

WEAVEAST



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SOCIAL INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM FOR ATLANTIC CANADA

2020 Annual Report - Appendices

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This is a supporting document to the 2020 Annual Report, with more in-depth information on specific areas and projects.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

SOCIAL INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM FOR ATLANTIC CANADA

With the support of the McConnell Foundation, in 2019, Inspiring Communities initiated a three year project to help build the social innovation ecosystem in Atlantic Canada.

At that time, it was understood that this could include work in the following areas:

- Capacity building for collaborative leadership and systems change
- Network building to create stronger linkages between and among those in the field
- Promoting and demonstrating the value of the field
- Amplifying and scaling existing work
- Creating an enabling policy environment
- Enhancing access to resources

In the first year, we established a baseline through engaging Fellows in the Atlantic provinces to conduct sensing journeys of what the current state was. We focused efforts on research and establishing relationships upon which we could build. In 2020, our focus shifted to a prototyping model, to explore different approaches for capacity and network building, and enabling policy change.

We have approached the work in the spirit of collaboration, respect, and transparency. As we enter into our third year, reflecting both on lessons learned and the new pandemic reality, our focus transitions to how we might approach achieving sustainability in the work.

WHAT IS WEAVEAST?

[WeavEast](#) is a collection of individuals and organizations committed to working together to create positive social change in Atlantic Canada. WeavEast is about coordinating conversations across the region to strengthen relationships, reduce fragmentation, amplify each other's work and catalyze collaborative efforts for social change. Through the staff of Inspiring Communities, we connect the work of WeavEast to Social Innovation Canada, and the broader community of weavers.

WHAT IS WAYSIDE?

Wayside is a website, a learning centre and a platform but most of all, Wayside is a community. Wayside Learning Community is for anyone working for the greater good in Atlantic Canada. It's a place to connect and recharge, collaborate, learn, and discover new paths to achieve positive social change. Wayside is a part of Inspiring Communities' commitment to offering new paths to learning.

WHAT IS INSPIRING COMMUNITIES?

Inspiring Communities supports the growth and vitality of the field of systems change in Atlantic Canada. We provide a nest for experimentation, develop leadership in the field, and cultivate a culture of learning and evaluation for social change initiatives. We are helping to shift communities and changemakers from a mindset of competition and scarcity to one of collaboration and abundance so that systems can change for greater social impact in Atlantic Canada.

WEAVEAST STRATEGY 2020

WEAVEAST MISSION 2020

Connect fragmented changemakers in Atlantic Canada to create collaborative systems-change efforts that work to address regional systemic issues that diminish/restrict the work of changemakers.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1: COORDINATE AND SUPPORT SHARED WORK THAT ADDRESSES REGIONAL SYSTEMIC ISSUES

ASPIRATION

That by addressing systemic issues, it will be easier for changemakers to have an impact / take action in Atlantic Canada. WeavEast has identified the following three priority areas to focus on:

1. Bridging across sectors, communities, and decision makers.
2. Shifting narratives: strategic storytelling to shift dominant, negatively reinforcing patterns.
3. Influencing the redesign of restrictive policies.

HOW:

Providing coordination, funds, and on-going support to people in the network to take action on regional systemic issues. Bring attention and legitimacy for specific issues.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2: WEAVE RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH CONVENING

ASPIRATION

That we weave strong enough relationships so that people connect outside of backbone-coordinated events to collaborate on initiatives, share resources and knowledge.

HOW

Monthly calls, gathering in the fall, and convening around specific issues.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3: EXPAND THE NETWORK THROUGH COMMUNICATIONS, CONVENING, AND CONNECTING 1-ON-1

ASPIRATION

To ensure that social innovators / changemakers outside of the current network of 39 people feel invited, welcome, and can contribute / benefit from WeavEast.

HOW

Through online communications efforts and connecting 1-on-1.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4: MOVE POWER TO THE PERIPHERY OF THE NETWORK

ASPIRATION

- We want to move more of the decision-making to the network, and support the work that emerges. We intend to follow the needs, desires, and energy of the network to inform our structure, rather than the other way around.
- Widely distributed leadership in an effort to scale up the work of changemakers in the field while keeping the costs of backbone support minimal.
- All members are stewards of connection, leadership, bridging differences and inspiring others.
- Members see themselves as equal partners and peers resulting in flattened hierarchies and a deep sense of respect, trust and safety.

