

AN UMBRELLA FOR FOOD ACTION

THE ISLAND FOOD NETWORK (IFN) SUPPORTS, CONNECTS AND ADVOCATES FOR PEOPLE WORKING TOWARDS A RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEM FOR CAPE BRETON ISLAND.

WHAT WE DO:



HOST EVENTS



Up!Skilling Food Festival -
 An annual day of hands-on food skills workshops taught by local experts.

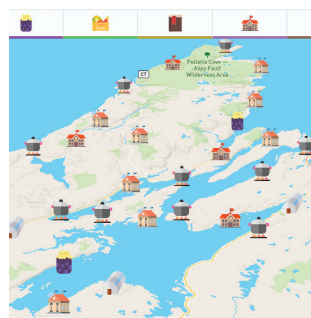


Farmer to Farmer Retreat -
 Our annual event for farmers to connect, share knowledge and celebrate.



Workshops and Events - The IFN works with community partners to offer learning and networking opportunities that contribute to a resilient food system.

CONNECT OUR FOOD COMMUNITY



Cape Breton Good Food Map -
 A food asset map created by community, for community. Find the places where good food is being produced, gathered, prepared, shared, sold and inspired.

Cape Breton Food News Follow the Cape Breton food movement through our [monthly e-bulletin](#) - a place for people to share Cape Breton food happenings.



Virtual Connection - The IFN has a growing suite of online tools to support barrier free, island-wide connection. Visit our [website](#) and join our [Facebook community!](#)

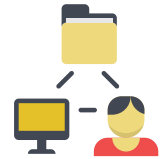
FACILITATE CHANGE MAKING



Community Food Conversations
 The IFN facilitates discussions on food barriers and opportunities in our lives, our work, and our communities. Invite us to host one with your group!



Shared Food Vision
 The IFN is consulting Cape Bretoners on what matters to them when it comes to food. This input will form the basis of a Shared Food Vision, which will serve as the foundation for a Strategic Food Action Plan.



Research
 In partnership with Cape Breton University, the IFN is capturing food stories and needs of Cape Bretoners.

CONTEXT

Food security in Cape Breton

Cape Breton is predominantly a rural region, with urban centres in Port Hawkesbury, and Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM), where the majority of the population resides. Across the island, there are five Mi'kmaq band councils and five municipal councils, which poses a unique opportunity and challenge for unity in Island-wide vision and governance. Colonization, a legacy of industry, and an aging and decreasing population create complex challenges for the region.¹ Symptoms of these challenges include household food insecurity and a disproportionately high rate of poverty.



1 in 3 children
in Cape Breton
lives in poverty²

SUPPORTING LOCAL FOOD BENEFITS EVERYONE

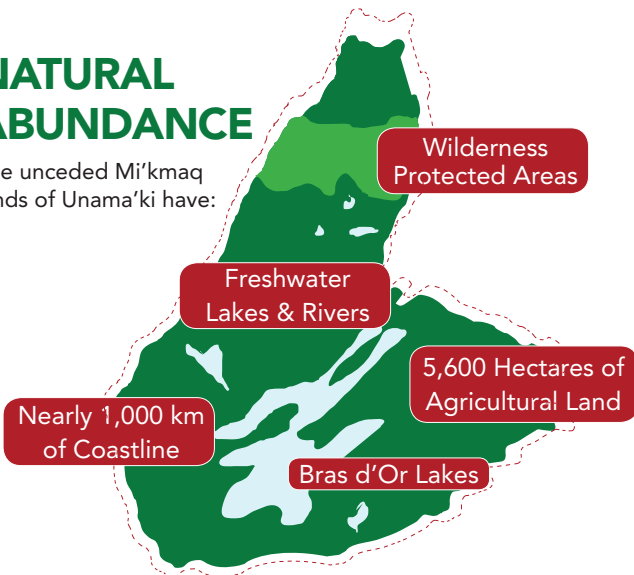


Despite a decline in farms⁴ and prioritization of seafood exports, the lands and waters of Cape Breton continue to inspire ideas for reinvigorating our local food economy.

