



Strategic Action Plan 2026-2029

“By the North. In the North. For the North.”

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Prepared by Inga Petri, Strategic Moves

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Our Context

The North needs strong, credible, community-rooted structures that reflect northern realities and northern leadership. imagiNorthern has been built gradually over the last six years through conversations, strategic visioning, community engagement, and partnership. What started as a COVID response to ensure artists survive the pandemic, has turned into a growing regional network that has been acting as the fuel that strengthens arts and cultural workers, organizations and the sector at large.

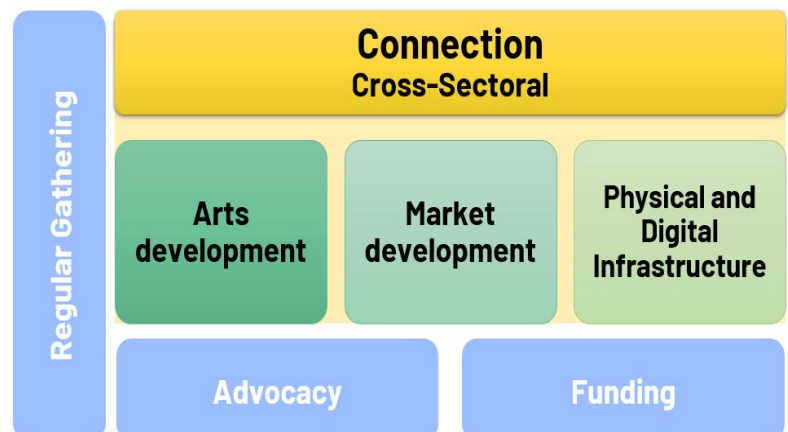
In 2022, imagiNorthern commissioned Strategic Moves to undertake a benchmark study on the *Artists and Arts Organizations in Northern Manitoba in 2022*. This study continues to be used to make the case to invest in and strengthen the arts and cultural sector in the North. Through three annual gatherings, the *Northern Arts and Food Workshop*, hosted by the University College of the North (UCN) in Flin Flon (2023), The Pas (2024), and Thomspon (2025), it has helped strengthen relationships, advance shared regional strategy, and build momentum for a more connected northern arts and cultural sector.

Over the course of these gatherings, participants developed the *Northern Manitoba Arts and Cultural Industries Strategy: Building Strong Communities and Diversified Economy*. This Strategy lies at the heart of the work of the imagiNorthern network and its partners.

Strategy-at-a-Glance

Building an inclusive and thriving arts and cultural sector means we are connected to each other, we share knowledge and resources, we nurture arts development through training for artists, food and cultural workers, we develop markets that can support the livelihood of artists, makers and producers, and we gain access to or build the digital and physical infrastructure we need to pursue our work across the North. The three underlying mechanisms required to realize this Strategy are:

1. Regular gatherings, and conferences and exchanges
2. Focused advocacy to elevate these sectors in the eyes of funders and governments.
3. Sufficient base funding for Northern Manitoban organizations and initiatives to implement this Strategy.



imagiNorthern has grown as a regional network that connects artists, cultural workers, organizations, makers, and communities across Northern Manitoba and, increasingly, in Saskatchewan. It has been supporting local and regional initiatives from the Northern Central Canada Centre for the Arts and Environment (NCCCCAE), a creative hub in Churchill, the Mall of the Arts in Thompson, and the Uptown Emporium eCommerce platform among others.

The recent governance process culminating in the 2026 imagiNorthern Governance Summit confirmed broad community support for moving from an incubated initiative of the Flin Flon Arts Council to an independent organization with its own board, membership, and decision-making.

To accomplish this, the Summit ratified the imagiNorthern Governance and Decision-Making Model. Strategic Moves documented this model in a *Summit Proceedings Report* and developed a Transition Plan and milestones as well as a Recruitment Plan for the founding board.