HOW:

- Through a transparent and participatory budgeting process, we will collectively decide how to allocate resources to best support these actions.
- WeavEast should develop incentives for collaboration that may not have happened organically.

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PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING: CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROPOSALS

The proposals can be found on the [WeavEast website](#).

WeavEast mission alignment: How is this making it easier for changemakers in Atlantic Canada to have an impact?

Alignment with WeavEast focus areas for 2020: How effectively does this project address the 3 focus areas of WeavEast?

1. Bridging between communities, changemakers and decision makers.
2. Influencing the redesign of restrictive policies.
3. Shifting dominant, negatively reinforcing narratives.

Regional: How does this initiative aim to serve the entire region of Atlantic Canada?

Regional collaboration: What can we do together that we cannot do alone? How is WeavEast uniquely situated to support this project?

Feasibility/viability: Is there a proposed willingness and capacity to get it done? Is there the knowledge, values, and skills within the group to achieve the proposed idea?

Respect for diversity: How will principles of inclusion and social justice be incorporated?

Collective needs: How is this project serving the needs of the WeavEast collective? Does it have the potential to create an impact that is felt by all?

Leveraging resources: Does this project use the WE funds to leverage others sources of support and funding?

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ATLANTIC YOUTH WEAVERS (AYW) PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

The Atlantic Youth Weavers (AYW) Photovoice Project connected sixteen Atlantic Canadian youths through an eight-week, honorarium-based project which explored what resilience looks like from the perspective of youth. AYW was a joint initiative between Inspiring Communities initiative WeavEast and the Atlantic Council for International Cooperation (ACIC), with funding from the McConnell Foundation, ACIC, and Inspiring Communities, and was led by experienced coordinator Dr. Jen McRuer.

The Photovoice methodology saw sixteen youth capture images depicting their feelings around what it means to be a “changemaker”. The project highlighted their experiences and reflections related to community and global change, social innovation, the sustainable development goals, and the importance of bridging experiences and communities as we move toward a ‘new normal.’ AYW also critically explored diverse and intersectional perspectives, as the youth applied (and continue to apply) Photovoice project learnings to advocate for their vision.

The images are curated in an online #Gallery4Change and were shared with policymakers, stakeholders and thought leaders via a virtual convening session to highlight and influence youth-led change. The convening was held on a Friday, in alignment with #FridaysForFuture, with a focus on action-oriented themes to generate solution-minded dialogue. The youth shared positive pandemic trends they identified during the project including:

- the increased use of outdoor spaces,
- heightened environmental awareness,
- advocacy for the protection of nature and other beings,
- the role they can play in food security, and
- sustainable consumer choices that support local economies.

Attending guests built on the youth-directed dialogue, to offer ideas, critiques, and solutions to support the Photovoice participants in their resilience journey of adapting to the shifting conditions created by Covid-19.

ATLANTIC YOUTH WEAVERS (AYW) PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

The following is a summary of the project team’s final reflections and evaluation.

CHALLENGES	STRENGTHS
<p>Scope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad scope and goals, might have gone deeper with a singular focus. <p>Recruiting and representation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional efforts were made to represent rural and urban Atlantic Canada, based on applications, however, some regions were not able to be included (e.g., Cape Breton, Yarmouth, Northern NB, Labrador). In addition, there were more NS participants than other provinces. Efforts were also made to include youth from diverse backgrounds including gender, orientation, ethnicity, and immigrant status. A more diverse representation would have been advantageous to capture multiple viewpoints. Perhaps more time and investment is needed to engage, recruit, and support their involvement. Two Black youth and two Indigenous youth signed on to the project, and were not able to take part, despite supports offered. The project started at the height of the first wave of the pandemic and the global resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, potentially creating additional challenges and barriers to participation, particularly for the Black youth. Limitations of organizational networks/relationships in terms of recruiting. Reliable internet access is a barrier for rural/remote participation. Pandemic limitations also posed a barrier to participation. 	<p>Systems learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported youth to develop an understanding of systems and to effectively communicate their experience of systems. Bridged narratives for greater collective impact across sectors, communities, and decision makers. Brought a lens and action, guided by equity and inclusion. Attracted diverse youth from across the region, with a variety of backgrounds and experiences. <p>Honouraria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Important support to youth and their work. Was given based on the degree of project completion. Flexibility in funding requirements/how funds were used was a huge support for the project. <p>Provided value for participants including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photography training and experience. Learning and practice using web-based meeting tools: Zoom, MURAL, Mentimeter, Google Drive. Provided income via honoraria. Built connections among Atlantic Canadian youth, especially during Covid. Opportunity to deeply critique holistic systems, well-being, community needs and strengths. <p>Partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened partnership between ACIC and Inspiring Communities. <p>Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong evaluation throughout. <p>Community-Based Participatory Methods:</p> <p>Used Photovoice and Participatory Action Research to meaningfully engage young people in identifying and showcasing the issues important to their lives.</p> <p>Leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experienced coordinator, Dr. Jen McRuer. Tyler Colbourne (IC), Rachel Morgan (ACIC) and Jackie Doves (ACIC) served as invaluable project initiators and team members.

QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS

How am I a change maker?

"I'm trying my best to represent every single girl in this big and beautiful world, and I believe that one day I will be their role model and others', and I will help them. :-)" -RB, Atlantic Youth Weaver

What added value did my participation in this project bring?

"I was able to see the beauty of my community more clearly and focus on the positive aspects that I had previously overlooked. I also learned the valuable skills needed to become a changemaker. Growing up in a community with a population of just over one hundred people has been a unique experience that I wouldn't change. I am proud to be from Lady Cove, NL." - JH, Atlantic Youth Weaver

Who do I think needs to be involved in change?

"Youth. If youth are brought to the table, it means that we no longer have politicians who may have ulterior motives and have spent their life doing more harm than good. If we, as young people, step up and are invited to the decision making table, we have the ability to work for positive change for many years to come." - NH, Atlantic Youth Weaver

What was my favorite part of the project?

"It was fascinating to share and compare the issues in our communities and to ultimately learn more about the experiences of youth in Atlantic Canada." -AB, Atlantic Youth Weaver

What is my hope for the world post-pandemic?

"My hope for the world post-pandemic is that this time of uncertainty and change has given many of us time to think about what we want to change in the world. I hope that we can have a sort of restart in regards to environmental and climate action, as well with issues of equality and systemic racism. It would be amazing if the pandemic could bring around a global awakening." - AB, Atlantic Youth Weaver

How can youth be the change?

"Youth can be the change in this world by standing up for what is right, and by NOT settling for less. Youth need to let their voices be heard about the issues that matter to them." - GG, Atlantic Youth Weaver

TAKING LESSONS FORWARD

Suggestions for similar projects in the future include:

- Diversity & inclusion: more relationship building and resources invested in targeted recruitment to increase Black, Indigenous, gender-diverse, rural/remote and broader geographical participation.
- Further engagement with WeavEast network and Wayside: presence throughout project, at convenings, and supporting young people with ongoing involvement.
- International focus: connecting young people to systems that are as relatable in home environs as in international contexts. Broadening the geographic scope to identify place-based and global connections.

This project was so successful that ACIC has gone on to do an international Photovoice project, involving young people (20-28) from Atlantic Canada, the Congo, and Guyana. This project focuses specifically on the Sustainable Development Goals, and what young people feel are the strengths and weaknesses in their lives and communities. To date, two of the three months of programming have been completed. Young people (some of whom have never had exposure outside of their home country) have expressed their gratitude for being connected with other youth and diverse experiences; value in learning new online platforms to share their experiences (Zoom and Google Meet), and recognition that we all have diverse experiences, accessibilities, limitations, and strengths, to contribute to international development communication, dialogue, and progress.

The Atlantic Youth Weavers has laid a foundation for continued programs of such nature, that offer young people in Atlantic Canada the opportunity to connect, share, and grow.

