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Research Shows Barriers to Access of Traditional Foods for Indigenous Children

WEST VANCOUVER, BC - COAST SALISH TERRITORY – The Population and Public Health program of Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) and the BC Aboriginal Childcare Society (BCACCS) have released a new report, [Increasing Indigenous Children’s Access to Traditional Foods in Early Childhood Programs](#). The report summarizes food safety barriers and facilitators to providing non-market, high-protein, traditional foods in early childhood settings.

Positive early childhood development outcomes are linked to health and nutrition. Indigenous cultures and identities are closely connected to the lands and waters where traditional foods are obtained. Harvesting, preparing and sharing traditional foods are important practices of Indigenous cultures, and learning about these practices is an important aspect of developing a strong cultural identity in young Indigenous children. Teaching about traditional food is an important way to offer multi-sensory and multi-dimensional teaching. Major barriers to the current food regulatory system exist for early childhood programs in BC. “These barriers undermine the ability of programs to be responsive to cultural curriculum and support the communities they are part of,” says Karen Isaac, BCACCS Executive Director.

Other outcomes of the report included recommendations and next steps, such as: the development of new food safety guidelines and standards, establishing a province-wide working group, increasing cultural sensitivity of health authority staff, and exploring opportunities to increase the capacity of early childhood educators to provide non-market traditional foods.

This project was funded by PHSA in collaboration with BCACCS. All aspects of the work were informed by an advisory committee with representation from First Nations Health Authority, Aboriginal childcare centres, regional health authorities (Environmental Health Officers and Licensing Officers), and BC Centre for Disease Control (food safety). The [full report](#) and [executive summary](#) will be posted on the PHSA Population and Public Health and BCACCS website.

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About BCACCS

BCACCS is committed to nurturing excellence through community outreach, education, research and advocacy, to ensure every Aboriginal child in BC has access to spiritually enriching, culturally relevant, high quality early childhood development services. We engage in research and policy analysis to advocate for and inform necessary supports for early childhood development and care for Indigenous children and their families, as contributions to the vitality of their communities and Nations. If you are interested in finding out more about our current research projects visit our website or contact graham@acc-society.bc.ca.

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