



Nourish

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Anchor Cohort

Nourishing Conditions for Change

Stewardship and Community Care: A Country Foods Journey through Newfoundland and Labrador

April 2025

Almost smack dab in the middle of Newfoundland you'll find an area called Sandy Badger. Also known as Moose Management Area 16, Sandy Badger is prized by outdoor enthusiasts for its forests, lakes, and trails. And, it's where first-time visitor Denley Jacque found a moose.

Working as a Fisheries Officer with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Denley Jacque was born and raised in a hunting and trapping family. "Canoeing, boating, spending time net fishing, that was my childhood," he said. "My father is from the north coast of Labrador. I am an Indigenous individual through the Nunatsiavut government, which is the Inuit government of Labrador North."

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador offers charitable moose licenses, where hunters and charitable organizations can partner to hunt a moose. The hunter then donates the animal, working with the charitable organization to get nutritious, locally sourced food to those whom it can benefit most. The initiative aims to enhance local food security, increase people's access to nutritious and healthy local food, and help manage big game in the province.

Last year, Denley was connected with Dana Marshall, Regional Food Animator for Labrador with Food First NL, about the possibility of hunting a charitable moose license. [Food First NL](#) is a non-profit

organization working to advance everyone's right to food in Newfoundland and Labrador. As Project Lead for Team NL in Nourish's Anchor Cohort, Dana works with Food First NL and the Labrador Anchor Collaborative to build supplier relationships between health care and Indigenous communities, organizations, and governments, and to help integrate country foods into health care menus.

With Denley as the hunter and Dana as the bridge and connector between the hunter and health care, they worked together to make the moose hunt a reality. Both Dana and Denley have childhood memories of visiting family members in the Paddon Home, a former long-term care facility in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador. And, both speak passionately about the importance of country foods as a part of community life.

Country Foods

Sometimes referred to as Indigenous foods, country foods include any food that is trapped, fished, hunted, harvested, or grown outside of commercial food systems (Health Canada, 2023). These include land and sea animals, fish, birds, berries, edible greens, and seaweed (Government of Nunavut, 2025).

Country foods are nutrient-dense, contribute to higher quality diets, and are associated with greater food security. Studies have shown that, on days when people consume country food, they have higher intakes of protein and vitamins A and C, and a lower intake of refined carbohydrates, saturated fat, and sodium (Rosol et. al., 2016).

Colonization's legacies and ongoing impacts, climate change, and urbanization have decreased people's access to country foods. Communities and organizations like Nourish and Food First NL are working to restore country foods as a vital and recognized part of food security and healing. This involves nurturing relationships among hunters,

harvesters, and elders; educating about the benefits of country foods; addressing regulatory and policy barriers; and, creating pathways for country foods into health care.

"Many people have relatives that go into long-term care. I know, just from hearing what's around my own town, a lot of it does come back to food. A friend of mine used to bring wild food in for his father that went into long-term care because that's what his father wanted. A lot of times, he didn't eat the other food or didn't eat as much, and he would ask for certain items," said Denley. "You know, the elders grew up on these foods. I've had family in long-term care, and one of the things that they said is that, a lot of times - it's not that they're not providing good meals, but it's not meals that a lot of the elders were used to. They're used to their country foods. They want their country foods; their country foods are their health, how they survived."

Bringing more country food into health care is part of a movement to support people's health and healing by offering people foods that are familiar, comforting, and culturally appropriate. Culturally appropriate food considers food within a cultural framework; it is not only the food itself, but also the cultural practices around the preparation and consumption of the food. This includes where, how, and with whom the food is sourced, prepared, and eaten.

"Not only do Indigenous foods have visible and strong health benefits, they also hold a working knowledge of the language, history, and technology used by the people who eat them. They are truly local foods and should be centered and held up as we find solutions to support our climate crisis."

