

Building Relationships and Community Through Food

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**RIGHT TO
FOOD**

Tomato Activity

What does this tomato make you think of?

Can you share a memory, a thought, a fact, a smell, a taste it makes you think of in the chat?



Food is a Connector



Everyone's food story is different and valuable.

Food is a powerful entry point for empathy, inclusion, and understanding in community.

Food strengthens social bonds.

Sharing food can increase trust, belonging, and relationship-building. Even talking about food can activate social connection pathways in the brain.

Food reflects culture and identity.

What we eat is tied to cultural knowledge, family traditions, and identity, shaping how we understand ourselves and others.

Food supports mental health.

Positive food experiences, cooking, and land-based activities are linked to improved mood, reduced stress, and greater wellbeing.

A large, diverse group of people, mostly young adults, are gathered in front of a large industrial building with a prominent glass and steel roof structure. They are all smiling and waving their hands towards the camera. The group is multi-ethnic and multi-gender. The background shows the intricate steel framework of the building's roof and some greenery. A red banner with white text is overlaid on the image.

About Right To Food

Resource & Strengthen | Mobilize & Advocate



Fund

**Develop
& Share**

Convene

**Engage
& Mobilize**

**Amplify,
Join &
Lead**



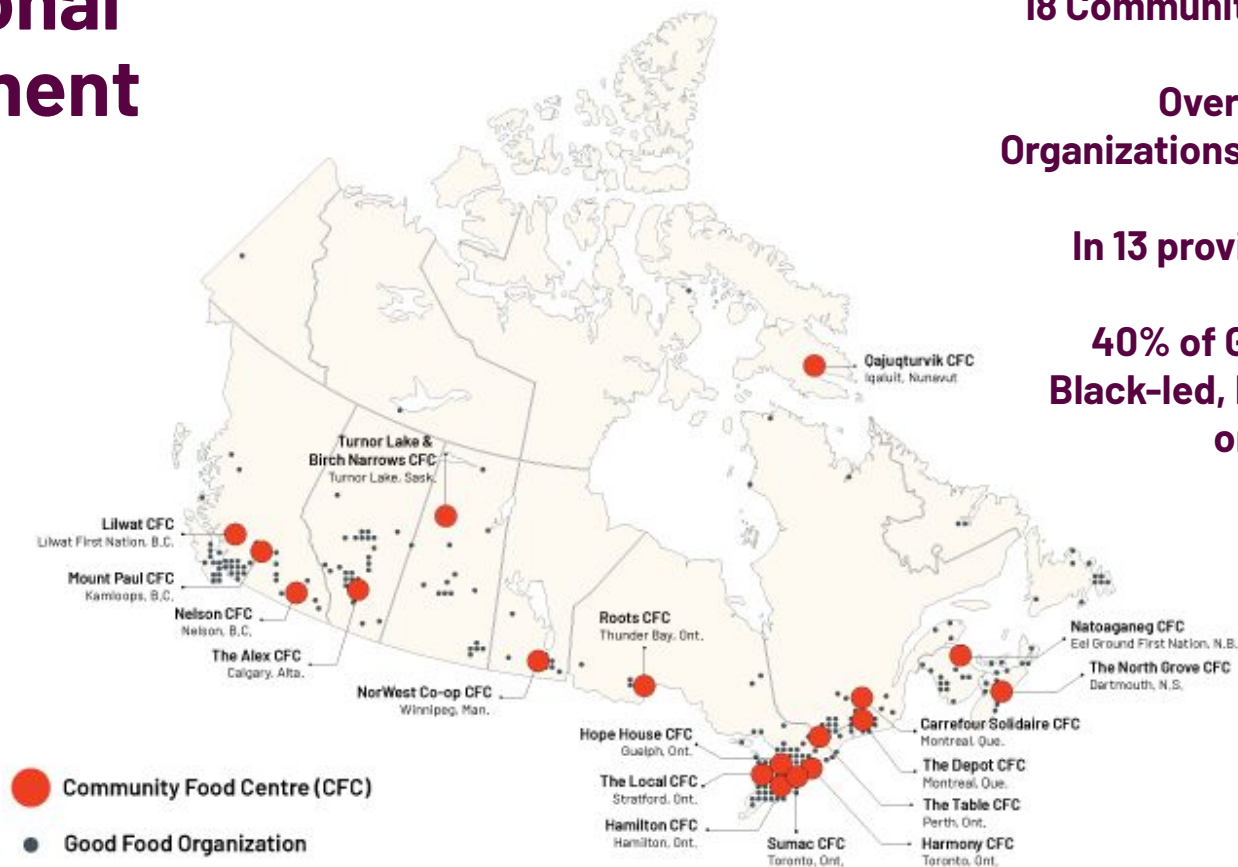
A national movement

18 Community Food Centres

Over 450 Good Food Organizations across Canada

In 13 province/territories

40% of GFOs identify as Black-led, Indigenous-led, or Racialized-led

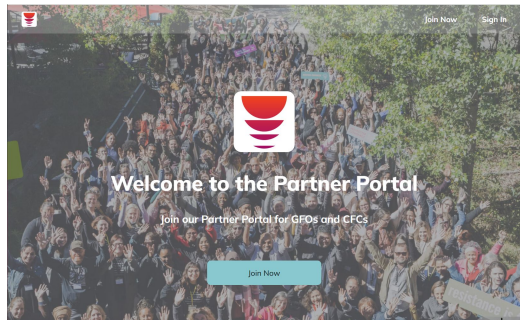


How Right To Food builds relationships

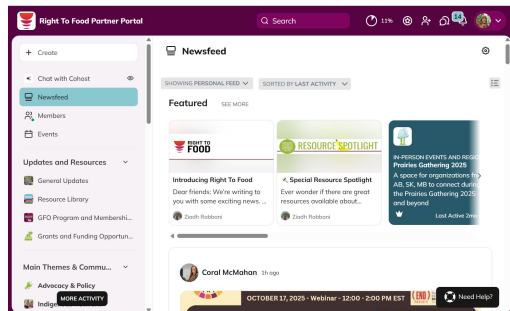
- Promote peer-to-peer connections
