

CAPE BRETON  
**ISLAND FOOD**  
NETWORK

*An Umbrella for Food Action*

# CO-CREATING A SHARED FOOD VISION FOR CAPE BRETON- UNAMA'KI

2017-2020



# CONTRIBUTORS

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**We acknowledge that Cape Breton Island is the unceded, traditional Mi'kmaw land, Unama'ki.**

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This report is an overview and synthesis of the Island Food Network's food policy action from 2017-2020. It is intended to serve as a key resource for the development of a Food Action Plan, a tool for deepening relationships, alignment and accountability. The associated, ongoing collaborative process will shape a set of shared goals, activities, and measurable outcomes, which will guide policies, programs and practices for the short and long term future for food in Cape Breton-Unama'ki.

## WHY DOES FOOD MATTER?

Food is the heart of our communities. It connects across cultures, sectors, regions, all levels of government, and each and every life. Collectively, we face many interconnected challenges relating to food in our communities. Food also represents opportunities for improving community, economic, ecological, and health resilience.

Cape Breton-Unama'ki has long been rich in lands and waters and the foods they permit us. For the First Peoples, newcomers past and present, and visitors, this region has been and continues to be cherished as a place of rare beauty and plenty. The diverse people of Cape Breton-Unama'ki are known for their pride in this island and in spite of disproportionately high rates of poverty and population decline, there is a growing sense of hope for the future. Food can be a powerful tool for cohesion. Working together, we have an opportunity to transform this region through the power of food.

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

We all are. The responsibility and leadership does not lie solely with government bodies. There is no "right way" to bring diverse partners together to create the future we want for our food system. As of 2013, 64 municipalities in Canada (among 200 across North America) have taken on food policy initiatives (e.g., *Thunder Bay, Toronto, and Edmonton*).<sup>1</sup> Each one has its own look and feel, particular to the community and its needs. [The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact](#), is an example of multiple municipalities aligning around a shared framework for action for collectively achieving more sustainable food systems. This pact aligns over 200 cities around the world. Our region represents five municipalities and five band councils and will require a similarly dynamic approach. In 2019, the Halifax Regional Municipality released a report on the [Municipal Role in Supporting Food Security](#), which endorsed the Halifax Food Charter and committed financial support to the development of a Food Action Plan with the [Halifax Food Policy Alliance](#). Momentum around collaborative, food systems design is all around us, and not so far from home. We have taken the first steps by building relationships, consulting communities and creating a Shared Food Vision for Cape Breton-Unama'ki.



1. Macrae R and Donahue K. 2013. Municipal Food Policy Entrepreneurs. Retrieved from: [https://foodsecurecanada.org/sites/foodsecurecanada.org/files/municipal-food-policy-report\\_may13\\_0.pdf](https://foodsecurecanada.org/sites/foodsecurecanada.org/files/municipal-food-policy-report_may13_0.pdf)

# WHAT IS THE ISLAND FOOD NETWORK?

The Island Food Network is an umbrella for food action and a voice for food in Cape Breton- Unama'ki.

We support, connect, and advocate for people working towards a resilient food system for Cape Breton- Unama'ki.

We envision a healthful, inclusive, just and resilient food system that serves as a lever for transformation and growth.

We value working collaboratively across sectors, with careful consideration for our environmental impact, and respect for Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.

The Island Food Network (IFN) was formed out of an identified need for more connection and food systems-wide leadership. Since 2016, the IFN has been building the *social infrastructure*<sup>2</sup> to serve this support role.

The IFN offers a range of communication tools and events designed for connection, cross-pollination and movement-building along with a collaborative approach to facilitating change through the activities of the IFN's Food Policy Working Group (FPWG).

[See the [IFN Backgrounder](#) for more information.

The primary focus of the FPWG has been the development of a Shared Food Vision.



