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**First Nations students’ perceptions of school nutrition policy implementation: a mixed methods study**

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**Abstract**

**Aim**

School nutrition policies can improve healthy food access for Indigenous First Nations children in Canada. This study explored First Nations students’ perceptions of a school nutrition policy.

**Methods**

The research was a process evaluation of school nutrition policy implementation using a mixed-methods design. Students in grades 4–12 (n = 94) completed a 17-question survey to capture their perceptions of the policy. Survey data informed an 11-question semi-structured interview guide. Transcripts from interviews with students (n = 20) were analysed using content analysis to identify barriers and facilitators to policy implementation.

**Results**

Key facilitating factors to policy implementation were student support for the policy and taste preferences. Most students (87%) agreed that only healthy foods should be served at school and, in interviews, expressed a preference for healthy food choices. Barriers to policy implementation included foods available at school and lack of communication between students and their teachers and parents. Half (50%) of surveyed students reported that their eating habits at school were average; interviews explained that their diets could be improved by consuming more fruit and vegetables at school. Both surveys and interviews found that communication between students and their parents and teachers about what they ate and drank at school was low.

**Conclusions**

To support children’s healthy eating at school, the school nutrition policy could provide clear guidelines on foods permissible in the school, while considering social and environmental barriers to healthy eating. The involvement of First Nations children in the implementation and evaluation of school nutrition policies is recommended.

**Key words:** Canada, children, Indigenous, nutrition policy, school, students

**Introduction**

In Canada, Indigenous children (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) often have poor dietary behaviours putting them at a higher risk for obesity and obesity-related chronic diseases

compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts.1,2 First Nations communities face barriers to healthy eating at multiple levels of influence (i.e. community, built environment,

social policy), including poverty, food insecurity and geographic isolation.3 Effective strategies to promote healthy eating behaviours among First Nations children are needed that recognise the multiple factors that constrain their access to healthy food.

A comprehensive school health (CSH) framework (also known as health promoting schools) is a multi-factored approach that supports improvements in both health and

education through improved social and physical environments.4 A school nutrition policy (SNP) is an integral component of the broader CSH approach as it establishes formal standards for nutrition-related aspects of the school environment, including foods available, health education and community and family involvement.5 By implementing SNPs, schools have the opportunity to create environments that enable and encourage healthy eating behaviours, which may support lifelong health behaviours and improved health outcomes for First Nations children.6

In 2014, Kipohtakaw Education Centre (KEC) adopted a SNP intended to promote healthy food choices in the school (Appendix I). KEC is a locally-controlled, band-operated Cree (one group of First Nations peoples) kindergarten to grade 12 school located on reserve lands. Following adoption of the SNP, the school’s administrators sought to explore the SNP implementation process through an evaluation that included key stakeholders to identify areas for improvement. As the main recipients and beneficiaries of SNPs, it is important to understand students’ perceptions of the policy and of the school food environment. Students have the potential to identify their self-perceived barriers to healthy eating at school and can provide ideas to overcome challenges associated with SNP implementation; thus, their participation in policy evaluation may result in increased feasibility, acceptance, and overall success of SNPs.7 The purpose of this study was to explore students’ perceived barriers to and facilitators of a school nutrition policy in a First Nations community.

**Methods**

A community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach was adopted in which community members of the Alexander Research Committee (ARC), a well-established

research committee in Alexander First Nation, Alberta, Canada,8 worked in close collaboration with university researchers on all stages of the research. The use of a

CBPR approach ensured that the research followed cultural protocols, reflected local context, and worked to address needs identified by community educators. Ethics approval was obtained from Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta (Pro00051837).