SOME IMAGES FROM THE PHOTOVOICE PROJECT



A Billboard of Unity: Rather than leaving the billboard that is typically filled with summer events and news empty, words of hope are expressed to unite the community and bring forth positivity in these difficult times. Seeing the sign as I walk through town reminds me that there is still a sense of togetherness amid the pandemic. - **Ashley Bradford**



Working From Home: The new normal may be, growing food in our homes and working from home. In this photo, someone is working from home and growing their own food. This exists because there is evidence that says that food may be scarce in 2021, so people need to grow some of their food, starting now. Everyone should be growing as much food as they can, and going back to the old days of pickling, jarring, dehydrating, and fermenting. - **Harry Gillis**

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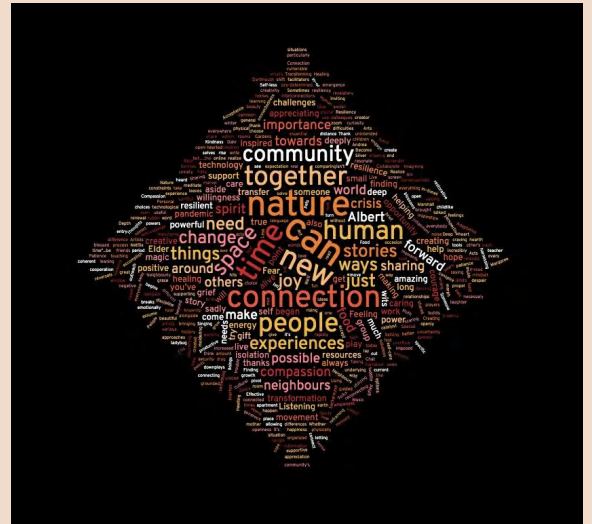
NARRATIVE PROJECT:

CHOOSING THE STORIES WE LIVE BY

The Narrative Project, a collaboration between WeavEast and How We Thrive, is about choosing the stories we live by in this Atlantic region of Mi’kma’ki. It has been a true collaboration, drawing inspiration and support from the international Re-Authoring Narratives work of [Dr. Chené Swart, Narrative Coach and Consultant](#) (with two practices primarily used: [The Unfolding Practices](#) and [Re-Dignifying Practices](#)). With inspiration from conversations with Elder Albert Marshall, the How We Thrive gatherings, WeavEast Gatherings, pre-COVID visits to communities, and both the spring and fall sessions, both sprang from the Atlantic Provinces, and brought the gifts of the teams involved. Chené brought many of the narrative and story facilitation practices to play with that meshed with hosting practices from the region, stories, music, art, film, prayer, active meditation, and movement practices.

Often the narratives that shape our institutions and community life are just assumed– “the way things are”. In the spring of 2020, COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter protests disrupted the continuity of dominant narratives. Through the cracks, more became visible. We saw inequities and vulnerabilities, embedded racism and quiet acts of leadership.

During those same months, the Narrative Project began hosting an online space that invited alternative stories to shine through the cracks– stories that inspired, nourished, challenged and provoked.



Once we recognize the stories we want more of, we deliberately strengthen, celebrate, grow and connect them, weaving them together and lifting them up to make them more impactful.

Sessions included:

- Opening a space of connection.
- Re-authoring our world: learning narrative practice.
- Together we stand: changing the violence against women narrative.
- Art as medicine: in the wake of the mass shooting in Nova Scotia.
- Nourishing our communities: food, farming and relationship to land.
- Reclaiming ancestral gifts: connecting to Indigenous and Gaelic roots.
- Community medicine: keeping spirits lifted
- Fueling passion: creatives building opportunities and careers
- Holding space for loved ones, neighbours, community, ourselves
- Re-authoring leadership: new community leadership rising during the Pandemic
- Joyful learning: nature-based children’s programming
- Conviction: going inside two of NS prisons, the cost of imprisoning the most vulnerable among us

NARRATIVE PROJECT

- Land, water, ourselves, each other: environmental racism and justice.
- Empowered from within: creating spaces to nourish and heal.
- Practicing food sovereignty: building our own knowledge and skills, and exploring the natural world around us.

The hosts and guests in the Narrative Project community were invited to bring their whole selves, identities, and diversity of gifts to this deeply immersive story circle and reflective space.

Visit the website to scroll through [the gallery of sessions](#), to find out what was shared, what was learned and what changed us. Check out the [harvest video](#) that weaves clips from stories, music and quotes.

