

Information and Activity Report

Cape Breton Regional Enterprise Network – Inverness County

Q3 – 2025/26
(October – December 2025)

Subject: CB REN Information and Activity Report

To: Municipality of Inverness County

Date Prepared: January 15, 2026

Prepared by: Lynne MacLennan, Economic Development Officer, Inverness County

Background:

The Cape Breton Partnership provides economic development support to the Municipality of Inverness County under the Regional Enterprise Network (REN) model in partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia.



The Cape Breton Regional Enterprise Network (CB REN) includes the Municipalities of the Counties of Inverness, Richmond, and Victoria, the Town of Port Hawkesbury, as well as the First Nations communities of We'koqma'q, Wagmatcook, Eskasoni and Membertou.

The CB REN is part of a larger network of Regional Enterprise Networks across Nova Scotia.

The Cape Breton Partnership maximizes the value of the CB REN's funding partners, leverages that investment to have a greater impact, and collaborates with other partners, funders, and projects that it is responsible for (like the Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership) to deliver operational synergies across Unama'ki – Cape Breton and to benefit the Municipality of Inverness County.

2025/26 CB REN Board:

- **Co-Chair** - Jen Ryan, Quincy Street Market
- **Co-Chair** - Adam Bateman, Business Development Bank of Canada
- Pearlene Cormier, East Coast Credit Union
- Capt. Vivek Saxena, NSCC Strait Area Campus
- Kelsea MacNeil, Membertou Corporate
- Gioia Usher, We'koqma'q Corporate
- Daniel Lee, Port Hawkesbury Paper
- Lee Fraser, Live Life in Tents

2025/26 CB REN Liaison Oversight Committee:

- **Chair** - Keith MacDonald, CAO, Municipality of the County of Inverness
- Warden Bonny MacIsaac, Municipality of the County of Inverness
- Warden Lois Landry, Municipality of the County of Richmond
- Troy MacCulloch, CAO, Municipality of the County of Richmond
- Mayor Brenda Chisholm-Beaton, Town of Port Hawkesbury
- Terry Doyle, CAO, Town of Port Hawkesbury
- Chief Terry Paul, Membertou First Nation
- Jennifer Deleskie, Membertou First Nation
- Warden Jackie Organ, Municipality of Victoria County
- Leanne MacEachen, CAO, Municipality of Victoria County
- Chief Norman Bernard, Wagmatcook First Nation
- Donald Hanson, CEO, Wagmatcook First Nation
- Chief John Leonard Bernard, We'koqma'q First Nation
- Gioia Usher, CEO, We'koqma'q First Nation
- Chief Leroy Denny, Eskasoni First Nation
- Steve Parsons, CEO Eskasoni Corporate, Eskasoni First Nation
- Evan Williams, Nova Scotia Department of Growth and Development
- Donald Ferguson, Nova Scotia Department of Labour, Skills & Immigration

Reporting Period:

Your CB REN team and the Cape Breton Partnership are pleased to share highlights, milestones achieved, and metrics from **October 1 to December 31, 2025**.

CB REN Board and LOC Meetings:

- **2025 AGM** – The CB REN held its annual AGM virtually on August 19.
- **Board Meetings**
 - Last Board Meeting: October 21, 2025 (Virtual and Inverary Inn, Baddeck)
 - Next Board Meeting: January 28, 2026 (Virtual and Inverness or Victoria County)
- **LOC Meetings**
 - Last LOC Meeting: November 21, 2025 (Municipality of Inverness County, Port Hood)
 - Next LOC Meeting: April 22, 2026 (Location TBD)

Highlights & Events:

- **Cape Breton Partnership Investor Summit** – The 2025 Investor Summit was an inspiring day filled with collaboration, innovation, and local pride. More than 230 business leaders came together to share ideas, make connections, and celebrate the people shaping the future of Unama’ki – Cape Breton. The Disruptors’ Panel, moderated by Inverness County’s Economic Development Officer, included Andre Bourgeois who provided an overview of new developments underway in the Cheticamp area, such as Table Doucet, La Pointe, and Le Cap Resort. In addition, Inverness County’s Healthcare Navigator delivered the Morning Energizer, which focused on the importance of welcoming newcomers and building community.
- **Federal Budget Outlook** – The Cape Breton Partnership hosted a Business & Breakfast session on November 19 in Port Hawkesbury, which provided an overview of the newly announced federal budget. The session, emceed by Inverness County’s Economic Development Officer, allowed business owners to gain practical insights about new tax policies and incentives, which could affect operations, planning, and growth strategies in the coming year. Several Inverness County businesses representatives attended the event, asking pertinent questions and participating in discussions with the 50+ attendees.
- **Safety in the Strait – The Evolution of Safety** - The Cape Breton Partnership, in collaboration with the Safety First in Cape Breton Network, the Nova Scotia Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, and WCB Nova Scotia hosted a Learn at Breakfast event in Port Hawkesbury on November 28. The session focused on the importance of strengthening a workplace safety culture across Unama’ki – Cape Breton.
- **Elisk+Nweyek - Weaving Together** - The Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership (CBLIP) hosted its sixth annual partner update event, *Elisk+Nweyek – Weaving Together*, on December 12 at the Membertou Trade and Convention Centre and online. Updates on the CBLIP’s work were provided to partner organizations that provide support to newcomers across the island. Reflections from Mi’kmaq,

newcomer and service provider perspectives were also shared through storytelling, dialogue, and hands-on activities.

