

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Cape Breton Food Facts

Food can be a lever for community transformation that helps to foster healthy lands and people, economic development, innovation, and social cohesion while deepening our stewardship of the natural world and our relationships with the original peoples of these lands and waters.

Food: The Heart of Our Communities

Cape Breton Island comprises the northern region of what is now known as Nova Scotia, but which continues to also be known as Unama'ki – one of the seven districts of the Mi'kmaq nation. Cape Breton is a predominantly rural region with one regional municipality where the majority of the Island's population resides. Across the island there are five Mi'kmaq band councils and five municipal councils, which poses both a unique opportunity and a challenge to unity in island-wide vision and governance.

Colonization, a legacy of industry, and an aging and declining population also create complex challenges for our region. The solutions must use a multi-faceted and long-term approach. We propose that mending our food system is one tool for revival.

Cape Breton is known for its immense beauty - vast landscapes of land and water, which we strive to protect. From these lands and waters we have traditionally produced sufficient food for a level of subsistence and trade. We imagine a Cape Breton that renews this sustainability and resiliency.

Cape Breton's Island Food Network is an umbrella organization for food action. We support food initiatives, cultivate food knowledge, connect food leaders, and advocate for food systems change.

The Cape Breton Food Policy Working Group, an action team of the IFN, is a cross-sectoral group of food leaders working to influence food related policies in our region. Currently, the focus of this group is the development of a shared food vision and action plan.



HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

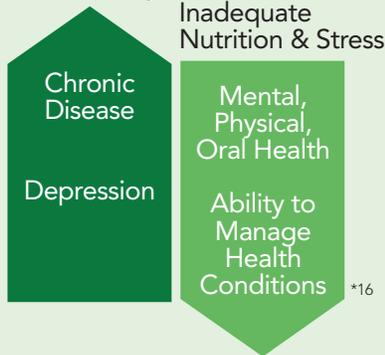
GOOD FOOD IS THE HEART OF HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.
FOOD INTERSECTS ENVIRONMENTAL, EMOTIONAL, SPIRITUAL, MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH.

FOOD IS A RIGHT

...but not everyone has enough of the food they want and need.

Food insecurity is more than hunger.

Food Insecurity =



Easy Choice?



Making the "healthy choice, the easy choice" is not so easy when affordable and accessible food is often lacking in nutrition.



Severe food insecurity has a lasting impact on children, resulting in increased risk of mental and physical health conditions later in life. ^{*15}

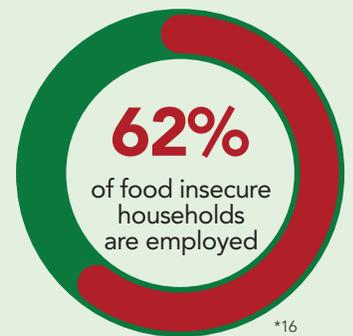
FOOD INSECURITY & POVERTY



1 in 3 children in Cape Breton lives in poverty ^{*8}

\$935 Cost of healthy food for a family of four for a month

Minimum wage and income assistance **X** are inadequate to afford this. ^{*9}

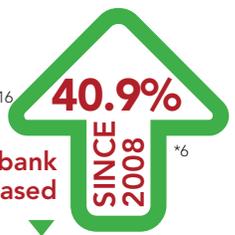


BEYOND EMERGENCY FOOD

Food banks began nearly 40 years ago as a community emergency response to economic hardship.

Even though many food insecure households ^{*16} do not use food banks

Nova Scotia food bank use has increased



This approach is failing; we must think beyond the emergency.

Food access should be free of stigma and ensure dignity and choice.

FOOD IS MEDICINE

Food nourishes and heals body and spirit, connecting us to the earth. For many Mi'kmaq people, colonialism has interrupted the connection between food and health with the loss of traditional diets and high rates of food insecurity.