2. **Social infrastructure:** the governance, relationships, networks and values that underpin physical infrastructure, determining how we use it, for what purpose and how they are governed. Further reading: <https://canadianfoodstudies.uwaterloo.ca/index.php/cfs/article/view/146/162>



# WHAT DID WE DO?

## SHARED FOOD VISION PROCESS

2016



2017

FOOD POLICY WORKING GROUP

2018

ASSET  
MAPPING

FOOD STORIES  
RESEARCH - PHASE 1  
(CBU)

KEY INFORMANT  
INTERVIEWS

2019

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY  
INPUT  
SURVEYS

COMMUNITY  
FOOD  
CONVERSATIONS

PRESENTATIONS  
TO COUNCILS

"WHAT WE HEARD"  
SHARE BACK AND  
SENSEMAKING SESSION

2020

SHARED FOOD VISION  
AND REPORT



## GROUNDWORK:

In 2017, food stakeholders from across sectors convened around a shared sense of urgency, intersecting mandates, a need for food policy change, and a feeling of positive momentum around food-related initiatives on the island. Early meetings produced a comprehensive list of potential food policy influencing projects. It was difficult to know where to begin or to find a focus in which all sectors represented could see themselves. The group soon decided that we should tackle them all! Thus began an in-depth, partnership-driven initiative to create a Shared Food Vision, capturing the voices, values, and priorities of the people of Cape Breton-Unama'ki in order to ground and guide future planning. We became the Food Policy Working Group (FPWG), a dynamic, action-oriented team, which took the time to drive across the island for long, facilitated working sessions. This group grew to be truly collaborative.

Combining the diverse perspectives and expertise represented by the many sectors within the FPWG, interconnected, broad, cross-sectoral themes or pillars related to food were identified. This took time and the building of trusting relationships. Working across sectors can involve unfamiliar approaches or terminology. Tensions around differing mandates can surface. This deep work of the FPWG produced a Shared Food Vision framework (see diagram) built around a common vision, the core pillar of *Food Justice*<sup>3</sup>, and surrounded by the pillars: Healthy Communities, Lands & Waters, Local Food Economy, Food Culture & Celebration, and Food Literacy. This framework

formed the foundation for collaborative food system design: working together strategically to shift our food system towards our shared vision and goals.

There are many ways to describe how community is connected to food, and there are many examples from across the world of regional food visions and strategies. They all look different and respond to the particular needs of the community and the moment in time in which they are created. The pathway of the FPWG was chosen through a collective learning and decision making process. While there is no right way to do this, we feel our approach represents the interests of many food leaders from across sectors, and the particular needs and opportunities that exist in Cape Breton-Unama'ki. In order to test this theory, the FPWG conducted and incorporated research and community engagement activities. We used several methods, audiences and locations in order to ensure that the Shared Food Vision could be as representative of the diverse perspectives across our region as possible.



3. **Food Justice:** a lens on food systems that amplifies the human element, particularly around the inequities, disparities and injustices faced by marginalized communities. Further reading: <https://foodsecurecanada.org/community-networks/food-justice>



## ASSET MAPPING:

In 2016-18, the IFN hosted six asset mapping sessions to explore food assets and priorities for different communities. These sessions were hosted in Ingonish, St. Peter's, Sydney, Eskasoni, Inverness and Port Hawkesbury. The findings were incorporated into the Shared Food Vision pillars.

## KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS:

We conducted semi-structured interviews with representatives from staff and council of local governments across the island in order to assess their understanding of food issues and opportunities for our region, and get a sense of their existing food-related activities and priorities.

