

Reconciliation Action Statement

In alignment with the [AHS Indigenous Health Commitments: Roadmap to Wellness](#) we are committed to reconciliation and working towards achieving health equity with and for Indigenous peoples in Alberta.¹

Nutrition Services acknowledges that the past and current policies and practices of colonization, such as the reserve system, residential schools, land use policies and prohibition of spiritual and cultural practices have harmed and continue to harm Indigenous peoples and communities across Canada. These practices and policies often involved limiting access to food and traditional food sources, resulting in prolonged undernourishment which is ethically and morally reprehensible. This sustained malnutrition and cultural assimilation has had lasting intergenerational impacts on Indigenous health including high rates of chronic diseases and loss of traditional foods and food systems.^{2,3,4,5}

Despite these injustices, many Indigenous communities and peoples are reclaiming their Indigenous foods and food systems. Indigenous foods are plants and animals that existed naturally on the land or in the water before settlers arrived.⁶ These foods have been integral to the survival and wellness of Indigenous peoples for thousands of years. We have much to learn from the traditional ways of knowing regarding food, culture, and caring for the land. Traditional foods and the practices around them are fundamental to mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional health, and can contribute to reconciliation and environmental stewardship.⁷

Alberta Health Services has a vision to achieve equity with, and for Indigenous peoples in Alberta.¹ Nutrition Services is committed to supporting this vision, the AHS Indigenous Health commitments as well as working to address the calls for action identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada² as they relate to our work. In response, Nutrition Services will work towards:

- Enhancing awareness and understanding of nutrition related health outcomes and the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in areas such as: maternal health, infant and child health issues, chronic diseases, malnutrition incidence, household food insecurity and the availability of appropriate health services. (Action 19)
- Working with Indigenous communities and organizations to prioritize activities and services that support closing health gaps. (Action 19, AHS Roadmap Goal 3, 4, 7)

- Recognizing the value of traditional foods and healing practices and work towards building relationships and collaborating with Indigenous healers and Elders to integrate Indigenous ways of knowing into our work. (Action 22, AHS Roadmap Goal 5 & 7).
- Enhancing cultural humility and safety through providing cultural competency training for interns and dietitians. ⁸ (TRC Actions 23iii & 24, AHS Roadmap Goal 1)
- Forming partnerships to increase recruitment and retention of Indigenous professionals working in nutrition and dietetic practice. (Actions 23i & 23ii, AHS Roadmap Goal 2)

Nutrition Services aims to use the [AHS Indigenous Health Commitments: Roadmap to Wellness](#) and other key AHS documents to guide our actions and work.^{1,9} We acknowledge that our mainstream views of health and well-being promote a Western understanding of food and nutrition and focuses predominantly on physical health.⁷ As a department we are committed to expanding our worldview of food and nutrition and improving our ability to use Two-Eyed seeing to guide our work. We are committed to listening and seeking understanding so that we can generate an ethical space to work together to take meaningful action on Indigenous health.

“Two-Eyed Seeing refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing and from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing and to using both of these eyes together”.¹⁰

References

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