

INDIGENOUS FOOD CIRCLE



IFC ANNUAL REPORT 2018 - 2019

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Table of Contents

1. Background & Context	2
1.1 What is Indigenous Food Sovereignty?	2
1.2 Origins of the Indigenous Food Circle in Thunder Bay	3
1.3 Work of the IFC to Date.....	5
2. Overview of Phase II (April 2018 – June 2019)	7
2.1 Asset & Needs Assessment of IFC Members.....	7
2.2 Logo Development	8
2.3 Understanding Our Food Systems Project: Phase II	8
2.4 IFC Members Meeting – June 13, 2019.....	10
2.5 Budget Update	11
3. Assets & Needs Assessment Results	12
3.1 Activities + Programs.....	13
3.2 Assets	14
3.3 Indigenous Food Sovereignty Definition	14
3.4 Barriers.....	15
3.5 Needs	16
3.6 Value of the IFC	16
3.7 Opportunities	16
4. Moving Forward: Next Steps	18
4.1 Phase III Objectives	18
4.2 Growth	18
4.3 Governance	19
4.4 Future Project Opportunities	20
Appendix A – IFC Member List	21
Appendix B – Needs Assessment Questions	22
Appendix C – IFC Member Meeting June 13, 2019: Priority Area Discussion Summary	24

1. Background & Context¹

1.1 What is Indigenous Food Sovereignty?

Beyond simply a commodity to be bought and sold, food provides nourishment for our bodies and our minds and for our communities. More than just fuel, food is a part of our identities, cultures and connects us to each other and to the natural world. When we think about our food, we must also consider who has ownership, access, and rights to the land and water. The idea of a **food system** describes these relationships between social, political and economic systems that bring food to our plates. In today's urban context, that system includes harvesting, foraging and growing food to processing, retail, consumption and waste. The Pan-Canadian Indigenous Food Systems Network describes food systems as follows:

The vast myriad of rivers, watersheds, landforms, vegetation and climatic zones have worked together for thousands of years to shape and form Indigenous land and food systems. Consisting of a multitude of natural communities, Indigenous food systems include all of the land, air, water, soil and culturally important plant, animal and fungi species that have sustained Indigenous peoples over thousands of years. All parts of Indigenous food systems are inseparable and ideally function in healthy interdependent relationships to transfer energy through the present day agriculture based economy that has been developed and industrialized through the process of colonization.²

Indigenous communities around the world have mobilized at multiple scales to maintain traditional food practices. Learning from the latest research and working with settler allies, these activities address food as an interconnected system where everyone has the right to healthy, culturally appropriate food produced, harvested and foraged in ecologically sustainable ways. Indigenous food sovereignty movements rooted in traditional ways of knowing assert that people, not corporations or governments, have the right to make decisions about their own food systems. Furthermore, food security is can only be achieved through food sovereignty. Figure 1 is a visual representation of the interconnections between issues of food sovereignty and food security in Northern Canada and the relationship to food systems. According to the Pan-Canadian Indigenous Circle that guided the People's Food Policy project, "the trends occurring amongst Indigenous peoples are the beginnings of a new Indigenous food sovereignty. By establishing their own projects under their own leadership, Indigenous peoples are determining what should be grown, cooked, taught, and shared. In time, these decisions will pave the way for greater food security."³

¹ This report builds on the March 2018 IFC Phase I Report; some of text comes directly from that report.

² Indigenous Land and Food Systems. (n.d.). Indigenous Food Systems. Available at <https://www.indigenousfoodsystems.org/>

³ Food Secure Canada. (2011). Indigenous Food Sovereignty. Peoples Food Policy. Available at: https://foodsecurecanada.org/sites/foodsecurecanada.org/files/DP1_Indigenous_Food_Sovereignty.pdf

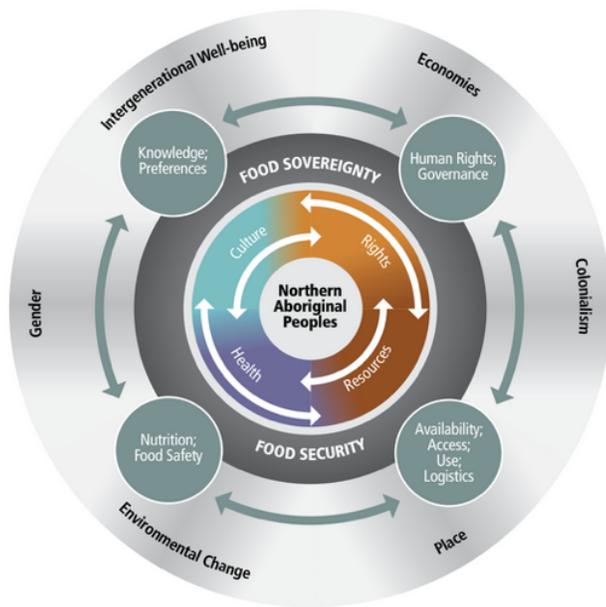
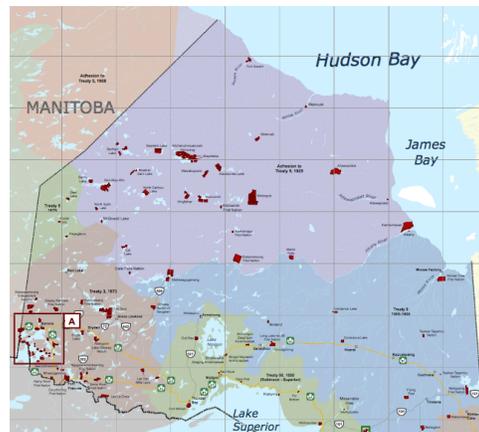


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Food Sovereignty & Security in Northern Canada⁴

1.2 Origins of the Indigenous Food Circle in Thunder Bay

Thunder Bay is located on the traditional land of the Fort William First Nation, signatory to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850 and is home to Indigenous people from many traditional territories. According to the 2016 Statistics Canada census, Indigenous people make up almost 13% of the City’s population, the highest proportion of urban Indigenous population in Canada. Besides the historical and present-day connections to the land, Indigenous populations have an important economic and social impact within the region. As one of the largest cities in Northern Ontario, Thunder Bay acts as a central hub for transportation, shopping and access to a wide range of services. Considering the history of strained Indigenous-settler relationships and the significant population, there is a unique opportunity to demonstrate how food can be a tool for reconciliation and resurgence.



