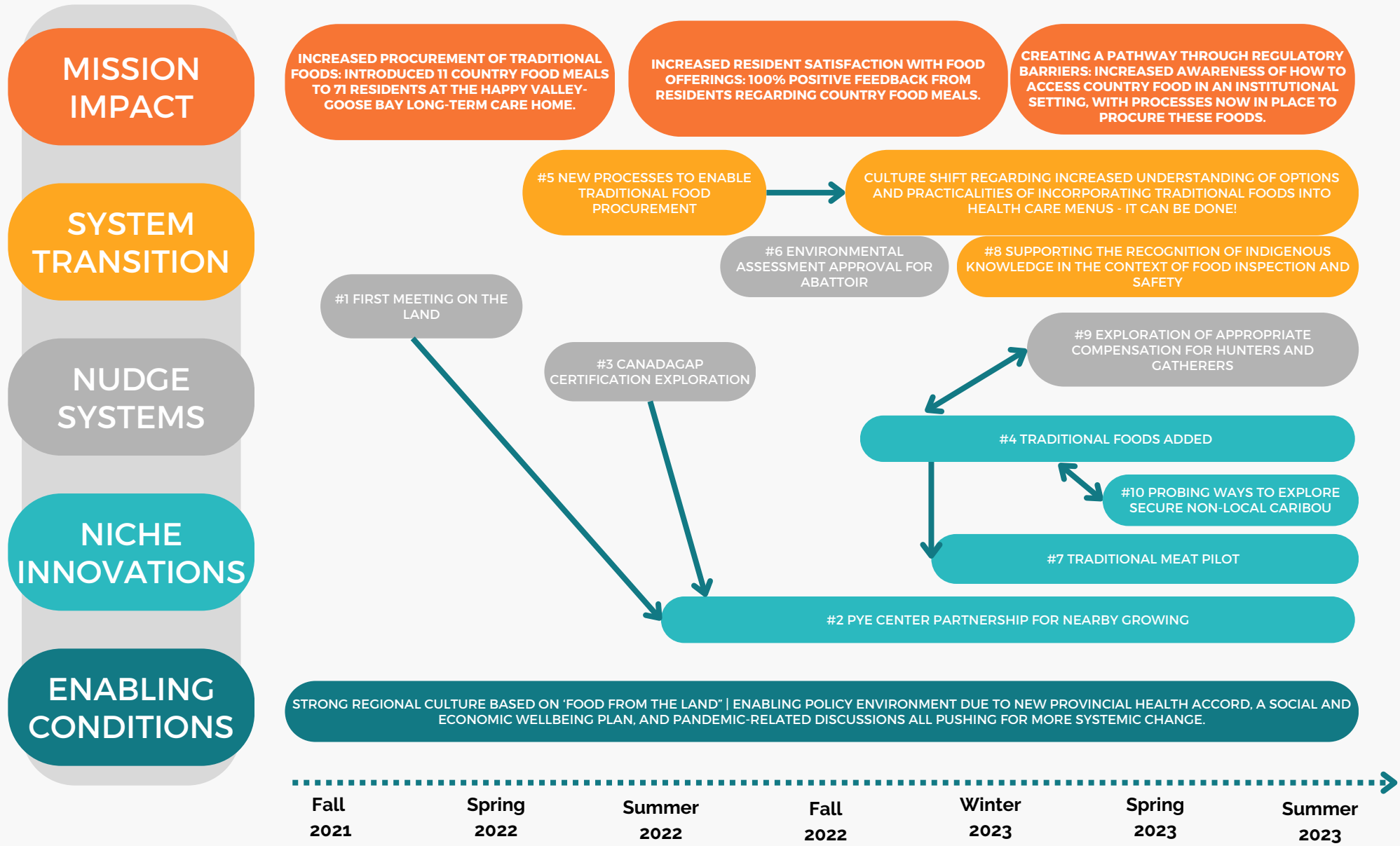
**LGH's Food Budget:**  
**\$4,825,491 annually**



**37,000 people, inclusive of three Indigenous groups - the Innu Nation of Nitassinan, the Inuit of Nunatsiavut, and the Southern Inuit of NunatuKavut**