The research was a process evaluation that focused on finding areas to improve the current SNP implementation process.9 The evaluation was conducted using an explanatory

sequential mixed-methods design, which is recognized as particularly effective in process evaluation research due to its ability to yield richer detail about implementation than quantitative and qualitative methods could alone.10 In the first phase, a cross-sectional survey was used to capture a broad understanding of students’ perceptions, attitudes, and experiences. Community members and academic researchers collaboratively developed a 17-question survey consisting of 1 open-ended question (‘what is your grade?’) and 16 closed-ended questions, including: 4 dichotomous questions; 1 Likert scale question; 3 interval scale questions; 2 semantic differential scale questions; and 6 frequency scale questions. The survey collected information on students’: gender (1 question); grade level (1 question); perceptions

of the policy and personal eating habits (3 questions); desirability of foods served and sold at school (3 questions); utilisation of the school food programs (3 questions); communication with parents and teachers (4 questions); perception of the healthiness of foods (1 question);

and desire to be served and sold certain foods (1 question).

All students in grades 4–12 (n = 126) were eligible to complete the anonymous survey. As per school policy, parental consent was not required because the survey had been developed to inform school programming. Students in kindergarten to grade 3 were not eligible due to time and resource constraints. The survey was read out to students in grades 4–6, while students in grades 7–12 completed the survey on their own with the same researcher (CG) present to answer questions.

Response frequencies (%) were calculated using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 22.0. Community members and academic partners discussed the results of the surveys and identified findings that were of interest and warranted further investigation. Thus, the quantitative results were used to develop the qualitative follow-up questions. Academic partners drafted the initial interview guide based on their expertise in interviewing and brought it back to the community members for approval, resulting in an 11-question semi-structured interview guide (Table 1).

All students in grades 4–12 were eligible to be interviewed if they had parental consent. To identify students to be interviewed, each consent form was assigned a number, and numbers were drawn from each grade level using Microsoft Excel random selection. Interviews were conducted by an experienced interviewer (CG) in a private room at the school. To reduce social desirability bias, the interviewer began each interview by explaining to students that they were not being tested. Students were also told that the interview was confidential, and that their responses would not be shared by name with their teachers, parents, or friends. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants’ consent. The interviewer had no previous formal relationship with participants; however, she may have been recognised by them as the same person responsible for survey administration. All interviewed students received a $25 (CAD) gift card for their participation. Interview recruitment continued until theoretical saturation, or the point at which no new information emerged, was reached.11

All interviews were transcribed verbatim with identifiers removed and analysed using ATLAS.ti version 8.0. Transcripts were analysed by the same researcher who conducted

the interviews (CG) using content analysis to generate knowledge based on participants’ perspectives.12 Guided by the approach outlined by Creswell,12 the analysis process included: (i) organising and preparing transcripts and field notes, (ii) reading each transcript to gain

familiarity with the data, (iii) line-by-line open coding using codes derived from the actual language used in the data (in vivo), (iv) generating themes, (v) describing themes and supporting them through transcript excerpts, and (vi) making interpretations of the findings.

 Facilitators and barriers to SNP implementation were organised using the socio-ecological framework3 during the final step of analysis. This is a theory-based framework for

understanding and describing the reciprocal interactions and interrelationships that occur between an individual’s personal dimensions and larger environment (e.g. social and physical environments).3 In this study, it was used to bring together the themes that naturally emerged from the data and establish the different levels of influence that each factor had on SNP implementation. Individual factors refer to the influence of students’ knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs on SNP implementation. Interpersonal factors refer to the influence of family and school staff on SNP implementation. Community, home and sociocultural environment factors refer to the influence of the school, community, and household food environments on SNP implementation.

 The researcher who administered and interpreted the interviews (CG) is an anthropologist with experience using qualitative methods to explore how people think about food and health within local contexts.13–15 These characteristics may have influenced the interpretation of results and methodological decisions, including the use of the socioecological framework to organise results. To mitigate the effects of individual researchers, trustworthiness of qualitative data was established through the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.16 To establish credibility, academic interpretations of the data were corroborated by community members on the ARC and a group of community Elders. Descriptions of the study setting, methodology, and data interpretations will allow other researchers to determine if and how findings may transfer to

other school contexts. Dependability was established by the researcher checking transcripts several times and defining codes to ensure that they were used consistently. Finally,

confirmability was established by maintaining an audit trail including minutes of ARC meetings and data analysis files.

