



Ministry of
Agriculture
and Food

B.C. Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food

**Strategic Plan 2021-2024
Year One Progress Report**

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

On behalf of the B.C. Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food (“IACAF”), I am pleased to show the steps taken this past year by the Council and Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

The year has been difficult with the ongoing pandemic, and extreme climate events that personally affected most, if not all Council members. Our food security and food sovereignty are deeply entwined with the ecological health of our Indigenous territories, which are increasingly impacted by the effects of climate change and associated threats. Our worldviews, knowledge systems, relationships with our lands and territories, and inherent rights to self-determination, including to maintain, control, protect and develop our social, economic, cultural and heritage, which supports our local economies, guide the Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food’s objectives and work.

The Council and Ministry have begun the process of working in partnership to understand the opportunities and barriers to strengthen Indigenous food systems, increase Indigenous participation in the agriculture and food sector, and to ensure recognition of Indigenous food systems in their foundational and interconnected role in providing for cultural, social, environmental, and economic well-being.

Through virtual and in-person meetings, three projects and reports, guest speakers, and agriculture and food tours, we have learned and shared ways to move forward in the coming year(s). Council members have raised and discussed issues of concern to Indigenous Nations and communities directly to the Minister and Ministry Executive. In turn, Minister, Ministry executive and staff seek input on key issues, programs and policies from the Council.

As Chair of the Council, I am pleased to report on year one actions and to continue to advance the Council’s Strategic plan.



Chief Byron Louis, Okanagan Indian Band

Chair of the Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food

INTRODUCTION

The B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food (the Ministry) and B.C. Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food (“IACAF”) Members come together around a shared commitment to advance reconciliation through meaningful change rooted in the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Calls to Action in the context of the agriculture and food sector.

IACAF and the Ministry co-developed a three-year Strategic plan which was released and announced in 2021 to guide the work of the Council over the course of the next three years (2021-2024). The plan includes three priority action areas to advance Indigenous peoples’ priorities and address barriers in the agriculture and food sector. The priorities recognize the ongoing legacies of colonialism and imminent environmental threats posed by climate change to Indigenous peoples’ food systems.

Quarterly meetings (virtual and in-person/hybrid) were successful in further developing the relationships between Council members and the Ministry. The meetings fostered discussions on how to advance the priorities of the Strategic plan and the approach to the foundational work of the Council. IACAF members appreciated the opportunity to hear and speak to guest speakers and to attend agriculture and food tours. These learning and sharing opportunities will continue to be a focus.

In addition to relationship building and shared learning, the quarterly meetings provided an opportunity for Council members to raise and discuss issues of concern to Indigenous Nations and communities directly to the Minister and Minister Executive. Similarly, the Council provides an important pathway for the Minister, Ministry Executive and staff to seek input on key issues, programs, and policies.

The work of the Council was impacted by the extreme wildfire and atmospheric river events of 2021, with members being impacted very directly, as well as by the emergency response obligations of the Ministry and Council members. The impacts of extreme weather events and climate change further raised the importance of work of the Council on Indigenous food system resilience, food security and food sovereignty.

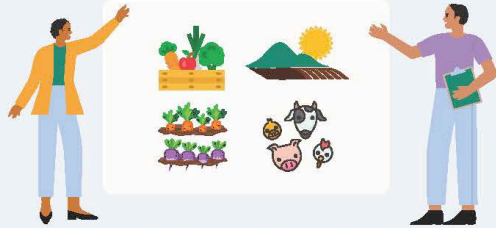
The purpose of this report is to provide an update on year one activities and the important contributions of the Council. This report is a summary of key completed activities and outcomes to date and does not include next steps. The Council and the Ministry are co-developing a year two work-plan based on year one outcomes and year two priorities.



IACAF Q4 meeting dinner at the Songhees Wellness Centre, Council members, Minister Popham, Deputy Minister, and staff enjoying a performance by the Lakw'agan Traditional Dancers.

