



CAPE BRETON
ISLAND FOOD
NETWORK

An Umbrella for Food Action

Strategic Plan
2020-2023



Message from the Steering Committee

Food is fundamental in our lives, essential for our physical survival, integral to our cultural expression, vital to our social relations, a huge part of our economic lives and increasingly critical to our relationship with the environment on which all else depends.

For some time now and in various forms, many partners have been coming together to help create a healthful, inclusive, just and resilient food system for Unama'ki / Cape Breton Island.

With the strategic plan presented here, the Island Food Network looks forward to strengthening its efforts to support, connect and advocate for people building the food future we want for our community.

- Island Food Network Steering Committee



IFN Steering Committee Members

Nadine Bernard: Owner, Facilitator and Life Coach, Slow Cooked Dreams

Alicia Lake: Executive Director, Cape Breton Food Hub

Eric Leviten-Reid: Community Engagement and Collaboration, New Dawn Enterprises

Erna MacLeod: Associate Professor, Cape Breton University

Jody Nelson: Community Food Coordinator, Ecology Action Centre / IFN

Kailea Pedley: Farmer, Patchwood Farm

Leigh Potvin: Assistant Professor, Cape Breton University

Kim Tilsley: Farmer, GlenRyan Farm
Library Coordinator, Coady and Tompkins Library

Claire Turpin: Manager of Meals on Wheels and Better Bite Community Kitchen, New Dawn



Who We Are

The Island Food Network is an umbrella for food action. We support, connect and advocate for people working towards a resilient food system for Cape Breton Island.

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

The IFN's work from 2020-2023 will focus on four strategic goals:

1. Advocate for Food Systems Change
2. Enhance Food Literacy
3. Connect and Support Food Leaders
4. Strengthen Organizational Resilience

"[The] most significant impact has been through... connection... [and] community building that comes from our events."