⁴ Council of Canadian Academies. (2014). *Aboriginal Food Security in Northern Canada: An Assessment of the State of Knowledge*, Ottawa, ON. The Expert Panel on the State of Knowledge of Food Security in Northern Canada, Council of Canadian Academies. Available at: https://foodsecurecanada.org/sites/foodsecurecanada.org/files/foodsecurity_fullreporten.pdf

Building on the energy, experiences and knowledge among Indigenous people in the Thunder Bay region, the Indigenous Food Circle (IFC) was established in 2016. The process involved many one-on-one meetings with representatives of Indigenous led and Indigenous serving organizations to assess interest in the initiative, as well as two larger group meetings to establish a basis for cooperation. An administrative team included Jessica McLaughlin, Dr. Charles Levkoe, Dr. Lana Ray, Joyce Hunter, and Micheala Bohunicky was given a mandate to establish a collaborative platform to support food sovereignty related initiatives developed by, for and with Indigenous organizations in the Thunder Bay region.

The initial aim of the IFC was to:

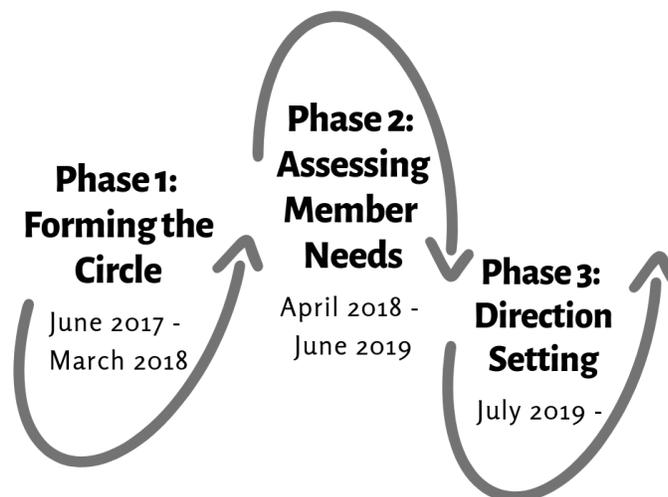
- Reduce Indigenous food insecurity;
- Increase food self-determination; and,
- Establish meaningful relationships with the settler population through food.

In order to build healthy, equitable and sustainable food systems in the Thunder Bay region, it is essential to make space for Indigenous people to speak about their own food systems. Drawing on concepts of Indigenous food sovereignty that emphasizes a re-connection to land-based food and political systems, the IFC aims to support and develop the capacity of Indigenous peoples to articulate and respond to relevant challenges and opportunities and to improve food-related programming and policy.

The IFC is rooted in six primary objectives:

1. To support an inclusive and supportive Indigenous food sovereignty in the Thunder Bay region;
2. To build meaningful relationships among Indigenous led and serving organizations in the Thunder Bay region around traditional food;
3. To support, connect and coordinate members with relevant food related initiatives and opportunities;
4. To establish a space for Indigenous people to share information and develop solutions to address immediate needs and decolonize the food system;
5. To bring awareness to Indigenous organizations and their food related work;
6. To build relationships between Indigenous and settler organizations.

To date, the IFC's work has occurred across three phases:



1.3 Work of the IFC to Date

Phase I: Forming the Circle (June 2016 – March 2018)

The initial phase of the IFC's development involved the administrative team reaching out to Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving organizations in the Thunder Bay region. During this phase, sixteen organizations committed to participate in the development of the IFC and an additional 40 conversations were held with others that expressed interest. The initial conversations focused on relationship building rather than information gathering. These initial discussions were conducted according to the needs of the particular organization and provided space for learning and getting to know everyone involved.

Phase I also involved a series of small pilot projects in partnership with the Thunder Bay and Area Food Strategy (TBAFS). In early 2018, the IFC and the Thunder Bay Country Market hosted a cooking, learning and sharing workshop to build familiarity with locally grown foods and means of obtaining them for members of the Indigenous Friendship Centre's Family Well-Being program. The IFC Coordinator, Jessica McLaughlin, also sat on the TBAFS Executive to provide updates, foster collaboration, and make presentations at regional and national network conferences (e.g. Sustain Ontario's Bring Food Home biannual meeting in Ottawa) in order to share the work of the IFC and get feedback on the initial phase.

Phase I wrapped up with news of successfully receiving a small grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) through the Partnership Engage stream to support the second phase of development. The application was collaboratively written as a partnership between the IFC, the TBAFS and Lakehead University. The aim was to spend time getting to know the different members and understanding the organization's needs, assets and visions for the IFC.

For more detailed information about Phase I: Forming the Circle, see the IFC Phase I Update Report, March 2018.

Phase II: Assessing Member Needs (April 2018 – June 2019)

With the securing of funds to support a second phase of development, the IFC was able to support part-time wages for two Coordinators, costs for travel, and IFC events. The main actions of the administrative team and the Coordinators during this phase were to conduct a needs assessment of IFC members; host an IFC members meeting to share results and determine next steps; develop a visual identity; and conduct Indigenous food sovereignty work through the Understanding Our Food Systems project with fourteen regional Indigenous communities.

On June 13, 2019 an IFC members meeting was held to share results from the needs assessment, provide an update on other actions, and host a circle discussion on next steps for the IFC. The circle determined that the top priorities for the IFC moving forward were to continue building networks and collaboration among Indigenous led and serving organizations in the city, while also focusing on taking action towards food access & advocacy, knowledge & sharing, and cultural safe space.