Project Updates - Local Economic Development Initiatives:

- **Elevate the Cape Conference** – Your Economic Development Officer attended this tourism conference, hosted by Destination Cape Breton and Cape Breton University in Baddeck on November 26. The event provided an opportunity to connect with tourism operators and industry experts, with a focus on growing and elevating the tourism experience across Cape Breton Island.
- **Lake Shore Living Video** – The Cape Breton Partnership released its *Reel Impact Video Series* at the 2025 Investor Summit, highlighting local businesses across Unama’ki – Cape Breton making a big impact. Included in the series is a video featuring Lake Ainslie’s Lake Shore Living. Founded in 2023, the company designs and builds energy-efficient modular homes. To discover how Lakeshore Living is shaping the future of housing in Cape Breton check out their [Reel Impact Story - Lake Shore Living](#).
- **Business and Entrepreneur Supports** – Your Economic Development Officer and CB REN team members continue to provide customized and individualized support and advice to small and medium sized businesses and exploring entrepreneurs across Inverness County. The CB REN team is also available to support and guide individuals considering Inverness County as a place to invest and to do business.

Project Updates – Creative Economy:

- **Cape Breton Creative Awards** – The Cape Breton Partnership and Cape Breton University hosted the 2025 Cape Breton Creative Arts Awards November 6. The awards honour artists, educators, and community leaders who are shaping the Island’s cultural landscape. Inverness County was well represented during the ceremony with the following winners being recognized:

Builder Award: Betty Ann Cormier, Chéticamp

A fourth-generation rug hooker, Betty Ann Cormier has dedicated her life to preserving and re-imagining Acadian craft traditions. Her workshops and online classes bridge generations, transforming rug hooking into a living form of community connection.

Father Donald Campbell Founder Award: Carole Chisholm, Mabou

Educator and cultural leader Carole Chisholm has built a lifelong legacy of creativity and learning. Her classrooms at Mabou Consolidated School were alive with music, theatre and local pride. Beyond education, Chisholm played a central role in the creation of Strathespey Place, establishing a lasting home for performance and community in Inverness County.

Sons of Membertou Educator Award (co-recipient): Margie Beaton, Mabou

Margie Beaton, a lifelong champion of Gaelic culture, was recognized for her leadership in education and heritage preservation. Through her work with the Mabou Gaelic & Historical Society and An Drochaid

Museum, Beaton has nurtured generations of learners, helping secure Gaelic's place in Nova Scotia's education system and cultural identity.

- **Film & Television** – Creative Economy Development Officer, Bill Culp, continues to work with film and television producers, promoting Cape Breton as location for upcoming productions. Currently producers of two feature films and one television series are interested in shooting principal photography in Inverness County this year.
- **Music Documentary** – The Creative Economy Development Officer hosted a live music and film-screening event for *The Piano Tuner*, a new Cape Breton jazz music documentary. The screening took place on December 6 at the Inverness County Centre for the Arts.

Project Updates – Green Energy Engagement Program:

- **Marine Renewables Conference** – The Green Energy Engagement Coordinator, Jenn MacNeil, attended the 2025 Marine Renewables Canada Conference in Halifax from November 12-14, with over 700 attendees. The conference highlighted the importance of clear policy, streamlined permitting, grid readiness and offtake. Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston and the federal Minister responsible for ACOA, Sean Fraser, both emphasized government commitments to create enabling conditions for private investment. Discussions also took place about supply chain gaps, workforce development needs, port capacity, and the importance of meaningful Indigenous participation.
- **Green Energy Engagement Activities** – The Green Energy Engagement Coordinator gave a presentation to Indigenous Youth at the CEPI/UINR Sustainable Futures Youth Forum in Membertou, with a focus on how the Green Energy Engagement Program has been undertaking engagement with communities about offshore wind energy. The event included a panel discussion with the Green Energy engagement Coordinator, Efficiency Nova Scotia, and Cape Breton University. Jenn MacNeil also participated in a Jenn MacNeil also participated in a Community of Practice with the NS Department of Energy, Net Zero Atlantic (NZA), COVE, Discovery Centre, Atlantica Centre for Energy, and Skills NS, to discuss engagement efforts related to the energy transition across Nova Scotia.

Project Updates – People and Labour Market Team

- **Immigration Access+** – This newly launched program is the Cape Breton Partnership's immigration representation option, available exclusively to Investors of the Cape Breton Partnership. The program offers a deeper level of support, including full application preparation and submission, delivered by one of the Cape Breton Partnership's licensed Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultants (RCIC). This service is ideal for employers and entrepreneurs who need hands-on, start-to-finish immigration assistance. Through this service, Investors receive personalized guidance on selecting the most appropriate immigration stream, verifying eligibility, and managing every step of the application process.

