



School Food Programming: 2022- Present

MLTC Nutrition & Education Programs
Patricia St. Denis with Tammy Shakotko
May 27, 2026

*Photo: from Birch Narrows Dene Nation School – Land Language Relationships and Culture Programming May 2026

Agenda



The Importance of School Food Programs

Meadow Lake First Nation School Food Programs

Programming – to Improve Support to Schools

Evaluation and Partnerships

A group of five children are running joyfully across a grassy field. In the foreground, a girl in a red and black hoodie runs towards the left. In the center, a boy in a blue hoodie with a cartoon character and '2018 KINDER GRAD' text runs towards the camera. To his right, a girl in a black hoodie runs towards the camera with a wide smile. Further right, another girl in a maroon hoodie runs towards the camera. In the background, a girl in a black hoodie runs away from the camera. The field is green and open, with a fence and trees in the distance under a cloudy sky.

Why are School Food Programs Important?

Why School Food is Important

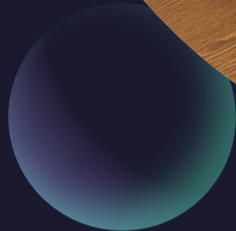
- Ensures Access- all students have access to nutritious food at school
- Reduce Impact of Hunger – hungry children:
 - May struggle to concentrate, making learning more difficult
 - May not perform as well on testing; struggle with emotional health or attendance
- Contribute to Wellbeing - High quality, nutritious foods are important
 - Promote physical wellbeing – ensuring the demands of growing bodies are met
 - Reduce the risk of developing a chronic disease later in life
- Learning Opportunity - Provide hands-on learning:
 - Connect the curriculum to local food practices.
 - Food literacy (understanding where food comes from, how to prepare it etc...)
 - Cultural and Traditional food experiences (land-based food skills)



*Photo: from Flying Dust First Nation – Buffalo Harvest – Land Language Relationships and Culture Programming Nov 2025

MLFN School Food Programs

What programs are being offered
by MLFN schools?



MLFN SFP

- 100% of schools offer some type of food (even if it is paid for)
- Breakfast - 88%
 - All are universal
 - Some are simple (cereal, milk and toast, fruit)
 - Some are hot full breakfasts or a hybrid of the two
 - Served to/or in classrooms; in hall as assisted buffet; or continental grab and go
- Snack - 75%
 - Offer at least one or two snacks
 - At least two are grab and go breakfast and/or snack
- Lunch - 88%
 - 4 Universal, 2 Monthly Fees, 2 Needs Based – some but not all receive
 - All offer hot items most of the time



Cooks

Ideal 1:100

- MLTC – range 0.68-0.93 with an average of 0.8:100
- Lower ratios can result in increased use of pre-prepared foods; serving quantity over quality; or staff burn out

Balance in Cook Workload is Important

- From scratch cooking methods
- Fresh fruits and vegetable & quality fresh foods
- Avoiding environmental waste
- Planning menus - using cycle menus to make ordering easier
- Having equipment and supports that make the cooks jobs easier



Areas of Focus

- Universal = free to All Students
- Expand SFP
 - Type (add a meal or snack)
 - Size (include fruit/veg, grains and protein; or hot items)
- Include school food and meals in curriculum
- Include more local food
 - Local food producers (gardens, ranchers)
 - Traditional or bush foods (wild meat, berries)
- Ensure Quality
 - Decrease processed food (sugary cereals, fries, breaded processed meats or hot dogs)
 - Increase quality food (fruit, vegetables, whole grains, quality meats)
 - Cook from scratch
 - Offer a variety of types of foods



Supports Offered to Schools

Projects

Assessments

Reviews

Funding

Tours



Buffalo Harvest

Nov to Dec

- Buffalo Harvest Program is growing
 - 4 schools 2024 (Nov-Feb)
 - 6 schools 2025 (2 new, Nov-Dec)
 - 8 schools – planned 2026
- MLTC works with FDFN Buffalo Ranch
- Schools plan travel and involve local elders
- Traditional Protocols involve tobacco use, elder involvement and mentorship and a pipe ceremony