FOOD IN OUR LIVES

The places we live, work, play and learn shape our experience with food and the foods we can access. Positive food environments help create the conditions for individual and community health and well being. ^{*18}

LAND & WATERS

HEALTHY LANDS & WATERS ARE VITAL IN FEEDING OUR COMMUNITIES. BY PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT, WE CAN FEED OURSELVES AND FUTURE GENERATIONS WITH GOOD, HEALTHY FOOD.



LIVING IN PEACE & FRIENDSHIP

The Treaties of Peace and Friendship signed between settler and Mi'kmaq ancestors continue the rights of Mi'kmaq peoples to hunt, fish and gather.

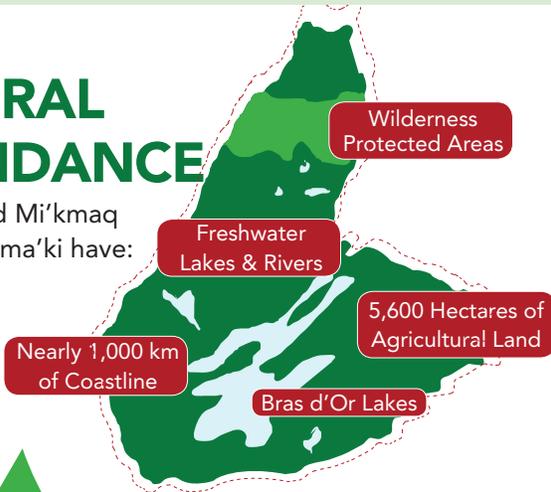
HEALTHY PLANET, HEALTHY FOOD, HEALTHY PEOPLE

Some farming and fishing practices contribute to climate change. In turn, climate change affects weather patterns that make it harder to grow and harvest food.



NATURAL ABUNDANCE

The unceded Mi'kmaq lands of Unama'ki have:



All plants & animals rely on healthy watersheds & balanced water cycles to thrive.

Water is sacred because without water, there is no life.

WATER IS LIFE



DOING MORE WITH LESS

Food waste in Canada amounts to 396 kg per person per year. Almost half of this waste happens in our households.*2

DISTANCE MATTERS



The closer we eat to home, the better it is for people and the planet.

STEWARDSHIP

Mi'kmaq peoples have cared for these lands and waters for thousands of years. The Mi'kmaq took only what was needed and wasted nothing. The Mi'kmaq idea of **Netukulimk** is a way of life, balancing the need to feed ourselves well and make a living for current and future generations.*17



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Communities of colour and low income face greater exposure to pollution and other environmental harms. Environmental Justice seeks to make sure these communities are heard and protected.



LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY

FOOD OFFERS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ECONOMIC RESILIENCY. IMAGINE CAPE BRETON AS A LEADER IN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD-BASED TOURISM; A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE AND CREATE.



SUPPORTING LOCAL FOOD BENEFITS EVERYONE

STRONG COMMUNITIES ♥ LOCAL BUSINESS & JOBS ♥ HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENT ♥ ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS

HARNESSING POTENTIAL

In 2017, the Pan Cape Breton Food Hub Co-op had over

\$130,000

in on-line sales



directly creating farm jobs and making it easier for people to access local foods.

In 2010 only **13%** of our food dollars spent in this province went back to Nova Scotia farms.



GROWING OPPORTUNITIES



Adopting sustainable farming practices can increase the total economic value of agriculture, produce more food with improved soil quality, reduce water use and decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

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INFORMAL FOOD ECONOMY

Many living in Cape Breton, including Mi'kmaq peoples, traditionally participated in and still enjoy informal food economy practices such as:



HUNTING



GATHERING



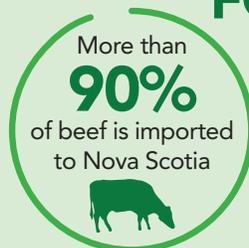
SHARING



BARTERING

*14

FOOD CREATES JOBS



Producing Our Own Beef Could:

Put Underutilized Land to Use

\$22.5 mil/yr INCREASE FARM CASH RECEIPTS FROM \$22.5 MILLION TO \$90 MILLION A YEAR.

