



# Bring Food Home Algoma: Policy Paper on Building Resilient Futures

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[Wyper, L., Thompson, D., and Meades, S.](#)

In Partnership with Sustain Ontario, the Rural Agri-Innovation Network (RAIN), Harvest Algoma United Way of Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma District, NORDIK Research Institute, and the Community Economic and Social Development Department (CESD), Algoma University

## Executive Summary

The first of four Bring Food Home 2019 Regional Conferences took place on October 10th in both Ottawa and Algoma via video conference, with Just Food and Algoma regional partners including Rural Agri-Innovation Network, Algoma Public Health, Johnson Farmers' Market and Harvest Algoma United Way of Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma District, co-hosting a province-wide panel and discussion on the systems-wide consequences of Canada's new Food Guide.

The lively discussion explored how to support local and regional food systems, how the new food guide can shape our food systems and impact where we get our food, and what this means for agriculture, producers, community organizations, government and eaters. NORDIK Institute helped to facilitate the discussion circles and collect contributions for the initial summary that went out to participants and that was used for this report.

Powerpoints from the morning panel, as well as the afternoon event that continued in Algoma, are now available online and we encourage you to check them out:

<http://rainalgoma.ca/resources/>.

Overall, the needs and challenges voiced at the Forum presented valuable information to support the local and regional food system. Themes include:

- **Education:** There is a need for education and sharing of knowledge about food production, processing, preparation, and food security across many sectors.
- **Cultural Appropriateness:** Different cultural groups have different needs and expectations related to food production and consumption, and people from different cultural groups should cooperate to support the local diverse communities,
- **Collaboration and Coordination:** Strengthening the food system will require groups from across many sectors and across the region to work together and share knowledge.
- **Health and Equity:** A robust and sustainable local food system that meets the needs of diverse communities throughout the region and that encourages all people to be involved in food production and preparation will improve health and contribute to ensuring everyone's needs are met. For this reason, the food system is a *social determinant of health*.

- **Diversification and Sustainability:** Diversifying local food production and encouraging sustainable practices are integral to the future health of the local food system.

A number of policy recommendations emerge from the findings, which have been supported by the partners. These offer ways for policy makers to contribute to supporting the development of a robust, sustainable, and diverse local food system:

#### **Policy makers at the federal & provincial level:**

- Support the development of sustainable food security programming, including:
  - Healthy eating programs;
  - Food literacy education from primary school through to college and university;
  - Programs documenting and promoting ecological and indigenous food knowledge;
  - Maintain existing agricultural and related trade degree and diploma programs, and expand to meet emerging needs.
- Support Indigenous leadership to tackle food insecurity in Indigenous communities.
- Support further development of agricultural infrastructure in Northern Ontario.

#### **Policy makers in First Nations & local governments:**

- Develop 'Food Charters,' concrete local food plans for how communities wish to have their food systems maintained .
- Develop partnership models across sectors.
- Change bylaws to support community members' ability to grow and raise their own food, while also supporting the development of agricultural infrastructure in Northern Ontario.

#### **Policy makers in health, education & training sectors:**

- Support the development of sustainable food security programming, including:
  - Healthy eating programs;
  - Food literacy education from primary school through to college and university;
  - Programs documenting and promoting ecological and indigenous food knowledge;
  - Maintain existing agricultural and related trade degree and diploma programs, and expand to meet emerging needs.
- Increase access to local foods within health, education and training institutions.
- Facilitate producers and distributors working with government, civil society, and funders to develop agricultural infrastructure, training, and job creation programs based on changing demographics and local needs.

## Introduction

Food security and food sovereignty are not only important to an individual's personal agency and identity but can be directly tied to our colonial histories and are a factor in the social determinants of our health (Czyewski, 2011; Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010; Turner, Gregory, Brooks, Failing & Satterfield, 2008).

According to La Via Campesina, "Food Sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" ([Food Secure Canada](#)), whereas The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing "when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life" ([Disabled World](#)).