Along with this sense of potential comes great responsibility to sustainably co-exist within our island ecosystem, as demonstrated by Mi'kmaq traditions. This stewardship role has become urgent in the face of climate change.

NATURAL ABUNDANCE

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



Amidst this complexity, food offers a tool for reconnection and growth. The IFN works to be a voice for food and the connective tissue between silos, councils, cultures, and people.

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.



¹ <https://www.islandfoodnetwork.ca/cape-breton-food-facts/>

² <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Nova%20Scotia%20Office/2017/11/Report%20Card%20on%20Child%20and%20Family%20Poverty.pdf>

The Island Food Network is

an umbrella for food action. The IFN connects food leaders, cultivates food knowledge, advocates for food systems change, and supports food initiatives.

We envision

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

We value

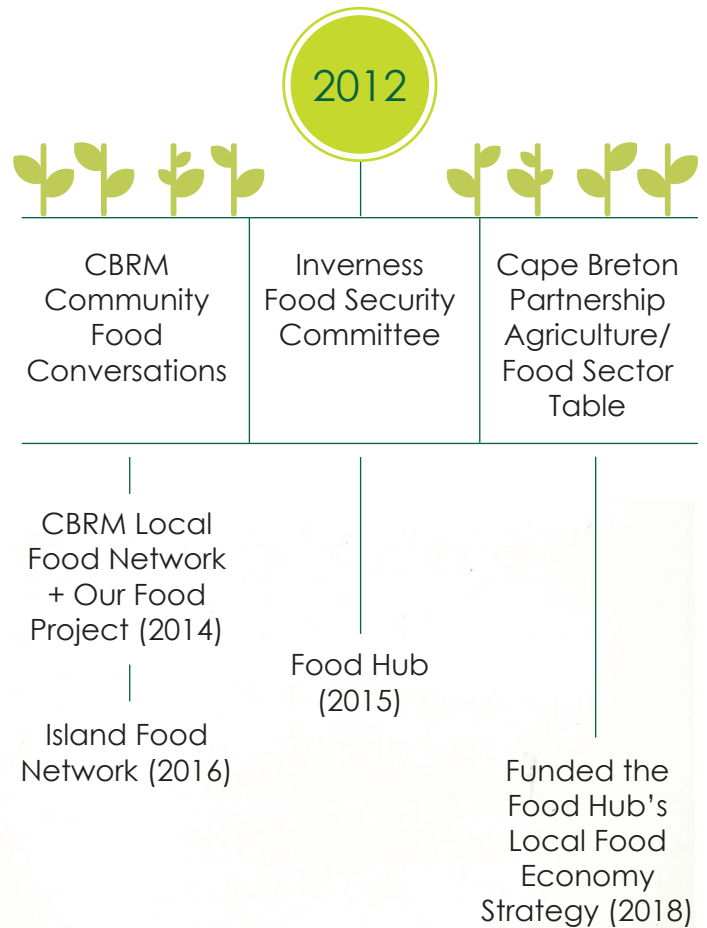
working collaboratively across sectors, with careful consideration for our environmental impact, and respect for Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.²



