

Unique Get Together Society (UGTS) and Urban Indigenous Food Insecurity in British Columbia

A systematic analysis of the disproportionate rates of food insecurity experienced by Indigenous communities in British Columbia



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British Columbia has the **second-highest**
Indigenous population in all of Canada

61,455 urban Indigenous
Peoples reside in Vancouver alone

Indigenous households experience one of the highest
rates of household food insecurity, with
1 in 3 Indigenous households being food-insecure



What is food security?

The Food and Agriculture Organization defines food security as when “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”

What is household food insecurity?

Household Food Insecurity is the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints

What are traditional foods?

Coastal Indigenous communities include traditionally harvested and processed food such as: salmon, game meats, shellfish, etc.

Who are Indigenous Peoples?

A monolithic term that fails to address over 198 diverse First Nations cultures in BC

What are urban areas?

Urban areas are a concentration of population at a high density. It is the opposite of rural, where the population is not concentrated but dispersed at a low density



"Indigenous Peoples" and "Urban Indigenous Peoples" are Monolithic Terms



Urban areas allow for a **mixture of Indigenous populations to gather from many different communities**. Addressing Indigenous food insecurity in urban areas presents the challenge of considering the 198 distinct First Nations in BC without treating all Indigenous Peoples as a **single monolith**.

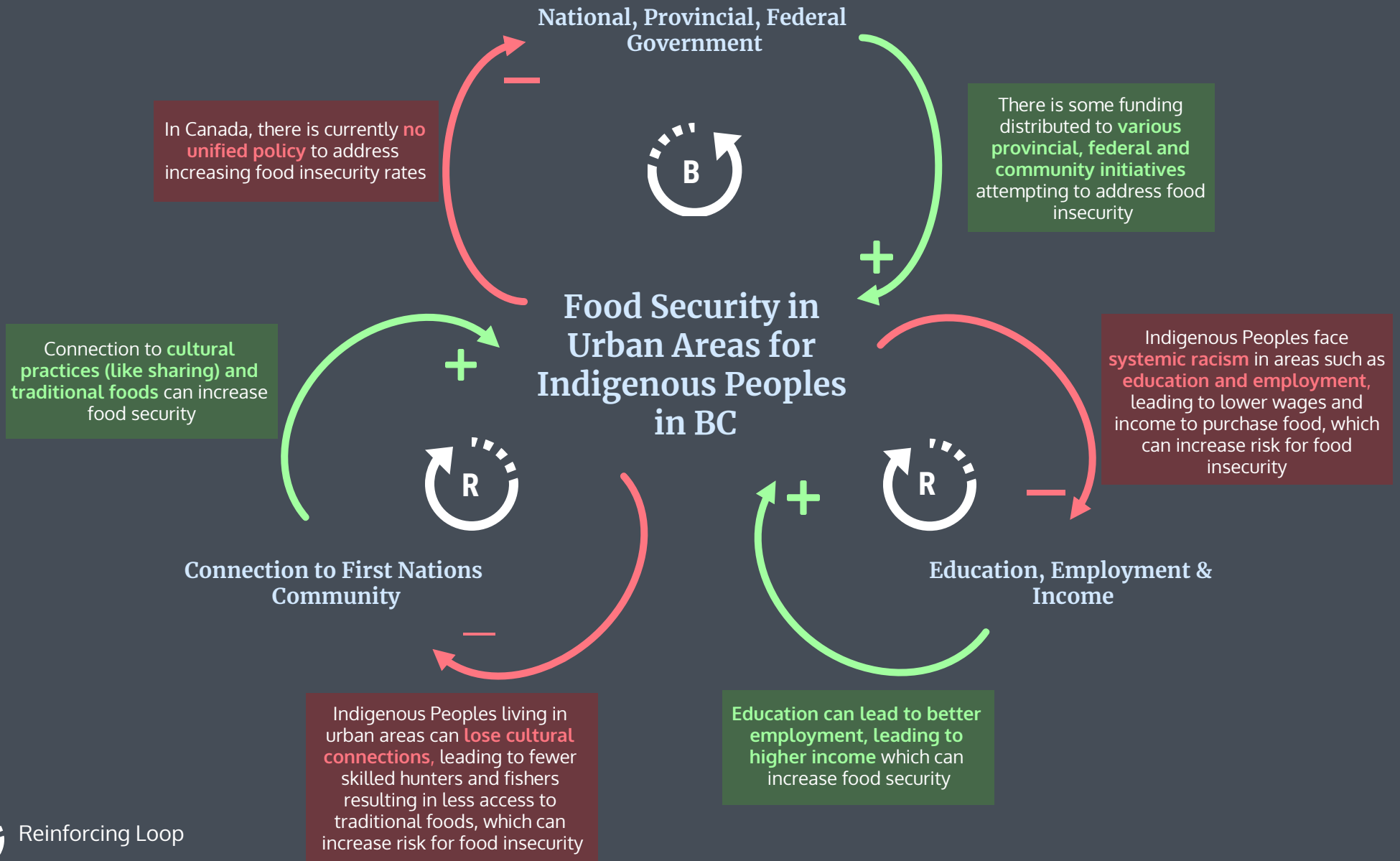
Urban Indigenous food insecurity is firmly held in place by a complex interplay between oppressive systems