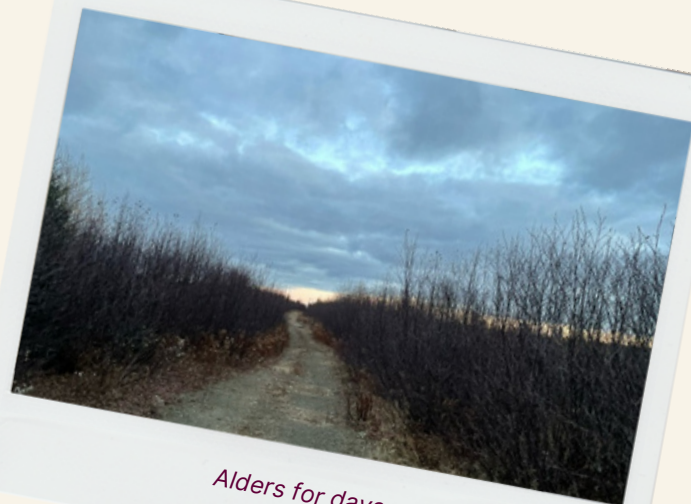
Jared Qwustenuxun Williams
and Fiona Devereaux
(Nourish 2024)

On the Hunt

With his homebase in Labrador, Denley traveled to Sandy Badger for the hunt. He worked with his co-hunter, Edwin Russell, local to the Sandy Badger area, to learn about the location. With funding from Nourish, Food First NL was able to cover their expenses for the hunt, including gas, food, and processing costs. After a few days together not seeing any animals, early in the morning on the fifth day, Denley and Edwin found two moose.

"Sure enough, we got into a fresh track early that morning, that fresh track leading us into bumping an animal," said Denley. "We could hear them running in the trees right next to us. It was an old forestry road that was grown up with alders, so a lot of times you didn't have a lot of area to overlook. We were fortunate enough that walking up the road 250 yards turned into a little break in the alders, and there was our moose." While it would have been possible for the two hunters to capture both the moose they found, a charitable license permits taking one moose only.

The hunters worked together to track, hunt, do the initial processing of the moose, then transport the moose to the butcher in Grand Falls-Windsor the following day. Working with Dana, Denley ensured that the requested cuts of meat met the needs of the moose's intended recipients - cuts like roasts and ground meat. While most of the moose meat went to a long-term care facility, the ribs were donated to the Labrador Friendship Centre for soup and some meat was donated to the Labrador Correctional Centre for a meal for the inmates.