- Share best practices (ex: Good Food Principles)
- Provide tools, resources and trainings
- Host virtual and in-person activities
- Produce policy, advocacy and campaign materials
- Distribute grant opportunities



How we keep our network connected:



Right To Food **Partner Portal**, where partners can have a place to connect, access resources, see upcoming events and more.



Right To Food's Monthly Newsletter: **The Bulletin**, where we share announcements, training and learning activities, courses, events, advocacy opportunities, jobs and funding



Virtual Knowledge Swaps and Meetups

Monthly or bi-monthly activities: Based on a theme, we share stories and examples, facilitate discussions, and find solutions!



Advocacy with
Jasmine, Dana,
Irmak & Anthony



Food Access
Knowledge swaps
with Brooke



Evaluation
with Melissa



**Fundraising
Club** with
Marie-Claude



**Indigenous
Network**
with Raymond



Community Meals
Knowledge swaps



**Fundraising
learning series**
with Rickesh
Lakhani



**Gardens and
Growing**
with Ziadh



Market meetups
Knowledge swaps
with Brooke



**Réseau
francophone**

Trainings / Courses / Campaigns

Dates to be announced for these courses, trainings and other opportunities!

Food Bank Transformation



Food Bank Transformation intensive

- Developed by Rekha Cherian
- 5-part learning series on how to evolve your food bank into a force for change



Building Welcoming Spaces

- Gain skills and confidence to tackle a space change project
- Dig into project management, design and aesthetics, kitchens, and capital campaigns



Advocacy trainings and opportunities for action

- Led by our Poverty Action Unit & the Regional Networks
- Federal election organizing materials & microgrant

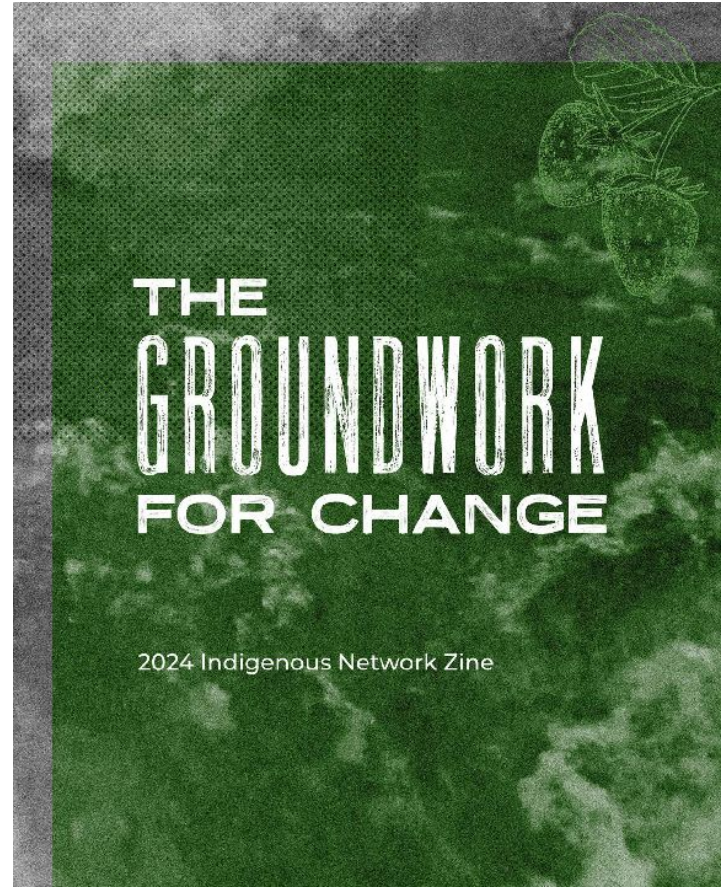


Evaluation Intensive Learning Series

- Led by Melissa Yule
- 3-part learning series
- Spring Dates TBD!