Stakeholders are highly interconnected, **government, economic and environmental sectors** play the biggest roles. For true, lasting change, collective action between all stakeholders must be adopted.

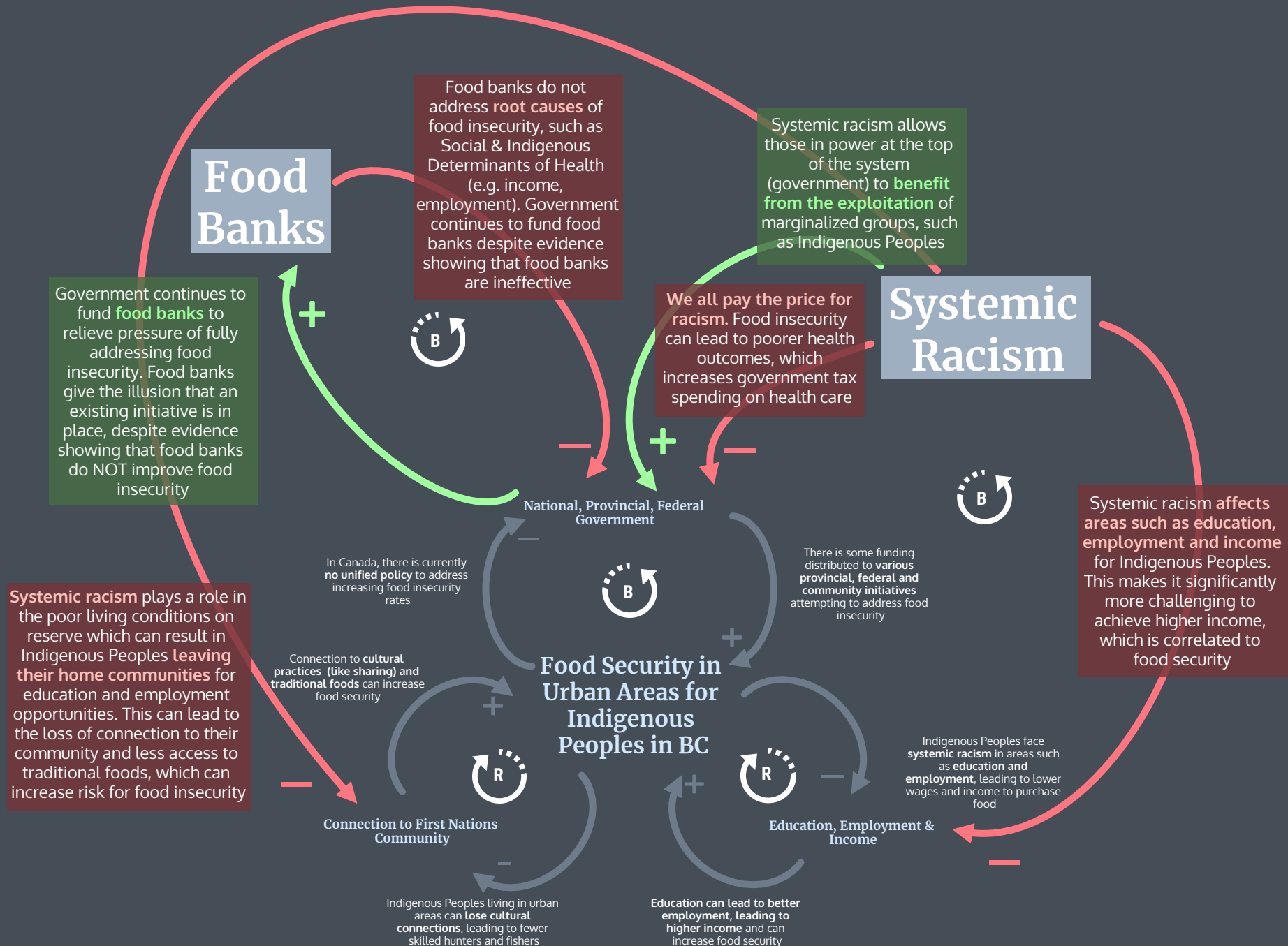
Focusing on the Key Root Causes

(Government, Economic & Environment Sectors)

