



# Introduction

Iqaluit is a growing community undergoing rapid change. Despite improved economic conditions, food insecurity remains high in Nunavut communities, which means that many are concerned with having enough of the foods they like on a daily basis. Part of this is explained by climate change, which is making access and availability of traditional foods more challenging. On the other hand, high prices of food in stores also make access to store foods difficult.

Food Banks and Soup Kitchens have traditionally been developed as a short term solution to food needs, but are increasingly being used as long term solutions. These community based approaches are relatively new in the Arctic, and are typically based on the Southern ways of helping. In Iqaluit, demand for these services has increased sharply in the past years, and some argue that such organizations can do little to address what is considered the root cause of food insecurity: low income.

There is a concern that climate change will increase the vulnerability of Inuit to food insecurity, and potentially increase the need at the local level for such services. Currently, we do not know how these services are helping, who is using them, how community members are dealing with limited access to food or if users of these services can access food through sharing. This project aimed to answer these questions by interviewing users of three community programs in Iqaluit where food can be accessed: the Food Bank, the Soup Kitchen and Tukisigiavik.

We interviewed 94 users of three community programs in Iqaluit over the month of May 2010. We profile here six key findings identified through these interviews and propose recommendations based on these interviews.

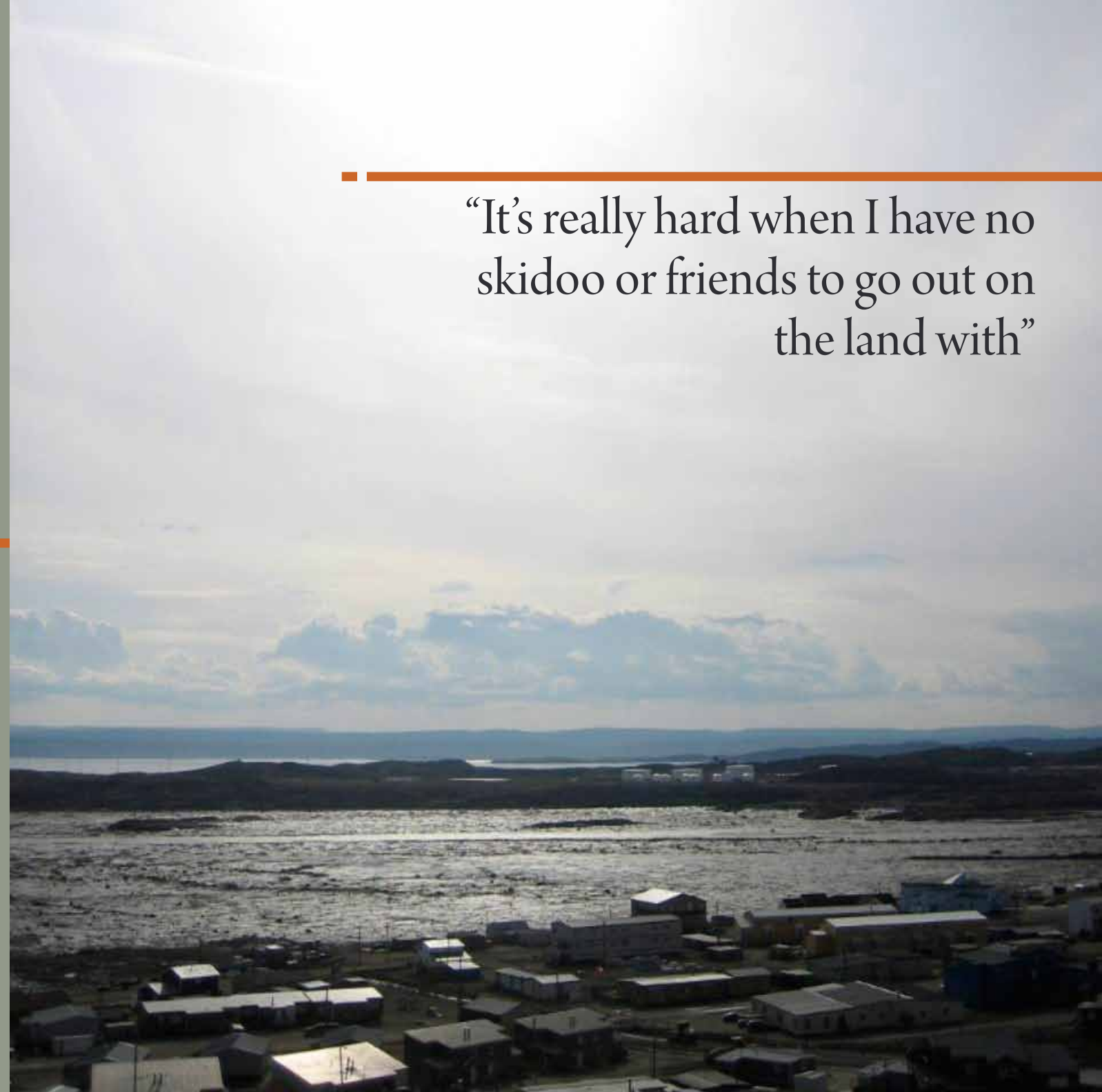
## Community program use

Soup Kitchen  
**9000**  
meals/year

Food Bank  
**1062**  
visits/year

Tukisigiavik  
**3500**  
visits/year

“It’s really hard when I have no skidoo or friends to go out on the land with”





“These organizations help a lot of people in Iqaluit. People know things will be OK because they can come here”

## Results

### **The Food Bank, Soup Kitchen and Tukisigiavik mostly help residents from Iqaluit**

Iqaluit was the hometown of the majority of respondents, and the majority of those not from Iqaluit were from other Nunavut communities. Most of the respondents (72%) were unemployed at the time of the survey, and social assistance was the main source of income for more than half of the respondents.