In terms of Sault Ste. Marie specifically, the Community Adjustment Committee Report notes that:

"Poverty is the root cause of food insecurity and in Sault Ste. Marie we have a larger percentage of people living with moderate or severe food insecurity as compared to the provincial average (12.7% versus 8.2%) (Algoma Public Health, 2016). Food insecurity is having too little food and/or insufficient nutritious food because of financial constraints (Helwig, 2016). For example, during a one-month period in the fall of 2016, St. Vincent Place food bank served 202 families, including 44 children (DSSAB, 2016). At the Sault Ste. Marie Soup Kitchen and Community Centre, a total of 938 individuals were served in October, 2016, 37 of those being children (DSSAB, 2016)." (Future SSM, 2017)

Although food banks are presently a needed short-term solution for many, as stated by Dr. Northan (2006), food banks are not the long-term solution, but social policies at all levels of government that "ensure a society in which everyone can participate fully in an environment where there is secure access to healthy food and housing", are a part of the solution. From the 1 in 5 children in Canada that live in hunger, to the 'tea and toast syndrome' among the elderly, to large percentages of pregnant women accessing Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Programs out of necessity (Algoma Health Unit, 2006), food security is a pressing issue in our region and nationally .

Related to this, food activism and agricultural development has been ongoing in the Algoma District for decades, with continual slow improvements to capacity development. Areas that have lagged are municipal agriculture policy, like the need to develop a local Food Charter, and changing bylaws to be more supportive of urban agriculture; some sector development is needed related to education, and training, from the primary school system up through to local college and university programming; an increase in agri-product processing and distribution is also needed, like a larger local abattoir, and more food

processing plants in the area. These strengths and challenges have had cascading effects that reflect the structure of food production, distribution and use in the district.

The goal of this paper is to look at some of the strengths and challenges in the local food system in detail while also recommending potential solutions to the challenges. Further, as mentioned, the Canadian Food Guide has been recently changed and was used as a tool to bring the discussion of food security, sovereignty and gaps to the surface locally through the Bring Food Home Algoma 2019 Symposium.

## Background

### Bring Food Home Algoma 2019 Local Partners

The Bring Food Home Algoma 2019 Symposium had many agencies and organizations that were involved as sponsors or worked to organize the event. Within the local group of organizers there are many individuals who work for agencies or institutions that believe in the future of food sovereignty in this region, and already work on projects towards this goal, including:

David Thompson is the Manager for the Rural Agri-Innovation Network (RAIN, [rainalgoma.ca](http://rainalgoma.ca)). RAIN is an initiative of the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre with a mandate to build a resilient agri-food sector in northern Ontario through innovative applied research and agri-food development projects. The RAIN is dedicated to the needs of agri-food organizations, producers, suppliers and agri-entrepreneurs in northern Ontario. It enhances the industry by providing a collaborative infrastructure and network that enhances stakeholder capabilities and business growth. The RAIN conducts applied research based on questions from the agri-food sector, coordinates strategic funding targeted for infrastructure and innovation, and provides opportunity for market development of agri-food products through partnerships. RAIN's goals over the next three years includes:

- Accelerating food processing of northern horticulture crops
- Developing sustainable solutions to amend acidic soils in Algoma
- Addressing food distribution challenges

Mike Delfre is the Director of Operations, Food Security for Harvest Algoma ([uwssmalgoma.ca/divisions-of-uw/harvest-algoma](http://uwssmalgoma.ca/divisions-of-uw/harvest-algoma)), of the United Way Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma District. In addition to food security, Harvest Algoma has recently begun to focus attention in the area of food sovereignty with the Algoma Agriculture Sector Development Project (AASDP). The difference between food security and food sovereignty is subtle but important. Food security is a measure of the availability of food and an individuals' ability to access it. Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to define and make their own food and



agriculture decisions; to protect and regulate local agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives, and; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets. In basic terms, food security is about making sure no one goes hungry. Food sovereignty is about empowering the community to achieve more local control of the food system thereby benefiting the community.