Phase III: Direction Setting (July 2019 -)

The priority areas for action discussed at the June 13th IFC members meeting kicked the third phase into gear. It was determined that working groups would be started in each of the three areas, each of which would be tasked with taking action on the key elements of those priority areas as well as provide a basis for governance of the circle overall. Other key components of third phase objectives will include:

- Hosting IFC members meetings as needed, including a fall 2019 meeting focused on growth and governance;
- Researching and applying for grants to secure further funds for the growth of the IFC;
- Partnering with the Thunder Bay and Area Food Strategy (TBAFS) to plan and host a major conference – Urban Access to Traditional food: Understanding Wild Game in October 2019;
- Continuing to build the network within the city of Thunder Bay and in regional First Nation communities.



2. Overview of Phase II (April 2018 – June 2019)

The second phase of the IFC's work included an in-depth analysis of member's assets and needs as well as a lot of growth and increased reach. It began with news that the IFC had been successful in securing a small grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for the purpose of understanding the specific and broader needs of the IFC, how to determine meaningful partnerships, and how to move forward with the work in a respectful and mutually beneficial way.

On May 2, 2018 a members meeting was held where it was determined that the IFC would establish an administrative team, hire two part-time coordinators (applications were solicited from IFC members), and conduct a needs assessment of member organizations. The administrative team consisted of two coordinators – Jessica McLaughlin (June 2018 – present) and Joyce Hunter (May – December 2018) – supporters, Dr. Charles Levkoe and Dr. Lana Ray, and Micheala Bohunicky. The team and the Coordinators then began working on the major objectives of the second phase.

2.1 Asset & Needs Assessment of IFC Members

The overarching goal of the second phase was to develop and complete an asset and needs assessment of IFC members. The **objectives of this assessment process** were to gather information from the member organizations to share back with the IFC and determine the next steps for the collective work. The administrative team began by developing needs assessment questions, determining which organizations and individuals to speak with, and planning an initial timeline for the process. The overarching themes of the questions were to better understand the work each organization was currently involved with, the assets they each bring to the IFC as well as the needs, challenges, and opportunities organizations have for food-related programming and food sovereignty work that is led by and/or serves Indigenous peoples in the Thunder Bay region.

Over the course of June 2018 to May 2019, the asset and needs assessments occurred as semi-formal discussions led by the IFC Coordinators. A total of 15 member organizations were interviewed, with one to three representatives representing each organization. In May and June of 2019, analysis of the data occurred which was reported back to members at the June 13, 2019 members meeting and helped to support the determination of directions forward. The third section of this report, *Needs Assessment Findings*, covers the findings in more detail.

The needs assessment questions can be found in *Appendix B – Needs Assessment Questions*.

2.2 Logo Development

As the work of the IFC continued to expand, the administrative team felt it was important to create a logo that represented and promoted the work. Indigenous artist Caleb Magiskan developed the initial draft of the logo.

The circle framing the logo represents the coming together of many different organizations and people to work towards Indigenous food sovereignty. This is represented by the branches and the blueberries (Miinan - the peoples berry) inside the circle.



2.3 Understanding Our Food Systems Project: Phase II

In August, 2018, the IFC was invited to co-coordinate phase II of the Understanding Our Food Systems Project (UOFS). Funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the UOFS project was undertaken by the IFC in partnership with the Thunder Bay District Health Unit, the Sustainable Food Systems Lab and Lakehead University. In 2017, IFC Coordinator Jessica McLaughlin had played a crucial role in the first phase of the UOFS project, which was led by a consulting firm. Given the mandate, intent, and reach of the IFC, the administrative team felt that forming an IFC project team to support the second phase of UOFS would benefit both communities and the larger network of the IFC. While the full IFC played a peripheral role to the project, many of the member organizations contributed to the success of the project through community partnerships and direct engagement.

The project ran from October 2018 to March 2019 and was established to work with fourteen First Nations in Northwestern Ontario to rebuild their food systems and work towards the goal of food sovereignty. The aim was to implement strategies developed by each First Nation that supported their community food systems through direct community support and connections. This involved community

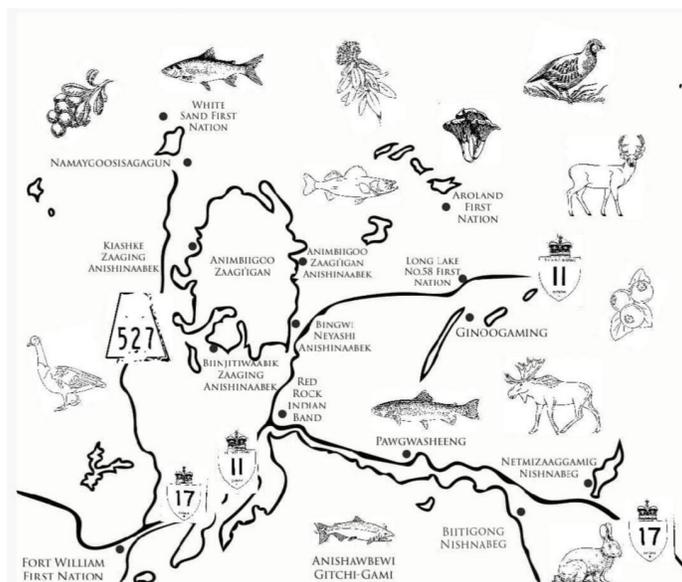


Figure 2: UOFS project map developed by Caroline Cichelly to depict the project area and communities involved.

visits, a regional gathering, a regional scan of probable solutions and methods and the further development of community food sovereignty visions for each First Nations communities. Taking leadership from the communities themselves, the IFC project team facilitated the further development of relationships through continuous communication and networking, while providing honest and transparent support.

The project was structured around **four key components**:

1. Leadership from and Direct Support of First Nations – Support for each community through further development and initial implementation of the community food sovereignty visions. This involved developing action plans and budgets as well as purchasing the necessary items to achieve short- and medium-term goals.
2. Network Building and Ongoing Communication - Connecting First Nations to relevant partner organizations and support networks. This included a literature review and a regional scan of existing food system projects, programs, and funding.
3. Regional Food Gathering and Knowledge Sharing – This event involved a coming together of the fourteen First Nations along with supporting individuals and organizations from Northwestern Ontario, Southern Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. It provided an opportunity for further relationship building and knowledge and skill sharing. It was also a space to work together on the action plans.
4. Sharing and Next Steps – Through oral and written communication, reports, videos and the internet, we shared back all information with the communities and provided collective ideas about next steps for the project.

