

2025 Interior Region Indigenous Food Forum



October 22-23, 2025

ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa – ʔaqam

We respectfully acknowledge ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa, where the Interior Region Indigenous Food Forum was held, and offer our gratitude to the community of ʔaqam and the ʔaqam Health & Wellness team for hosting.

We thank the Community-led Advisory Committee and the Steering Committee for their guidance and dedication, which shaped the vision and delivery of the Forum and kept the work grounded and community driven.

We are deeply grateful to the Elders, speakers, community leaders, and members who shared their knowledge, energy, and perspectives throughout the gathering.

Community-led Advisory Committee

- Monica Lloyd – Health Director, ʔaqam First Nation
- Jenny Damstrom – Community Health Nurse, ʔaqam First Nation
- Marco Campanella - Wellness Coordinator, ʔaqam First Nation
- Rachel Bach – Health Director, ʔakisqnuq First Nation
- Lillian Rose – Community Member, ʔakisqnuq First Nation
- Shane Fullerton – Farm Manager, yaqan nuʔkiy First Nation
- Joanne White - Community Member, yaqan nuʔkiy First Nation

Steering Committee

- Alexis Blueschke, IH – Public Health Dietitian
- Ashley Cruickshank, IH – Administrative Assistant, Indigenous Partnerships
- Beangka Elliott, FNHA - Program Coordinator, Healthy Eating and Food Security
- Fiona Goorman, FNHA – Environmental Health Officer
- Jade Chaboyer-Kondra, IH – Lead, Indigenous Engagement
- Kathleen Yung, FNHA – Food Security and Healthy Eating Specialist
- Katrina Lehenbauer, IH – Manager, Healthy Communities
- Kris Murray, IH – Corporate Director, Indigenous Health & Wellness
- Kristi Christian, IH – Lead, Indigenous Food Security
- Savanna Brown, IH – Director, Quality, Standards & Initiatives, Food Services
- Seamus Damstrom, IH – Public Health Dietitian
- Tegan Correll, IH – Facilitator, Indigenous-Specific Antiracism Education



Where We Gathered



The fourth annual Interior Region Indigenous Food Forum (IRIFF) took place October 22-23 on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa, in the community of ʔaqam.

Gathering on the Land grounded the forum in Ktunaxa teachings, relationships, and responsibilities to place.



Why We Gather

The IRIFF is a gathering that brings Indigenous communities together to discuss traditional foods and medicines, and their connections to culture, Land, health, and wellness.

The forum creates space to learn from one another, strengthen relationships, and support Indigenous-led food systems-led food systems.



Representation



More than 80 people travelled from across the Interior to take part in the gathering. Elders, youth, harvesters, seed caretakers, and individuals working in food sovereignty and community health contributed their voice and experience.

Indigenous leadership guided the event, supported by Interior Health, the First Nations Health Authority, and other partners working alongside communities.

What We Shared & Experienced

We hold deep gratitude for our Masters of Ceremony, Diane Whitehead and Jade Chaboyer-Kondra, who carried this important role with such care and intention. Their guidance helped hold the space in a good way for everyone who gathered.

Ktunaxa Creation Story



Joe Pierre opened the forum with a captivating retelling of the Ktunaxa creation story, a generational teaching that describes the origins of the ʔaqʔmaknik (people). His story invited people in with warmth, offering moments of humour and reflection that reinforced how closely human life remains tied to the Land.

Ktunaxa Community Storytelling



Speakers from ʔaqam, ʔakisqnuq, and yaqan nuʔkiy described how food continues to shape belonging, healing, and cultural identity. They spoke about the way food-focused programs create supportive environments where community members can grow in confidence and reconnect with teachings held by their families and Nations.



Indigenous Seed Stewardship



Tiffany Traverse described seed stewardship as a responsibility rooted in culture, relationship, and science. Her message centred on the way communities care for one another and uphold their responsibilities, while ensuring that the seeds being nurtured today will carry knowledge forward for those who come after.

Chronic Wasting Disease



Dr. Amélie Mathieu and Tzvetelina Petkova presented on the presence of CWD in parts of British Columbia. She explained how the disease affects wildlife and why cautious harvesting and monitoring are important for community safety. The discussion emphasized collaboration, early action, and shared awareness as essential to protecting ecosystems and cultural harvesting practices.



An Evening of Connection & Culture



The evening gathering brought people together over a delicious shared meal, provided by local caterers Frybread for Fun, followed by a joyful round dance. A community trade table invited participants to exchange foods, seeds, fresh produce, beadwork, crafts, and more, creating a vibrant space of reciprocity and sharing.

Throughout the evening, drumming filled the air, offering grounding and a sense of collective belonging.



Food Forum Sharing Circle “Weaving Stories Together”



Participants gathered at the ʔaqam Arbour and shared stories around a warm fire about how the Food Forum has shaped their lives and communities. During a Sharing Circle led by Jill Worboys, people spoke about renewed motivation and the meaningful connections they are bringing home. Their reflections showed how the Forum creates a sense of togetherness and opens space for important conversations.

Participants also shared their hopes for the future: more chances to gather throughout the year, deeper community involvement, stronger engagement with youth, and a growing responsibility to Land, seeds, and food safety.

These stories and insights were brought to life through graphic recording by Darcy Roshau.



The IRIFF is funded by Community Food Action Initiative (CFAI), a health promotion initiative that aims to increase community food security within British Columbia. The primary objective of CFAI is to support food security in rural, remote and Indigenous communities and encourages community involvement and community-led decision-making and partnerships.

For More Information

Article: [Indigenous Food Forum explores food systems, health and wellness](#)



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