

ACB Food in LTC: Co-designing roadmaps for promoting culturally relevant food in long-term care homes in partnership with community food programs to address modifiable risk factors for poor health in the African, Caribbean, and Black population in Canada

Aim: To promote food security and sovereignty in long-term care homes by working towards food sourcing, preparation, and delivery aligned with African, Caribbean and Black cultures as part of person-centered care.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Food as a bridge to belonging, extending beyond nutrition by creating gathering spaces and fostering intergenerational connections.
- The importance of physical space to grow, cook, and gather as a community to strengthen interpersonal bonds.
- We achieved our goal of strengthening relationships with our partner organizations and gathered insights into culturally responsive practices in long-term care.



Highlights from our recent site visits

This fall, our research team had the opportunity to visit two remarkable community food programs: the Sinkunia Community Development Organization in Edmonton and the Afri-Can FoodBasket in Toronto. Both organizations are doing incredible work supporting African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) communities through culturally grounded food initiatives.



Nourishing the Soul

Our site visits were filled with learning, reflection, and connection. Through observation, semi-structured interviews, and conversations, we gained meaningful insights into how food, space, and community come together to nourish both the body and spirit.



HIGHLIGHTS

During our site visits in Edmonton, AB and Toronto, ON, we highlighted 5 key takeaways from the experiences:

Food as a bridge to belonging

At Sinkunia, we witnessed how access to cultural food goes far beyond nutrition — it creates space for people to gather, share traditions, and connect with others who share their cultural background. These moments of togetherness foster belonging, maintain cultural identity, reduce loneliness, and offer a true sense of *home*.

Food as medicine

Our visit to Afri-Can FoodBasket deepened our understanding of the powerful connections between food, health, and culture. The team shared rich knowledge about the medicinal and nutritional properties of various cultural foods and the importance of maintaining culturally relevant preparation methods that preserve both heritage and wellness. It was inspiring to see how the program is intentional about sharing this knowledge with their clients through various initiatives e.g. cooking classes and children's summer camps.

The importance of space

Across both programs, the value of physical space stood out. Having a dedicated place to grow, cook, and gather strengthens community bonds among staff, volunteers, and clients. It also enables programs to run more smoothly, expand intergenerational activities, and reduce barriers to engagement. Both programs have been resourceful in finding working space. In Sinkunia, an outdoor garage space has been converted into a gathering space, kitchen and hub for adult engagement e.g. their popular sewing and quilting program. Afri-Can FoodBasket has partnered with the Pilgrim Tabernacle Church and the Jamaican Community Association for space to process and store food for the hampers that go out to their clients.

Large-scale customization is possible

In Toronto, we met Afri-Can FoodBasket partners who provide meals for diverse groups, including asylum seekers, newcomers, and youth in shelters. They shared innovative practices for sourcing and preparing culturally tailored meals that meet a wide range of ACB food traditions—while also introducing clients to new foods in welcoming ways and sharing knowledge on nutritional benefits. These approaches could offer inspiration for adaptation within long-term care settings.

Passion drives resilience

At both sites, we were inspired by the passion and dedication of staff and volunteers. Their commitment to food justice and community well-being fuels creativity, resourcefulness and their long-term sustainability. We met several “change champions” at both programs whose vision and dedication have allowed both programs to grow and thrive in amazing ways— we hope to be able to include them in the future co-design work for developing the roadmaps to guide long-term care homes.



REFLECTIONS AND GRATITUDE

Our goal for these visits was to strengthen relationships with our partner organizations and gather insights that could inform culturally responsive practices in long-term care. Thanks to the generous hospitality and openness of both Sinkunia and Afri-Can FoodBasket, we achieved just that, and much more.

We had lots of fun attending Sinkunia's annual Harvest Festival, sharing delicious African meals, dancing with clients and volunteers, and harvesting fresh produce from their community garden. At Afri-Can FoodBasket's urban farm, we rolled up our sleeves to pick kale and tomatoes for the food hampers and admired the callaloo and okra plants.

NEXT STEPS

Following the events from this fall, our next steps are to:

- Analyze the data from the site visits.
- Hold policymaker focus groups and interviews — **Winter 2026**
- Plan and prepare for 2026 site visits
 - CANAVUA, Edmonton, AB — **April, 2026 (new partnership!)**
 - DESTA and WIBCA, Montreal, QC — **October, 2026**
- Complete policy analysis using the Intersectionality Framework
- Complete protocol and policy analysis papers and submit for publication
- Virtual end of year meetings with Community Advisory Council and full project team in November-December
- Submit abstracts for 1-2 conference presentations in 2026



Thank you

These visits were deeply meaningful and energizing for our teams. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the staff and volunteers at both organizations for welcoming us so warmly, and to **Yewande, Zakiya, Dayirai, Carol, Melissa, and Destiny** for their valuable contributions to data collection and reflection.

Looking to the Future

We look forward to continuing this learning journey and visiting the remaining community food programs next year!



Scan the QR code for more information about the ACB Food in LTC Project.