CHALLENGES	STRENGTHS
<p>Building an Atlantic-wide audience and network of people learning about the role of narrative and ways they can be part of the shift:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was a challenge to engage a full diversity of folks, for example the history of mistrust with African NS communities. • Atlantic network is a new thing, takes time to build the relationships and the network. 	<p>Raising awareness about, and offering alternative narratives for, current systemic issues: learning how to shift narratives.</p> <p>Learning from real examples about how to shift Atlantic narratives that are self-defeating to those that connect, heal, regenerate, enliven, and reinforce a spirit of solidarity so that we are able to meet challenges with collective strength.</p> <p>Creating resources that inspire and inform community hosting and narrative-shifting.</p> <p>Sessions covered stories from each of the Atlantic Provinces.</p> <p>Timing at the start of the COVID pandemic, when people were craving this kind of uplifted connection.</p> <p>Participation: up to 70-80 folks participated in each session.</p>

KEY LEARNINGS	QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
<p>Listening to each other’s stories (for even just a moment) when combined with Re-dignifying Practices is a powerful de-colonizing and deep connection act.</p> <p>Deep human connection can happen online with the power of audio, story, music, song, kinesthetic/movement, prayer, small groups online, shared agreements etc.</p> <p>Stories are a powerful tool to help us see truths through the “weeds of the complexity” we live in today without inviting judgement/feedback.</p>	<p>“I shifted back to who I was when I was more open and accepting. I was moved to a place of openness and love.”</p> <p>“I am thinking more about relationships and racism and historic relationships.”</p> <p>“I feel more hopeful to know there is a community of people caring and thinking about all sorts of things that can make this world better.”</p> <p>“I am more aware of the difficulties facing diverse Nova Scotians and how I can be an Ally.”</p> <p>“It called up in me my responsibility to listen intently, to question, to converse about the many inequalities in our region, and to act!”</p> <p>“My ears are more open to racism and environmental racism and the serious harm these cause.”</p> <p>“More appreciation and love for self, my body and my experiences.”</p>

The conveners of the Narrative Project have proposed a new series of drop-in sessions in 2021 to satisfy the longing for less-formal connection. The work will continue to provide stories, connections and sustenance for the network going forward.



<https://www.howwethrive.org/story-archive/opening-a-space-of-connection>

6 | SOCIAL INNOVATION POLICY PROJECT

The proposed goal of the project was to develop a better understanding of existing policies, programs and processes in the region that are effectively helping to enable social innovation, as well as those that are acting as barriers. A further goal would be to narrow the focus on how to influence government policy.

The initial process proposed to achieve this goal was to hire a researcher to do a jurisdictional policy review across the four provinces, based on a scope of work that would be developed by WeavEast members. A group of government and non-government representatives would be recruited and convened to help shape the work, review the research, add context based on experience, and develop recommendations for next steps.

What happened:

- Around 15 folks from the WeavEast Network met a few times to define scope of work.
- Multiple themes surfaced, with two main ones:
 - Racism & equity: in light of the Black Lives Matter movement interest was on anti-racism policy and how equity shows up in community work. A side conversation started around de-funding the police.
 - Covid response: mapping the Covid response across the region; how is money being spent? What new programs are emerging? Recommendations for a Covid recovery phase.
- A researcher was hired; however, the paid research never took place as the group wasn't able to define scope.
- Energy dissipated.
- The project lead put out a call-back in October to see if a group was interested in mapping the Covid responses in the region.
- A meeting was held and there was shared interest in continuing the work, perhaps focusing on inequities in how funding is allocated in the arts and culture sector in particular.
- The next step, planned for early 2021 is to convene a meeting between the project lead, network members still interested and WeavEast to see if continuing is still feasible. Funds have not been spent (except for about \$500 to the researcher in the early stages of the project).

CHALLENGES	STRENGTHS
<p>Proposal was very open and broad: What do I mean by a policy? Policy in what area? Who is the target audience?</p> <p>Unfocused conversations, not able to get to something concrete. Insufficient time /ability to move past divergence to convergence.</p> <p>Project lead (Annika) was unresourced for her work; it was off the side of her desk and fell away. None of the funds went to support her time.</p> <p>Project wasn't focused enough for the researcher to dig in, so she took another opportunity.</p>	<p>Engaged dedicated group of people from the network in an area identified as a priority.</p> <p>People saw the value: there was energy around it. Folks kept coming to meetings and engaging in the discussion.</p> <p>2 main ideas surfaced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racism & equity • Covid response <p>Spin-off conversations, such as defund the police, point to other potential topics for convening.</p>