**Results**

In total, 94 students in grades 4–12 completed the survey (response, 75%). Participants were 49% female and 51% male, and 44% were in grades 4–6 and 56% were in grades 7–12.

 Student responses to questions about healthy foods aligned with national dietary recommendations.17 For example, all students responded that leafy greens and fruit

were healthy and that candy and chocolate bars were unhealthy. When asked their preferred food and drinks to be served and sold in school, students’ choices aligned with

national dietary recommendations guidelines17(Table 2). Preferred foods also included traditional foods of their Cree culture, such as berries (e.g. raspberries and saskatoon

berries), baked bannock (a quick bread and staple food in many First Nations communities), and wild game meat (e.g. moose and deer). An exception was fish, which less than half of students chose to be served or sold. Although healthy foods were popular, many students still also chose unhealthy foods like sports and energy drinks, French fried potatoes, and soda pop to be served or sold at school.

Most students agreed (68%) or strongly agreed (19%) with the policy stating that ‘only healthy foods will be served or sold at KEC’. Fewer than half of students indicated

that they liked the foods served for breakfast (41%) and lunch (37%), yet most utilised the breakfast (56%) and hot lunch (53%) programs daily. In contrast, most students

(72%) liked the healthy snacks offered in the school canteen (e.g. chocolate milk, nuts, and low-fat snack foods such as pretzels) and just over half of students (54%) purchased them every day (12%) or a few days each week (42%).

Although most students were utilising the school food programs and canteen, they perceived their current eating habits to be only average or unhealthy. When asked to reflect on what they usually ate every day at KEC, over half (55%) of students responded that their eating habits were average, unhealthy or very unhealthy, while the remaining students (45%) indicated their eating habits were very healthy or healthy. Fewer students (34%) considered their eating habits at home and other places outside of school to be very healthy or healthy. Over half (57%) of students responded that they had asked their parents to buy healthy foods based on what they had learned about nutrition at school; however, most students did not communicate regularly with their parents or teachers about healthy eating or their nutrition at school (Table 3).

Following survey administration, a total of 20 students participated in the interview, including11 (55%) girls and 9 boys (45%) from all grades, except for grade 11. Interviews ranged from 8 to 27 minutes in length, averaging 14 minutes. Facilitators and barriers to SNP implementation are organised at the individual, interpersonal, and community, home, and sociocultural environment levels.

**Individual facilitators**

***Health knowledge*** All students provided examples of healthy and unhealthy foods. Students perceived healthy foods and drinks as being natural, low in sugar, and containing vitamins

and nutrients. Examples of healthy foods included wild game meat, fruit, and vegetables. In contrast, students perceived unhealthy foods as being processed and having high sugar and fat content. Examples of unhealthy foods included candy, soda pop, and pizza. Students also understood that food preparation and cooking methods influenced the healthiness of foods. For example, one student responded that fish is healthy ‘*[depending] on how you cook it*

*in and what it has in it*’ (Student 9).

***Food preferences*** Students expressed considerable interest in having healthy choices like fruit, vegetables, and wild game offered to them at school. For example, when asked which

foods they would serve for hot lunch, one student explained, ‘*I think I would make like some salad or like soup…Because it’s more healthier*’ (Student 7). Students also liked traditional Cree foods, and most identified berries and moose meat as their favourites. One student suggested that the hot lunch include, *‘[Moose meat]…and put some other vegetables on the side that most kids like. It seems a little more healthier because the vegetables are healthy and the meat*’ (Student 15). An exception was fish, which most students did not have an interest in consuming because they did not enjoy the taste. One student was also concerned about the safety of fish consumption, explaining ‘*maybe it’s just my superstition, I don’t know if they keep their lake clean*’ (Student 1).

Many students also expressed enjoying and wanting to consume foods like French fried potatoes, soda pop, and candy that they knew were unhealthy. For example, when asked to describe favourite foods, one student replied, ‘*pizza and pop…I know they’re not healthy but it’s good, tastes good*’ (Student 4).