### **Most program users live in households without hunters**

75% of respondents lived in a household without a hunter, which made it hard to get country food on a regular basis. Tukisigiavik, the wellness center in Iqaluit where country food is available on a daily basis, was the main source of country food for 33% of the respondents. Most respondents said they could access country foods through sharing, mostly from family and friends. However, close to one third of the respondents said that they didn't have anyone who could share country food with them.

### **Food insecurity**

Food security exists “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”. In our study, running out of food and not being able to access some was a major concern for the majority of the respondents, with 90% reporting that this had happened to them in the last year. We asked participants about ways they managed this situation, and the most common way was by switching to cheaper foods that were often less preferred, diminishing portion sizes, sending people to eat elsewhere and selling things to get money for food. Respondents who lived in households with a hunter were more likely to report selling things for money to purchase food than respondents living in households without a hunter. Even though we didn't ask for the details of what was being sold, many reported selling hunting gear, which can provide short term benefits, but can also further decrease access to country foods in the long term.

# Results

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## The Food bank, the Soup Kitchen and Tukisigiarivik are considered as essential

For the most part, respondents used these services either every day they are open or a few times a week. Over half of the respondents (62%) used all 3 programs. The food bank was used at least once a month for 79% of respondents, the Soup Kitchen was used at least a few times a week for 81% and Tukisigiarivik was used at least a few times a week for 70% of the respondents. Respondents had generally been using these services for more than a year, but for each of the services, a significant proportion were new users with 35% of users reporting having started using the Food bank in the last year, 42% for the Soup Kitchen and 39% for Tukisigiarivik. This could be due to a combination of factors, such as more people being aware of these services, the Soup Kitchen having moved to a more central location, and an increase in the need for such services in the community.