# DETAILED INTERVENTIONS & OUTCOMES



Reference Number & Date	Title	Key Outcomes	Significance	Contributions
1. Fall 2021	First Meeting on the Land	Leaders from LGH and FFNL learned Indigenous foodways from knowledge keepers in Labrador and Nunatukavut while walking the snowy landscape and participating in activities such as creating sealskin crafts and learning about Indigenous food traditions (e.g., rabbit snaring).	Created an opportunity for a paradigm shift in understanding Indigenous foodways, as well as relationship building with Elders and within the team.	The Labrador Anchor Team organized the gathering and used Nourish grant funds to pay for some of the costs.
2. Summer 2022 - Ongoing	Pye Center Partnership for Nearby Growing	A new LGH partnership with The Pye Center for Northern Boreal Food Systems creates a pathway to grow traditional vegetables/herbs nearby and source them for health services.	A win-win partnership with the potential to create local supply for traditional foods, and a longer-term commitment to explore and address traditional elements of local food systems.	The Labrador Anchor Team secured funding to support engagement sessions on site at the Pye Centre and strengthen relationships for future procurement opportunities.
3. Summer 2022	CanadaGap Certification Exploration	The Pye Center and LGH began to explore how smaller local producers can feasibly obtain CanadaGap Certification.	Access to CanadaGAP certification expands options for local procurement of traditional foods for LGH and is a regulatory hurdle the team needed to overcome.	The Labrador Anchor Team and The Pye Center surfaced issues to understand steps that could be taken to overcome barriers.
4. Fall 2022 - Winter 2023	Traditional Foods Added to Facility Menu	A survey of preferred foods by residents of the Goose-Base Long Term Care facility in the fall leads to adjustment in facility menus by the winter.	The hands-on exploration of preferred foods surfaced 'authentic' demand for different goods and adjustments to the menu demonstrated the ability of facilities to be responsive.	The Labrador Anchor Team designed and implemented the survey, and assisted Goose Bay staff to explore the implications of findings.

5. Fall 2022 - Winter 2023	New processes to enable traditional food procurement	The Labrador Anchor Team engaged with LGH and Government of NL Departments of Health, Community Services, Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture to determine the processes for acquiring and serving wild game and other locally acquired foods. LGH collaborated with Indigenous partners to appropriately engage with local hunters and gatherers to acquire these foods.	This work helped to build partnerships with the provincial Government regarding legislation and regulations impacting access to traditional foods for institutional settings. It also strengthened linkages between the health system and Indigenous peoples as part of the food procurement process.	The Labrador Anchor Team engaged directly with regulators and with hunters and gatherers to support these new processes and create sustainable systems.
6. Winter 2023	Environmental Assessment Approval for Abattoir	A local business receives Provincial Environmental Assessment approval to establish a local abattoir for processing traditional meats.	This is the first such approval in the region since the previous abattoir shut down and allows traditional food advocates to develop and test ways to sustainably procure traditional meat for the health system.	The Labrador Anchor Team provided a Letter of Support to the application.
7. Winter 2023 - Ongoing	Traditional Meat Pilot	Local hunters and gatherers were engaged to supply berries and game meats (e.g., partridge and rabbits from Labrador as well as caribou from Scandinavia, sourced from elsewhere due to restrictions on local caribou hunting) for Goose Bay's Long-term Care facility.	Goose Bay residents react positively to the addition of new foods using traditional recipes, and traditional food advocates surface more opportunities and barriers to harvesting and procuring local foods.	The Labrador Anchor Team led the process and used Nourish funds to purchase meat.
8. Winter 2023 - Ongoing	Exploration of Appropriate Compensation	Advocates surfaced the need to discuss if and how to standardize compensation for hunters and gatherers, as well as devise culturally appropriate ways to do so (e.g., not paying for country foods directly but supporting costs through items such as gas and ammunition).	Addressing these operational issues in a fair and culturally responsive manner is important to sustain the work in Goose Bay, move toward a sustainable running abattoir, and continue the work beyond the Cohort timeframe.	The Labrador Anchor Team worked through issues with partners, informed by information exchanges with other Nourish Cohort members across Canada.

9. Winter 2023 - Ongoing	Supporting the recognition of Indigenous Knowledge in the context of food inspection and safety.	LGH obtains meats from experienced hunters and gatherers who ensure country foods are stored under appropriate conditions before handover to LGH.	Traditional methods of harvesting and preparation have been safe for thousands of years, asserting this is an important part of decolonizing food systems.	The Labrador Anchor Team secured input from local partners and other Nourish Cohort members to devise an approach that would be sustainable.
10. Spring 2023	Probing Ways to Secure Non-Local Caribou	LGH acquired meat from Scandinavia through a local retailer (because it is not currently allowed to hunt Caribou in Labrador), leading to the exploration of other sourcing options for locally significant foods procurement from other partners across the North.	Caribou is very culturally important, but the local herd has declined and cannot be hunted at this time. In this case the carbon footprint of importing has to be balanced with the cultural meaning of access.	The Labrador Anchor Team explored alternative pathways for sourcing caribou and made arrangements to bring it into the province as well as include it in the menu using traditional recipes at the Long-term Care facility in Goose Bay.



**NOURISH**

**Nourish believes food is a powerful way to build health for both people and the planet, in addition to providing comfort and healing to patients, creating more resilient communities, and addressing climate change.**

**Starting from a community of practice, we have grown to a network of leaders, organizations, and communities, shifting the focus upstream to work preventatively through food in health care.**

**Through our work with cohorts of leaders and action learning programs, we equip innovative individuals and teams with the skills and momentum to empower bold leadership in climate action and health equity. We work across community, institutional, and policy scales to steward food for health innovation.**

**Join us!**

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