The Indigenous Network

- Conversations, learning, projects and sharing around Indigenous knowledge, culture and ceremony.
- Different options for Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving organizations and staff.
- Checkout our 2024 Documentary and Zine “Groundwork for Change”



In-person events

National Food Summit

Bi-annual gathering of all of our partners in Toronto, ON.

Stay tuned for our Food Summit in 2026!

Regional Gatherings

We're touring the country to bring people together by region. Last gatherings have been in the Prairies, Montreal and BC.



Special Projects: FoodFit & Mind Your Food

What is FoodFit?

- **FoodFit for Older Adults is a 12-week, community-based health promotion program that builds social connection and whole-health skills through cooking, movement, reflection, and supportive peer relationships.**
- The program uses an inclusive, equity-informed approach, emphasizing cultural relevance, body respect, fat acceptance, and holistic health (mental, emotional, physical, spiritual).
- **Facilitators receive online training and resources, including modules on anti-oppressive facilitation, engagement, customizing content, and evaluation.**
- Adaptable curriculum covers nutrition, movement, cultural food traditions, mindful eating, and budget-friendly cooking, with reflection and relationship-building at its core.
- **Delivered by partners nationwide, FoodFit is flexible and culturally responsive, with communities adapting recipes, languages, land-based practices, and content to reflect local worldviews and lived realities.**



What is Mind Your Food?

- **Engages youth (ages 13–19) from Indigenous, newcomer & low-income communities through food and land-based activities.**
- The program connects the impacts of poverty, food insecurity, racism & colonialism on youth mental health
- **Current phase: 2022–2026, running in 7 communities across Canada.**
- 11-week sessions or year-round or week-long intensives.
- **Supports youth wellbeing and mental health through reinforcing protective factors: cultural identity, community connection, food skills.**
- Provides ongoing facilitator support, capacity building and professional development opportunities