The AASDP is building on the Market Study conducted by RAIN that was released in the spring of 2019 ([rainalgoma.ca/marketstudy](http://rainalgoma.ca/marketstudy)). One of the areas that was included in the study was the human resource gaps in skills, labour and services in the local food system. The AASDP is focusing on this component of agriculture sector development. We are conducting information gathering through the entire food system to find specific needs in this area. From this we are facilitating partnerships with community stakeholders to develop training, employment and community engagement initiatives which are aimed at developing the agriculture and food processing sectors. The ultimate outcome of the project is to create the means to fill the human resources gaps and to create community stakeholder networks to work together to develop and promote the agriculture sector in Algoma.

The Algoma Agriculture Sector Development Project (AASDP) is an initiative of the United Way of Sault Ste Marie and Algoma District in partnership with Rural Agri-Innovation Network (RAIN), East Algoma Community Futures Development Corporation, Community Development Corporation of Sault Ste. Marie & Area and Algoma Workforce Investment Corporation. It is funded by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Lisa O'Brien, is a Registered Dietician for Algoma Public Health ([algomapublichealth.com](http://algomapublichealth.com)). Algoma Public Health (APH) is a public health agency committed to creating communities where all people can achieve good health, regardless of age, gender, ability or socio-economic or ethnic status. APH works with individuals, families and community partners to promote and protect health, prevent disease and reduce social inequities. Guided by the Ontario Public Health Standards, APH uses evidence-informed practices to identify and address the unique needs of our communities. The health unit's Community Health Profile (2018) which reports on the health status of our community shows that residents in Algoma experience higher rates of food insecurity and lower intake of vegetables and fruit, compared to the Ontario average. APH works with community partners to address the multiple dimensions of poverty and food literacy.

Edith Orr helps to oversee the Johnson Farmers Market ([johnsonfarmersmarketdesbarats.ca](http://johnsonfarmersmarketdesbarats.ca)). Since its inception in 2007, the market organizing committee has been true to its goals. The first is to provide a warm and inviting vibrant marketplace for local goods to be sold directly to the consumer. It is a place where sellers and buyers know each other and become family. The second goal is to be a catalyst to Grow the Agriculture sector and more specifically all things food related. It is in this



capacity that members serve on various committees, pitch new ideas, hold workshops and convene regional meetings. The remaining goal is about ambassadorship of the area. The market is frequently the gateway into area communities and as such it promotes events and activities to attract people to visit, invest and live in the area. The market is a complete package of local ideas, caring and sharing, and an example of rural hospitality and living.

Sean Meades is the Director of NORDIK Institute and Dr. Laura Wyper is a NORDIK faculty affiliated researcher ([nordikinstitute.com](http://nordikinstitute.com)). Meades' work at NORDIK directs and supports the NORDIK team to develop partnerships with communities to solve practical issues that are important to municipalities, First Nations and community organizations in Northern Ontario. NORDIK offers business, organizational and community development support, while promoting more vibrant, caring and sustainable communities through research, dialogue, analysis and reflection dedicated to the practice of holistic community development.

Dr. Laura Wyper and Sean Meades are also both full-time faculty in the Department of Community Economic and Social Development (CESD) at Algoma University ([algomau.ca](http://algomau.ca)). The Community Economic, and Social Development program provides students with the tools and knowledge to make meaningful change within their community and the world around them. Due to the broad-based structure of the program, students develop a holistic perspective of the world around them and develop the knowledge and understanding to work to advocate for positive change, fight for economic and social equality, and defend human rights, with a specific focus on smaller urban, rural, northern, and Indigenous communities. Dr. Wyper's work for the CESD department includes involvement in the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada's (SSHRC) Lake Superior Living Labs Network's (LSLLN, [livinglabs.lakeheadu.ca](http://livinglabs.lakeheadu.ca)) Eastern Hub at Algoma University, which focuses on food security teaching, learning, and research. She is a part of the Algoma University Food Forest working group for the LSLLN Eastern Hub, sits on the Algoma University Food Security Task Force, is one of the faculty that oversees the students' work in the Peoples' Garden, and is a Slow Food in Canada ([slowfood.ca](http://slowfood.ca)) Board Member as the Ark of Taste Liaison. In this role she brings Ark of Taste ([arkoftaste.slowfood.ca](http://arkoftaste.slowfood.ca)) food biodiversity projects into the CESD course curriculum, and is involved in other food activism in the local area.