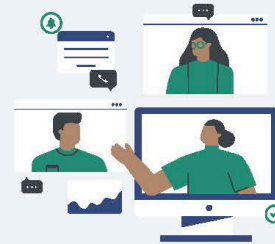
YEAR ONE OVERVIEW

12 Learning Sessions & Site Visits



Internal & External Guest Speakers
Project & Site Tours

5 Council Meetings



3 Virtual Meetings
2 Hybrid Meetings

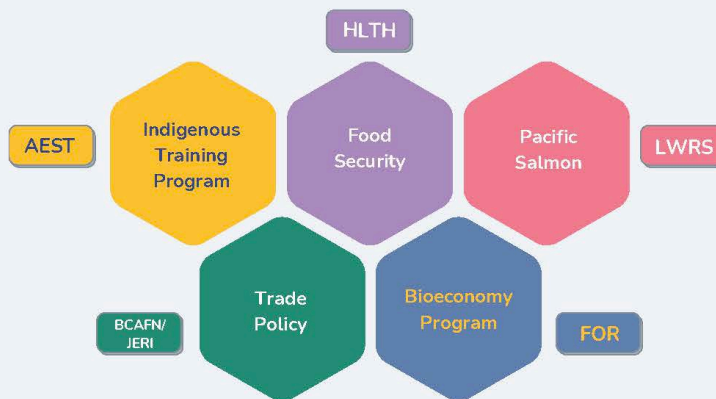
3 Reports & Analysis



3 Ministry Program Input



5 Cross-Government Collaborations



PRIORITIES

In support of our vision to advance Indigenous self-determination, further self-sufficiency and resilience to climate change, prioritize the revitalization of cultures, and through these advance lasting and meaningful reconciliation, the priority action areas for IACAF are:



Strengthen Indigenous food security, food sovereignty, and build food system resilience



Address barriers and create economic opportunities



Foster inclusive Indigenous governance and support self-determination



PRIORITY 1: PROGRESS ON ACTIONS

Priority 1: Strengthen Indigenous food security, food sovereignty, and build food system resilience

ACTION 1: Commission a discussion paper on the topic of strengthening Indigenous food security and food sovereignty, and building food system resilience that offers recommendations and reflects the unique histories, priorities, innovations and diversity of Indigenous Peoples, and offer recommendations.

ACTION 2: Review previous and current work related to this priority area to identify successful examples and best practices that can be amplified and learned from by others and better define the unique role of IACAF in this area.

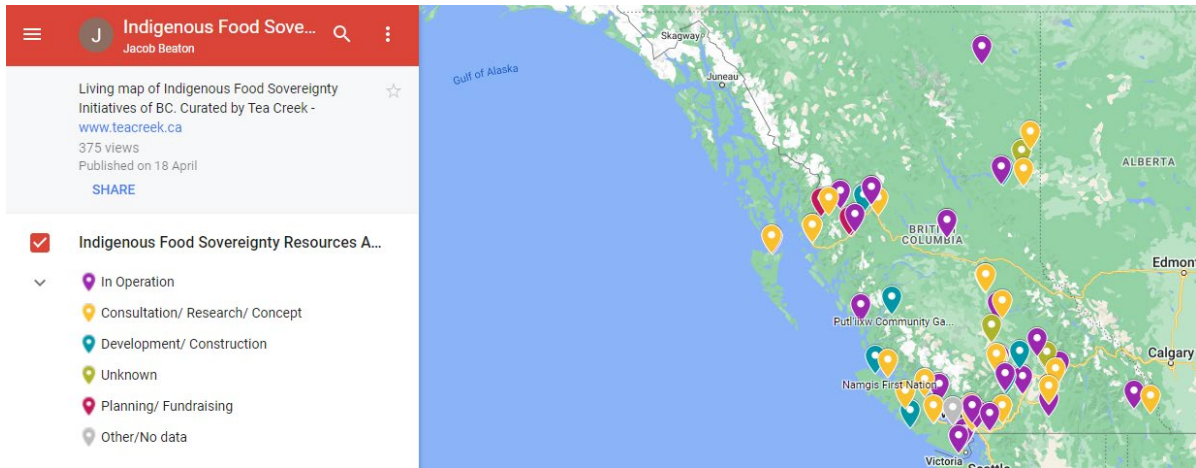
The actions were combined for the development of a **discussion paper on Food Security and Sovereignty**. This report consisted of:

- 13 **case studies** of Indigenous food security and sovereignty initiatives involving in-depth interviews and site visits.
- **Survey** included questions addressing start-up costs, important factors needed to support Indigenous food security/sovereignty in participants' Nation or community, impacts of climate change, barriers to developing Indigenous food security/sovereignty.
- Literature review

Project outcomes included:

- Review and exploration of definitions of Indigenous food sovereignty, common underlying narratives driving Indigenous food sovereignty in B.C., and the historical and current policy context and barriers faced by Indigenous Peoples in B.C.
- Summary of foundational factors required for Indigenous food sovereignty success based on survey findings and case studies.
- Development of a living map of [Indigenous Food Sovereignty Initiatives of BC](#) to demonstrate the current status across the province and that if further developed could serve Nations across B.C. by conglomerating initiatives, resources, trade networks, and funding sources.

- A six-step action plan for government to support Indigenous food sovereignty in a meaningful, effective, and timely manner.
- IACAF members indicated support for the expansion of the initiative through a Phase 2 project.



Living map of Indigenous Food Sovereignty Initiatives of BC. Curated by Tea Creek, www.teacreek.ca

View the map:

[Indigenous Food Sovereignty Initiatives of BC](http://www.teacreek.ca)



PRIORITY 2: PROGRESS ON ACTIONS

Priority 2: Address barriers and create economic opportunities

ACTION 1: Commission a gap analysis for Indigenous agriculture across B.C. to identify policy, legislation and program gaps, address barrier and create opportunities for Indigenous peoples in the agriculture and food sector.

Two gap analysis were completed focused on “Funding access and availability”, and “Irrigation and related water needs.” The analyses built from gaps identified in the 2020 Indigenous Agriculture Inventory and explored priority barrier areas identified by IACAF as they relate to the success of Indigenous participants in the agriculture and food sector.

Both projects were guided with input from members of IACAF, involved fulsome literature reviews, extensive engagements with Indigenous Nations, organizations, producers and processors through surveys, dialogue, interviews and interviews with program and service delivery partners.

The **Funding Gap Analysis** assessed barriers and opportunities within the current food and agriculture funding landscape. The findings and recommendations support improved integration of Indigenous food and agriculture interests and opportunities in future AF program and policy design, the Next Policy Framework and bilateral funding agreement between B.C. and the Federal government, and discussions with funding partners on program design.

The **Irrigation and Water Gap Analysis** quantified and qualified Indigenous irrigation and related water needs for agriculture and food endeavors. Ministry staff and IACAF members are developing steps to action the recommendations from both projects internally within the Ministry and with funding partners.

ACTION 2: Work with the Ministry on developing consistent definitions for Indigenous products and a feasibility study on options and recommendations for Indigenous Buy BC branding and programming.

Buy BC is a Ministry program which promotes a wide range of agriculture, food, and beverage products through a recognized logo and marketing activities.

The Buy BC program presented on the function, implementation, and impact of the program. IACAF members and staff had multiple discussions on the value and complexities of developing a marketing or branding approach for Indigenous food and agriculture products. The importance of a distinctions-based approach and acknowledgment of the range of perspectives on agriculture and food in different nations was raised.

With support of the Council, discussions will continue into year two with a broadened scope on exploring an approach to marketing and branding for Indigenous food and agriculture with the goal of supporting increased awareness, promotion and opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurs and communities.



