Scaling up local knowledge: Addressing country food security in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, NWT
Camilla Daniels, 4th year honours student, Department of Geography, Environment and Geomatics
Supervisor: Sonia Wesche

INTRODUCTION
- Rates of food insecurity in northern Inuit communities in Canada exceed the national rate by a significant margin.
- In the westernmost Inuit region, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) (NWT), almost half of all households experience either moderate or severe food insecurity to a certain degree.
- Country food (wild-harvested food from the land) is an important component of the Inuit diet, both nutritionally and culturally.
- This study focuses on community perspectives and priorities for maintaining and addressing country food security.

OBJECTIVES
- Identify common themes and outliers surrounding country food security across the six ISR communities: Aklavik, Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour, and Ulukhaktok.
- Scale up local perspectives to inform regional policy recommendations for country food security.

STUDY COMMUNITIES

METHODS
- This project focuses solely on five country food goals
- Focus groups were conducted in each ISR community
- Focus group participants were asked to identify assets, challenges and solutions for each country food goal
- Focus group transcripts were coded and analyzed using DEDOOS qualitative software
- Preliminary results were verified in each community (except Sachs Harbour)

RESULTS
Assets, challenges and solutions are presented for each goal. The number of communities in which each point arose are indicated.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS
Sharing:
- Continue and improve inter-community sharing and trading
- Research and implement other ways to encourage sharing

Storage:
- Install community freezers with shared and individual spaces
- Supply chest freezers to households in need
- Programs to improve country food storage knowledge and skills

Harvester Support:
- Increase funding for harvesting resources and equipment
- Ensure application processes are made accessible and fair

Selling:
- Conduct further research in collaboration with community members on country food commercialization
- Conduct feasibility studies for installation of country food processing facilities
- Regulate and standardize country food safety practices

Skills and Knowledge:
- Invest in land-based education for both children and adults
- Appoint elders and experienced harvesters to teach and lead country food education and programming
- Include traditional languages in country food education and programming

CONTRIBUTIONS AND FUTURE WORK
This research identified priorities pertaining to country food security in six communities in the ISR. Further, it proposes a systematic way of incorporating localized Indigenous knowledge into priorities and recommendations to inform regional policy-making.

Future academic research in this topic should identify priority areas where policy is being implemented and evaluate the effectiveness of those activities.

Background photo: Maya March
Additional photos: Tiff Annie Kenny

References

Figure 1. Locations of the six ISR communities.