### Bring food Home Algoma 2019 Symposium Highlights

The Bring Food Home Algoma 2019 Symposium highlighted various food related issues including the new Canada's Food guide changes to portion sizes, meat consumption and lifestyle choices (Bonnett & Harris, 2019). Criticism of the representation of the new Canada's Food Guide is related to terminology like 'plant-based diets' which can misconstrue what a healthy choice is, the contradictory messaging and research on red meat consumption that reflects the smaller meat portions, the lack of dairy, and the argument that plant-based diets are more sustainable which, similar to plant-based food



choices, is not always the case and depends on what the choices are (Matthews, 2019). Consumer food choice is also of course tied to supply and demand, which affects production, distribution and circularly, also use / choice.

Related to supply and demand, the meat and poultry sectors have had labour challenges in recent years with 2,400 vacancies in the meat sector alone in 2017 (Naccarato, 2019). With a prediction of need for 1,000 additional people in the next decade, and currently no post-secondary programs for skill training, this sector is looking at a three-tiered approach to workforce development, domestic talent use, and foreign work programs to meet its needs (Naccarato, 2019).

This labour shortage highlights the need for education and training across JK to post-secondary levels to re-embed food related skills, and while post-secondary project examples like the Lake Superior Living Labs Network (Cameron & Wyper, 2019) are great starts, comprehensive agro-ecological citizenship education and training strategies are needed at federal to municipal / First Nations levels to resolve the systemic labour shortages. “Agroecology encompasses the relationship between agricultural production systems and ecological processes. It includes all the techniques that allow agricultural practices to be more respectful of the environment and its ecological specificities” (<https://youmatter.world/en/definition/definitions-agro-ecology/>). Agro-ecological citizenship education is thus teaching and learning that includes knowledge of farming methods and skills building around processing and storage of food (Lutz & Schachinger, 2013; Walingo, 2006, as cited in Smith, 2010) to meet citizen’s knowledge and skill building demands and industry demands simultaneously. This can also include “an interdisciplinary combination of agronomy, agriculture, scientific ecology, economics, and social sciences. It integrates practices such as organic farming, regenerative agriculture, some aspects of permaculture and therefore contributes to sustainable development” (<https://youmatter.world/en/definition/definitions-agro-ecology/>).

Tackling both industry level and individual level food security needs alludes to the United Nations Human Right to food that “requires the States to provide an enabling environment in which people can use their full potential to produce or procure adequate food for themselves and their families” (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2010). Hayu Dyah Patria (2013) talks of three specific strategies for food sovereignty which are: research, education, and campaign (p.151), which when combined through JK to post-secondary education and research, could potentially also increase food literacy rates of our nation as well as food security and sovereignty.

When we combine the labour shortage needs in Ontario with a local aging workforce, lower fertility rates in Ontario, and out migration in both rural and small northern urban centres (DeVuono, 2019), the need for a multi-tiered approach becomes clear, and includes supporting immigration. Local retention rates for newcomers are hovering at 80% currently, but with only 0.7% of immigrants choosing to settle in Northern Ontario



(DeVuono, 2019) the settlement and retention of this demographic group is a largely untapped resource for Northern communities. Further, the slowly increasing diversity of northern communities means both the need to respond to this diversity and the strength of this diversity are paramount to current and future community engagement, planning and development.

In terms of future and current equitable and inclusive planning, First Nations sovereignty needs to also become a focal point as we move into reconciliation from our shared colonial histories. Groups like the Indigenous Food Circle are leading through example as they support resurgence of Indigenous food networks to improve Indigenous food security, Indigenous food sovereignty and “establish meaningful relationships with settlers through food” (McLaughlin, 2019). The Indigenous Food Circle members include members from the health, education and social service sectors as well as with political membership of First Nations and First Nations organizations (McLaughlin, 2019).