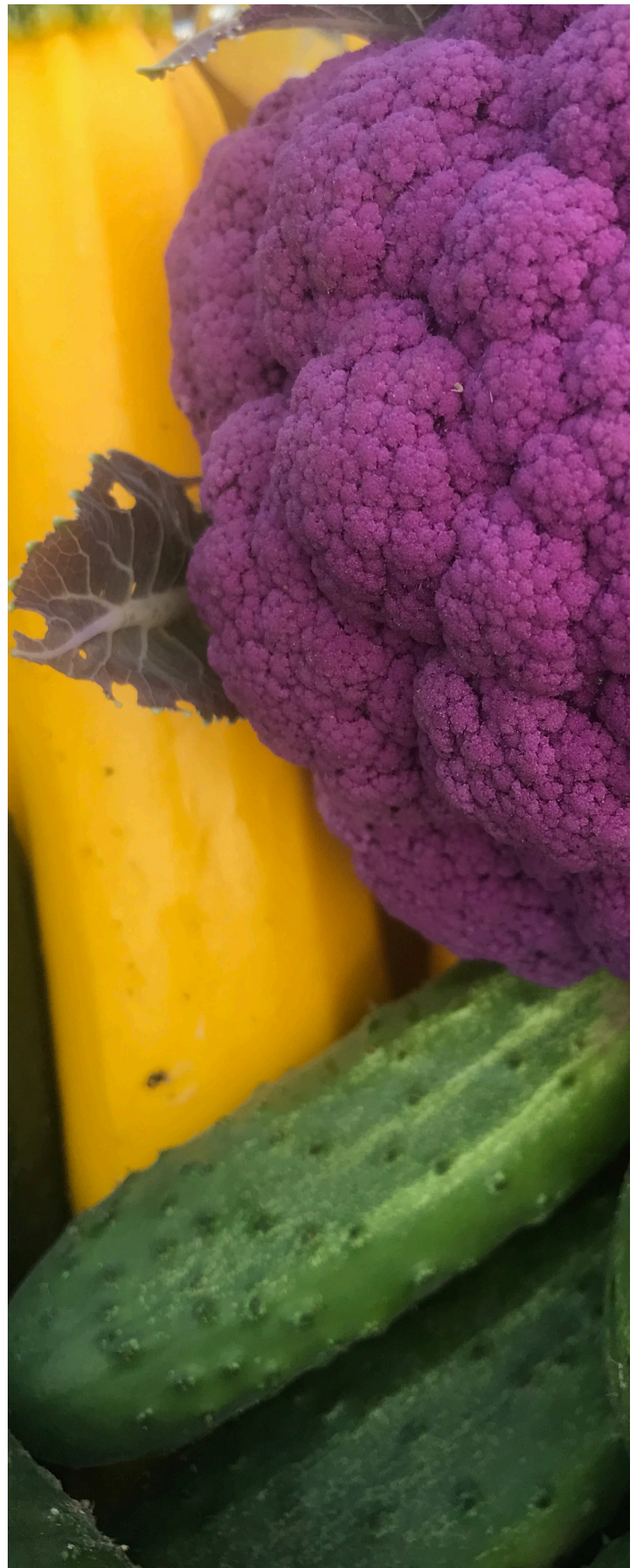
## FOOD STORIES RESEARCH:

As part of the "Storying Cape Breton Food Landscapes" research project<sup>4</sup>, led by Dr. Leigh Potvin at Cape Breton University, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted. This was the first phase of ongoing research exploring these research questions:

- *How do residents of Cape Breton-Unama'ki understand their relationship to place and community both in the past and present through food?*
- *What do people in Cape Breton perceive/experience as barriers or opportunities to consuming the food they want to?*

This research seeks to fill in gaps in understanding of Cape Breton-Unama'ki specific issues surrounding food access and food justice. These interviews are the start of an ongoing research project that is detailing and amplifying stories of food and food experiences of Cape Bretoners.

"Sacredness of land, water, food, humanity, creation. If we all treat these as sacred, would we value them and each other more?" - *Community input participant*



4. Research supported with funds from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

## PRESENTATIONS TO COUNCILS:

Through the Key Informant Interviews we learned that many local governments do not understand the IFN or what we do. We presented to councils to inform them of the Shared Food Vision process and invite them to get involved through the FPWG. We recognize that it will take time to build relationships with government staff and council, but their participation is important for building supportive food policies.

## COMMUNITY INPUT SURVEYS:

159 respondents, ranging in age from 19 to over 65, participated in the [“What is Our Shared Food Vision for Cape Breton-Unama’ki”](#) survey. The survey opened on October 22, 2018 and closed on May 31, 2019. The survey was available on the IFN website and in paper form.