Background

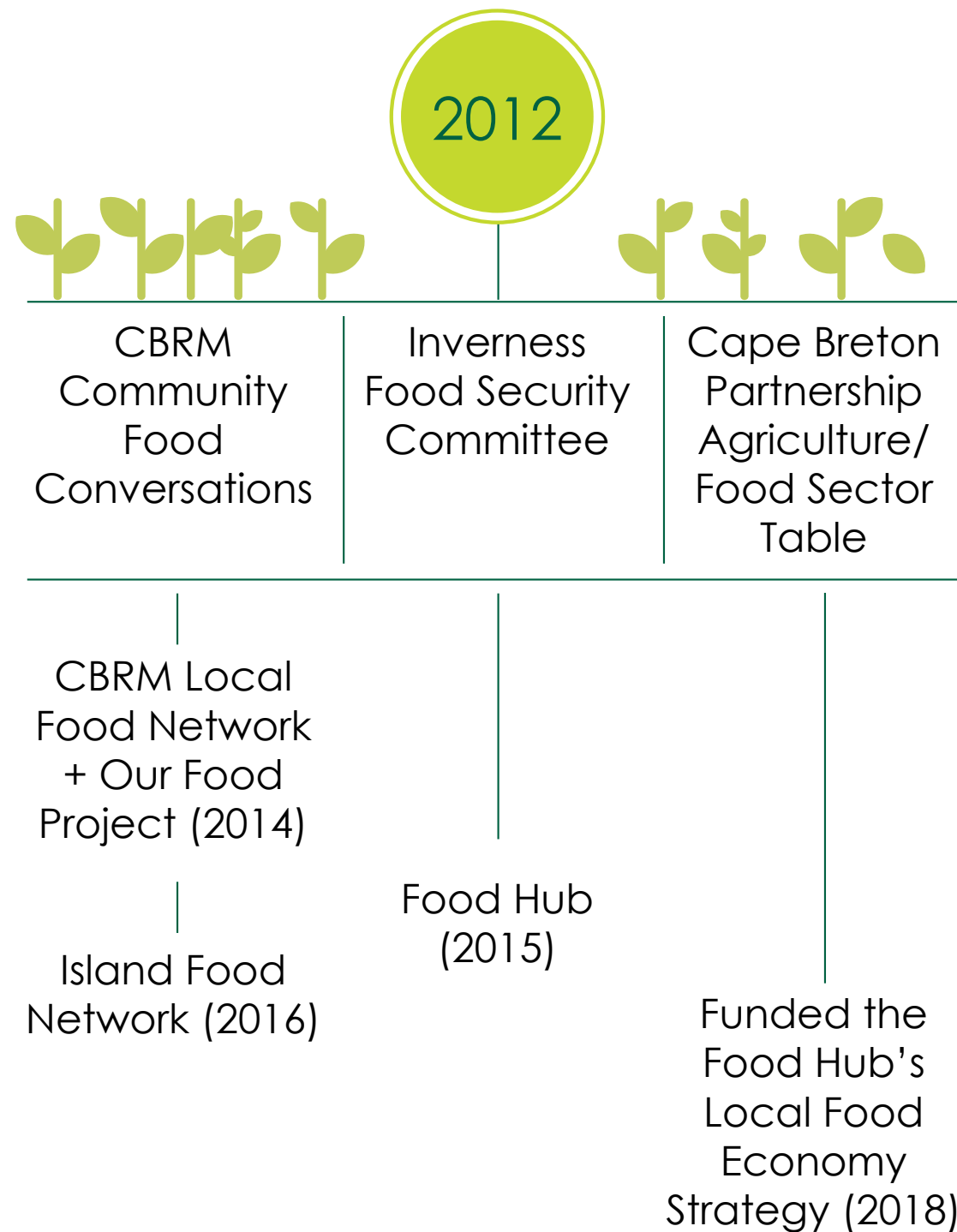
In 2016, the Island Food Network (IFN) launched as an umbrella for food action in Cape Breton / Unama'ki. We envision a healthful, inclusive, just and resilient food system that serves as a lever for transformation and growth. The IFN evolved from the CBRM Local Food Network, in response to demand and readiness for an island-wide network to strengthen cohesion around a regional food movement.

Since its launch, the IFN has focused on engaging communities in order to set a responsive course. We have also developed a suite of communication and networking tools that help us to meet our goals. Underpinning all of this is a focus on building strong, authentic, cross-sectoral relationships. Over the coming few years, the IFN will put all of these foundational pieces together, with a strong emphasis on building capacity and readiness for food system change. With stable backbone support from the IFN, food can serve as a lever for transforming communities.



Strategic Planning Process

The strategic direction of the Island Food Network has been shaped through community engagement and collaborative, multi-stakeholder ownership of our planning process. The community consultations that have informed this strategic plan are described below.



Let's Talk About Food

In 2016-2018, six asset mapping sessions were hosted across Cape Breton to determine food assets and priorities for different communities. These findings were then themed at a central event, "Getting Our Hands Dirty," which helped to focus our work on five food pillars: Healthy Communities, Local Food Economy, Lands and Waters, Food Culture and Celebration, and Food Literacy.



Shared Food Vision

In 2018-2019, the IFN undertook a community engagement process to help shape a Shared Food Vision for Cape Breton / Unama'ki, a document that will represent our collective values around food for our region. This process included a Community Input Survey and a series of Community Food Conversations. The consultation process wrapped up with a "What We Heard" share-back and sensemaking session.

"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."



Logic Model Development

In 2018, the IFN Steering Committee carried out a visioning and planning process, which produced a logic model to guide outcome-based activities. This was revisited in 2019 to allow for course-correction, and forms the basis of this strategic plan for 2020-2023

GOAL

WE WILL...

OUTCOME

ADVOCATE FOR FOOD SYSTEM CHANGE



We will act as a “voice for food,” working with stakeholders across sectors to create a climate of understanding and readiness for food system change.