Working in partnership brings a synergy of cumulative positive outcomes as demonstrated in the Thunder Bay and area Food Strategy (McLaughlin, 2019), and simulation of this model is a suggested way forward for other municipalities and First Nations groups, based on each area's place-based strengths and challenges. This statement comes with the realization, as noted in the draft of the local Poverty Reduction Roundtable Strategic Action Plan (Broad, Miller, and Vipond, 2016), that working in a coordinated fashion is not easy (Jolley, 2014; In Broad, Miller, and Vipond, 2016 ) and that refinements to this process in terms of developing new approaches is ongoing at global levels (Jabbar & Abelson, 2011; In, Broad, Miller, and Vipond, 2016). As such, following from Broad, Miller, and Vipond (2016), a collective impact approach should be used in this instance as well (Kania & Kramer, 2011; In Broad, Miller, and Vipond, 2016) as there is a common goal and common ground for working together locally.

Related to place-based needs, the local municipality is looking at planning for a vibrant agriculture and food sector in Sault Ste. Marie that includes more efficient land use planning, protecting prime agricultural areas, edible planting on public lands, and relaxing certain regulations (Tonazzo, 2019). These are all directions that will increase food security, yet past practice pertaining to small scale small animal husbandry that ‘some practices are better left in the shadows’ needs to be critiqued as it leaves both the animals involved and the urban farmer vulnerable rather than protecting citizen food sovereignty and food security, and simultaneously minimizes respect for life, and the care that goes into our human-to-non-human farming relations. Having said this, many Canadians are already limiting meat consumption as reported in a recent Dalhousie study (Charlebois, Somogyi & Music, 2018). Various consumer and food growing / production adaptation strategies can also be supported within urban agriculture policy as well as rurally (Thompson, 2019) as communities need to respond to climate change and the potentially resulting future transitions it will cause.

## Methodology

During the Bring Food Home Algoma 2019 Symposium, participants were given a chance to discuss the topics in small discussion circles at each table, that were brought up by presenters. These discussion circles were facilitated and documented by NORDIK Institute staff who documented responses to each prompt from participants at the table they were responsible for.

After the morning session presentations on the Canada Food Guide, discussion prompts for each table included:

1. What does the Canada Food Guide mean for producing and gathering food in our own region?
2. Whose food is not included and what are the impacts?

Afternoon sessions' prompts included:

1. What can Municipalities, First Nations and Organizations do to support the regional food system?
2. How can we prepare for changes in our rural and urban communities based on our changing demographics?

Results from the collected data were analyzed for similarity and outlying themes, as noted in the analysis section immediately below.

## Analysis of Findings:

### Themes

#### **Education & Knowledge Transfer:**

Participants identified education as a major theme, whether in relation to the impacts of the Canada Food Guide regionally, or ways in which communities and organizations can support a regional food system. Educating youth in terms of where food comes from, how it's produced, and the skills that come with gardening, preserving, foraging, etc. is seen as an invaluable means of sustaining our unique regional food system. For First Nation communities in the region, the transfer of knowledge about food and agriculture is essential in bridging intergenerational knowledge gaps. Educational gardening, meal prep skills, preservation skills, farm visits, etc. were some proposed examples.



### **Cultural Appropriateness & Cross-Cultural Cooperation:**

Participants from across the region expressed that the appropriateness of foods and training for a wide cross-section of cultural groups and cross-cultural collaboration are essential to our unique regional food system. Participants noted that cultural foods and traditions were not recognized as legitimate components in our food system and should be. Participants suggested that we should be recognizing solidarity between culturally diverse foods and traditions. Many argued for a re-evaluation of priorities and modern agricultural practices to be more inclusive of Indigenous and newcomer communities. This can be achieved through education, collaboration and sharing.