## COMMUNITY FOOD CONVERSATIONS:

Another 138 participants took part in eight separate Community Food Conversations hosted with New Dawn Enterprises (Sydney), Ecology Action Centre Community Food Leader Program (island-wide participants), Northside Rising (Sydney Mines and North Sydney), Coady and Tompkins Memorial Library (Margaree), Cape Breton University, Mi’kmaq Food Working Group (Eskasoni) and

Dr. Kingston Memorial Health Centre (Richmond County). The FPWG developed a [Discussion Guide](#) to support people in hosting Community Food Conversations.

## SYNTHESIS:

Nearly 300 people from around the island contributed their ideas and insights to the visioning process. Research Assistant, Kerri Marshall, compiled, coded and categorized the data. They were grouped using the pillars identified by the FPWG (see Shared Food Vision Framework on page 4.) The themed data and quotes were compiled in [Our Shared Food Vision: What We Heard](#). The share-back and sensemaking session was documented in [Our Shared Food Vision “What We Heard” Harvest Report](#). The community engagement findings were then incorporated into a final Shared Food Vision for Cape Breton-Unama’ki. See pages 9 and 10 for the Principles and Pillars of our Shared Food Vision.

For some assistance in understanding the terminology, check out **DIG IN!**  
**Some Common Food Terms:**  
[https://islandfoodnetwork.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/DigInDoc\\_19Mar2018.pdf](https://islandfoodnetwork.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/DigInDoc_19Mar2018.pdf)

Relative priority of themes that emerged through the Shared Food Vision community engagement process.





# PRINCIPLES AND PILLARS OF OUR SHARED FOOD VISION

We believe a just food system is a decolonized food system; one in which everyone grows, catches, harvests, shares, accesses, distributes, and eats free from inequities related to race, class, gender, ability, income, or religion.

...environmental justice, which acknowledges the disproportionate exposure to environmental harms for marginalized communities.

...dignified food-related experiences for all, grounded in awareness of the ways food intersects with gender, race, class, mobility, ability, sexual orientation, body type, and culture.

## FOOD JUSTICE WE VALUE...

...social justice, wherein everyone has equitable opportunity for meaningful participation in change.

...all people's right to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

...community food sovereignty: a community's right and agency to shape its own food system and diet.

...the Treaties of Peace and Friendship.

...Indigenous food sovereignty: honouring Indigenous self-determination, traditional foodways, and the inter-connectedness of land, food and identity.

We believe good food is the heart of healthy communities.  
Food intersects environmental, emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical health.

## HEALTHY COMMUNITIES WE VALUE...

...safe, nutritious, available, accessible, culturally acceptable, and affordable food for all.

...compassionate, dignified, stigma-free approaches to addressing the root causes of food insecurity.

...the role of positive food environments in helping to create the conditions for individual and community health and well-being.

...innovative approaches to emergency and affordable food access.

... food as medicine with the capacity to nourish and heal the body and spirit, and create connection.

We believe healthy lands and waters are vital in feeding our communities.  
By protecting our environment, we can feed ourselves and future generations with good, healthy food.

## LANDS & WATERS WE VALUE...

... stewardship of the lands and waters of Cape Breton-Unama'ki for current and future food production and harvesting.

... that farming, foraging, hunting and fishing on Cape Breton-Unama'ki takes place on the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaw Nation.

...the natural abundance and biodiversity unique to our region.

...climate change adaptation and mitigation in all parts of the food system.

...food production and harvesting practices that prioritize the humane treatment of animals.

...the Mi'kmaw principle of Netukulimk, which states that we should only take what is needed and waste nothing to ensure balance and sustainability.

We believe food literacy is an essential life skill. It can lead to informed food choices for better personal and community health.

## FOOD LITERACY WE VALUE...

...the development and sharing of skills related to growing, foraging, hunting, preserving, farming, fishing, and preparing food.

...our food leaders and food knowledge holders: Intergenerational learning opportunities and mentorship enhance food literacy and stewardship.

...enhancing individual and collective capacity to transform food systems.

...deepened understanding of the root causes of food insecurity, grounded in the wisdom of those with lived experience.

...action grounded in evidence gained through community-based research, community engagement, evaluation, and storytelling.

...nutrition education and appreciation for the relationship between food and health, with consideration for cultural factors and how good nutrition can look different for different people.

We believe food offers an opportunity for economic resilience. Cape Breton can be a leader in sustainable agriculture and food-based tourism; a place where people want to live and create.

## LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY WE VALUE...

...opportunities to grow food and food-related businesses that foster a strong local food system.

...a support system of people, organizations, policies, programs and government that fosters a vibrant, thriving food economy.

...the improved viability of farming, through appropriate local food infrastructure, training, research, and coordination of effort.

...living wages, safe working conditions and other rights for workers within our food system.

... sustaining the traditional/informal food economy (i.e., foraging, hunting, and fishing).

We believe food brings people together. Food is central to family, celebrations, traditions and cross-cultural learning.

## FOOD CULTURE & CELEBRATION WE VALUE...

...the power of food to connect people across differences.

... celebration of the unique and diverse food histories, cultures, and traditions of Cape Breton-Unama'ki and beyond.

...the vital role of a culture of collaboration in cross-sectorial, system-wide change.

...spaces where people can socialize and share in food growing, preparation and eating.

...events that showcase and celebrate local and cultural foods.

...the authentic expression and continued learning around the guiding principle of Two-Eyed Seeing (coined by Mi'kmaq Elder, Albert Marshall) which illustrates seeing with both Indigenous and Western knowledges and ways of knowing.

# WHAT DID WE LEARN?

## PILLARS:

Engaging communities and stakeholders across Cape Breton-Unama'ki was an important step in getting people to consider and reflect on what matters to them when it comes to food. After reviewing the feedback received, we found that none of the themes that emerged were surprising or inconsistent with the draft framework proposed by the IFN's Food Policy Working Group. Participants at the "What We Heard" Share-Back and Sensemaking Session were asked to identify the pillar within the framework with which they most strongly identified in their work or personal life. Regardless of the sector participants represented, they felt that several or all of the pillars were important.

The pillars give us a holistic way to approach the complex topic of food, while recognizing that many of the issues and opportunities around food are interconnected. We appreciate that this is just one way to "slice the pie" and there is the potential of reinforcing silos in relation to actions or efforts that emerge from the Shared Food Vision. As a result, we have placed a strong emphasis on cross-cutting themes surrounding Food Justice, the intrinsic values underpinning all of our priorities for food in Cape Breton-Unama'ki.

## COMPLEXITY AND COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE:<sup>5</sup>

Our food system is complex. An innovative, systems-based approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of the issues, brings together diverse stakeholders, and draws strong ties to local government is essential. We know that what we have been doing is not working. It is time to do things differently. Responsibility for food-related policy and programs sits within all levels of government (see [Levels of Government & Influence Over Food Systems](#) for an overview of some of the ways that levels of government could or already playing) but many of the issues are rooted in social change, so we must reach beyond government for solutions. Systems-wide collaborative governance leverages the perspectives, experience, resources, capacity and passion of many stakeholders, creating the conditions for broader and deeper impact. This approach must also include a mixture of short-term actions and longer-term initiatives.

## BASELINE:

Much of the existing research fails to provide Cape Breton-Unama'ki specific data. While we can sometimes use provincial or national data to offer insights (see [Food for Thought: Cape Breton Food Facts](#)), there is a need for a more accurate picture at a level of detail that will allow us to measure progress on goals locally. Some food policy initiatives conduct food assessments, like [Food Counts, the Halifax Food Assessment](#). Another useful tool is a policy scan, or going deeper, a food policy database like that developed by [Kwantlen Polytechnic University](#).



## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES FOR FOOD ACTION:

The table below lists community priorities for food action going forward. This table also explores the range of approaches that may be employed. We have divided these approaches into Programs, Policy Action, Research, and Making Food Matter. These community priorities for action were identified through the IFN's community engagement process and the FPWG. This is not a comprehensive inventory nor is it an analysis of opportunities. This table strictly serves to capture community interests which should be considered when developing the Food Action Plan.

These suggested community food actions are potential building blocks of a food movement that can create a more resilient, healthful, just and inclusive food system for Cape Breton-Unama'ki. These efforts can be made stronger through systems leadership, which holds the big picture and our shared goals, while monitoring impact so that we know that we are bringing real change to real lives.