Finally, as Canada renews its nation-building agenda through investments in northern sovereignty, trade corridors, and economic infrastructure—including continued federal and provincial support for the Port of Churchill and its wider economic corridor—Northern Manitoba is becoming more central to the country's future, not more peripheral. In that context, imagiNorthern positions arts, culture, and creative capacity as essential enabling infrastructure: helping Northern communities take advantage of new opportunities and shape growth on their own terms, strengthen local identity and resilience, and ensure development is rooted in people, place, and Northern and Indigenous leadership.

Last, but not least, there are two paid staff, the Project Manager and the Champions Coordinator who are expected to implement this plan in coordination with the Flin Flon Arts Council and eventually the founding board of the newly constituted imagiNorthern board. Their roles may shift, if needed, to suit the requirements of this Strategic Action Plan.

imagiNorthern's Mandate, Vision and Values

Our anchor: By the North, In the North. For the North.

Who We Are

imagiNorthern is a northern-led creative network rooted in the values, voices, and leadership of northern Manitoba communities, and increasingly, Saskatchewan. Our network includes artists, cultural workers, and food innovators as well as organizations and partners committed to revitalizing community life through creativity, entrepreneurship, and collaboration. Grounded in a holistic Indigenous worldview and community insight, our network is shaped by those who live and create here.

Mandate (Our purpose – what we are here to do)

To build and sustain a northern-led creative network that equips artists with the tools, spaces, and support they need to thrive—while growing local economies, strengthening cultural infrastructure, and amplifying northern stories across Canada and beyond.

Vision (long-term, generational)

A culturally rich and economically vibrant northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan where artists, makers, food producers and cultural leaders drive local development, connect communities, and share their voices with the world.

Values (how we behave)

- ❖ **Respect** – for the land, the water, the animals, plants and rocks and our connection with each other
- ❖ **Reciprocity** – to share and live in balance together
- ❖ **Responsibility** – our collective duty to care for the land, water, community and ensure the well-being of future generations
- ❖ **Relevance** – making knowledge, learning deeply meaningful and grounded in local communities needs and traditions
- ❖ **Relationships** – we are all interconnected and in community together
- ❖ **Inclusion** – we nurture belonging, connection to land, language, culture and value each other's gifts
- ❖ **Collaboration** – we value community-engaged leadership and shared decision-making

Strategic Action Plan 2026-2029

This imagiNorthern *Strategic Action Plan* implements the community-developed *Northern Manitoba Arts and Cultural Sectors Strategy* (updated in 2025), while also establishing an independent organization.

During 2026 imagiNorthern will transition from an incubated initiative into an incorporated, community-governed network capable of stewarding public funds, hiring regional staff, and providing sustained leadership. Incorporation is the necessary mechanism that enables accountability, legitimacy, and scaling up. At the same time, regional Champions continue to activate the strategy on the ground—strengthening local capacity, facilitating training, supporting infrastructure projects, and building measurable local and regional impact.

From 2027 to 2029, imagiNorthern grows and accelerates its impact. With its own governance stabilized and regional coordination functioning, its focus turns to market development, professionalization support for artists and makers, infrastructure alignment, diversified funding, and advocacy. Importantly, the aim is not to centralize activity, but to reduce friction across communities, strengthen cross-sector connections, and amplify Northern voices in provincial, national, and international markets.

This Strategic Action Plan positions imagiNorthern as the enabling backbone of the Northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan creative ecosystem—community-led, Indigenous-aligned, and regionally accountable. By strengthening governance, activating Champions, and coordinating partnerships, imagiNorthern will help ensure that the arts and cultural industries are not peripheral activities, but essential contributors to the North's economic opportunities, cultural vitality, and long-term prosperity.

Our Mission (short and mid-term, within 3 to 5 years)

1. To constitute imagiNorthern as an independent organization with community-created governance and decision-making.
2. To secure the financial and human resources to build the imagiNorthern network.
3. To implement the *Northern Manitoba Arts and Cultural Industries Strategy*.

