Reviewer’s report

Title: The characteristics and experience of community food program users in Arctic Canada: A case study from Iqaluit, Nunavut

Version: 1 Date: 23 March 2012

Reviewer: Grace Egeland

Reviewer’s report:

The paper provides a rich context for understanding the food insecurity issue in a northern community through in-depth interviews and a fixed choice survey involving 94 users of a food bank, a soup kitchen and a friendship centre in one community over a one month period in May 2010. The qualitative approach is appropriate for the objectives of the research and I didn't see any major methodological problems with the paper.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. For some of the statistical analyses, however, the authors may not have had sufficient power to identify important associations in the data. I would suggest that the discussion section mention this as it relates to specific items. For example, the authors report that 72% of respondents were unemployed and this implies that 28% were employed, but the table lists 26% were employed. Nevertheless, the percent employed seems low raising concerns regarding the finding of no association with employment status and the frequency of use of the community food bank. Did the authors have sufficient power to evaluate this with 94 participants? Did employment include part-time employment? Later it is stated that 12% reported employment income and social assistance. It would be better to clarify the percentages for employment status and the issue of statistical power for this and other findings.

2. On page 7, the authors state "sampling continued over a 4 week period until saturation was reached". What is meant by the term "saturation"? Please expand the text.

Minor issues:

3. The references need to be carefully checked and corrected..there are numerous errors (some references are repeated, some have typographical errors and some mix the title and authors of different papers).

4. The term "usership" could potentially be changed to "utilization"

5. page 3, the sentence "The early 1990s scholarship..." why not simply state "research" instead of "scholarship". Also toxic chemicals may be better described as "contaminants" as the level of contaminants varies and is not necessarily "toxic".

6. page 4, the authors state that there are lower retail prices for store foods at the
regional Inuit centres (RICs), but it would be clearer to the readers to explicitly state that this is relative to other communities in the Arctic which are more remote from major food distribution routes.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.