**5. Collaborative Governance:** a model for local decision making that emphasizes the role of non-government stakeholders (civil society, non-profit, and private sector) in shaping policy through collaborative, network processes. Further reading: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332879578\\_Collaborative\\_governance\\_The\\_case\\_of\\_local\\_food\\_action\\_planning](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332879578_Collaborative_governance_The_case_of_local_food_action_planning)



Community Food Action: <i>Priorities Going Forward</i>	Community Food Action Approaches			
	Programs	Policy Action	Research	Making Food Matter
<b>Food Justice</b>				
Uphold the Treaties of Peace and Friendship		✓		
Environmental justice for vulnerable communities		✓		
<b>Healthy Communities</b>				
Advocate for policies that address relative costs of food (e.g. sugar tax to support healthy eating)		✓		
Advocate for basic income		✓		
Subsidized healthy food programs	✓	✓		
Stigma-free food access programs that address transportation and mobility barriers in urban and rural communities	✓	✓		✓
Support local research to establish a baseline on poverty and food insecurity			✓	
Support healthy and local food in institutions (schools, health care, etc.)	✓	✓		
<b>Land and Waters</b>				
Advocate for stewardship policies and programs that protect the health of our land, water, air, biodiversity, and traditional foodways	✓	✓		
Protect and renew agricultural land	✓	✓		
Safe drinking water for all		✓		
Edible landscaping in public parks		✓		
Reduce food waste and consider sustainable disposal options	✓	✓		✓
Scale appropriate policies for agriculture		✓		
Sustainable/ ecological food production and harvesting practices: free-range/pastured animals, non-GMO, soil health, water conservation and protection, etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reduction in the use of plastics in all stages of the food system	✓	✓	✓	✓
Policies to ensure food safety and public trust		✓		✓
Mitigate ecological impacts of forestry practices (biosphere)	✓	✓		

Community Food Action: <i>Priorities Going Forward</i>	Community Food Action Approaches			
	Programs	Policy Action	Research	Making Food Matter
<b>Food Literacy</b>				
Advocate for clear food labels and food marketing restrictions to properly inform consumers	✓	✓		✓
Consumer education (health, illness prevention, value of local purchasing, how to access local food, how to use seasonal food)	✓			✓
Producer training (permaculture, regenerative agriculture, what grows here well, climate change mitigation and adaptation)	✓		✓	✓
Local knowledge transfer (land based learning, intergenerational learning, farming, hunting, fishing, gathering, food preservation and preparation, etc.)	✓			✓
Extend the diversity and availability of foods produced in CB over more of the year	✓			
<b>Local Food Economy</b>				
Increased availability of local options in restaurants and institutions	✓			✓
Supports for new and young farmers and other food related businesses	✓	✓		
Value adding and retailing of fish and shellfish	✓	✓		
Value adding of local dairy	✓	✓		
Support farm succession and the development and capacity of farmers on the island	✓	✓		
Establish appropriate food infrastructure and mechanisms that enable greater local food production, e.g. abattoirs, butchers, commercial kitchens, food storage facilities, community root cellars, community greenhouses, community gardens, etc.	✓	✓		
Sustain and reinvigorate food sharing channels and practices, especially those that serve to relocalize our food system	✓			✓
<b>Food Culture &amp; Celebration</b>				
Explore authentic embodiment of Two-Eyed Seeing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Breastfeeding friendly spaces and culture	✓	✓		✓
Make spaces for people to socialize, grow, prepare and share food	✓	✓		
Foster food events, festivals, tourism, and celebrations that prioritize local, traditional, and/or culturally appropriate and relevant food	✓			✓
Create a culture of resource sharing (seed banks, equipment libraries, land shares, etc.)	✓			✓

# APPETITE FOR CHANGE?

It is important to recognize that we are not starting from scratch. Cape Breton-Unama'ki is experiencing growing momentum around food initiatives. It has been built over years of conversations that are evolving into meaningful action. The IFN offers a snapshot of many of these initiatives on the [Cape Breton Good Food Map](#).

The following table captures some successful food initiatives to date, and categorizes them by approach.