The primary outcomes of the UOFS Phase II project were:

- Enhancing and updating **food sovereignty visions** for each of the fourteen First Nations;
- Hosted a two-day **Regional Food Systems Gathering** January 23 – 24, 2019 that included all First Nation partners and was open to all IFC members;
- Conducted a **regional scan** of resources and tools on food sovereignty and food system development in Northwestern Ontario that was shared with all First Nation partners;
- Compilation and sharing of an **Overview of Regional Food Research & Information** to support communities in accessing relevant information about foods sovereignty work regionally and in their communities;
- Implementation of **community food action** in each of the fourteen First Nations, in line with their food sovereignty visions.

While the project formally ended on March 31, 2019, the IFC Coordinator has continued to work with communities whose projects gained momentum and who were seeking ongoing support. The continued support work was made possible by a small grant of \$5,000 from the Harbinger Foundation as the IFC continues to explore funding to support the communities' food sovereignty visions.

For more detailed information on the UOFS Phase II project, see the Understanding Our Food Systems: Phase II Final Report from March 2019.

2.4 IFC Members Meeting – June 13, 2019

On June 13, 2019, the IFC members came together to reflect on Phase II and review the results from the asset and needs assessment and the Understanding Our Food Systems Project. The first part of the meeting involved presentations on the work to date while the second part was structured as an interactive circle discussion. Members were asked to identify priority actions for the IFC to focus on that would allow an opportunity to figure out what working together moving forward looks like. Everyone was given an opportunity to share what they feel would be priority areas.



From the circle discussion, **three priority action areas** were developed for the IFC:

- 1) Knowledge & Sharing (e.g., traditional teachings, tools and resources, promotion of Indigenous food knowledge);
- 2) Food Access & Advocacy (e.g., Barriers to accessing wild game, Organizational collaboration on barriers); and,
- 3) Cultural Safe Space (e.g., access to physical spaces, training and settler awareness, anti-oppression work, Promotion of Indigenous/Non-Indigenous knowledge sharing).

Following the group circle discussion, members were asked to choose one of the three priority areas and join a breakout discussion about what action on this priority would look like. This gave the directive for the IFC administrative team to begin hosting IFC working group meetings for each of the three priority areas. It was also determined that another IFC members meeting would be hosted in the fall of 2019 to see what progress had been made through the working groups, helping to direct conversations on growth and governance.

For more detail on the conversations held at the June 13th meeting, see *Appendix C – IFC Members Meeting – Priority Area Discussion Summary*

2.5 Budget for IFC Phase II Work

Revenue (March 2018 – June 2019)

Partnership Engage Grant Awarded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC Grant)	\$24,000.00
Understanding Our Food Systems via Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program Enhancement Project Awarded by the Thunder Bay District Health Unit via Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care	\$200,504.00
Understanding Our Food Systems Overhead (from Understanding Our Food Systems project)	\$7,523.53
Total	\$232,027.53

Expenses (March 2018 – June 2019)

Understanding Our Food Systems Project (salaries, events and direct community support)	\$200,504.00
IFC Coordinator	\$20,169.83
Other salaries	\$1,180.00
Supplies	\$1,392.00
Meeting Costs	\$4,579.01
Travel	\$4,202.54
Total	\$232,027.53

3. Asset & Needs Assessment Results

An Asset & Needs Assessment of the IFC was conducted between March 2018 and May 2019, through direction from members. As recommended in the IFC Phase I Update Report (March 2018) and agreed to at the May 2, 2018 meeting, the IFC administrative team consulted with all members to better understand the needs, challenges, and opportunities for Indigenous led and Indigenous serving organizations in the Thunder Bay region.

The **objective of the asset and needs assessment** was to gather information from the member organizations about needs, challenges, and opportunities related to food to share back with the IFC and determine the next steps for future collective work.

Over the course of the asset and needs assessment, **representatives from fifteen IFC member organizations completed an interview** with IFC Coordinators. All interviews were recorded, either via typed notes or voice recorded.

The interview guide included **four main themes** with core questions for each. These themes were:

- Indigenous Food Sovereignty/Self-Determination
- Organizational Profile
- Needs/Challenges/Opportunities
- Indigenous Circle.

Within each theme, there were between one to eight sub-questions that could be asked, depending on the relational nature of the discussion (see Appendix B for the questions). Interviews were held between a member of the administrative team and one or more members of each organization. Adopting Indigenous methodologies, conversations were relational and emergent.

Analysis of the needs assessment findings began by using Nvivo software to help code responses into seven categories:

1. Activities + Programs
2. Assets
3. Food Sovereignty Definition
4. Barriers
5. Needs
6. Value of the IFC
7. Opportunities.

From there, the responses under each category were analyzed to find common themes within each section, thus providing useable information for the IFC. Below, a high level summary of coded responses from each section can be found.

ANALYSIS CATEGORY	KEY RESULT THEMES
Activities + Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing food to clients ▪ Food-based programming
Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indigenous knowledge ▪ Sustainability & environmental protection ▪ Nutrition ▪ Research ▪ Food safety ▪ Community engagement ▪ Supporting vulnerable people ▪ Growing & harvesting food
Food Sovereignty Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Systemic (inequities, access, control) ▪ Connection to Indigenous ways of knowing and living
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of resources ▪ Bureaucratic/Institutional ▪ Organizational
Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Traditional knowledge ▪ Increased understanding and awareness ▪ More money & resources ▪ Networks & connections ▪ Trainings ▪ Space ▪ More client-based programs available ▪ Policy learning
Value of the IFC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Network building ▪ Sharing knowledge & resources ▪ Lobbying & advocacy ▪ Education for organizations ▪ Research
Opportunities	A diverse range of opportunities were shared; see section 3.7

3.1 Activities + Programs

Participants were asked what kind of food or land-based programs does your organization run, to which thirteen participants responded. There were twelve mentions of organizations providing food directly to clients, whether that was at programming (6) or through community kitchens (3). Three organizations shared that a full time cook (or cooks) works for their organization.