Priority 1: Incorporation and Governance (2026)

The detailed *Transition Plan and Timeline for Incorporation*, dated March 11, 2026 includes the following milestones:

By March 31, 2026 — Establish the transition leadership group and confirm the interim operating and fiduciary arrangement with Flin Flon Arts Council.

By April 24, 2026 — Recruit, screen, and confirm the founding board of directors.

By May 15, 2026 — Finalize the incorporation package, including articles, bylaws, and initial governance documents.

By July 17, 2026 — Complete the founding membership campaign and establish a meaningful pre-incorporation membership base across the North.

By August 14, 2026 — File for federal incorporation under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act.

By August 31, 2026 — Hold the first official meeting of directors and formally establish the corporation for operations beginning September 1.

September 2026 — Complete provincial registrations. Convert founding sign-ups into official members and begin to prepare for the first AGM or member meeting.

By October 31, 2026 — Finalize and activate the transition from FFAC fiduciary oversight to imagiNorthern's independent operational structure.

The full detail, including who should sit on the Transition team, is presented in the *Transition Plan*.

Success Indicators

- Founding Board established.
- Legal incorporation and registration completed.
- Active member registry established.
- Board meeting schedule and reporting structure in place.
- Clear separation between governance and operations.

Priority 2: Financial and Human Resources to Build the Network

FFAC has funding in place to hire regional Champions and to pay them until March 2027. While the federal portion is provided by Canada Council for the Arts, there is a need to find provincial support to match.

2.1 Human Resources (2026)

- March: Confirm number of champions that can be hired under current funding; ensure continuity with the coordinators hired until March 2026 to deliver the Northern Arts and Food Project via Creative Manitoba project funding.

- Establish the regions/communities for which they are responsible based on their existing relationships, family connections across Indigenous communities, and knowledge of local communities and customs.
 - Consider the champions as a group as a whole, not only as individuals
- In March / April: Hire/confirm Champions under FFAC fiduciary structure; use the hiring committee structure outlined in the *imagiNorthern Governance and Decision-Making Model*.
 - Define clear job descriptions aligned with Strategy priorities:
 - Cross-sector connection
 - Arts development facilitation
 - Market readiness support
 - Infrastructure mapping
- April: Launch monthly regional meet-ups (online and in-person).
- May: Implement lightweight *Creative Pulse* reporting.
- June: Begin publishing monthly or quarterly (depending on content) eNewsletter; develop a content plan to highlight stories from across the region; report back on upcoming events and ongoing activities via *Creative Pulse* reporting.
- Continuous activities:
 - Continue to update and expand regional asset mapping.
 - Promote the artist directory at Creative Manitoba website and help artists complete their profiles.
 - Coordinate at least 2 training initiatives per region; with other communities participating virtually in a hosted group.
 - Promote cross-sector collaboration (arts + food + tourism).
 - Monthly open invitation online meet-ups to work as a community of practice.
 - Collaborate and support the work of each champion, via regular online check-ins and working sessions.
 - Support the *Transition Plan and Timelines for Incorporation* as needed

Success Indicators

- Champions are active in defined regions.
- Champions share information with each other and report through *Creative Pulse* methodology
- # of participants in training and meet-ups.
- Active growth of artists listings on Creative Manitoba Artist directory

2.2 Funding (2026 – continuous)

- March: request the extension of the current funding from Canada Council for the Arts to March 2027.
- March: ask for meetings with Ministers in the Government of Manitoba to share information about the evolution of imagiNorthern and discuss options for multi-year financial support from the province.
- March/April: Develop clear 3-year financial projections based on ideal level of activity by champions, travel budget, staff salaries, governance costs, book keeping, accounting/audit and legal
- April to December: Prepare funding proposals for federal, provincial governments to support the work of imagiNorthern.
 - Collaborate closely with the FFAC and the City of Flin Flon in terms of the NCCCAE, to develop joint asks whenever possible.
 - Collaborate with other organizations as opportunities arise to develop joint proposals, or support local organizations prepare their proposals
- June to December: Look for additional funding sources, and consider options for earned revenue streams
 - Consider delivery of funded projects for partners, such as Creative Manitoba, UCN, Manitoba Arts Network and others
- Continuous: ensure annual funding and reporting cycles are effectively managed with on time submission of proposals and reports.