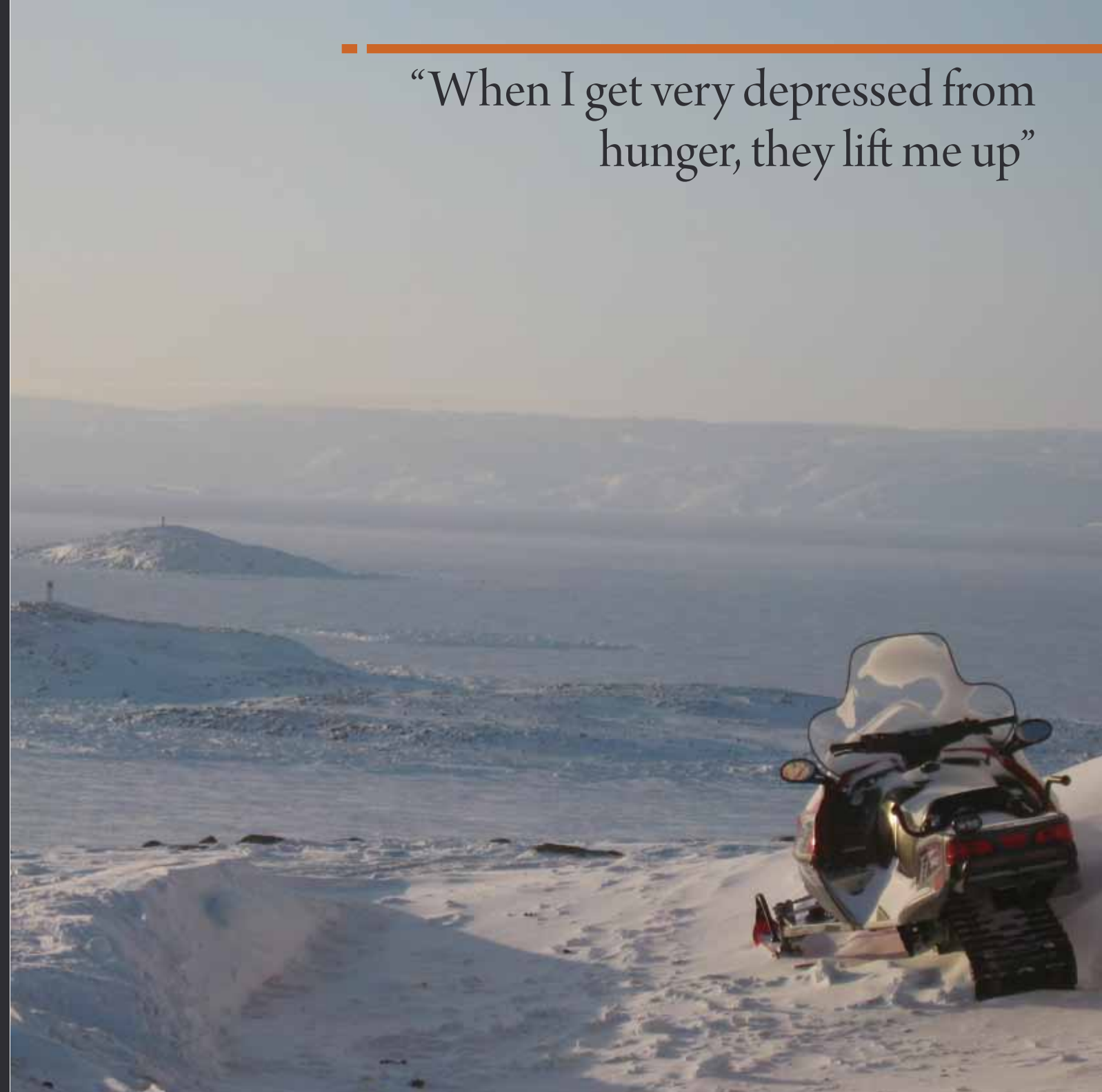
## Winter is a tough part of the year


Over half of the respondents said that winter was the most difficult time of the year to have enough food, because there was less hunting in the community, less country foods, bad weather and because expenses go up during that time. Also, around 20% of the respondents mentioned that the most difficult time of the year was when services providing food were closed, such as during the summer, or during bad weather events, which highlights the important role of these organizations for many in the community.