With coordination for alignment around food issues and opportunities, Cape Breton will see greater cross-sectoral support for and participation in systems-level change.

ENHANCE FOOD LITERACY



We will lead and support food research, capture and share food knowledge, and raise awareness of food-related issues and opportunities.



Community members will become more aware of food issues and opportunities. Revaluing and sharing food knowledge will mobilize food actions that create a more localized, equitable food system.

CONNECT & SUPPORT FOOD LEADERS



We will enhance the capacity of food leaders, while building community awareness of food resources and initiatives. We will create opportunities for people to connect and collaborate around food, including entry points for new food actors.



Through increased connection, support and promotion of food initiatives, Cape Breton will develop enhanced food-related social infrastructure within a culture of collaboration, which can be leveraged for a stronger local food economy and community development through food.

STRENGTHEN ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE



We will work towards securing medium-term funding (2020-2023) while developing a plan for sustainable funding



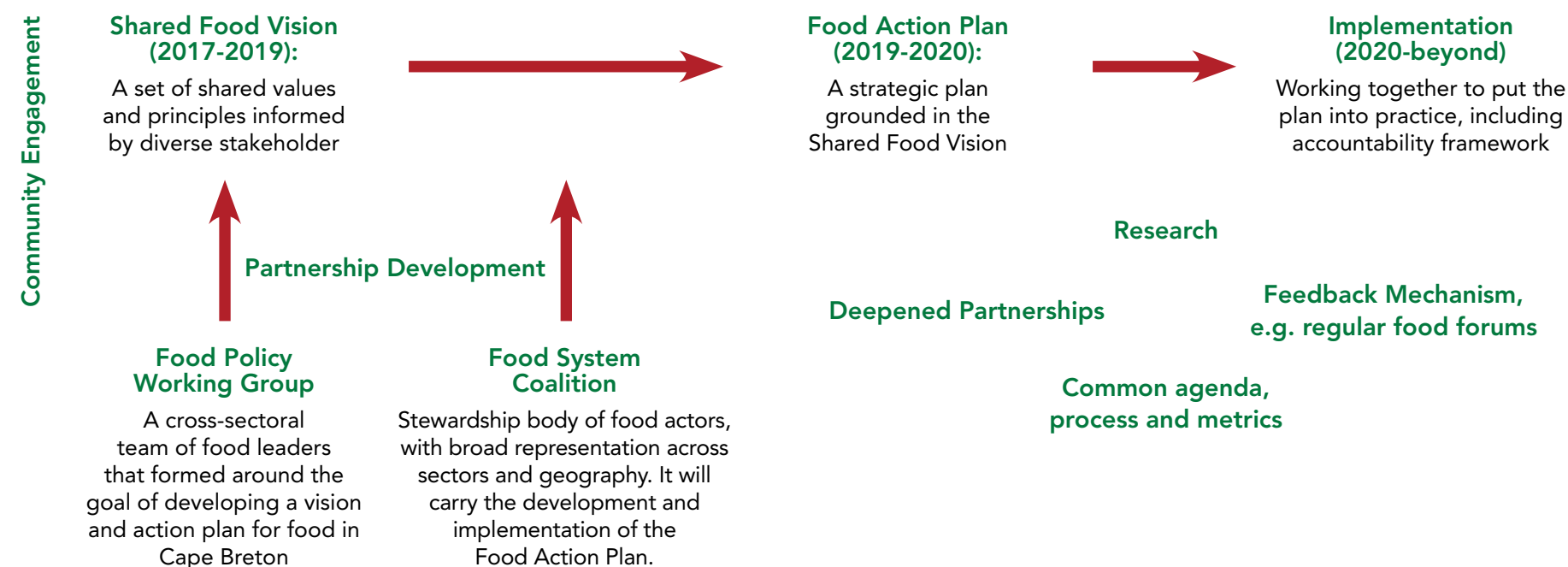
Systems change takes time. The Island Food Network will have the resources and the capacity to lead this work in the long-term, providing the conditions for trusting relationships, credibility and cohesion.