The other most common kind of programming was direct food-based programming that spanned a wide range of activities including skill building, gardening, cooking, and learning about healthy eating. Two organizations also directly cited meal planning and preparation with clients as a part of their food based programming. Other types of activities mentioned were having a traditional food freezer for staff and clients, sweatlodge, medicine garden, food for staff, resource development, and educating people about the cultural and spiritual aspect of food.

3.2 Assets

Through the needs assessments, it became clear that members brought a range of knowledge and experience to the IFC. These assets, or experience, included:

- Indigenous knowledge
- Sustainability & environmental protection
- Nutrition
- Research
- Food safety
- Community engagement
- Supporting vulnerable people
- Growing & harvesting food

3.3 Indigenous Food Sovereignty Definition

There were two main themes that came out when participants talked about what Indigenous food sovereignty meant to their organization. One theme focused more on the systemic element of food sovereignty while the other theme focused on the connection to Indigenous ways of knowing and living.

There were several common responses that reinforced a wholistic and integrative view of Indigenous food sovereignty. Of the eight participants that responded, five individuals shared that having access and control over local food and supply, including access to culturally appropriate food and ways to process and distribute this food was an essential element to food sovereignty. These responses make a connection to the inherent inequities of the industrial food system and the control that has been withheld from Indigenous communities in regards to their food systems. Four participants specifically indicated the inherent right that Indigenous peoples have to traditional food and food systems. A further connection was made between the interconnection between food security and food sovereignty (2/8), with one participant stating that “food security is the frontline and food sovereignty is the systemic.”

The other emerging theme had seven mentions that connected Indigenous food sovereignty to Indigenous ways of knowing and living. Participants recognized food as linked to culture, to the importance of community, and the healing nature of food and its connection to health. Others focused on the importance of preserving traditional food knowledge for future generations, and using old knowledge and new knowledge to create a new way forward. In these responses, there was a deeper sense of Indigenous food sovereignty as tied to distinctly Indigenous traditions and ways of knowing and how this is an important element of how to guide access and control over Indigenous food systems.

An interesting trend in the responses to this question was that primarily Indigenous-led organizations referenced or included mention of the second theme of Indigenous food sovereignty as linked to Indigenous ways of knowing and living. Indigenous-serving organizations predominantly responded to this question through the more systemic, equity lens (as did many Indigenous-led organizations). This pattern makes the case for continued work to be done at members meetings on the understanding of Indigenous food sovereignty and how this includes not only rights, but the important role that cultural and knowledge play in Indigenous food systems.

3.4 Barriers

There were three themes that characterized the major barriers or challenges that organizations faced:

- Lack of resources
- Bureaucratic/institutional barriers
- Organizational barriers

Of the nine participants that responded, twelve mentions were made about a **lack of resources** which included not enough funding (3), capacity of staff to do the work (3), limited space (2), no physical cultural space (2), and access to wild game (2).

There were eleven mentions of **internal and external bureaucratic barriers**. Specific internal bureaucratic or institutional barriers mentioned were administration, too much paperwork, food purchase contract, getting insurance. Specific external bureaucratic or institutional barriers included municipal, provincial, and federal regulations (including access to wild game), as well as restrictions placed on programs due to funding deliverables. These barriers are certainly part of the systemic barriers that prevent Indigenous food sovereignty.

In regards to **organizational barriers**, two participants mentioned autonomy within organizations and two mentioned difficulty working with management (lateral violence, willingness to change).

Overall, the common barriers faced suggest a role for the IFC in advocacy and continued network building to build collective strength to push back against systemic barriers.

3.5 Needs

Participants were asked a variety of questions stemming from the barriers and challenges theme that included identifying gaps and specific needs in resources, training, and information. Of the ten participants who responded to some or all of these questions (numbers indicate how many mentions of that answer), there were several themes that arose:

- (10) Traditional knowledge (harvesting, preparing, knowing the land)
- (10) Increased understanding & awareness (of food issues, gaps, history in the region)
- (9) More money & resources (funding, staff, volunteers, equipment)
- (7) Networks & connections (partnerships, knowledge of Indigenous food sources)
- (6) Trainings (for clients, for staff)
- (6) Space (including traditional food spaces)
- (4) More client-based programs available
- (3) Policy (learning about legal and policy barriers, how to navigate)

3.6 Value of the IFC

Ten participants responded to the question “*What purpose could the Indigenous Circle fulfill for your organization?*” (numbers indicate how many mentions of that answer). Five key themes emerged:

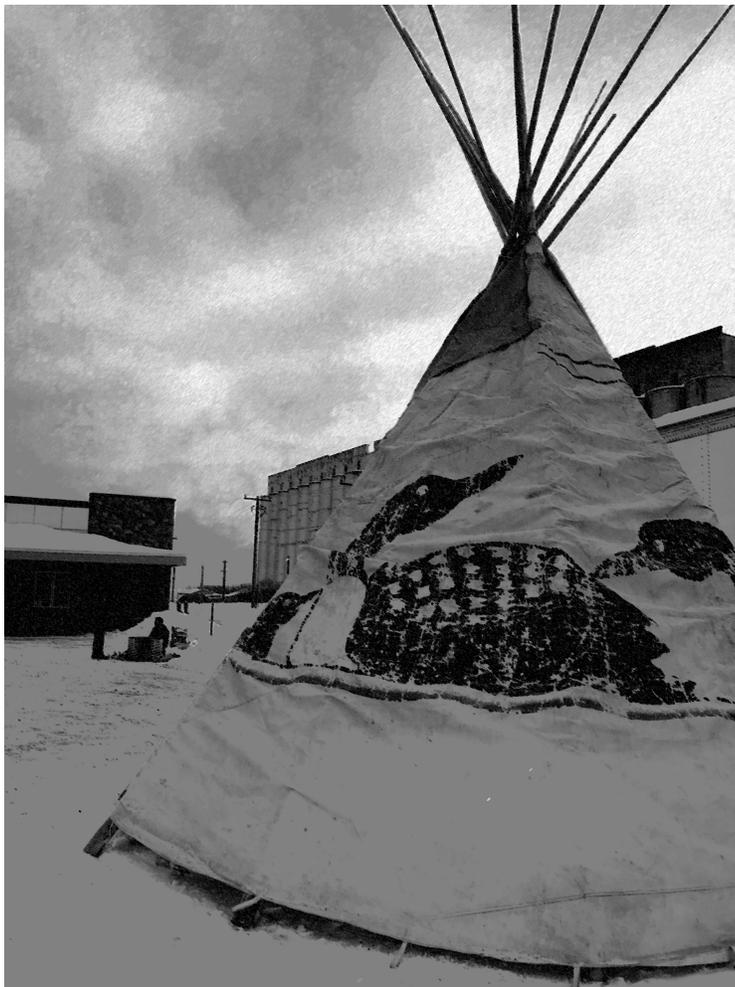
- (10) Network building (developing networks and relationships, building partnerships with regional First Nation communities, connecting with larger funding networks)
- (8) Sharing knowledge & resources (including about Indigenous food sources)
- (8) Lobbying & advocacy (in relation to policies and practices)
- (4) Education for organizations
- (3) Research (specific mention on identifying needs)