History of collective food initiatives in Cape Breton

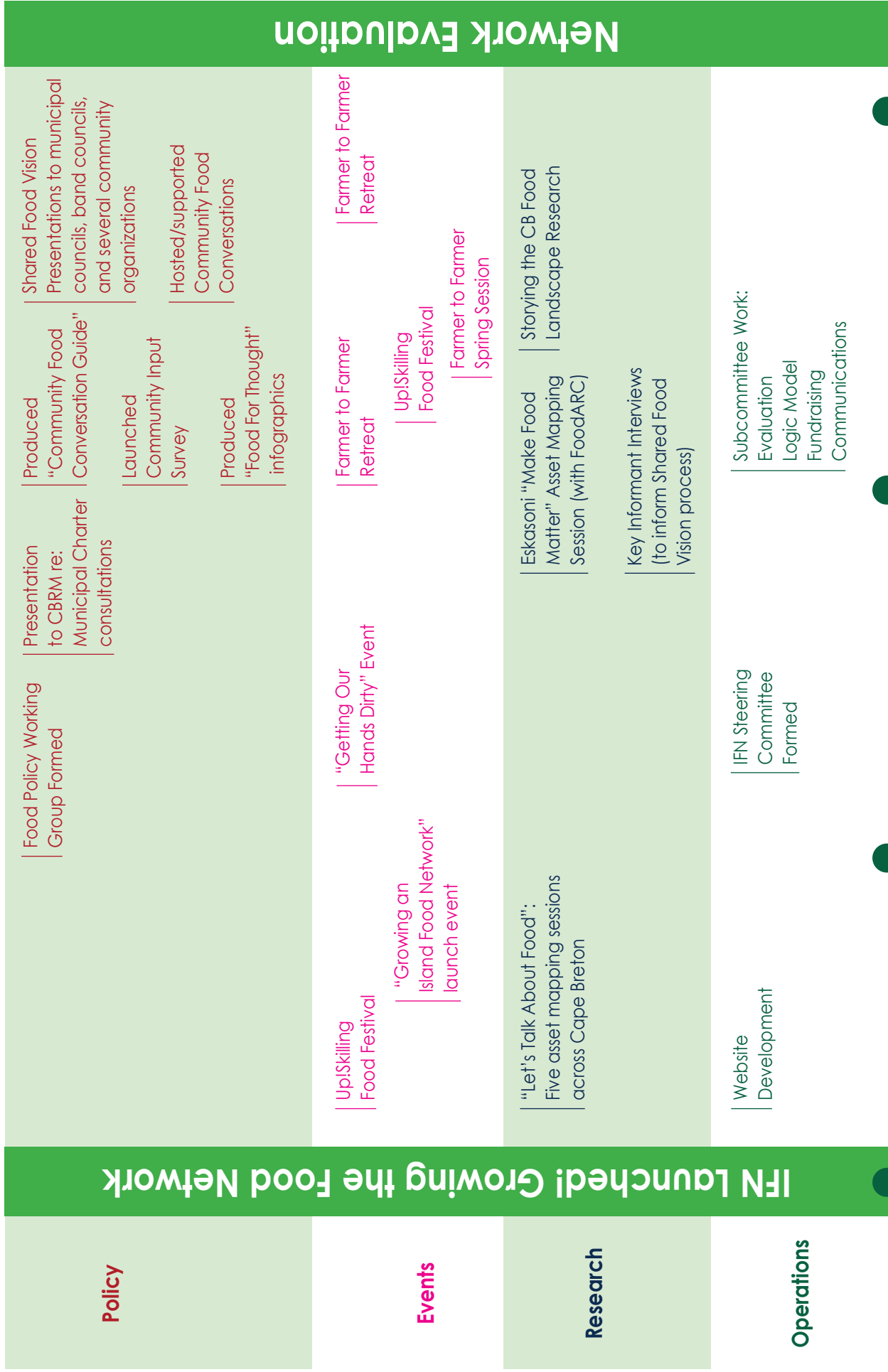
The IFN is the current iteration of over 10 years of food work in Cape Breton. This is a brief overview based on a presentation created by Eric-Leviten Reid for the IFN sensemaking session:

In 2012, three broad collaborative efforts began in order to strengthen the food movement: the CBRM Community Food Conversations, the Inverness County Food Security Committee and the Cape Breton Partnership Agriculture/ Food Sector Table. The CBRM Community Food Conversations led into the CBRM Local Food Network, which partnered with the Our Food Project to create the IFN. The Inverness County Food Security Committee led to the Food Hub, and the Cape Breton Partnership funded the Food Hub's recently developed strategy for growing the local food economy.