***Interest in health education*** Nearly all students were interested in learning more about healthy foods at school. One student replied, ‘*Yes I would, honestly. What I would*

*want to know is how to prepare healthy meals*’ (Student 11). Another student specifically expressed interest in learning about healthy foods in their non-health classes, saying

‘*Yes because when we go to our health class with [teacher] we mostly talk about social studies…so we never talk about health*’ (Student 10). Students were also interested in having

after-school programming such as cooking classes offered.

**Interpersonal barriers**

***Lack of communication with teachers*** Although the SNP encourages all staff to incorporate health education and positive food messaging into the classroom, students indicated that they do not speak with their teachers about healthy eating. Students were unsure of or unable to articulate a reason for this lack of communication, although one thought it may be due to time, explaining, ‘*because maybe she is really busy…she has to teach three classes*’

(Student 13). In one exception, a student discussed having effective communication with a teacher who made a concerted effort to discuss healthy eating and active living

with students: ‘*I talk to one teacher about living like a healthy lifestyle…we’re trying to get a fitness group, like with a bunch of other kids in high school…he said that would be*

*like an all-around thing, we would like workout and exercise and then we would also talk about eating healthy…I hope he really does that though it’s a really good idea and everybody*

*likes him at school*’ (Student 1).

***Lack of communication with parents*** Students also revealed that they do not speak with their parents about what they eat at school, or healthy eating in general. For instance, one

student responded ‘*there’s not a particular reason why but I don’t usually talk about that. I usually forget*’ (Student 17), and another explained, ‘*I just talk about like what I did at school*

*and what I worked on and not really about the food*’ (Student 4). Other students indicated that the lack of communication was a result of lack of parent involvement or interest. One

student responded that they do not talk about what they eat and drink at school because ‘*no one asks*’ (Student 18). Another student said, ‘*I would talk about it, but it seems like*

*my parents are busy*’ (Student 5), and another student explained that parent involvement needed to be improved, saying ‘*I think with the parents it would be nice to have the parents more involved, so they can ask their kids when they get home “what did you eat today?”*’ (Student 1).

**Community, home and sociocultural environment barriers**

***Food served and sold in the school environment*** Most students believed that the quality and variety of foods served and sold in the school could be improved. Specifically, students

believed that the school’s food environment could be made healthier by serving and selling more fruit and vegetables. One student explained ‘*I think we should have more fruit and*

*more vegetables…I feel like it should just be mandatory to take*’ (Student 1). One student recommended incorporating more fruit and vegetables into the hot lunch saying, ‘*they could*

*have like sides with some vegetables or fruits*’ (Student 14), and another student suggested ‘*apples, oranges, and bananas for like little snacks between breaks*’ (Student 17).

In addition, students explained that they were served or sold foods and drinks at school that they did not think were healthy. One student perceived the pizza served at hot

lunch as being unhealthy, and some students perceived unhealthy food options being available in the school canteen. For example, one said, ‘*they sell those [processed, flavoured*

*rice chips], I eat those a lot. My teacher tells me that it’s bad, but I still eat it*’ (Student 2). Many students also reported bringing nutrient-poor processed foods from home with

them as snacks, including granola bars, cookies, and pudding. One student felt that unhealthy foods brought by other students from home should be banned, saying, ‘*Some foods should be banned like energy drinks. I see that a few times in the school*’ (Student 5).

***Lack of healthy foods at home*** Most students believed that their eating habits at home and other places outside of school could be improved. Specifically, students felt that

they should be consuming more fruits and vegetables and less convenience and pre-packaged foods. For instance, one student responded they should eat ‘*less fatty products and*

*more vegetables and fruits*’ (Student 5). In addition, two students disclosed relying on the food programs at school to supplement their diets as they did not have access to many

healthy food choices at home.