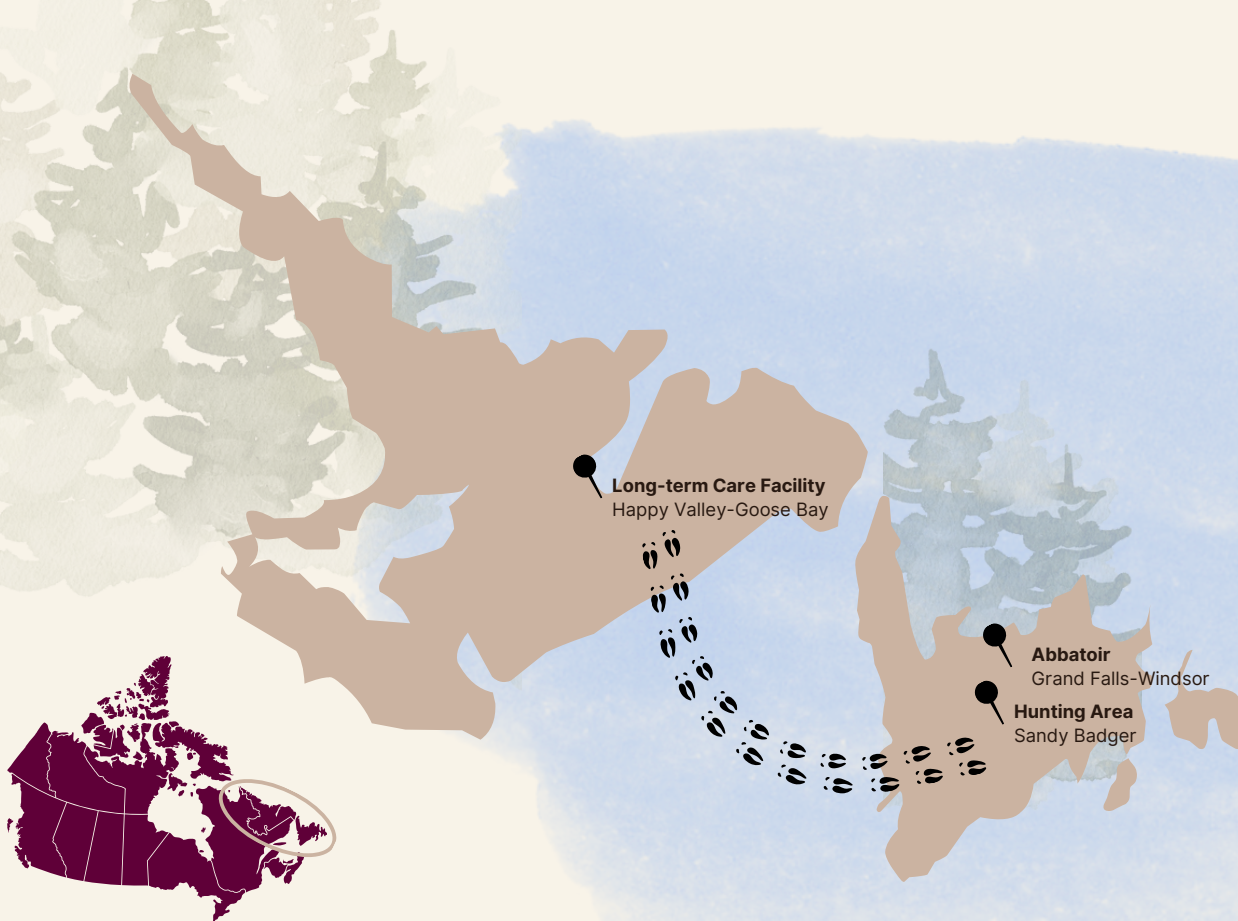
Alders for days...



Maybe a different perspective will help find a moose!



A successful hunt = happy hunters.



Feeding Community

The feedback people shared after receiving the moose meat was overwhelmingly positive, with people loving the food. Denley shared how excited the long-term care facility's head chef was when he dropped off over 200 pounds of moose meat. The chef had created some smaller meals centred around country foods in the past and had seen firsthand how much it meant to people when it was served. "He ended up saying, even for the amount that I dropped off - which was almost an entire moose - he ended up informing me that, once he starts cooking - this he guarantees - this is probably not even going to last long, even for the amount that we had," said Denley. "They don't have leftovers because it's gone. They want it. It's very well utilized, so he was quite excited."

One of the current challenges in making country foods more available in Labrador is processing and storage. While work is underway to build one, Labrador currently lacks a licensed abattoir with a certified butcher to cut and process meat. "Let's make it more feasible, and if it's more feasible, it has to include an abattoir," said Denley.

He explained that if he harvested a moose in Labrador, he would have to freeze the meat, travel 12 hours by road and ferry to the island to a certified butcher, get it cut, and journey back. By hunting on the island, he could go directly to the butcher. Even so, the moose hunt required travel from Labrador to the island twice - once for the hunt and, after a two-week wait for the processing to be done, another journey to pick up the meat.

"If we had the abattoir up and running, say in Central Labrador right now, it would make things so much easier just getting country foods from the harvester to the abattoir and then into our healthcare facilities," said Dana. "Right now, we aren't able to do as much as we could be doing." From the time Denley started his journey to when he dropped off the meat at the long-term care facility, it took a total of nine days away from his work and family. The hope is that a new abattoir in Goose Bay, Labrador will save time and costs, making country foods - and the skills and relationships that go along with them - more accessible and available.