### **Collaboration and Coordination:**

Many of the participants recognized that in order to support the regional food system that collaboration will have to be a priority. Participants noted that food is a way to bring people together and that working together through cohesive planning and collaborative practices, the local/regional food system can be strengthened and sustained. Participants suggested that this work can be done through increasing community participation in different networks, events, clubs and associations and by coordinating school boards, municipalities, First Nations, service clubs, businesses, etc. in the regional food economy. Building trust and capacity through meaningful communication and working together is essential to the strength and sustainability of the regional food systems.

### **Health and Equity:**

Participants brought forward numerous health and equity implications and impacts for consideration. Participants emphasized the need to draw connections between the Canada Food Guide and healthy and local diet, particularly in institutions such as hospitals and schools. Participants noted that in order to reduce the equity gap, factors that impact food choices such as financial constraints to eating healthy and local, time management, planning and preparing, shopping frequency, affordability, religious restrictions on diet, etc. must be addressed.

### **Diversification and Sustainability:**

Many participants stated that it would be beneficial to have a local/regional Canada Food Guide that takes into consideration what is produced and provided in the region and how people eat depending on where they are living. It is evident that when examining the regional food system, in order to be sustainable long-term, some local producers may need to diversify their production and processing practices. Participants noted that a lot of production is processed by big corporations outside of the region and that they would like to see this processing happen locally, which may require more research and development. Participants also noted that they would like to see more varied crop production, particularly fruits, nuts and whole grains. In order

for the regional food system to be sustainable local farmers will need support and incentives to enter new markets and policies will need to be changed. Shoppers will need to educate themselves about the food that is produced locally and where it is accessible in order to support local producers. The regional food system will need to overcome the impacts of seasonal agriculture and reducing environmental foot-prints in order to be sustainable long-term

## Policy Recommendations

### I. Recommendations for Provincial and Federal Governments

- Develop agro-ecological citizenship education and food literacy curriculum for the JK to 12 education system, with cross-cultural indigenous-settler food as/and cultural literacy programming .
- Develop college and university programs across a range of food sovereignty and security skill sets (from ecological and organic small scale methods to larger agri-industrial options, programs for trades, entrepreneurship, sustainability / technology, etc.)
- Support the development of Northern Ontario infrastructure for food processing and distribution facilities as economic development incentives for the region.
- Fill the vacant Agriculture Development Advisor position that served Algoma District through the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food & Rural Affairs who supports agri-food organizations, producers, food processors and rural economic development.
- At provincial and federal levels, similar to the Thunder Bay Food Strategy's recommendations the participants in the Algoma Bring Food Home Symposium emphasize the need to:

“Integrate sustainability into Canada’s Food Guide, creating a strong policy link between healthy eating and sustainable food production.

Create a cost-shared universal healthy school food program to ensure that all school children learn basic food skills and have access to healthy, nutritious meals every day.

Supporting Indigenous leadership that is tackling the epidemic of diet-related disease and food insecurity among Indigenous populations”

(<http://tbfoodstrategy.com/news/response-call-food-policy-canada/>)

## II. Recommendations for Municipalities and First Nations

- Work across First Nations and municipal bodies to develop partnership models similar to the Indigenous Food Circle
- Use this partnership model to create a local Food Strategy, similar to the Thunder Bay Food Strategy.
- Commit to urban agricultural policy development within any newly created Food Strategy, including changing bylaws and supporting small scale small animal husbandry policy, supporting more efficient land use planning, protecting prime agricultural areas, implementing edible planting on public lands with community food sharing programs, and relaxing certain regulations as necessary to fully support local food sovereignty and food security initiatives.
- Support the development of Northern Ontario agricultural infrastructure through economic development or community development funds; as examples, in Sault Ste. Marie food processing and distribution infrastructure should be among the priorities as should be the increase in broadband capabilities through the region to increase productivity.
- Work with other sectors using a collective impact approach, including: First Nations, Public Health, RAIN, NORDIK, post-secondary institutions, etc. to achieve the recommendations throughout.