**Discussion**

Very few studies in Canada have explored the factors influencing nutrition policy implementation in First Nations schools. We surveyed and interviewed First Nations students,

and their self-perceived barriers and facilitators in SNP implementation were organised within the context of the socio-ecological framework.3 The key individual facilitating factors identified in this study were student support and taste preference for healthy foods. Previous research has determined both student support for healthy eating and student taste preference to be significant factors influencing policy implementation.18,19 Although students admitted to

enjoying unhealthy foods, they provided many examples of healthy foods that they desired to have at school. Echoing finding in previous studies,20 this suggests that students will make healthy choices if the availability of unhealthy foods is reduced and availability of healthy foods is increased at school. Elders in the community were unsurprised by this finding, explaining that most students are aware of what foods are good for them but experience barriers that prevent them from consuming healthy foods. As such, the SNP may play a significant role in ensuring students receive nutritious meals that they may otherwise not

receive due to barriers experienced outside of school.

Survey and interview data also demonstrated students’ interest in consuming traditional foods of their Cree culture. This is an important facilitator of policy implementation in this context, as the school has a focus on incorporating education on traditional foods, as well providing traditional foods in the school food programs. However, surveys suggested that students were not interested in being served or sold fish. Interviews explained that this finding was due to students’ distaste for fish and food safety concerns. Elders affirmed this concern, explaining that contamination caused by pollution and environmental degradation has affected fish populations as well as traditional wild game such as moose and deer. Elders suggested that students’ disinterest in fish may also be due to unfamiliarity and lack of exposure to diverse types of fish, as traditional food sharing practices are deteriorating in the community and many families cannot access fish to prepare at home for their children. Given these issues, students may benefit from education on environmental contamination and being exposed to foods that they may not have had an opportunity to try.

Interpersonal barriers to SNP implementation included the lack of communication between students and their teachers and parents. Survey and interview results confirmed that most students do not speak to their teachers about healthy foods, despite staff being encouraged to incorporate nutrition education in their classrooms regardless of the subject being taught. An evaluation completed with staff from KEC indicated that the policy was implemented inconsistently by staff due to their limited knowledge of the policy, competing priorities, and perceived role as nutrition policy facilitators.21 These findings indicate a need to encourage and support staff to improve the embedding of policy-driven nutrition education into the classroom as part of a broader CSH approach. This may require explicit policy guidelines that specifically outline staff responsibilities in addition to the provision of appropriate resources and support.22

Survey and interview findings corroborated that studentsrarely speak with their parents about what they eat anddrink at school. As students have been identified as driversof change in the home environment6,23 and parents controlmost of the food choices at home,7 parent engagementthrough communication with their children is an importantmeans of extending the SNP intentions beyond the schoolenvironment. Lack of communication is also of concernbecause parents may be unaware of the school’s food programs,their child’s eating habits at school, or the SNP ingeneral. Lack of parental awareness may be a reason whychildren were sent to school with snacks that did not complywith policy guidelines, potentially undermining successfulSNP implementation. Addressing this barrier mayinvolve strategies and resources to increase parent awarenessof the policy and engagement in the SNP implementationprocess through ongoing consultation. It is importantto consider, however, that parents may be aware of policyguidelines but are unwilling or financially unable to providehealthy food choices for their children to bring to school.

Finally, foods available to students at home and at school presented a barrier at the community, home, and sociocultural environment level. Surveys indicated that most students believed that their eating habits at school were average or unhealthy; interviews explained that this was due, in part, to their belief that they should consume more fruits and vegetables at school. As a SNP provides the foundation for coordinating other elements of CSH, including food programs, it is essential that guidelines are specific, consistent, and mutually reinforcing.6 These findings indicate that there may need to be clearer guidelines surrounding foods served and sold to students in the school environment. However, ensuring that food menus better adhere to SNP guidelines may be challenging, especially within First Nations contexts due to underlying issues of food access and affordability. For instance, access to fresh fruits and vegetables is an ongoing barrier for KEC due to its rural location and issues with finding suitable and affordable fresh produce providers. Furthermore, some students indicated having limited healthy foods at home, which may be due to their parents being unable to afford healthy foods like fruit, as reported by previous qualitative research at KEC.24 When implementing SNPs in First Nations contexts, it is essential to take into account the local environment and consider multiple levels of the socio-ecological framework, including considerations of healthy food availability, accessibility, and cost, local conceptualisations of health, and cultural foods.25,26

A strength to our study lies in the CBPR approach, which facilitated community control and involvement of community members, including Elders, in the evaluation of the SNP. However, as data collection took place in only one community, the results may not be transferable to other First Nations schools. The school in which the research took place is in a rural (but not remote) community with limited access to off-site fast food and convenience stores. The school also has a canteen where healthy foods are sold and a kitchen where a hired cook prepares free breakfast and hot lunch meals. These characteristics may in themselves be important facilitators of SNP implementation in this school. Regardless, the barriers and facilitators identified in this research offer key factors for other First Nations schools to consider when developing and implementing SNPs.