\$90 million/year

Increase Full-Year Equivalent Employment:



from: **448 JOBS** to **ABOUT 1,774 JOBS**

*19

FOOD CULTURE & CELEBRATION

FOOD BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER. FOOD IS CENTRAL TO FAMILY, CELEBRATIONS, TRADITIONS, AND CROSS-CULTURAL LEARNING.



FOOD IS EVERYWHERE

Whenever people get together, there is food! Most of the special events in our lives (parties, weddings, funerals, meetings, and more) are not about food, but food is always present.

EATING IS SOCIAL

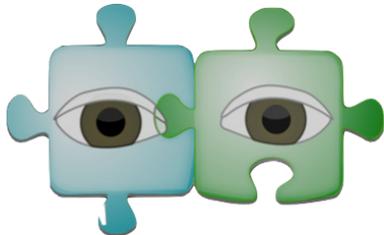
Making the time and space for cooking and eating together strengthens relationships and builds community while reducing social isolation.



Food sharing is a simple way to show generosity and kindness.

Familiar food can make people feel at home.

TWO-EYED SEEING/ ETUAPTUMUK



is a guiding principle coined by Mi'kmaq Elder, Albert Marshall.

"learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing... and learning to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all."

*12

FOOD KEEPS TRADITIONS ALIVE

Food is deeply connected to memories.

Cape Breton has a rich tapestry of food traditions.

Celebrating food shapes and preserves our cultures.

KitchenFest! *Festival de l'Escaouette*
Fêis a' Chidsin! *Ceilidhs* *Crab Fest*
Celtic Colours International Festival
Mawio'mi *Pier Melting Pot*
Storytelling Lunches with Elders
Kitchen Parties

Annual events such as "A Taste of Canada" in Sydney allow cultural groups to share their cuisines and cultural identity with the community.



FOOD IS SACRED

Food is a gift of life not to be squandered.

Through ceremony, prayer, gratitude, and celebration, many cultures have a spiritual relationship with food and the plants, animals, lands and waters from which it comes.

Hunting, eeling, fishing, and food sharing are vital Mi'kmaq food traditions.

FOOD LITERACY

FOOD LITERACY IS AN ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILL.
IT CAN LEAD TO INFORMED FOOD CHOICES FOR BETTER PERSONAL
AND COMMUNITY HEALTH.

FOOD LITERACY...

Goes beyond the
Canada Food Guide
daily recommendations.



- Fosters an understanding of how food choices impact health and our complex food system.^{*3}
- Can impact eating patterns.

CONFIDENCE & COMMUNITY RESILIENCE^{*7}

PRIDE
in food skills

FOOD LEADERS & EATERS
that take action
on food issues
with an
awareness
of the greater
food system
and the roots of
food insecurity

The feeling of
being a part of
**POSTIVE
CHANGE**

CONNECTION
to culture &
community

A sense of
environmental
RESPONSIBILITY

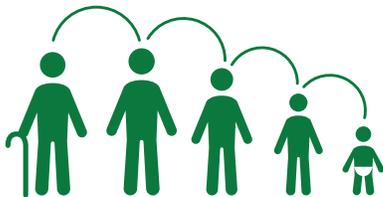
FOOD SKILLS

Growing, planning,
purchasing, preparing,
cooking, and sharing



Lower income **does not**
mean a lower level
of food skills.^{*11}

LOCAL FOOD KNOWLEDGE



Food literacy preserves our local food knowledge across generations and cultures. For example, intergenerational learning is vital to maintaining Mi'kmaq traditions of food harvest, food preservation and land stewardship.



Transfer of agricultural skills (along with farm succession) is vital to sustained food production in our region.



Cape Breton's Up! Skilling Food Festival celebrates our local food experts and builds community around food.

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