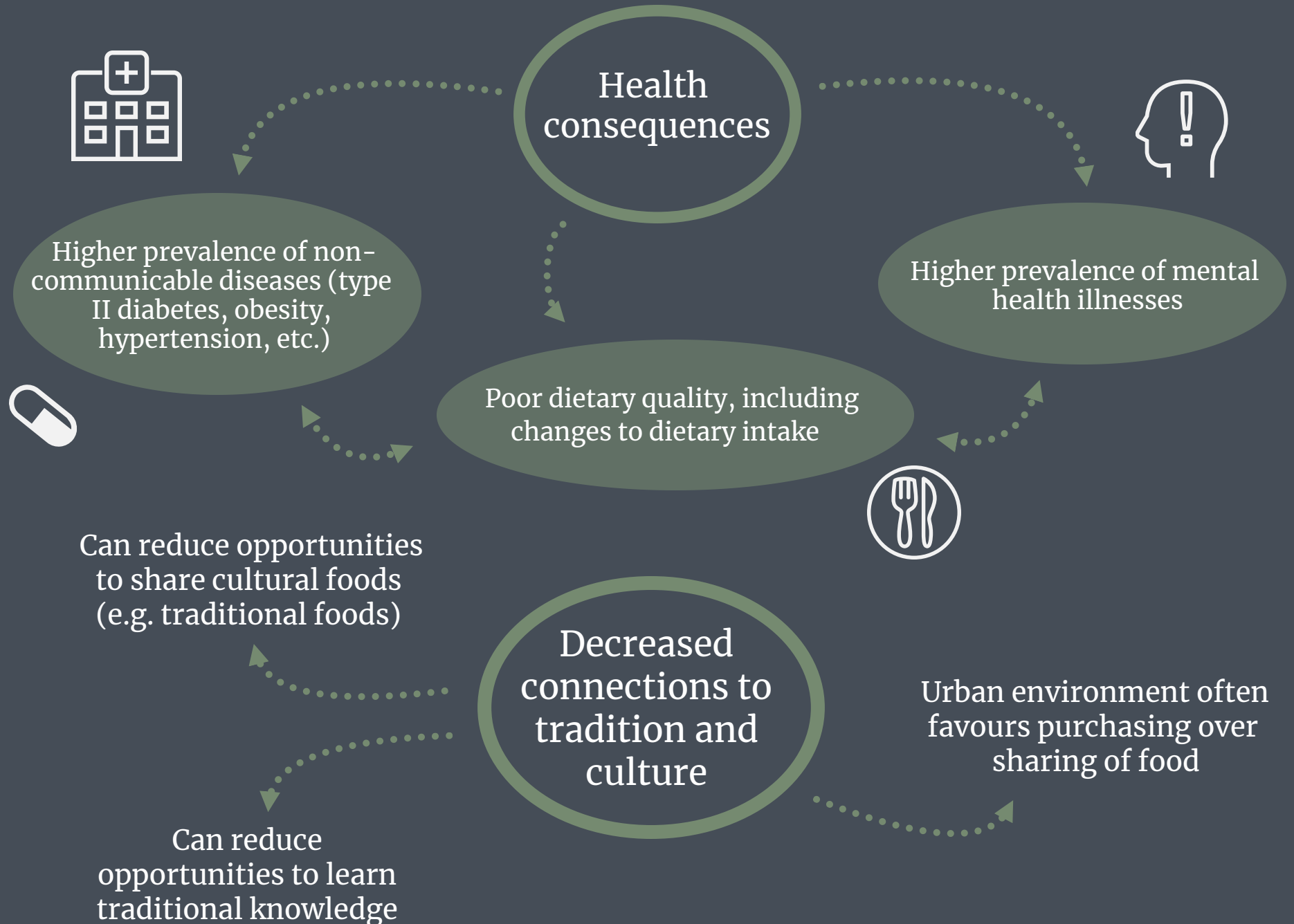


Perpetuating the Status Quo

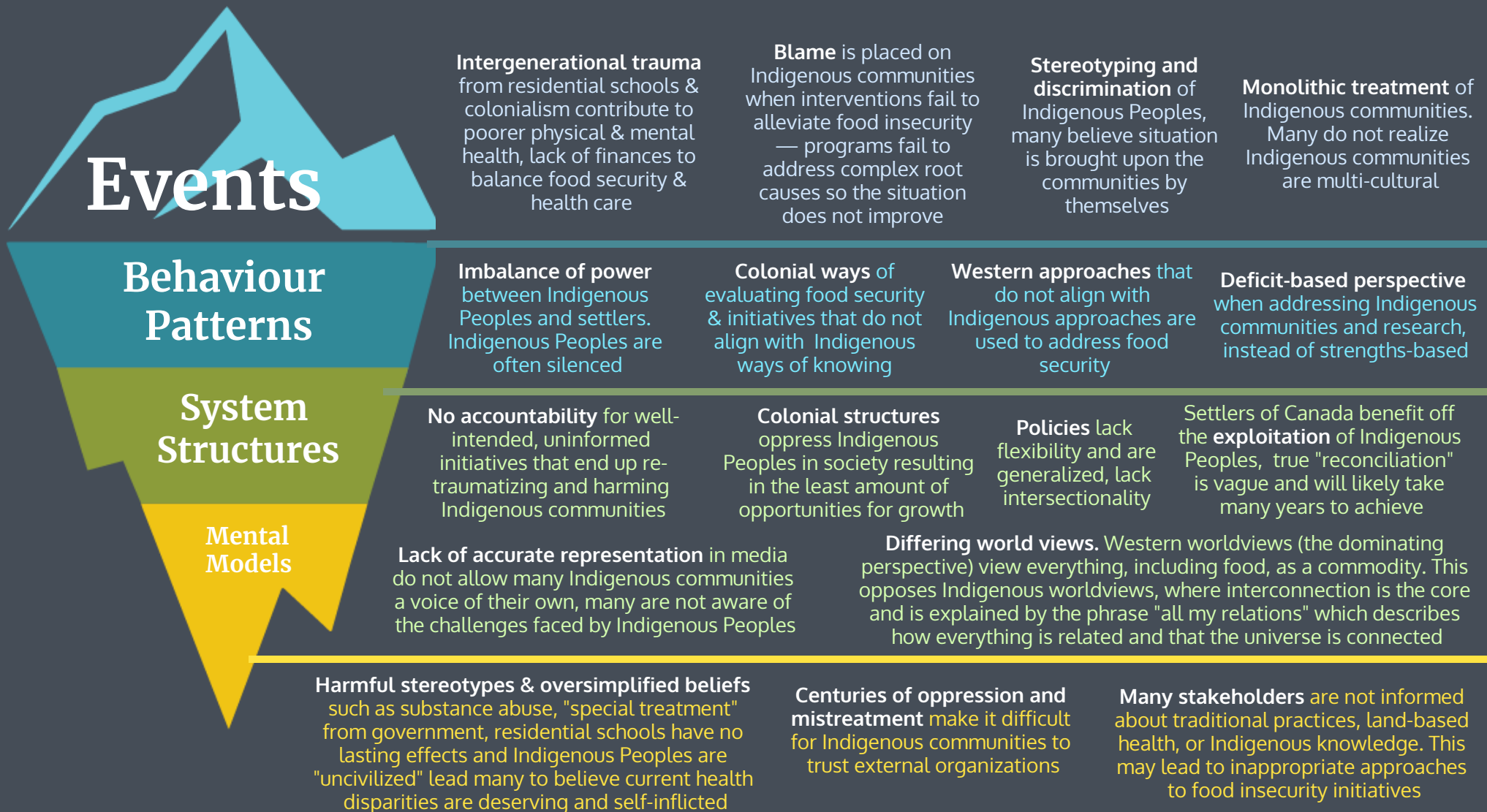
Food Banks & Systemic Racism are keeping urban Indigenous Peoples food-insecure