3.7 Opportunities

Participants were asked if there were any opportunities to expand their food and/or land-based programming to better serve clients. Only seven participants replied, but their answers are rich and varied and demonstrate a vibrant food community in the Thunder Bay region that can do much to support Indigenous Food Sovereignty.

The opportunities shared included the following:

- Traditional food freezer
- Drop-in w/ food to support relationship building
- Traditional food to support staff reclaiming of Indigenous identity
- Expanding access and ability to serve wild game
- Growing food in the summer
- Offering opportunities to harvest wild food
- Building a permanent cultural learning space, collaborative
- Expand access to Good Food Boxes to FN communities
- Land-based learning class
- More value added products
- Expand on accessibility/availability of fresh food distribution
- Northern Fruit & Veg program
- Wild game application to enhance wild game access
- Providing staff and leadership with tools for understanding



4. Moving Forward: Next Steps

The third phase of the IFC began in July 2019, stemming from the direction given at the June 2019 IFC members meeting. Towards the end of the second phase, the part-time Coordinator, Joyce Hunter, completed her role and Courtney Strutt was hired to take on new responsibilities. Moving into the third phase, the administrative team is made up of Jessica McLaughlin (as the IFC Coordinator), Courtney Strutt, Dr. Charles Levkoe, and Dr. Lana Ray.

4.1 Phase III Objectives

As the IFC moves into its third phase of work, there are several clear objectives identified to begin working towards:

1. Establishing **working groups** and determining guiding principles for each of the three priority areas (Knowledge & Sharing; Food Access & Advocacy; and Cultural Safe Space) and supporting actions for each of the working groups;
2. Working in partnership with Sustain Ontario: The Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming and the TBAFS to **organize and host a regional event** focused on wild game access in October 2019 called "Bring Food Home";
3. **Researching and applying for grants** to secure further funds for the growth of the IFC;
4. Hosting **IFC members meetings** as needed to share key updates; includes a fall 2019 members meeting focused on growth and governance;
5. Continuing to **build the network** in the city of Thunder Bay and the region.

4.2 Growth

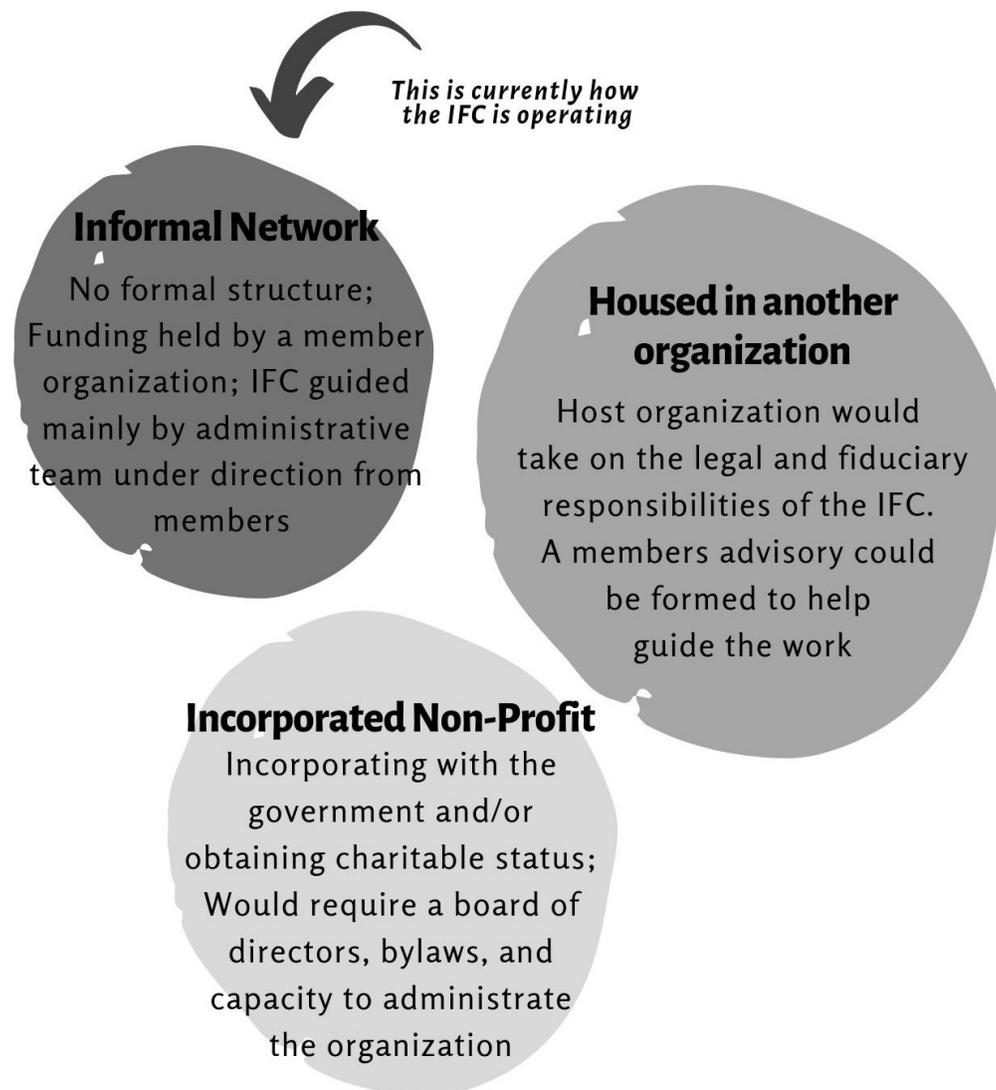
To date, the IFC funding has provided wages for two part-time Coordinators, costs associated with member meetings, and travel related to the work. At this time, the IFC administrative team suggests pursuing the following funding opportunities:

Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) Grow Grant	Understanding Our Food Systems Phase III (TBDHU)	Leveraging the Resources of the Circle
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Under the "Prosperous Peoples" stream• Support core costs• Due Nov. 27, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continued support for 14 First Nations that grows the IFC's regional network• Supports members in connecting to regional food systems work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organizational expertise, knowledge and in-kind resources of IFC members• Ex. Staff time, space, food, etc.

4.3 Governance

Thinking about growth includes thinking about governance – Who is a part of the IFC? What is the process for decision-making? Who holds funds for the IFC? How is the IFC structured? As future opportunities for the IFC continue to arise, we need to be clear about the connections between the work (directly and around the periphery). The guiding principles developed in the initial working group meetings will present an excellent starting point for these conversations.

Based on the discussions with members and some reflection by the Administrative Team, potential models that could serve the purposes of the IFC include:



4.4 Future Project Opportunities

As the work of the IFC continues to gain recognition not just regionally, but also provincially and nationally, a variety of opportunities have emerged. These opportunities should be considered only if they meet the mandate and goals of the IFC. These opportunities include:

- Understanding Our Food Systems: Phase 3 – The TBDHU has expressed interest in working with an IFC project team on UOFS Phase 3. More information will be available in Fall 2019.
- Direct Community Support – Through the work of UOFS, the IFC Coordinator has continued to work with several communities, a few of whom have secured project funding through CFTC and have asked the IFC Coordinators to continue to support their work. Canadian Feed the Children, an organization that supports food security work in First Nations communities across Canada, has asked the IFC to support work in project monitoring & evaluation.
- Funding Collective – The Social Planning Council of Sudbury is in the process of applying for a collaborative grant that is based off of a collaborative funding model used by the Northern Manitoba Food, Culture and Community Collaborative. In this model a variety of funders pool resources and work to align the funding directives with the needs of the communities they serve, and where funder and grantee learning is integrated into the project evaluation process. There is a possibility for the IFC to partner with the Social Planning Council of Sudbury on this opportunity.

Being transparent about these opportunities and discussing their potential for expanding the IFC is a key component of growth and governance conversations.

Appendix A – IFC Member List

As of September 2019

Member Organization	Primary Contact Name
Anishnawbe Mushkiki	Jennifer Bean Cathleen Larson
Anishnabek Nation	Lynn Moreau
Beendigen	Kathleen Sawdo Katie Bortolin
Confederation College	Emily Wilson
Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School	Needs updated contact
EcoSuperior	Needs updated contact
Fort William First Nation	Rita Charles Beau Boucher Haley McCrain
Ka-Na-Chi-Hih	Vince Simon
Keeywaytinook Okimakanik	Needs updated contact
Lakehead University Food Council	April Head Tyna Legault Mario Koeppel Dr. Barb Parker
Matawa Education & Care Centre	Joey Miller Olivia Merko Charlotte Baxter
Metis Nation of Ontario	Jacklyn Raynard
Nishnawbe Aski Nation	Loretta Sheshequin
Northern Nishnawbe Education Council	Needs updated contact
Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre	Gwen O'Reilly
Ontario Native Women's Association	Needs updated contact
Regional Food Distribution Association	Kelsey Agnew
Roots to Harvest	Erin Beagle Airin Stephens
Shelter House	Katie Watson
Shkoday Abinojiiwak Obimiwedoan	Needs updated contact
Sustainable Food Systems Lab (Lakehead University)	Charles Levkoe
Thunder Bay & Area Food Strategy	Karen Kerk Victoria Pullia
Thunder Bay District Health Unit	Ivan Ho
Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre	Needs updated contact
Thunder Bay Public Library	Samantha Martin-Bird
Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre	Donna Campbell Kristin Bernosky
Wequedong Lodge	Needs updated contact

Appendix B – Needs Assessment Questions

Theme	Core Question	Sub Questions
Indigenous Food Sovereignty/ Self-Determination	What does Indigenous food sovereignty (or food self-determination mean for your organization)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does your organization address these ideas?
Organizational Profile	What kind of (food/land-based) programs does your organization run?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you please describe the program? • What clientele do you serve for each program? • What types of food to you serve? • What is the quantity of the food you serve? • Where are you getting your food from? • Are there certain initiatives or programs that you would like to develop or expand? • What other organizations do you work with? • How is your program funded?
Needs/Challenges/ Opportunities	<p>What are the major barriers/challenges that face your organization?</p> <p>Are there any opportunities to expand your food and/or land-based programming to better serve your clients?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the gaps in programming you or someone else needs to fill? • What kinds of resources do you need? • What kinds of training do you need? • What kinds of information do you need? • What kind of questions do you need answered? • What policies (municipal, provincial, federal) impact the work within your organization?

Indigenous Circle	What purpose could the Indigenous Circle fulfill for your organization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the short- and long-term opportunities of the Indigenous Circle?• Who else needs to be part of the Indigenous Circle?• Would your organization be willing to take a more leadership role? If so, how?• Would your organization be interested in leading a particular initiative of the Circle? If so, what?
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Appendix C – IFC Member Meeting June 13, 2019: Priority Area Discussion Summary

This process was framed as enacting a process of learning by doing through the use of the Circle for members to share ideas. Members were asked to think of some priority actions for the IFC to focus on that would allow an opportunity to figure out what working together moving forward looks like. Everyone was given an opportunity to share what they feel would be priority areas; the specifics of what each person said can be found in the document Priority Action Notes June 13 (MB) in the IFC Members Meeting folder.