Another challenge to getting country foods into health care is the way that regulations and policies combine with unwritten ground rules and colonial mindsets to create the perception that Indigenous harvesting practices are unsafe and/or out-of-date. Land use, agriculture, and health and safety regulations favour large producers and processors, focusing on an export-oriented food system. Health and safety regulations that may be necessary for large-scale, industrial facilities are not always relevant to local producers. To realize the power of country foods in health and healing requires the provincial and federal government to create an enabling regulatory and policy environment that ensures safety and that is adaptable and responsive to local contexts.

When asked what he would tell government officials about country food, Denley said, "I would tell officials that we have to make it more readily available. I'm sure there's studies out there, and even going beyond studies - I don't even have to hear about studies. I just know, by personally giving food to elders here in this community, for ones I used to hunt for or harvest for, the smile on somebody's face when they get their country food back is enough right there. Whether it's a meal of berries, a meal of fish or of partridges, or whatever country food, that's the food they want, and that's the food that makes them happy."

"Our elders and knowledge keepers have been hunting and harvesting for generations and their practices should be recognized," said Dana. "More work has to happen to prove their preparation methods are safe. I understand we need regulations, but we also need to listen to the voices of our ancestors and put more trust in our Indigenous methods of harvesting and preparing food for consumption."

None of this work is possible without capable hunters. Based on this hunt's experience, Dana identified the need to connect hunters and non-profit organizations. If more hunters knew about opportunities to donate, more people could have access to needed food.



At the abattoir in Grand Falls-Windsor.

In 2020, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) created a special permit for food banks, allowing them to accept and distribute donations of moose and caribou meat. Meat must be processed at a government-licensed facility (home butchered or processed wild game is not accepted), and there is a limit of one license per charity. Groups like Sharing the Harvest NL help hunters and harvesters donate their catch to food banks in Newfoundland and Labrador.

"As a result of the work done with the Labrador Anchor Collaborative we've since been able to get partridge, moose, and even some caribou from our partners. We would never have been able to obtain these foods or serve them to our residents without the work of the Collaborative. We've also received locally picked berries and bake apples, which were a real treat. No permanent menu additions have been made with the wild game since supply is limited, but we've been able to provide periodic special menus for our residents to give them a taste of home."

Tracey Duder, Regional Director, Food and Environmental Services, Labrador Grenfell Zone, Aramark Canada Ltd.



A happy and successful delivery to long-term care.



Delivering the moose meat to the long-term care facility.

Dana is exploring the value of creating a database of hunters willing to hunt charitable licenses and non-profit organizations who could benefit from their efforts - a kind of country foods matchmaking. Right now, there is no clear way for the two to connect. From Denley's perspective, this could be hugely beneficial: "There's people already going to be traveling to their cabins. There's going to be people that are out berry picking. There's going to be people that are going to be on the land," he said. "If they had an opportunity to harvest an animal that would benefit a charity, I guarantee there'd be people that would put their names down."

"We still have a lot of people that are raised on country food. Country food is important. Newfoundland, Labrador still have a lot of rural communities that depend on wild food, and they want wild food. And when the elders get to a spot where they cannot harvest it themselves - well, I think that's when the younger generation has to come up," said Denley. Nurturing hunting and harvesting skills in youth, strengthening connections between youth and elders, and programs like the charitable moose license program have the potential to rekindle country food networks and the community ties that accompany them.

When asked if he would participate in the charitable moose license program again, Denley was on board: "The joy of dropping something off - whether it's a meal of partridges, whether it's a meal of trout, whether it's a meal of rabbit - to somebody that can't get it anymore...it's such a great feeling. I'm very proud of what I was doing," said Denley. "Everyone was positive about what we were doing. This was something right. This is what we need."



A special thank you to Denley Jacque and Dana Marshall for sharing their stories and experience with Nourish. Thank you to Denley's family and colleagues for supporting him to be on the land and away from home to be part of the charitable moose license.

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