## How do these organizations help?

When asked to explain how these organizations helped them, 82% of participants' answers made direct reference to hunger or not having any food at home. Other ways in which these organizations provided help were by improving a feeling of well-being (38% of answers) because participants knew they could access help if they needed it. 32% of answers mentioned that these organizations were good for many members of the community, and included many references to the fact that these organizations could help to avoid social problems by reducing stress and anxiety related to hunger. Finally, 26% of respondents mentioned that these organizations prevented a sense of helplessness: many mentioned having nobody to go to for help, and did not know what they would do without these organizations.

“When I get very depressed from hunger, they lift me up”





“It makes me feel good to come here, I know my children won’t go hungry”

# Recommendations

## Country Foods at the Food bank and Soup Kitchen

Many participants expressed their gratitude towards the foods offered at the food bank, and that these provided staples which were considered as useful. However, many also expressed their strong desire to see their traditional foods being incorporated in the menus of the Soup Kitchen, or being offered at the Food Bank because of the difficulty they have obtaining them otherwise.

## Helping to ensure that community members can access hunting equipment and keep the equipment they own

Many reported having to sell hunting equipment to access money to buy food. This results in short term financial gains but can make it even more difficult to access country foods in the future. Many also reported having hunting skills but no equipment, or could not go hunting because of the cost associated with hunting. A co-op system to allow community members without equipment to access hunting gear could be implemented. Financial incentives to hunt should be developed to ensure that hunters don’t sell their equipment for financial reasons.

## Coordinate between different departments to develop long term solutions to food insecurity

## A place to stay during the day

16% of the respondents were either homeless or living at the shelter. Many of the participants expressed the need to have a place to stay during the day, and winter is a particularly vulnerable time. Tukisigiavik was the only organization providing a warm place throughout the day, and participants expressed that beyond the ability to accessing country foods there, the main reason to visit Tukisigiavik was because they felt good, safe and welcomed there. Attention should be given to provide comfortable places during the day, where community members can meet, learn and spend time together.

## Sharing networks to distribute country foods need to be preserved and facilitated

Initiatives that facilitate the sharing of country foods should be implemented, such as community freezers, reduced cargo cost for shipping of country foods between communities, support for the new country food market in Iqaluit, subsidies on country foods sold at stores and subsidies to hunters to allow them to go hunting.

## Teach how to make the best of store foods offered at the Food Bank

Develop cooking classes, pamphlets with recipes, and workshops that teach users of these services how to get the most nutritional value out of the distributed foods.

# Data Tables

## 1: Demographic Characteristics

<b>Sex</b>	%	<b>Household type</b>	%
Male	56.4	Living with extended family/friend	36.2
Female	43.6	Two parent	23.4
		Single individual living alone	16
<b>Do you identify yourself as Inuit?</b>	%	Shelter/homeless	16
Yes	96.8	Lone mother	8.5
No	3.2		
<b>Age group</b>	%	<b>Number of people in household</b>	%
18-24	13.8	Alone including in the shelter	23.4
25-34	24.5	2	16
35-44	27.7	3 to 4	30.8
45-54	24.5	5 to 8	21.3
54-64	7.4	9 and more	8.5
65-74	2.1		
<b>Are you originally from Iqaluit?</b>	%	<b>Does the number of people living in your household fluctuate during the year?</b>	%
Yes	75.5	Yes	45.7
No	24.5	No	54.3
		<b>If yes, when do you have the most</b>	%
<b>If not, are you from another Nunavut community?</b>	%	Winter/when it's cold	30.0
Total outside Nunavut	22.7	When family, friends have nowhere to go	30.0
		When people come visit	40.0
<b>For how long have you been living in Iqaluit?</b>	%	<b>What is your main source of income?</b>	%
1-5 years	33.3	Mostly social assistance	60.1
5-10 years	22.2	Employment (current/past/spouse)	25.6
More than 10 years	44.4	Other benefits/sources	10
		Carvings	3.3
<b>What brought you to Iqaluit?</b>	%	<b>Do you consider your income to be enough for your needs?</b>	%
Work	31.8	Often	5.4
Family	27.3	Always	6.5
Personal reasons	22.7	Sometimes	30.4
Court order	9.1	Rarely	28.3
Studies	9.1	Never	29.3
<b>Are you currently working?</b>	%	<b>Education level</b>	%
Unemployed	72.3	Elementary school (completed or not)	6.4
Work full time	11.7	Did not complete high school	78.7
Work part time	7.4	Completed high school	3.2
Hunter/fisher	4.3	Post secondary/trades/university	11.7
Carver	2.1		
Other	2.1	<b>Hunter in the household</b>	
		Yes	23.4
		No	76.6

