



INDIGENOUS WELLNESS PROGRAM – FIRST FOODS ACCESS PANTRY POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1 About Unkitawa

“Unkitawa,” a Lakota word meaning *ours, yours, and mine*, reflects our belief that what belongs to each of us individually also belongs to all living things. As an Indigenous led nonprofit, Unkitawa is committed to restoring balance, wellness, and cultural connection for Indigenous peoples across King County and beyond.

1.2 Purpose of the First Foods Access Pantry

The Owówičhak’u Wašté First Foods Access Pantry exists to:

- Reduce barriers to culturally relevant, nutrient dense foods
- Support Indigenous food sovereignty
- Promote whole person’s wellness through food, culture, and traditional knowledge
- Address chronic disease caused by colonization of Indigenous food systems
- Provide a respectful, equitable, and culturally grounded food access experience

The pantry is part of Unkitawa’s Indigenous Wellness Program, which includes hot meals, traditional medicines, and community education.



2. Guiding Principles

2.1 Cultural Integrity

We honor the foods, medicines, and teachings of Indigenous people. The pantry prioritizes First Foods, traditional ingredients, and culturally significant items.

2.2 Health & Nutrition

Unkitawa's Food and Nutrition Guidelines—developed with the American Heart Association and aligned with the Healthy Eating Research (HER) Nutrition Guidelines—ensure that distributed foods support long-term health and wellness.

2.3 Equity & Access

Policies ensure fair, consistent, and respectful access for all relatives, prevent shortages, and maintain community trust.

2.4 Sustainability

We source from Indigenous producers, hunters, gatherers, and local farms whenever possible, and avoid foods that are not culturally aligned or that contribute to chronic disease. (FDA approved to give to community in the pantry)



3. Nutrition & Food Sourcing Guidelines

3.1 Nutrition Commitments

We prioritize HER “Choose Often” foods:

- Whole grains (wild rice, whole corn, whole wheat)
- Lean proteins (buffalo, elk, smoked salmon, turkey, beans)
- Fresh and local fruits and vegetables
- Low sodium and minimally processed items
- Dehydrated traditional foods

We limit or avoid:

- Dairy
- Gluten containing items
- Sugary beverages
- Candy and low nutrient foods
- Breaded or heavily processed items

3.2 Food Donations

We welcome donations that align with our nutrition commitments; all donations must be USDA compliant.

Choose Often:

Dark leafy greens, fresh fruits, lean proteins, whole grains, dehydrated foods

Choose Rarely:

Dairy, gluten containing items, sugary beverages, candy, breaded/prepared foods, large quantities of desserts



Staff may decline donations that do not match these guidelines.

3.3 Food Purchases

When funding is available, Unkitawa prioritizes:

- Fresh produce
- Spices and cooking staples
- Indigenous First Foods
- HER “Choose Often” items

We do not purchase sugary beverages, candy, or foods without nutritional value.

4. Pantry Operations

4.1 Location & Hours

Owówichak’u Wašté
1103 Meeker Street Suite 103
Kent, WA 98032
Phone: (253) 277-3749

Open 3–5 days per month, 10am–2pm. Dates vary and are published on the 6-month calendar.

4.2 Eligibility

Open to all.
No documents required.
Priority is given to American Indian/Alaska Native relatives.



4.3 Registration & Appointments

Households register through PantrySoft:

<https://www.pantrysoft.com/login/unkitawa>

- Registration opens at 10am two days before each distribution day.
- Registration closes at 10am on the distribution day.
- Each household may visit **two times per month**.
- A household member must be present to shop.
- Walk-ins may shop when openings are available.

Assistance is available at wellness@unkitawa.org.

4.4 Appointment Attendance Policy

No Call – No Show:

If a participant misses an appointment without notifying staff prior to their appointment time, they will be temporarily unable to schedule a new appointment for one (1) month from the date of the missed appointment.

Reinstatement:

Participants must email wellness@unkitawa.org to reconnect with staff, and discuss barriers. Scheduling privileges will be restored one (1) month from the date of the missed appointment.

This policy ensures equitable access for all relatives.

5. Household Shopping Guidelines

5.1 Household Definition



A household member is someone who resides at the registered address.

Alternate household members:

- Must live at the same address
- Must be listed in the PantrySoft account
- May shop on behalf of the household

Not permitted:

Friends, neighbors, coworkers, or family who live at a different address.

Participants may not create multiple accounts with the same address.

5.2 Shopping Procedure

1. Check in at the front desk
2. Retrieve a basket
3. Shop according to household size
4. Check out with staff/volunteers for inventory tracking

6. Monthly Item Limits

6.1 Standard Monthly Limits

Each household may receive:

1–2 Person Household

- Each visit: 1 lb. meat, 1 lb. grains, unlimited produce
- Monthly: 2 non-duplicated traditional medicines, 1 lb. berries, 1 lb. nuts/seeds, 2 non--duplicated specialty items



3–5 Person Household

- Each visit: 2 lbs. meat/seafood, 2 lbs. grains/beans/flour, unlimited produce
- Monthly: same as above

6–8 Person Household

- Each visit: 3 lbs. meat/seafood, 3 lbs. grains/beans/flour, unlimited produce
- Monthly: same as above

9+ Person Household

- Each visit: 4 lbs. meat/seafood, 4 lbs. grains/beans/flour, unlimited produce
- Monthly: same as above

6.2 Limited Monthly Items

- Berries/Mushrooms: 1 lb. per family (mix & match)
- Nuts/Seeds: 1 lb. per family
- Traditional Medicines: 2 items, nonduplicated
- Specialty Items (honey, juniper ash, bee pollen): 2 items, non-duplicated

Limits within protein category:

- Salmon: 1 lb. Monthly if chosen
- Clams/Oysters: 1 lb. Monthly if chosen
- Rabbit (ground): 1 lb. Monthly if chosen
- Other seasonal proteins as marked



6.3 Substitutions

For households with dietary restrictions:

- Meat/seafood may be substituted with mushrooms or berries
- If berries are also restricted, households may receive 2 portions of mushrooms

7. Special Programs

7.1 First Foods Access Pantry

Provides nutrient dense foods, recipes, meal samples, and culturally grounded education.

7.2 Hot Meal Program

Meals will:

- Use Indigenous cookbooks
- Include vegetables in every meal
- Offer balanced plates
- Provide water, coffee, or tea as default beverages
- Include vegetarian/vegan options

7.3 Farmers Market Access

Unkitawa provides:

- Produce stipends
- Gas stipends (when available)



8. Staff & Volunteer Responsibilities

8.1 Training

All staff and volunteers receive orientation on:

- Nutrition guidelines
- Cultural protocols
- Pantry operations
- Safety and sanitation
- Appointment and item limit policies

8.2 Cultural Respect

Staff must follow:

- Trauma-informed practices
- Respectful communication
- Confidentiality
- Non-judgmental support

8.3 Food Safety

Staff must follow:

- Safe food handling
- Temperature control
- Storage and rotation
- Cleaning and sanitation standards



9. Administration & Implementation

- Guidelines approved: 08/21/2024
- Effective date: 08/27/2024
- Revised date: 02/03/2026
- Incorporated into Unkitawa's organizational policies
- Communicated via social media, websites, newsletter, and partner outreach
- HR ensures all new staff and volunteers receive this handbook while onboarding

10. Review & Updates

This handbook will be reviewed annually or as needed to:

- Reflect community feedback
- Incorporate new nutrition research
- Respond to funding or partnership changes
- Strengthen cultural alignment

Updates require approval from Unkitawa leadership.