## III. Recommendations for Health, Education and Training Sectors

- Support, and potentially fund, agro-ecological citizenship education for food literacy, like The Algoma Educational Gardening Program (SooToday, 2019), as an example, to increase knowledge and decrease gaps for citizens that affect their food security as related to choices and skill sets.
- Rebuild agro-ecological citizenship education and food literacy curriculum into the JK to 12 education system, and cross-cultural indigenous-settler food as/and cultural literacy programming. Educate about the value of all types of agriculture.
- Implement Specialist High Skills Major for Agriculture and Food Processing in Algoma secondary schools.

- Develop community-based partnerships to provide food education and employment opportunities for youth.
- Develop college and university programs across a range of food sovereignty and security skill sets (from ecological and organic small scale methods to larger agri-industrial options, programs for trades, culinary innovation, entrepreneurship, sustainability / food technology, etc.)
- Support the Thunder Bay Food Strategy recommendations for this region:

“Create a cost-shared universal healthy school food program to ensure that all school children learn basic food skills and have access to healthy, nutritious meals every day.

Set targets for local, sustainable food procurement by public institutions to ensure public spaces are healthy spaces

Consider health and food access in implementing food safety protocols as they are often a significant barrier for growing and sourcing local, sustainable, and country foods for institutional food services or community food initiatives.”

(<http://tbfoodstrategy.com/news/response-call-food-policy-canada/>)

#### IV. Recommendations for Producers and Distributors

- Work with government bodies and funding agencies to support the development of local infrastructure for food processing and distribution as economic development incentives for the region.
- Work with government bodies and funders to analyze the changing demographics in the area for new product development and/or product adaptation to take advantage of niche markets for these changing communities.
- Work with government bodies, civil society, and funders to support job creation programs that will support immigrants with transferable skills to find employment in the local food systems.
- As suggested from the Thunder Bay Food Strategy, work with other sectors to:

“Create a cost-shared universal healthy school food program to ensure that all school children learn basic food skills and have access to healthy, nutritious meals every day.

Set targets for local, sustainable food procurement by public institutions to ensure public spaces are healthy spaces.

Consider health and food access in implementing food safety protocols as they are often a significant barrier for growing and sourcing local, sustainable, and country foods for institutional food services or community food initiatives.”

(<http://tbfoodstrategy.com/news/response-call-food-policy-canada/>)

## Implementation and Next Steps

### V. Working with Sector Partners

- Dissemination of the report across our networks for feedback on the report, on needs, on gaps, and on potential champions willing to help take on this work and drive it forward at decision making tables.
- Present information on the report and future planning to date to sector partners as / if requested.
- Develop a survey to help with feedback after dissemination of the report.
- Have the Bring Food Home initial local partners meet in April to analyze data from surveys, etc. in order to chart steps forward.
- Potentially develop a local Food Strategy committee across sectors using a collective impact approach, including but not limited to: municipalities, First Nations, Public Health, agri-food businesses, RAIN, Harvest Algoma United Way SSM & Algoma, NORDIK, primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions, newcomer services, etc. to achieve the recommendations in this list, and others as need is realized.

## Conclusions

Food security and food sovereignty are foundational principles related to our social determinants of health, sense of identity and personal agency in life. Food insecurity is a pervasive issue in the Algoma region, and within Sault Ste. Marie specifically. Although various food security and agricultural projects have been and continue to be developed, a collective impact approach to policy changes across sectors is needed to tackle the systemic issues that underlie local food insecurity and contribute to poor health outcomes.

As noted earlier, this policy document discusses a number of policy recommendations and goals that are based on the findings as well as agreement among the partners. This document is being shared with those who participated in Bring Food Home, and also with leaders and stakeholders through annual meetings and engagement events. The

recommendations herein bring various calls for action spanning federal, provincial, First Nation, municipal, health, education and training bodies, as well as food producer and distributor sectors. Again, we hope this document furthers policy development at the local level particularly, and look forward to building a resilient Algoma agri-food system with you in 2020.

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