To our knowledge, this is the first study to involve students in evaluating a SNP in a First Nations community in Canada. Future research will benefit from continuing to involve First Nations students to understand their perceptions of the impact of SNPs as well as identify barriers and enablers to their success. With this knowledge, it may be possible to optimise the successful implementation of SNPs to improve food environments and eating behaviours to decrease obesity risk for First Nations children.

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**Conflicts of interest**

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

**Authorship**

All authors were involved in study design. Quantitative data were collected by CG and analysed by CG and NDW. Qualitative data were collected and analysed by CG. Interpretations of all data were made by CG and reviewed by ARC. CG drafted the manuscript. All authors reviewed and are in agreement with the manuscript and declare that the content has not been previously published elsewhere. The authors gratefully acknowledge Alexander First Nation and Kipohtakaw Education Centre. The authors thank the First Nations students and Elders who participated in this research, as well as school administrative

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Table 1. Semi-structured interview guide

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Question | Probes |
| 1. If you could have anything to eat or drink at home, what would you want? Why would you choose these foods?
 | Types of foods and drinks child likes to have for breakfast, lunch, dinner, or celebrations; taste; social importance |
| 1. Tell me about some food and drinks you think are healthy. Why do you think they are healthy?
 | Food preparation; bannock; meat; rabbit/moose/deer/duck/bush chicken; fish; sports and energy drinks |
| 1. Tell me about some food and drinks you think are unhealthy. Why do you think they are unhealthy?
 | Food preparation; bannock; meat; rabbit/moose/deer/duck/bush chicken; fish; sports and energy drinks |
| 1. Tell me about the food you usually eat and drink at school. Could the way you eat at school be healthier? Why or why not?
 | Breakfast; Hot lunch; Canteen; Are foods brought from home or outside the school? |
| 1. Tell me about the food you eat and drink when you are not at school. Could the way you eat and drink at home and other places outside of school be healthier? Why or why not?
 | At home or other places. |
| 1. Think about the last meal you were served at school. Can you describe it for me? Did you like it? Why or why not
 | Breakfast; hot lunch; taste |
| 1. If you were in charge of making a healthy breakfast and hot lunch at school, what would you make? Why would you choose those foods
 | Fish; taste; nutritional value |
| 1. Does anyone in your life hunt for moose, deer, rabbit, duck or bush chicken? Do they fish, or pick for berries like saskatoons, chokecherries, gooseberries, blueberries, and raspberries? If so, which of these foods do you like to eat? Why or why not?
 | none |
| 1. How often do you talk with your family about what you eat and drink at school? If often, what do you talk about? If not often, why not
 | none |
| 1. When you are at school, do you talk to your teachers about healthy foods? If so, what do you talk about? If not, why not?
 | none |
| 1. Think about the classes you have where you learn about health. Would you like to learn more about healthy foods at school? How would you like to learn about healthy eating?
 | General nutrition information; cooking classes; shopping trips; field trips; visits from a nutritionist; after-school activities |