## 2: Country Foods and sharing

<b>Is there a hunter in your extended family or friend who shares country food with you?</b>	%
No	23.4
Yes	76.6
<b>Where do you get the most country food?</b>	%
Family and friends	61.7
Tukisigiavik	33
Ourselves mostly	3.2
Other	2.1
<b>Can you access food through sharing (including store foods)?</b>	%
yes	72.3
no	27.7

## 3: Food Security & Coping

<b>Not enough food this year?</b>	%
yes	89.2
no	10.8
<b>Reason why</b>	%
Not enough income (income support too low/not enough money)	35.8
Unemployment/not working enough	26.9
We have to help others/crowding	11.9
Additions	7.5
Food is too expensive	6
Other	11.9
<b>Switch to different foods (cheaper foods, less preferred)</b>	%
yes	86.7
no	13.3
<b>Change portions for yourself</b>	%
yes	71.7
no	28.3
<b>Change portions for others in your household</b>	%
yes	60.2
no	29.8
<b>Sell things for money to get food</b>	%
yes	48.9
no	51.1
<b>Send people eat elsewhere</b>	%
yes	53
no	47

## 4: Use of Community Food Programs

<b>Do you use the food bank?</b>	%
yes	92.6
no	7.4
<b>When did you start using the food bank?</b>	%
More than a year ago	65
In the past year	35
<b>How often do you use the food bank?</b>	%
At least once a month	78.5
Once every few months	15.2
A few times a year	5.1
<b>Do you use the Soup Kitchen?</b>	%
yes	90.4
no	9.6
<b>When did you start using the Soup Kitchen?</b>	%
More than a year ago	58.5
In the last year	41.6
<b>How often do you use the Soup Kitchen?</b>	%
At least a few times a week	81.3
A few times a month	15
A few times a year	3.8
<b>Do you use Tukisigiavik?</b>	%
yes	71.3
no	28.7
<b>When did you start using Tukisigiavik?</b>	%
More than a year ago	61
In the last year	39
<b>How often do you use Tukisigiavik?</b>	%
At least a few times a week	70.2
A few times a month	24.6
A few times a year	5.3

## 5: Difficult Times

<b>Time of the year that is the most difficult?</b>	%
Same	21.3
Winter	53.9
Summer	6.7
Fall and or spring	9
Christmas time	5.6
When unemployed	3.4
<b>Reason for this time during the year</b>	%
Unemployment/lack of stable employment	10.2
Services are closed/unable to access services	16.9
Less hunting/less country food	30.5
Bad weather/too cold	13.6
Less sharing	6.8
Expenses go up	15.2
Other	6.8
<b>Most difficult time of the month</b>	%
End	20.9
Middle	26.7
Beginning	11.6
Same	25.6
When services closed/income support not enough/between cheques	10.5
Other	4.7
<b>Reason for time of the month</b>	%
Between cheques/waiting for income support	35.8
Income support too low/not enough money	45.3
Other	18.9

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The authors are grateful to the community members who shared with the research team their experience around the use of community-based food programs in Iqaluit. We are thankful for their time and openness and hope their answers will contribute to inform programs and policies that can continue to address the needs of many community members.

We are also thankful for the support of the hard-working community members at the Tukisigiartvik Friendship Centre, the Iqaluit Food Bank and the Iqaluit Soup Kitchen that made this research possible.

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**For More Information, visit**

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