From what was shared, the following priority areas emerged, with networking and collaborating being an umbrella for the kind of work that the Circle is focused on:

Networking + Intergenerational Collaboration			
Food Access + Advocacy	Knowledge + Sharing	Cultural Safe Space	Settler Awareness + Training

Knowledge + Sharing (26 mentions)

- Collaboration/Network of Information sharing/support (5)
 - Info to include knowledge, partnerships, traditional teachers
 - Proactive, how do we keep track of success?
 - Learning and sharing together, Indigenous and settlers
 - Safe space for collaboration like this, addressing what's going well (2)
 - Organizations being able to support cultural coming together at a community level
 - Dismantling racism within the food system in Thunder Bay
- Traditional Teachings (food, culture) (6)
 - Learning/Sharing Knowledge about Traditional Food (harvesting, processing, preserving)(2)
 - How to cook traditional foods
 - In school food environments
 - Culture of Indigenous people, related to food, land, water
- Tools/Resources (5)
 - Traditional foods + medicines (for orgs & clients) (2)
 - Specific Indigenous food sovereignty resources (library working on this)
 - Food resource database (2)
- Food Sovereignty + Self-Determination (3)

- Reframe how we think about public and urban spaces for Indigenous food sovereignty
- More resources needed on this
- Self-government... ex. of community food chest (Marlene)
- Sustainability of the land (2)
 - This effects Indigenous peoples' ability to harvest traditional foods
- Other (5)
 - Indigenous certifications
 - Reclaiming culture and identity
 - Promoting a new form of "food economy" (people make, harvest, preserve, and share food freely, no monetary exchange... example of self-government (Marlene)
 - Regional food supply change development
 - Food + Economic Development

Food Access + Advocacy (14 mentions)

- Food Access (7)
 - Understanding food access needs/barriers of clients (2)
 - Understanding food access needs/barriers of organizations
 - Financially accessible (2)
 - Traditional food access specifically, support in this (5)
 - Partnership with FWFN to support traditional food access
- Understand/analyze/question rules and regulations to push back (5)
 - Gene, Maryanne, Beau, Marilyn
 - Ivan can offer perspective from the system
 - Ex. Barriers to traditional food access, to harvesting, to eating, as well as things like regulations for having fires, etc.
 - Speaking truth to power
 - Need to collaborate on how to work around these regulations, getting creative to overcome barriers
- Risk management
- Reframe how we think about public and urban spaces for Indigenous food sovereignty

Cultural Safe Space (8 mentions)

- Need for a cultural safe space (6)
 - Accessible to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people
 - Promotes knowledge sharing for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people
 - That also has physical infrastructure for outdoor cooking
- Public, urban space for food sovereignty
- Libraries as learning hubs

Settler Awareness + Training (7 mentions)

- Anti-oppression work/training (2)
- Culturally safe trainings
- Dismantling racism within the food system in Thunder Bay
- Breaking barriers between people and cultures, awareness (3)

Breakout Group Discussions

Breakout group discussions were held for the top three priority areas: Knowledge + Sharing; Food Access + Advocacy; and Cultural Safe Space. Groups were asked to discuss “What doe action for this focus area look like on the ground?” and “How should the IFC go about doing this work in a good way?”. Majority of groups only addressed the first question.

Knowledge + Sharing

- IFC resources
 - Share with library
- Something about collaboration, legislation
- Members in the Disucssion:
 - Lana Ray (IFC)
 - Gene Nowegejick (Elder)

Food Access + Advocacy

- This group really focused on the barriers to food access in organizations, specifically around legislation and traditional food. Discussion points:
 - Challenge regulations with the Health Unit
 - Understand liability
 - Learn navigation strategies to overcome barriers, logistics, application process
 - Understand what the specific food access needs/barriers are of members organizations and community members
 - The need for a Coordinators of Traditional Foods within agencies... this as a part of service delivery, would help with access if someone’s job was to focus on coordinating healthy, culturally appropriate food for programming and it wasn’t a haphazard part of everyone’s job
 - Collect information regarding the government structures/regulations to understand what the barriers are from the system
 - Determine how to work through barriers... can some be done? Which ones need subversion and how can the IFC provide a new legislative infrastructure for the government to follow the lead on
- Action Steps:
 - Ivan & Karen said they could look into the systemic barriers, the processes behind this

- Would be important to talk to Kathy Loon/bring her to Thunder Bay to glean knowledge re: the process of incorporating traditional food into institutions (policies, loops, etc.).... Help to build on an understanding of what it was like to navigate pushing back against that system; Ivan said he could make that connection
- Courtney can look through the needs assessments to bring back information specifically about organization food access needs
- Need to bring more community members into the circle to be able to get information about food access (and other topics) from that perspective... also intergenerational input needed
- Members in the Discussion:
 - Katie + Maryanne (Beendigen)
 - Katie (Shelter House)
 - Gwen (NWOWC)
 - Kelsie (TBIFC)
 - Ivan (TBDHU)
 - Karen (TBAFS)
 - Courtney (IFC)

Cultural Safe Space

- Setting principles for organizations to follow and adhere to
- Wake the Giant/Rainbow Flag as examples of this in public spaces
 - Brings up the question what are the organizations actually doing to back this up in action (deep work)
 - Related training for organizations and their staff
- Invest and support in a cultural safe space
- Support organizations and committee's currently conducting this work; Lakehead Food Sov Committee.
- Circle of security – making space (s) accessible
- Learning by doing:
 - Using circle principles
 - Doing the work ourselves
 - What could we be doing if...
 - Baby steps
 - Building relationships with organizations and asking for feedback
 - Dignity for people – doing
 - Training
- Members in the Discussion:
 - Jessica McLaughlin (IFC)
 - Erin Beagle (R2H)
 - Jennifer Bean (Mushkiki)
 - Catherine Larsen (Mushkiki)