

Food Insecurity in Northern Indigenous Canadian Territories: an Interview with an Inuk Teenager

1.0 Preamble

- a. This interview conducted by Mostafa Zandkarimi, aims to dig deeper into the ongoing food insecurity problems in Indigenous communities, specifically in the Northern territories of the modern state known as Canada. The interviewee whose answers are mentioned hereunder, has asked Zandkarimi to remain anonymous due to possible social and security conflicts in their homeland. The interviewee's answers have been refined to display true understanding in regards to the exponentially progressing famine, thereof. The interviewee has consented to be stenographed and their answers be recorded.
- b. Notwithstanding the digital circumstances of this interview that was conducted by an application hereby referred as Zoom, we acknowledge the land we are meeting on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

2.0 Interview Questions

2.1 Can you please introduce yourself?

“Hi, I’m 16 years old and I live in a small Inuit community in the northern territories of Canada.”

2.2 What is your connection to your Indigenous culture?

“My connection to my Indigenous culture is really important to me. It shapes how I see the world, especially when it comes to food. In our culture, food is not just about eating; it’s about sharing, family, and respect for the land and animals. We have traditions that have been passed down for generations, teaching us how to hunt, fish, and gather food sustainably. This connection to our heritage influences how I feel about food security because I know that traditional food practices are a big part of who we are. When those practices are challenged, it feels like a part of our identity is threatened.”

2.3 Could you share your personal experiences regarding food access in your community?

“In my community, food access can be really hard. The prices at our local store are often sky-high, and sometimes we don’t have access to fresh fruits or vegetables at all. I’ve had times when my family couldn’t afford the groceries we needed, and we had to make do with whatever we could find. It’s frustrating when I want to eat healthy but there aren’t many options available.”

2.4 What role does traditional food play in your life and community?

“Traditional food plays a huge role in my life and in my community. Foods like caribou, seal, and fish are staples for us, and they connect us to our culture. I love sharing meals with my family that include these foods, especially when we can prepare them together after a successful hunt. One of my favorite traditional foods is seal meat; it reminds me of family gatherings and the stories that are shared around the table.”

2.5 How has food insecurity impacted your community specifically?

“Food insecurity has a significant impact on my community. Many families struggle to get enough healthy food, which affects our health and well-being. Kids in our schools sometimes go hungry, and that makes it hard for us to concentrate and learn. There are also cultural impacts—when we can’t access traditional foods, we lose connection to our customs and practices, which are tied to our identity as Inuit.”

2.6 What do you think are the main causes of food insecurity in your community?

“The main causes of food insecurity in my community are a mix of economic challenges and geographic isolation. The cost of living is high, and transportation to get food here is difficult. Climate change also affects hunting and fishing, making it harder to find traditional food.”

2.7 How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected food access in your community?

“The COVID-19 pandemic made things worse for us. It disrupted supply chains, so getting food became even more challenging. Some people in our community lost jobs, and it felt like there were fewer resources available for everyone.”

2.8 What initiatives or programs do you think could help improve food security for Indigenous communities?

“I think initiatives that focus on local food production and community gardens could really help. Programs that teach us how to preserve traditional food practices or improve access to hunting and fishing resources would make a big difference, too.”

2.9 Can you describe any community efforts to preserve traditional food practices?

“In our community, we have some efforts to preserve traditional food practices, like workshops on hunting techniques or sharing stories about our food traditions. It helps keep our culture alive and teaches younger generations about the importance of these practices.”

2.10 What message would you like to share with those who may not understand the issue of food insecurity in Indigenous communities?

“I want people to understand that food insecurity isn’t just about hunger; it’s about losing connection to our culture and identity. It’s important for everyone to know that Indigenous communities face unique challenges that require understanding and support from the broader society. We’re not just statistics; we’re people with stories, and we want our voices to be heard.”