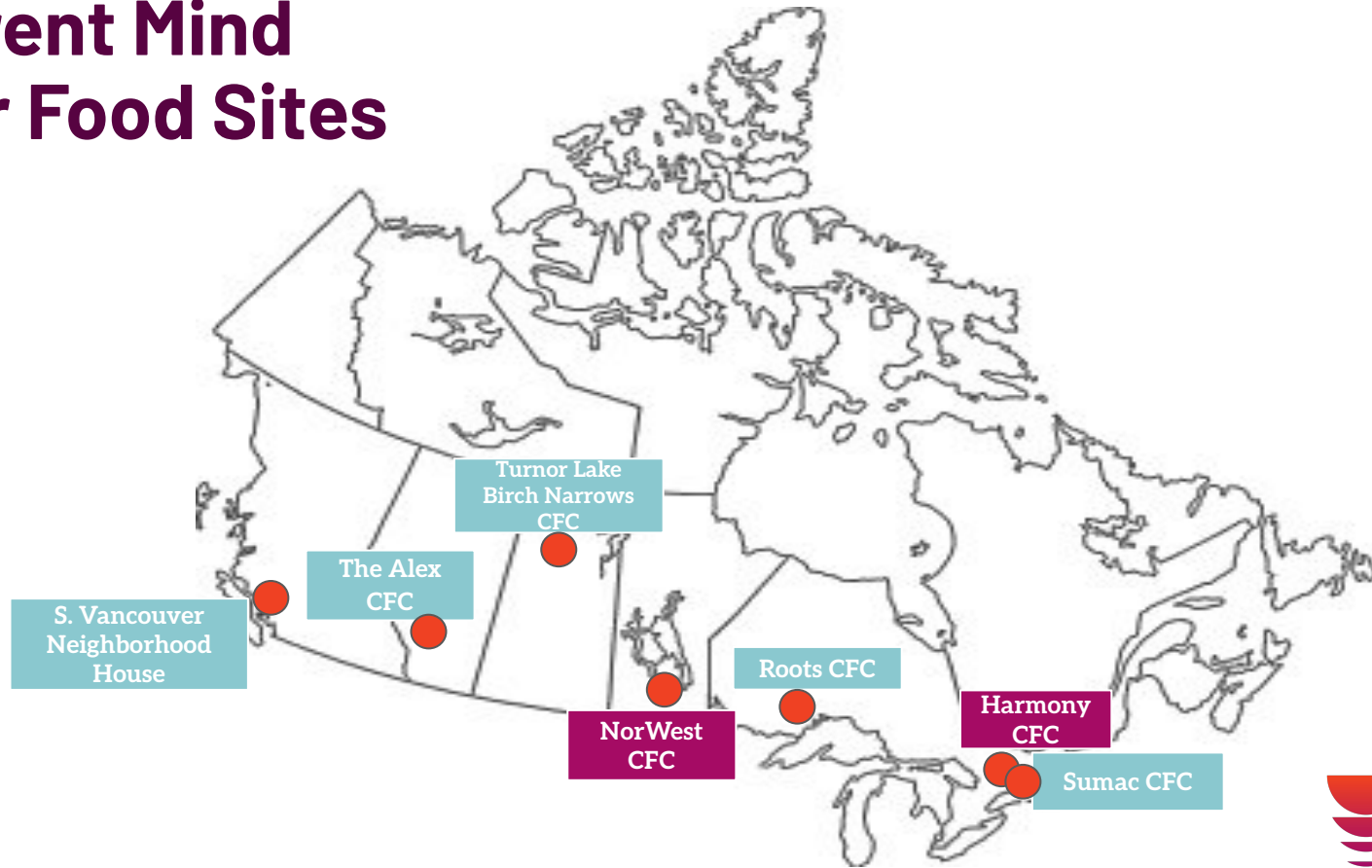


Why Mind Your Food is Needed:

- **1/6 children in Canada are food insecure & 1 in 5 youth >25 experience mental health issues and challenges**
- Food insecurity rates are disproportionate among certain groups due to systemic racism and ongoing impacts of colonization:
 - 21.2% for Newcomer families, 25.8% for First Nations youth off-reserve, 25.6% Métis, and 56.7% Inuit youth, compared to 12.4% for non-Indigenous youth.
- Youth in food-insecure households are:
 - **3x more likely** to experience mental health issues.
 - Less likely to access balanced diets
 - At higher risk of **social isolation** & disconnection from culture.
- **50% of Child & Youth workers leave their jobs within the first 5 years due to burnout (CMHA, 2022)**



Current Mind Your Food Sites



Mind Your Food reinforces and strengthens protective factors for good mental health by:



- Protective Factor → **Balanced Nutrition**
- learning food skills and encouraging healthy eating habits through hands-on learning
- Protective Factor → **Strong Cultural Identity**
- through cultural food traditions, celebrates diversity and building cultural pride
- Protective Factor → **Prosocial Behaviours**
- building community involvement through fostering kindness and helping behaviours
- Protective Factors → **Healthy Relationships and Inclusion**
- growing social connections through linking youth with peers & mentors for support
- Protective Factor → **Social & Emotional Skills**
- developing life skills through improving teamwork, leadership & emotional management

Mind Your Food's Community of Practice

A structured network that brings MYF facilitators together to share knowledge, access training and resources, and strengthen their capacity through exchanging best practices, and building collective skills to enhance their impact.



**One-on-One
Support and
Mentorship +
Referrals**



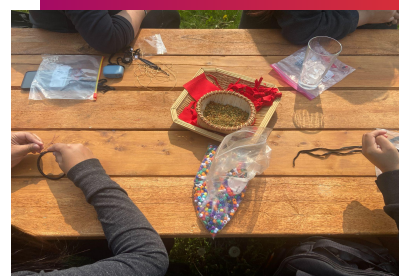
**Bi-Monthly Virtual
Community of Practice
+
Good Food Network
Training Opportunities**



**2-Day Annual
In-Person MYF
Facilitator Training
+
Bi-Annual Food Summit**



**Shared photos,
activity plans,
recipes**





97% of 
(n=72)

Mind Your Food participants reported an **increase in at least one area of food and/or land knowledge or skills.**



55% of 
(n=56)

Mind Your Food participants **increased their understanding of how culture is expressed through food**



75% of 
(n=56)

Mind Your Food participants **increased their understanding about the connection between the foods they eat/drink and how they affect their body, mind and mood**



83% of 
(n=72)

Mind Your Food participants **increased their confidence to prepare a delicious, nutritious meal from whole ingredients**



“I feel more connected to our ancestors.”

“We used our language.”

“We learned culture from our elders and want to put forth for future generations.”

— *Youth from Roots CFC*



“

It taught me how much I enjoy cooking with and for others and sharing food.”

“Made me feel included in the community.”

I enjoyed the times we'd sit together at the table after finishing and eat together the most even if it was mostly silent, just having everyone there was a comfort.”

— *Youth from South Vancouver
Neighborhood House*





Thank you for listening! Questions?

