



## Foreword

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The United Nations has set the goal to achieve food security and reduce hunger by the year 2030. In order to achieve this goal, we must pay attention to Indigenous Peoples, to recognize our unique food systems and food production and validate our systems of knowledge. The Assembly of First Nations' (AFN) advocacy in support of inherent and treaty rights, title, and jurisdiction includes food sovereignty and food security that will ensure safe and reliable access to traditional food sources.

First Nations have relied on the land for our physical, mental, and spiritual well-being since time immemorial, and we are committed to respecting and upholding environmental integrity for future generations. Environmental degradation from industrial activities is affecting traditional food gathering, resulting in increased food insecurity.

More than 10 years ago, the AFN, recognizing the critical need to better understand our food systems, pushed the Government of Canada (Health Canada and later Indigenous Services Canada) to support and implement a study to quantify the health of traditional food sources, the quality of the daily diet of First Nations, and the quality of water in our territories.

I am pleased to see the completion of this first ever nationwide First Nations Food, Nutrition and Environment Study (FNFNES). FNFNES has demonstrated the success of a true partnership between First Nations and academia. It was mandated by First Nations leadership across Canada (AFN Chiefs-in-Assembly) and realized through a unique collaboration. With principal

investigators from the AFN, who co-led the study with researchers from the University of Ottawa and l'Université de Montréal, the FNFNES team worked closely with the almost 100 First Nations participating in the study, integrating traditional knowledge into all stages of their work. FNFNES is an excellent example of how a good partnership can produce information that is both scientifically robust and meaningful to First Nations.

Results of this study, presented in the 12 articles published in this Special Issue of the *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, highlight that traditional food systems remain foundational to First Nations' health and well-being. This is a critically important finding given that traditional food systems are also threatened by further environmental degradation, including climate change.

The extensive data collected on the levels of environmental contaminants in our food and waters are extremely important as they serve to evaluate the safety of the food we harvest and consume. And while the majority of traditional foods were found to be very safe and extremely healthy, more than half of all adults reported that harvesting traditional food is negatively impacted by industry-related activities, as well as climate change, and access to these foods does not meet current needs.

While the FNFNES results provide an important snapshot of the environmental and nutritional health of First Nations peoples, they also serve as a baseline from which to measure further environmental changes expected to take place over time. Studies like FNFNES can support First Nations to help make informed decisions about the

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environment and environmental stewardship, and can lead to further research and advocacy with respect to safeguarding First Nations' rights and jurisdiction.

I extend my thanks and appreciation to everyone who made this study possible. This includes, first and foremost, the First Nations participants and community researchers who were on the frontlines of this work, along with the research team and Indigenous Services Canada for its investment. I lift you up for your efforts in ensuring the success of this important work.

The FNFNES marks an important milestone in our partnerships with academia, and I look forward to see-

ing the results of FNFNES being used to improve the nutritional and environmental health of First Nations for years to come.

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