PRIORITY 3: PROGRESS ON ACTIONS

Priority 3: Foster inclusive Indigenous governance and support self-determination

ACTION 1: To foster inclusive Indigenous governance and support self-determination, conduct an analysis on the current status, interest and potential of Indigenous trade networks and economic institutions to strengthen Indigenous food systems and provide recommendations to reinvigorate this type of economy within B.C.

Ministry staff began with mapping the past and current work occurring within the B.C. government working towards rebuilding Indigenous trade networks and economic institutions as well as initial discussions with Council members. Work on Indigenous trade, trade networks, and trade policy is being led by the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) and **the B.C. Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery, and Innovation (JERI)**.

IACAF and AF will continue to stay informed of the work underway and will provide input into this work from a food and agriculture perspective. AF and IACAF will take a supporting role in the existing project led by JERI and BCAFN at this time.

ACTION 2: Engagement with the Province on incorporating B.C. Indigenous priorities and perspectives into the development of the Next Policy Framework and the development and implementation of the Declaration Act Action plan.

The Next Policy Framework (NPF) guides the development of a bilateral funding agreement between the federal government and provinces/territories for the food and agriculture sector. The current bilateral agreement (Canadian Agricultural Partnership) expires March 31, 2022, and a new agreement is under negotiation for 2023.

In the inaugural meeting in June 2021, staff from AF's Deputy Minister's Office leading the NPF engagement process provincially joined the meeting. A summary of feedback received and discussed at the June IACAF meeting was provided to Agriculture and Agri-food Canada to add to their federally led engagement process. Council was updated throughout the year in quarterly meetings.

The Funding Gap Analysis (Priority 2, action 1) also provided a review and recommendations to improve funding availability and program suitability for

Indigenous food and agriculture related to the NPF and bilateral funding agreement. These recommendations were presented to Ministry staff leading the negotiations and to Ministry executive.

ACTION 3: Engage in information sharing through presentations and discussions on Indigenous rights, priorities and perspectives on the food and agriculture sector with government and other relevant groups.

Key topic areas were identified together and brought to the Council meetings for information sharing, discussions and/or presentations. IACAF's strategic priorities intersect with different units across the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and across many other Ministries. Staff from within the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, from other Ministries, and external guests were invited to share information, facilitate discussions, and learn from the Council.

Presenters included:

- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Lands, Water and Resource Stewardship (LWRS)
- BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN)
- Investment Agricultural Foundation (IAF)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food leads:
 - Buy BC
 - Intergovernmental Relations
 - Traceability Programs
 - Youth Development
 - Fisheries and Aquaculture
- Indigenous Entrepreneurs:
 - Bangin' Bannock
 - Sriracha revolver
 - Tea Creek Enterprises

Presentations, information sharing, and discussions on strategic priorities will continue to support shared learning and create a forum for Council to provide advice to Ministry executive and staff, and to advance strategic actions.



LOOKING FORWARD

In 2020-2021, the Ministry and IACAF members came together around a shared commitment towards reconciliation. This report summarizes the work done in the first year of the Council's operations and aims to communicate progress to date.

Building on year one outcomes and the [year two priority actions identified in the IACAF three-year Strategic plan](#), the Council and the Ministry are co-developing a year two work-plan.

The work plan for year two is responsive to the evolving priorities of the IACAF members. This includes a greater focus on youth membership and engagement, the alignment of laws with the Declaration Act, moving from research to action, and incorporating consideration for climate change into all actions. In the coming year and beyond, the Ministry is focused on continuing to build relationships, strengthening Indigenous agriculture and food systems, and advancing strategic priorities as directed by IACAF.

Significant work remains to support Indigenous Peoples' agriculture and food economies, food security and food sovereignty objectives and to advance the implementation of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People Act and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action within the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's mandate. The Ministry is committed to the work and the year one accomplishments reported on here are one small step on this long journey.

For further information on this report or the Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food please refer to or contact:

- [B.C. government website](#)
- [IACAF 2021-2024 strategic plan](#)