Activities	Description	Goals Achieved			
		Advocate for Food Systems Change	Enhance Food Literacy	Connect & Support Food Leaders	Build Organizational Resilience
Food System Coalition	We will lead the formation of a stewardship body to support the development and implementation of a regional Food Action Plan based on our Shared Food Vision	✓	✓	✓	✓
Food Action Plan	We will serve as the backbone for the development of an island-wide, cross-sectoral Food Action Plan - a strategy for achieving food systems change	✓	✓	✓	
Community Food Project Incubator	We will provide coaching to advance food initiatives and organizational capacity, while providing connection to other food leaders across the region		✓	✓	
Events	We host events that provide opportunities for knowledge exchange, skill building, and collaboration (e.g. Annual Farmer to Farmer Retreat, Annual Up!Skilling Food Festival, Food Forums, etc.)	✓	✓	✓	
Project Partnerships	We catalyze collaborative food initiatives, like the Good Food Bus, focusing on growing strong, long-term working relationships and a culture of collaboration	✓		✓	
Online Community	We use a suite of online tools to inform the greater community about food issues, food projects, resources and opportunities: Cape Breton Good Food Map (food asset map), Cape Breton Food News (e-bulletin), FaceBook Group and more.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Storying the Cape Breton Food Landscape	In partnership with Cape Breton University, we are capturing the food experiences of Cape Bretoners from a range of backgrounds to contribute to our baseline understanding of food issues in this region	✓	✓		
Community Food Conversations	Developed as a tool for engaging communities around what matters to them when it comes to food, and continued in various iterations as an engagement tool	✓	✓	✓	
Resource Development	e.g. “Food for Thought”, a set of backgrounders to help people understand the many ways that food intersects our lives	✓	✓	✓	
Awareness-raising Campaign	We will deliver a campaign to raise public awareness around issues and opportunities related to food	✓	✓		
Sustainability Plan	We will develop a plan to ensure continuity, growth, resilience and responsiveness of the IFN. The plan will include grantseeking, partnership building and more				✓



IFN: Backbone Support for Collaborative Food System Design



This diagram represents key steps in collaborative food system design for Cape Breton





Achieving Our Goals

The Island Food Network's Strategic Goals will be achieved by our commitment to:

- **Working collaboratively across sectors.** Food touches all sectors, all jurisdictions, and all people. It is a poverty issue, a health issue and an environmental issue, while offering opportunities for growth and connection. As such, food is a lens for community development and cohesion. By working collaboratively, we create the conditions for innovation.
- **Systems change.** Our food system is composed of many complex intersecting and interrelated parts, like an ecosystem. Systems change requires examining a system for leverage points, or ways to shift the food system towards being more healthful, inclusive, just and resilient.
- **Respecting Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.** As described in the guiding principle of Two-Eyed Seeing, coined by Elder Albert Marshall: "...learning to see with one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing, and learning to use both of these eyes for the benefit of all."
- **Environmental stewardship.** We cannot talk about food without considering the environment. Protecting the lands and waters from which our food is derived is essential to the long-term production of food in our region.
- **Research.** Through community engagement and institutional research partnerships, the IFN works to ground all action in evidence.
- **Evaluation.** By consistently assessing our progress and impacts, the IFN can remain responsive to changing context, needs and opportunities while remaining accountable to our funders, partners and communities.



"I feel more plugged in in Cape Breton because of the IFN, more knowledgeable about things that are going on. I know more people who are doing things that are similar to what we are doing, but also more people who are doing different things [as] part of a broader network."





CAPE BRETON

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Everybody eats. Something as intrinsic as food makes us all members of the Island Food Network. Your participation is welcome!

Contact us to help move the food movement in Cape Breton:

www.islandfoodnetwork.ca

Facebook Group: Island Food Network

Instagram @islandfoodnetwork

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