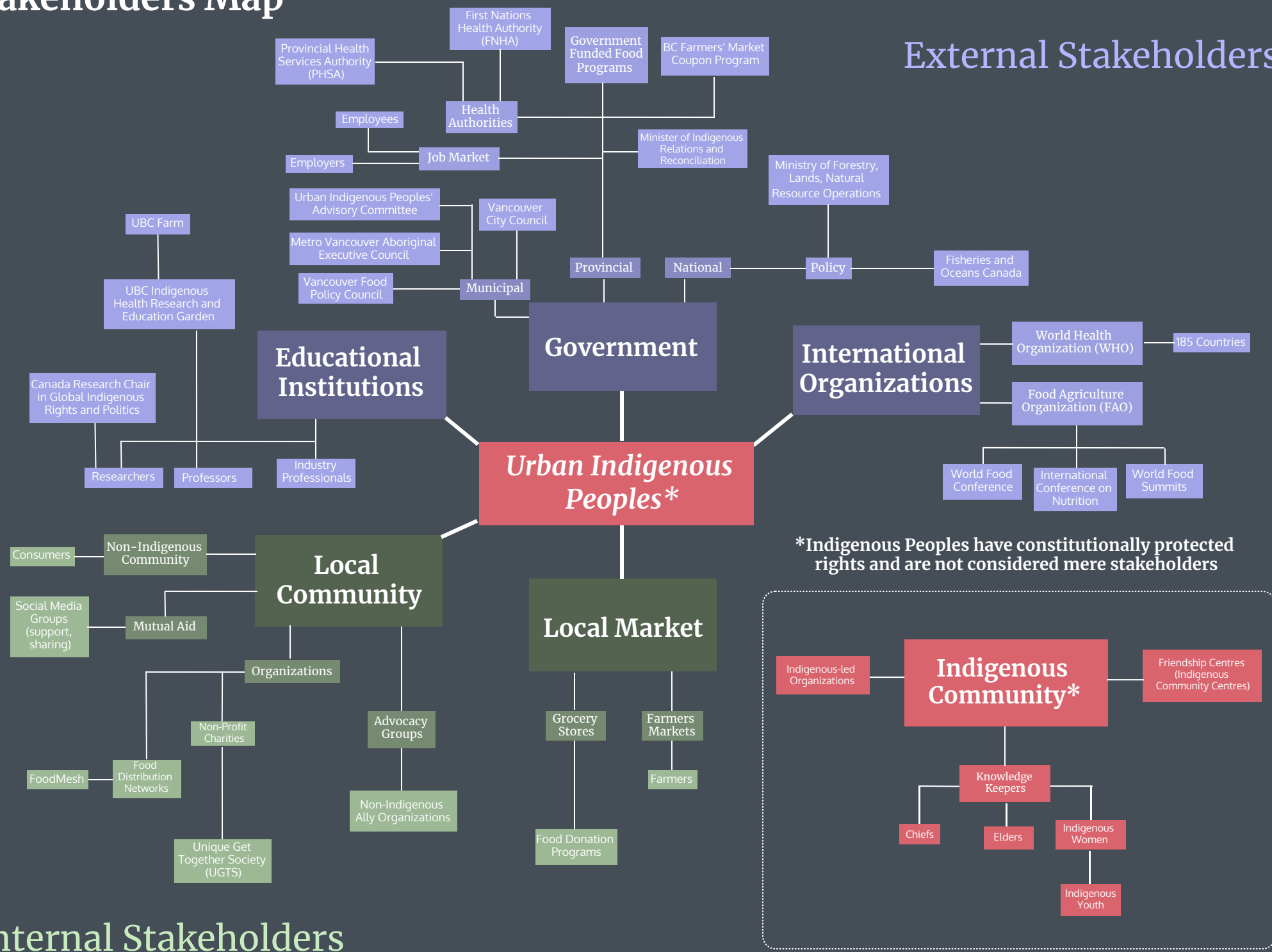
Symptoms of Urban Indigenous Food Insecurity