- **Cape Breton Connector and Welcome Network Program** - Coffee & Connect events, hosted in partnership with the Municipality of Inverness County, took place bringing together newcomers, volunteers, professionals, the municipality's Healthcare Navigator, and Immigration Francophone de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

Cape Breton Connector Program Coordinator, Sumayya Mulasery, participated in the Career & Service Fair at Cape Breton Highlands Academy, providing students with information about vocational skills and apprenticeship pathways.

An *Around the World in One Kitchen* event also took place at Le Centre de la Mi-Carême featuring stories, dance and food provided by newcomers to Inverness County from Columbia and Peru.

- **Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership (CBLIP) Updates** - The CBLIP implemented and moved forward with a number of initiatives, including the finalization, design, and printing of the new CBLIP Theory of Change, as well as a Year in Review document, which can be found here: [CBLIP 2025 Year in Review](#).

CBLIP representatives attended the Pathways to Prosperity National Conference in Halifax, leading and participating in workshops on topics including reconciliation in Mi'kma'ki, the CBLIP's work in Mi'kmaw-newcomer relationship building, collaborative strategies in LIP evaluation, and building connection between Francophone and Anglophone service providers.

- **Cape Breton Job Board** - Due to an analytics display error on the Cape Breton Job Board, we are unable to report the number of jobs posted this quarter. In total, 48 Inverness County employers currently have active accounts on the CB Job Board.

Upcoming Events and Activities:

- **Regional Enterprise Network Provincial Conference** – The Cape Breton Partnership is currently planning the annual provincial REN conference, which will be hosted by the CBRM REN this spring.

Additional Information:



CB REN Website: Additional Information on the CB REN can be found on the CB REN webpage: <https://capebretonpartnership.com/initiative/cape-breton-regional-enterprise-network/>



Welcome to Cape Breton Website: Additional Information on Living, Working, Investing, Studying and Moving to Inverness County - including community profiles and economic data - can be found on the Welcome to Cape Breton website:

<https://welcometocapebreton.ca/invest/invest-in-cape-breton-unamaki/cape-breton-unamaki-community-profiles/>



News and Updates – Elevate Magazine, and articles from Pulse Newsletter, new podcasts, news releases and more can be found on our website here:

<https://capebretonpartnership.com/cbp-news/>

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Respectfully submitted by:

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Addendum I – CB REN Inverness County Metrics

Activities	Q3 Metrics <i>Q3 October 1 – December 31, 2025</i>		YTD <i>Since April 1</i>
	In Progress	Completed	Total Completed
Business Support, Sustainability, & Growth	Total: 16	Total: 15	Total: 59
Business Insights Interviews		2	7
Business Advisory & Continuous Improvement Services	4	3	7
Business Quick Support		10	26
Succession Planning & Support	2	0	0
New Businesses & Entrepreneur Support	9	0	10
Microloan Participants	1	0	2
Other Business Support Services	0	0	7

Major Projects & Strategic Sector Support	Total: 20	Total: 3	Total: 11
Sector Development Projects	7	2	2
Economic Development Projects	13	1	9

Addressing Talent Needs (Labour & Population)	Total: 0	Total: 18	Total: 40
Projects Assessing Local Labour Market	0	0	0
Cape Breton Job Board Advertisements		0	6
Immigration Advisory Services	0	8	14
Immigration Applications Submitted	0	4	8
Business Immigration Quick Support		6	12

Newcomer & Talent Retention Programs	Total: 2	Total: 11	Total: 256
Connector Program Matches	1	3	8
Newcomers Welcomed Through the Welcome Network	1	7	16
Local Immigration Partnership Members		0	217
Events Aimed at Talent Attraction & Retention		1	15
Other Activities Addressing Talent Needs	0	0	0

- *Notes on Addendum 1 are on the following page*

Notes on Addendum 1:

- *The data provided is sourced from our Insightly CRM software, representing each business advisory with a file. However, our actual engagement with the business community is more broad, encompassing various supports like brief consultations and connections not always recorded in routine work.*
- *At times, CB REN Inverness County Metrics may be less complete than normal due to the schedule of data availability not matching the schedule of council meeting calendars, and CB REN Staff's ability to input data prior to quarterly report production. If this is the case, year to date data in following quarterly reports will be adjusted to ensure accuracy.*
- *For the first half of 2026, two factors will affect the availability, accuracy, and format of metrics in Addendum 1 as we work to improve our service to Inverness County:*
 - **CRM Upgrade:** The Cape Breton Partnership is transitioning from Insightly CRM to Monday CRM to improve operational effectiveness, accuracy, and workflow. During this time, some of the metrics may not be available until a new reporting matrix is created in Monday.
 - **Internal Process Strengthening:** The Partnership is working with Brad Jacobs of Charity Coach, who is on contracted as a fractional COO until early summer 2026. Brad is helping the partnership strengthen its internal capacity, focus our mission, mandate and activities, and better organize the Partnership's many services for the benefit of our partners. The continuation of this work, started in June of 2025, will have a positive impact on the work we deliver to Inverness County, as well as the way we measure the work we deliver to Inverness County.