⁵<http://islandfoodnetwork.ca/>

IFN TIMELINE



Activities & outputs of the IFN since inception

Asset Mapping Sessions (Ingonish, Port Hawkesbury, St. Peters, Sydney, Inverness, Eskasoni): About 60 community members came together to create a map highlighting food assets located on Cape Breton Island. Food assets are places where people can grow, prepare, share, buy, receive or learn about food.⁶ These can be viewed on the IFN website.

Up!Skilling Food Festival: Is an annual public event that offers workshops hosted by local community experts on every aspect of food from seed to table. The workshops range from growing, sourcing, harvesting, storing, preserving, to cooking local and healthy foods. Each year there are approximately 100 people that attend this event.⁷

Food Policy Working Group: This group has a fluctuating membership, with approximately 12 active members at the time of this document. It was created to begin the process of developing a shared vision for social, economic, environmental and health goals related to food in Cape Breton. This vision will serve as a foundation for an action-based food strategy.⁸

Cape Breton Farmer to Farmer Retreats: An annual event for current and aspiring farmers to share knowledge, build connections, and share a meal. The first CB Farmer to Farmer Retreat welcomed 50 participants to discuss issues that matter among food producers in Cape Breton. This was followed by a more tailored event in the spring based on feedback gathered at the first session, again welcoming 50 participants.⁹

Storying the Cape Breton Food Landscape Research: The goal of this research project is to learn more about household food insecurity in Cape Breton. This research seeks to explore the following questions: How do residents of Cape Breton Island experience household food insecurity? What do people in Cape Breton perceive/experience as barriers or opportunities to consuming the food they want? The primary objective is to document and understand

Cape Bretoners' lived experiences with household food insecurity in a qualitative way.¹⁰ At the time of the writing of this document 11 participants had shared their stories through interviews.

Shared Food Vision Presentations: Members of the IFN attended meetings where they were able to inform organizations and councils about the IFN's Shared Food Vision project, build relationships and encourage participation. In total approximately 150 were in attendance.

Community Food Conversations: The first conversation was hosted in November 2018 within the community to raise awareness about food issues, provide opportunities to gather community input into a Shared Food Vision, inspire action to build food security in the region, share ways to get involved in the IFN and local activities, and to build new connections and relationships with others interested in food issues. Eighteen participants attended the first community conversation, and many more conversations were being planned through 2019. A discussion guide that was developed by IFN to support these gatherings can be found on the IFN website ([Discussion Guide for Community Food Conversations](#)).

Communications: The IFN has created a number of ways to communicate with and connect people interested in food security:

- Newsletter sent out monthly: Cape Breton Food News with 425 people on the listserv
- Website: islandfoodnetwork.ca
- FaceBook Group: with 350 members
- [Food For Thought infographics:](#)
<http://islandfoodnetwork.ca/cape-breton-food-facts/>



COLLABORATING FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE



At the core of the Island Food Network's values is working together to effect meaningful change in our food system. We strive for authentic collaboration built on strong relationships.

Some of our key partners have included:



Eric Leviten-Reid
and Claire Turpin



Ecology Action Centre

Jody Nelson
and Satya Ramen

Cape
Breton
University
Happen.

Leigh Potvin
and Erna MacLeod



Alicia Lake



Cape Breton-Victoria
Regional Centre for Education

Debbie Madore



Jen Cooper



Sarah Ross, Beth Gillis,
and Karen MacKinnon

We could not do it without the support of individual food leaders, who give their time, hearts and expertise on a volunteer basis: *Kim McPherson, Kailea Pedley, Catherine Hart, Kim Tilsley, Demmarest Haney, Nadine Bernard, Dave Williams, Megan MacLeod, Kerri Marshall, Sara Roth, Amiee Wilson and many more.*



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