Urban Indigenous Food Insecurity is More Than Just Lack of Access to Food



Stakeholders Map



Internal Stakeholders

Relationships Between Key Stakeholders

International Organizations
[WHO, FAO]



*Indigenous Peoples have constitutionally protected rights and are not considered mere stakeholders



International

Welfare "Quarantining"

National



Nutrition North
Canada (NNC)

Solutions Landscape

Provincial



BC Farmers' Market
Nutrition Coupon Program

Community



Urban
Agriculture

Non-Profit
Organizations

Charitable
Food Programs

Food Recovery
Programs

Private



BC Farmers' Donation
Tax Credit

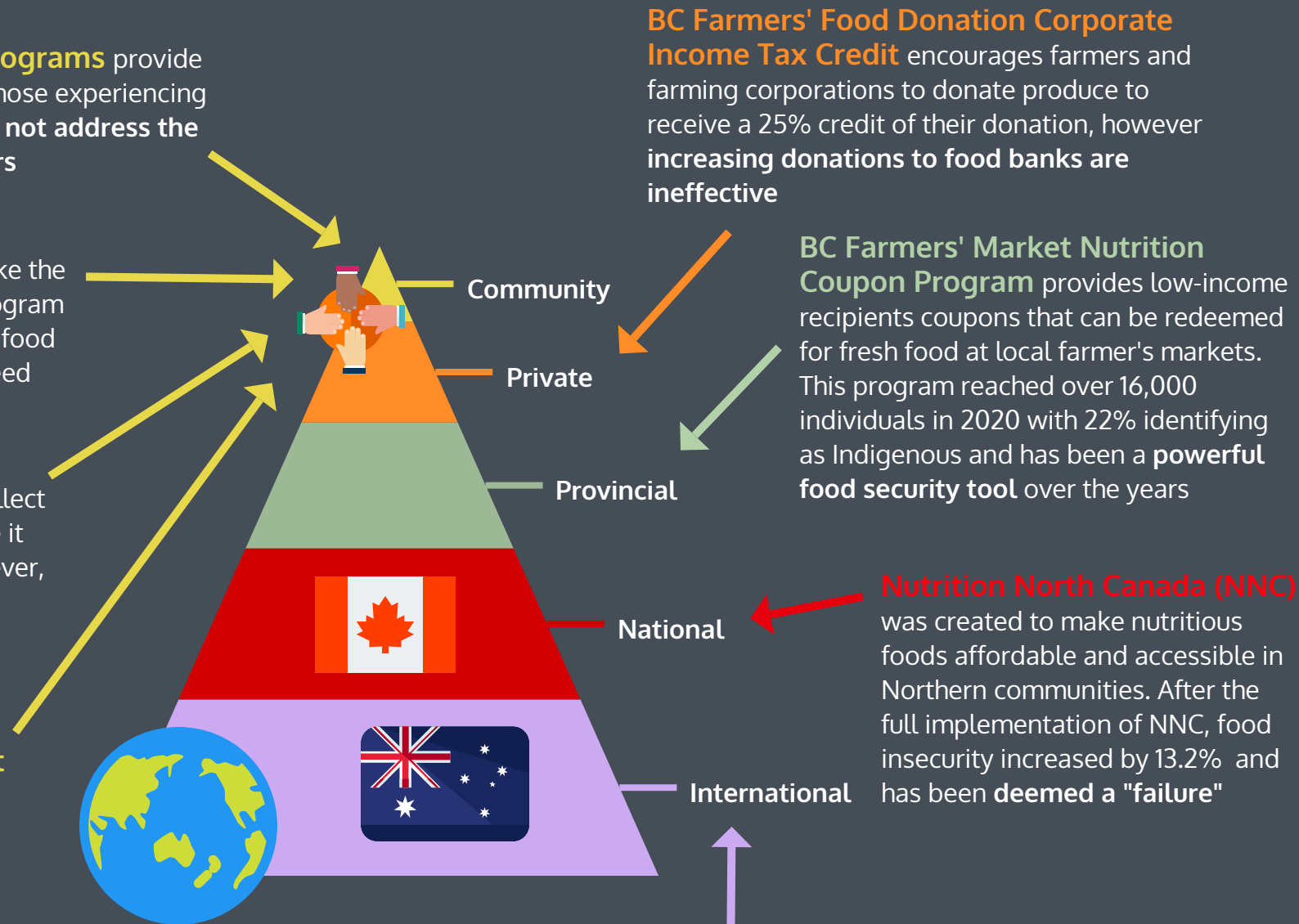
Food insecurity is a complex challenge that requires holistic multi-dimensional interventions that support food sovereignty

Charitable Food Programs provide short-term relief to those experiencing food insecurity but do not address the root causes or barriers

Non-Profit Organizations like the UGTS Essential Food Basket Program eliminate stigma by delivering food and by not requiring proof of need

Food Recovery Programs collect perishable foods and redistribute it to food banks and shelters, however, no evidence has shown that this improves food insecurity

Urban Agriculture: Tu'wusht Garden Project is an Indigenous-led initiative that created a safe space for intergenerational teachings and promotes healing through gardening for medicine and sustenance while building a connection to land and knowledge



BC Farmers' Food Donation Corporate Income Tax Credit encourages farmers and farming corporations to donate produce to receive a 25% credit of their donation, however increasing donations to food banks are ineffective

BC Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program provides low-income recipients coupons that can be redeemed for fresh food at local farmer's markets. This program reached over 16,000 individuals in 2020 with 22% identifying as Indigenous and has been a powerful food security tool over the years