LESSONS LEARNED	PIVOTS
<p>More parameters/ smaller container is needed: The proposal was high level, scope was too big.</p> <p>Need time, energy, resources: project lead needs to be resourced to hold and direct it or hand off completely to a hired person.</p>	<p>Reached out after the conversation had faded out with a specific proposal to map Covid in the Atlantic Region: this was met with mixed interest and energy dissipated again.</p> <p>Final call was to see if anyone was interested in furthering the work and two folks reached out: their particular interest is in inequities for BIPOC-led organizations in the arts and culture sector.</p>

7 | FOOD SYSTEMS COLLABORATION: A VISION FOR A JUST RECOVERY

Folks from food security initiatives in different Atlantic Provinces were independently involved in [Just Recovery](#) conversations at their provincial levels. The opportunity to collaborate at an Atlantic level emerged among this group, as common themes were being seen in the opportunity of pandemic recovery.

About 15 individual members of food security initiatives from across Atlantic Canada came together for an initial chat, with the goal of bringing a united message into provincial and federal conversations in order to help shape investment strategies related to COVID recovery. There was an opportunity identified for amplification of efforts as an Atlantic-wide voice brings more credibility and weight:

“We can say, ‘folks throughout the Atlantic are on the same page and brought this together.’” - Josh Smee, Food First Newfoundland.

WeavEast backbone staff facilitated some meetings, supporting the group readiness for writing a draft, and again afterwards in working through iterations. This was seen as quite useful, as there was no funding for this work, and therefore no organizational staff dedicated to it. As this is a common situation for burgeoning cross-Atlantic collaborations, we see a continued need for this Atlantic backbone resource.

Going forward the group plans on meeting in 2021 and has expressed interest in continued backbone support, for example around communications. Once the vision is made public they will launch a campaign to add signatories from across the Atlantic region.

See below for the draft document at the time this report was written. It will be public on atlanticfoodvision.ca when ready.

ATLANTIC CANADIAN FOOD SYSTEMS: A VISION FOR RECOVERY

As organizations working to strengthen food systems across Atlantic Canada, we share a common vision of how our food systems can play a role in a just, equitable, and prosperous recovery from COVID-19. This can only be fully achieved in partnership with all levels of government and Indigenous communities. Drawing from what we have heard from our own partners, and from the many other Just Recovery agendas that organizations around the country are articulating, our vision for a recovery that enables our food systems has 10 key elements.

The signatories to this statement play many different roles in the food system - as producers, as networks, as industry associations, and as advocates, but we can all see how a recovery that embraces these ideas would strengthen the broader food system. We look forward to supporting conversations about them in the months to come.

1. **Addressing the source of food insecurity** through the establishment of a basic income guarantee.
2. **Supporting all food workers** with a livable income and enhanced protections in the workplace.
3. **Supporting Indigenous food sovereignty*** by reconciling Indigenous food and cultural values with non-Indigenous colonial laws and policies.
4. **Recognizing Indigenous ways of knowing** and working in partnership with Indigenous communities and leaders.
5. **Applying a food security lens to legislation and regulations** to enable small-scale and local production and distribution and support Indigenous communities in their work to maintain and strengthen harvesting practices.
6. **Supporting and removing barriers** to the local and decentralized processing and distribution of and access to sustainable forms of seafood by creating regionally appropriate seafood value chains.
7. **Leveraging government's procurement power** to build and support local value chains, including through strengthening school food programs.
8. **Providing opportunities** for improved food literacy.
9. **Investing in meaningful consultation** at all levels, with a particular focus on reducing barriers to participation for those impacted by food insecurity.
10. **Prioritizing resilient, ecological local food systems** that shorten and diversify food chains, revitalize rural communities, support lower-emissions food systems, build greater resilience to shocks; and act as a lever to positively address the climate crisis.

***Working definition of Indigenous food sovereignty:** Self-determination for Indigenous communities in their ability to respond to their needs for healthy, complimentary food systems consisting of culturally adapted traditional foods, regionally produced foods, and access to traditional foods through Treaty rights.



WWW.INSPIRINGCOMMUNITIES.CA