Table 2. Survey responses: students’ desire to be served and sold certain foods

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes,****n** (%) | **No** **n** (%) |
| Would you like the following food and drinks sold and served at [removed for blind peer review]? |  |
| **Unprocessed, minimally processed, or processed food** |
| Fruit | 88 (100) | 0 (0) |
| Berries | 86 (98) | 2 (2) |
| 100% fruit juice like apple and orange juice | 84 (97) | 3 (3) |
| Milk | 83 (94) | 5 (6) |
| Cheese and yogurt | 78 (89) | 10 (11) |
| Leafy greens | 78 (89) | 10 (11) |
| Vegetables | 74 (84) | 14 (16) |
| Whole grain breads and pasta | 69 (79) | 18 (21) |
| Whole grain, low sugar breakfast cereal | 67 (76)  | 21 (24) |
| Low fat meat and chicken | 61 (70) | 26 (30) |
| Baked bannock | 58 (66) | 30 (34) |
| Wild game meat | 56 (64) | 31 (36) |
| Fish (not breaded) | 37 (42) | 50 (58) |
|  |
| **Ultra-processed snack food and fried food** |  |
| Fried bannock | 53 (61) | 34 (39) |
| Low fat snack foods | 54 (61) | 34 (39) |
| Sports and energy drinks | 52 (59) | 36 (41) |
| French fries | 42 (48) | 46 (52) |
| Ice cream | 40 (46) | 47 (54) |
| Soda pop | 37 (43) | 49 (57) |
| Potato and nacho chips | 33 (37) | 55 (63) |
| Cakes and cookies | 33 (37) | 55 (63) |
| Candy and chocolate bars | 25 (29) | 62 (71) |

Table 3. Survey responses: communication with parents and teachers

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Never, n (%) | A few days each month, n (%) | A few days each week, n (%) | Every day, n (%) |
| How often do you talk with your parents about what you eat and drink at KEC? | 32 (34) | 30 (32) | 26 (28) | 6 (6) |
| How often do you ask your teachers about healthy foods to eat and drink? | 44 (47) | 26 (28) | 20 (21) | 4 (4) |
| How often do your teachers talk with you about healthy food choices? | 22 (23) | 27 (29) | 42 (45) | 3 (3) |

Appendix I. Kipohtakaw Education Centre (KEC) School Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy 126

Written by Alexander First Nation Department of Education

Implemented March 2014

Policy Statement: Kipohtakaw Education Centre will promote and provide nutritious snacks and meals consistent with the First Nation, Inuit, and Métis (FNIM)Food Guide while promoting nutrition education and daily physical activity.

Guidelines:

1. All Kipohtakaw Education Centre Staff must ensure that strategies are in place to foster the knowledge, skills and attitudes that promote healthy eating. In fulfilling this expectation Kipohtakaw Education Centre staff will:
	1. establish linkages between health education and foods available at the school
	2. promote nutrition education and positive food messages provided by Alberta Health Services Website and Canadian FNMI food guide
	3. limit the use of food items as rewards, e.g. no candy for cleaning desks or finishing work early.
	4. All school and classroom celebrations will follow the FNMI food guide and Alberta Health Services Guidelines for healthy living. (for example, talent show, round dance, pow wow, birthday parties, Halloween, meet the teacher, parent teacher interviews, Christmas concert, Christmas parties, career fair, graduation, track and field, prom, Easter, year-end parties, 100th day of school celebration and in addition to any other school celebrations).
	5. Hot lunch menu and canteen menu to be posted in the monthly newsletter.
2. Kipohtakaw Education Centre will promote healthy, reasonably priced food choices when food is sold or otherwise offered. In fulfilling this expectation, Kipohtakaw Education Centre Staff will plan to:
	1. access expertise in the community through partnerships, programs, referrals, etc.,
	2. offer foods that are from the FNMI Food Guide
	3. All fundraisers must follow the FNMI Food Guide and Alberta Health Services guidelines for healthy living.
3. Kipohtakaw Education Centre school community will examine their nutrition practices and provide opportunities, support and encouragement for staff and students to eat healthy foods. In fulfilling this expectation staff may do things such as:
	1. create their own health and wellness team that includes staff, parents and students
	2. choose healthy fundraising options
	3. create an environment where healthy foods are available, affordable and promoted as the best choice
	4. review options with food suppliers to maximize the nutritional value of the items
	5. define the frequency of special celebrations in yearly calendars and ensure that healthy food items are available on those days

will promote positive food messaging on lunch and snack items provided by parents (Kipohtakaw Education Centre staff are not responsible for unhealthy food choices brought from home)