Success Indicators

- 3-year financial projection
- Initiated and ongoing follow up with two high potential funders
- Identified all relevant funding program options
- Prepared and submitted funding proposals to higher potential funding programs

Priority 3: Implement the Northern Manitoba Arts and Cultural Industries Strategy

3.1 Communications (2026 - immediate priorities to establish)

- Comprehensive update of the imagiNorthern website, clean up navigation structure, create one new section (About Us) for the governance work, and consolidate all relevant content there.
 - o Continuously update the website with relevant events, workshops, activities, partners events and activities
 - o Create a “Become a member” page on the site to outline why join, and have a sign up form, integrate with eNews sign up.
 - o Create a page for Founding Board expression of interest under the governance section
 - o Create a page for job postings (jobs)
- Get a free MailChimp account, if not done yet.
 - o Add the emails from all the gatherings, and workshops to the email list and send a welcome message
 - o Grow the email list / enews – have an eNews sign up on the website and Facebook to go directly into the mailChimp email engine; invite people in real life to sign up to get the latest news and events information.
- Social Media – Facebook posts to amplify the work of imagiNorthern and build a community pf practice
 - o Grow the social community

Success Indicators

- Growth of eNews list
 - o active members = open rates; highly engaged members = click through rates
- Growth of Social Media followers and engagement

3.2 Cross-Sectoral Connections (2026 – ongoing)

Northern Manitoba has many individuals and organizations that work in several roles and sectors at once. Artists are also municipal administrators, arts administrators are also food entrepreneurs, videographers and film makers are also musicians, retail spaces are also places for arts workshops. Given that remoteness generates similar challenges across the arts, creative, cultural and agri-food sectors, ideally connections and solutions are shared across these sectors. That cross-sectorial approach must be inclusive of not-for-profit organizations, businesses, social enterprise, municipal and Indigenous governments.

There must be an emphasis on continuing to develop and nurture relationships with Indigenous organizations, groups and individuals from all Northern Manitoba First Nations as well as Métis and Inuit communities.

The staff and regional champions will actively and continuously build relationships and:

- Partner with Indigenous artists, elders and knowledge keepers to reach indigenous communities more effectively and collaborate effectively.
- Partner with Creative Manitoba to continue to update the Cultural Resource Mapping project and the Northern Manitoba Artists Directory.
- Identify community needs and develop access to needed resources in communities across Northern Manitoba.
- Provide direct support where it is needed to help local projects succeed

3.3 Arts Development: Skills and Knowledge (2026 – ongoing)

- Build capacity for sustained training and professional development of artist's practices including encouraging inter-generational teaching and learning by doing.
- Deliver or coordinate training to be delivered from qualified providers, partnering with ImagiNorthern, UCN, Creative Manitoba, Food and Beverage Manitoba, Indigenous governments and community organizations and more, including *Managing Your Arts Career*, and *Getting Export Market Ready*.
- Engage full range of local institutions, from museums to libraries and education, in arts and creative development; this can include, based on local interests:
 - Work with municipalities and First Nations government to develop arts and cultural plans and policies.
 - Help develop multi-cultural celebrations that resonate with increasingly diverse populations and are inclusive of art, music, food.
 - Help develop youth-engaged arts and creative programs including in schools.
 - Establish community theatre program

3.4 Advocacy (2026 – ongoing)

- In 2026, develop an advocacy plan and local implementations to champion the role of arts and culture in every community.
 - Champion the creation of funded cultural plans or policies at all levels of government.
 - Make the case for supporting adequately paid staff positions in arts organizations.
 - Promote fair pay for artists, artists re-sale rights and intellectual property protections.