Tour of Maskwacis

December 2025

- Looking at other models is inspiring!
 - Tour with 15 people
 - 50% of schools attended
 - 2 cooks, 5 administrators, 1 councilor, 1 elder
- Created a report on the types of programs and opportunities to share with all schools



Food Skills & Gardening Grants

- Each year MLTC nutrition offers a small grant to schools and communities
- Purpose
 - Increase food skills
 - Support food sovereignty projects
 - Be sustainable
 - Create opportunity to try new things
 - Get small capitol equipment or supplies



Elder and youth garden

- Garden beds, seeds, equipment, compost and soil

Outdoor land-based youth program

- Smoker, vacuum sealers, meat handling tubs, and pans

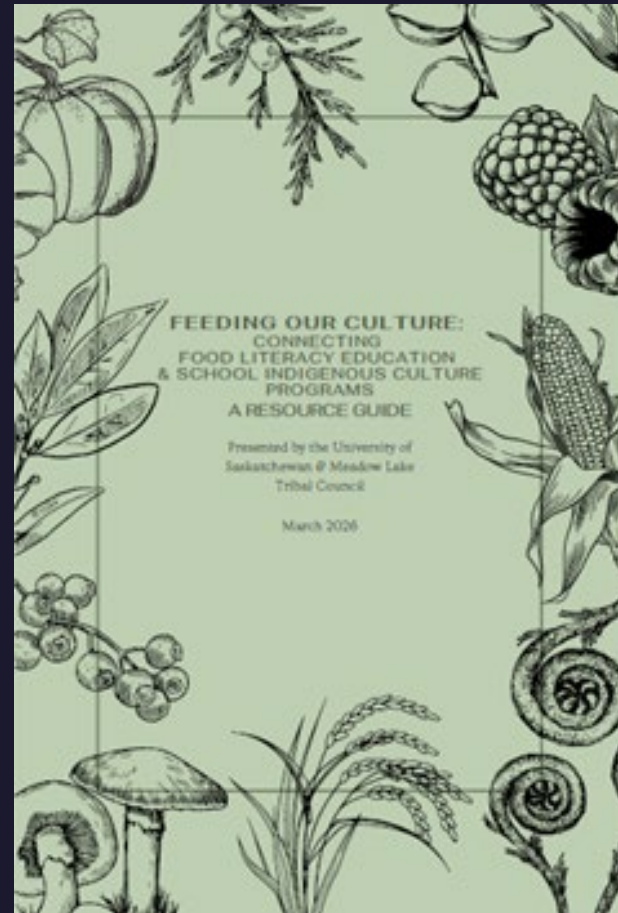
Building Code & Mechanical Engineering

- Ventilation is important
 - April 2026 – offered a TEAMS meeting to schools
- NSFP96 ventilation is specific for grease laden vapors
- Class 3 building code
 - Menus impact decisions about ventilation
 - Experts can advise
 - Buildings may need upgrades
- Mechanical engineers can advise on ventilation options and act as project managers
 - Spring 2026 – inquiring about services



Evaluation & Partnerships

- School Food Dev. Project 2022-2024 - UofS
- Arts Based Evaluation 2026 - UofS
 - Shay Quinn – University of Saskatchewan
 - Zine making grades 4-6
 - Exploring what traditional food means to students
- Other Evaluation 2025-2026 –UofS
 - 2 schools are involved in formal SFP evaluation
 - Tracking: # of meals, # of students, type of meals offered
 - Interviewing staff about program needs
 - Economic evaluation- CRDN



Food Literacy Guide –UofS

- A resource developed in collaboration with MLTC and the UofS
- Shares practical information about pairing land-based programming and the inclusion of traditional food with food literacy education.



Thank you

- Patricia St.Denis with Tammy Shakotko
- Meadow Lake Tribal Council