Community Food Action: <i>Some Current Successes</i>	Community Food Action Approaches			
	Programs	Policy Action	Research	Making Food Matter
Shared Food Vision for Cape Breton-Unama'ki		✓	✓	✓
Economic Food Strategy (CB Partnership/ Food Hub)		✓	✓	
Healthy Eating in Recreational Spaces policy		✓		
Good Food Bus, affordable mobile food market (United Way, CBRM, New Dawn, IFN, Ecology Action Centre)	✓	✓		
Local food distribution system through the Cape Breton Food Hub	✓			✓
Better Bite Community Kitchen and Meals on Wheels (New Dawn)	✓			✓
Coordinated poverty reduction initiative (United Way of CB)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Up!Skilling Food Festival (since 2015)	✓			✓
Island Food Network	✓	✓	✓	✓
Farmer to Farmer Retreat (IFN, Department of Agriculture, Federation of Agriculture, and local farmers)	✓			
Community food research at Cape Breton University			✓	
Community Food Leader program hosted by Ecology Action Centre	✓			✓
School food initiatives (Nourish NS)	✓	✓		✓
Food security a priority for many Community Health Boards	✓	✓		✓
Food Policy for Canada		✓		
More farmer's markets, including an expanded, centrally located CB Farmer's Market	✓			✓
Glace Bay Food Bank and North Sydney Food Bank gardens	✓			✓
Annual moose hunt and community feast (Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources)	✓			✓
Community clay oven in Margaree Forks	✓			✓
Community and school gardens	✓			✓



# WHAT IS THE RECIPE FOR CHANGE?

## FOOD SYSTEMS CHANGE:

Our food system is composed of many complex, intersecting and interrelated parts, like an ecosystem. The food system includes the healthy lands and waters that enable our food access, along with every step from the moment food is produced, harvested or disposed, to the moment we put it in our mouths. There are many visible components, like distribution and sales, and less visible parts, like food-related policies, and education. Systems change requires exploring strategic opportunities (such as redirecting investments, maximizing resources, building on our social assets and more) to shift current ways of thinking and acting towards ones that are more healthful, inclusive, just and resilient. It is not a science. It is an iterative process, building the path as we walk on it, and embedding learning as we go. This whole-system approach requires change leaders to work across sectors and across spheres of influence. Such collaboration requires new relationships to be built. New and unlikely partnerships and voices at the margins can lead to insights and brave ways of working across differences.

## SHARED FOOD VISION PROCESS:

The creation of a Shared Food Vision is just the first step in a long-term approach to create a just, inclusive, resilient food system for Cape Breton-Unama'ki. The vision represents a very intentional process for building the strong relationships necessary to carry long-term, challenging work. The process also focused on asking communities what matters to them, and making sure the food values in the Shared Food Vision truly reflected what we heard. The Shared Food Vision will serve as the foundation for future planning.



*"When it comes to education and knowledge I think it will be very helpful to involve more young people..." - Community input participant*





## PLANNING FOR ACTION:

The Food Action Plan will be a shared set of goals built off of the Shared Food Vision, but it too will be far more than a document. A Food Action Plan is a tool for deepening relationships, alignment and accountability. The process will be shaped by a stewardship body made up of diverse stakeholders from across the region. The intention is to find alignment in existing goals and mandates related to food, identify gaps, and enhance impact through collective action. Ultimately, we aim to improve the lives of Cape Bretoners.

A Food Action Plan should outline:

- **Roles** - who are the stakeholders and who is responsible for what?
- **Goals** - what is it we aim to achieve?
- **Actions** - how do we plan to achieve our goals?
- **Timeline** - how much time will each action require to have an impact?
- **Process** - how do we plan to work together and implement our actions?

The [Vancouver area's Regional Food System Action Plan](#) offers a concise example of what this could look like.

## IMPACT MONITORING:

It is also important to ask, how do we know we are making progress and how do we know when we have arrived? In Cape Breton-Unama'ki we intend to deepen our Food Action Plan by offering clear, intended population-level outcomes and indicators, or measurable targets. The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact has a robust [monitoring framework](#) to provide shared tracking on progress on 42 indicators. A similar approach will help us to know if we are making progress towards our goals while allowing us to course correct as necessary.