Nutrition North Canada (NNC) was created to make nutritious foods affordable and accessible in Northern communities. After the full implementation of NNC, food insecurity increased by 13.2% and has been deemed a "failure"

The Australian Federal Government implemented welfare "quarantining" which restricted a portion of payments that could only be used to purchase food. However, many food-insecure individuals often sacrifice food when other basic needs like rent or medicine are a higher priority

Patterns Within the "Solutions Landscape"



Effective Initiatives

Benefit and address aspirations of the community

Foster self-determination

Co-create & co-develop initiatives

Promote Indigenous self-governance and value Indigenous voices



Ineffective Initiatives

Do not include Indigenous voices

Fail to recognize the importance of cultural and traditional foods

Do not address barriers and stigma

Exploit Indigenous Peoples while adopting colonial strategies

Before the gaps and levers can create meaningful change...



it is essential for stakeholders to build relationships and establish trust and respect within Indigenous communities

All stakeholders need to



- 1 Empower Indigenous voices and communities
- 2 Recognize the intergenerational trauma that exists today
- 3 Be informed of Indigenous ways of knowing and learning

Gaps & Levers



GAP

LEVER

INTERVENTION

Lack of co-creation and self-determination

Prioritize co-development and empowerment of Indigenous communities

All programs must co-create with direct input from the Indigenous community, Elders, Chiefs and Councils

Stakeholder Action

Government, Educational Institutions & Non-profits

- Indigenous communities and stakeholders must co-create interventions together with involvement of Elders, Chiefs, councils and Indigenous community
- Acknowledge that Indigenous communities are diverse in culture, thus have different preferences
- Implement **Two-Eyed Seeing Approach**, support **self-determination** and respect **Indigenous traditions and culture**



GAP

LEVER

INTERVENTION

Researchers and Educational Institutions can perpetuate harm

Reflect positionality, learn Indigenous cultures, acknowledge Indigenous Peoples ownership of data

Implement the First Nations Principles of OCAP, Participatory Action Research, Two-Eyed Seeing Approach & Four R's

Stakeholder Action

Educational Institutions

- Include Indigenous perspectives and take time to learn each Nations' customs
- Ensure outcomes benefit the community and findings are disseminated back
- Acknowledge positionality of researchers
- All research policies involving Indigenous Peoples must implement the **First Nation Principles of OCAP**
- Incorporate **sharing circles** in research and teaching methods
- **Distinguish research** between urban, rural and specific Indigenous communities
- Allow Indigenous Elders and other Knowledge Keepers to also be knowledge translators
- Advocate for **strengths-based research**, as current colonial perspectives on Indigenous Peoples are deficit-based

Gaps & Levers



GAP

LEVER

INTERVENTION

Lack of upstream approaches to food security

Recognize that food insecurity stems from lack of income and Social & Indigenous Determinants of Health

Implement a unified policy focusing on uplifting Social & Indigenous Determinants of Health

Stakeholder Action

Government

- Policies must focus on addressing the Social & Indigenous Determinants of Health
- Prioritize reducing food insecurity for urban Indigenous Peoples
- Instead of only consulting Indigenous Peoples they should be co-developers when co-creating initiatives together
- Mandatory implementation of UNDRIP at all levels
- Implement provincial Indigenous Food Framework

Organizations

- Advocate for policy action together with the Indigenous community

GAP

LEVER

INTERVENTION

Inconsistent funding & underfunding of Indigenous- and BIPOC-led organizations

Prioritize consistent funding of Indigenous- & BIPOC-led organizations

Create low barrier funding opportunities and expand funding for current successful initiatives

Stakeholder Action

Government

- Allocate low-barrier funding specifically for BIPOC-led non-profits
- The Federal, Provincial and Municipal government must consistently fund effective, Indigenous-led local organizations and initiatives. Many Indigenous-led organizations are impactful, but are shut down due to underfunding
- Expand funding to support current successful initiatives instead of creating new initiatives