- Encourage creation of an intersectoral Northern funding table to discuss and put in place mechanisms to support the broader goals and specific initiatives in Northern Manitoba.
- Continuously: Promote diversified economies in the region and in local communities with primary industries mixed with arts, culture, and tourism.

3.5 Annual Gathering – 2027 and beyond (2026)

- By summer 2026: Connecting to the outcomes of the first three annual Northern Arts Workshops in Flin Flon, The Pas and Thompson, and the Governance Summit in Flin Flon in 2026, imagiNorthern will work with key partners (UCN, Creative Manitoba, Manitoba Arts Network, Travel Manitoba and so on) to:
 - Establish a partnership to organize and finance the annual Regional Gathering in winter/spring 2027.
 - Decide where the gathering will be held
 - Ensure continuity and learnings from the initial series of gatherings are carried forward.
 - Maintain free registration to the gathering including food, child-minding and elder care services, and secure travel subsidies.
 - Develop the program for the Gathering to include network development and relationship building as well as knowledge transfer and learning opportunities.
 - Maintain and update terms of reference for the Local Host Committee to work on local arts and cultural activities in concert with the conference organizing committee.
- Establish the Annual Gathering locations for 2028 and 2029
 - Establish a local host committee and work with them closely.

3.6 Funding Support (2026)

- Create and update a listing of services, resources, and funding that artists or makers and arts or cultural and food entrepreneurs can access.

3.7 A) Infrastructure Development (2026)

- Actively support and promote built arts and cultural infrastructure initiatives in Flin Flon, Churchill, Thompson and The Pas, as well as other communities that come forward.
- Take an active support role in the Northern Central Canada Centre for Arts and Environment (NCCCAE) infrastructure development and develop a long-term partnership with the NCCCAE to achieve the shared goal of strengthening the arts and culture sectors in the North.

- Examine underutilized existing infrastructure in local communities across the North that may be available or suitable for artistic or creative production or community use in general; use pilot projects to develop proof of concepts as needed.
- Identify other infrastructure-related needs assessments or feasibility studies for major developments, and secure funding for this work.
- Continue to develop and vigorously market the Uptown Emporium's eCommerce website to audiences outside Northern Manitoba.

3.7 B) Infrastructure Development (2027-2029)

- Develop mechanisms that can be shared across communities to support artist residencies, connecting communities with professional artists.
- Develop viable spaces for sustainable artist residencies programs and for creative production and dissemination.
- Other types of infrastructure are needed to support artists and other independent cultural workers, such as a Healthcare Co-op/ Artists Group Plan for artists / makers / cultural workers to provide an alternative to private health plans.

3.8 Market Development (2027-2029)

- Collaborations among arts, creative, cultural organizations, and food entrepreneurs on market access and increased connectivity to Southern Manitoba, across Canada and the world – i.e. bring the North to the world – in partnership with provincial organizations such as Creative Manitoba, Food and Beverage Manitoba and the Manitoba Arts Network.
- Build a robust community-based cultural tourism program for Northern Manitoba, i.e. bring the world to the North.
- Ensure understanding of current artists rights regimes and changes needed, such as artists re-sale rights and support those legislative efforts nationally (CARFAC)
- Explore establishing a collaborative brand (e.g. *Authentic Northern Manitoba*) and marketing program to better reach export markets outside of Northern Manitoba.
- Run workshops and mentoring on pricing one's art, performances, and other creative and cultural products and marketing them effectively in various target markets.
- Collect and share legal information about exports of art and food product, Indigenous products.
- Begin implementation of the existing export marketing plan for Germany and expand to other markets as export growth permits.
- Develop a strategic partnership with Export Canada, Trade Commissioner Service to support the export market plan.

Success Indicators

The Creative Pulse reporting on a monthly, quarterly, annual basis