## FEEDBACK MECHANISM:

Communication pathways are essential to shared ownership. The IFN will ensure that progress on goals is shared, and that there continues to be entry points for participation.

Mechanisms could include:

- Regular Food Forums;
- Workshops to build capacity of implementation partners;
- Cultivating a community of practice to maintain alignment and momentum;
- An online portal for shared tracking and communication of progress; and
- Social media and newsletter updates.







## INCLUSIVITY AND FOOD JUSTICE:

The needs, values and knowledge of Mi'kmaw communities is a priority as we work towards the realization of truth and reconciliation through food. While *Two-Eyed Seeing*<sup>6</sup> is much quoted, we often struggle to live this practice authentically. While we have made efforts to include Mi'kmaw perspective (through Mi'kmaw participation in the FPWG, an asset mapping session, a community food conversation, key informant interviews, and more), it remains uncertain whether Mi'kmaw communities will truly see themselves in the Shared Food Vision. As we work towards a Food Action Plan, it will become increasingly critical that Indigenous, and other voices that often fall to the margins, are amplified in this process.



Any new food system must have a sense of place, one that sustains both the ecology and human communities of Cape Breton.

- Community input participant

## UNDER RESOURCED AND LONG-TERM WORK:

This work takes time and requires dedicated backbone coordination, which requires resources.

*This essential role includes<sup>7</sup>:*

- Providing leadership, guiding vision and strategy
- Convening, facilitating and partnership development
- Creating and maintaining communication and feedback pathways
- Supporting research and dissemination
- Establishing and implementing shared measurement practices
- Advancing policy
- Mobilizing resources and fundraising
- Supporting food actions and a community of practice
- Cultivating community engagement and ownership

Maintaining support for such a large, broad body of work from funders and ever-changing government is a major hurdle. It also requires extensive in-kind support from overextended partners and underpaid front-line staff.

6. **Two-Eyed Seeing:** guiding principle coined by Mi'kmaq Elder, Albert Marshall, which illustrates seeing with both Indigenous and Western knowledges and ways of knowing. Retrieved from: <http://www.integrativescience.ca/Principles/TwoEyedSeeing/>

7. **Collective Impact Forum.** (2014). **Backbone Starter Guide.** Retrieved from: <https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/sites/default/files/Backbone%20Starter%20Guide.pdf>



# COLLABORATIVE FOOD SYSTEM DESIGN

## PROCESS

### SHARED FOOD VISION (2017 - 2020)

A set of shared values and principles informed by diverse stakeholders.



### FOOD ACTION PLAN (2020 - 2021)

A strategic plan grounded in the Shared Food Vision.



### IMPLEMENTATION (2022 - Beyond)

Working together to put the plan into practice including measurement of progress and impact.

## PEOPLE

### FOOD POLICY WORKING GROUP

A cross-sectorial team of food leaders that formed around the goal of developing a vision and action plan for food in Cape Breton-Unama'ki.



### STEWARDSHIP BODY

Coalition across sectors and geography. This team will carry the development and implementation of the Food Action Plan.



### IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

With shared goals and metrics, organizations and government will work together on creating a vibrant, healthful, just and resilient food system for Cape Breton - Unama'ki.



# CONCLUSION

As a geographically isolated region, Cape Breton-Unama'ki has the potential to model regional food security. Striving for control over how we access food and what we eat, while protecting the lands, waters, plants and animals that give us the means to do so, are acts of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty is about centering our food system around the people, and revaluing our local food knowledge, removing the vulnerability and food injustices inherent in dependence on a global food system. In doing so, we have the potential to renew sustainability and resilience for Cape Breton-Unama'ki.



**“I think the biggest thing... is creating a vision for food in Cape Breton... encompassing perspectives from all people and consider[ing] the ecological side.”**

- Community input participant

**“ We have the ability to feed all the people in Cape Breton with food grown in Cape Breton, so everyone can access and afford the food they need and want... ”**

- Community input participant



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CAPE BRETON  
**ISLAND FOOD**  
NETWORK

*An Umbrella for Food Action*

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