



POPLAR RIVER FIRST NATION: Negginan Food Producers Co-op

Community members in Poplar River First Nation have been actively exploring local food production options over the last five years. The community has a strong fishing industry and people are used to wild foods and fish. In 2012, the Health Centre focused their efforts on increasing gardening in the community and raising chickens. This work was supported by Leon Simard, First Nations Food Security Coordinator. Good food is hard to access in remote communities like Poplar River, and people want to learn more and do more about producing their own foods.

Since that time the Health Centre has steadily developed this work and now has a one acre garden site and a large community greenhouse that is 70 feet long and 20 feet wide. The grand opening of the Poplar River Greenhouse happened in summer of 2016. Everyone came out to see it including school children, RCMP, Chief and Council, Health Centre staff and lots of community members. It was the first year of operations for the greenhouse and people were learning what to do and how to grow things in a greenhouse. There was an interest in producing bedding plants for local beautification and vegetables for food.

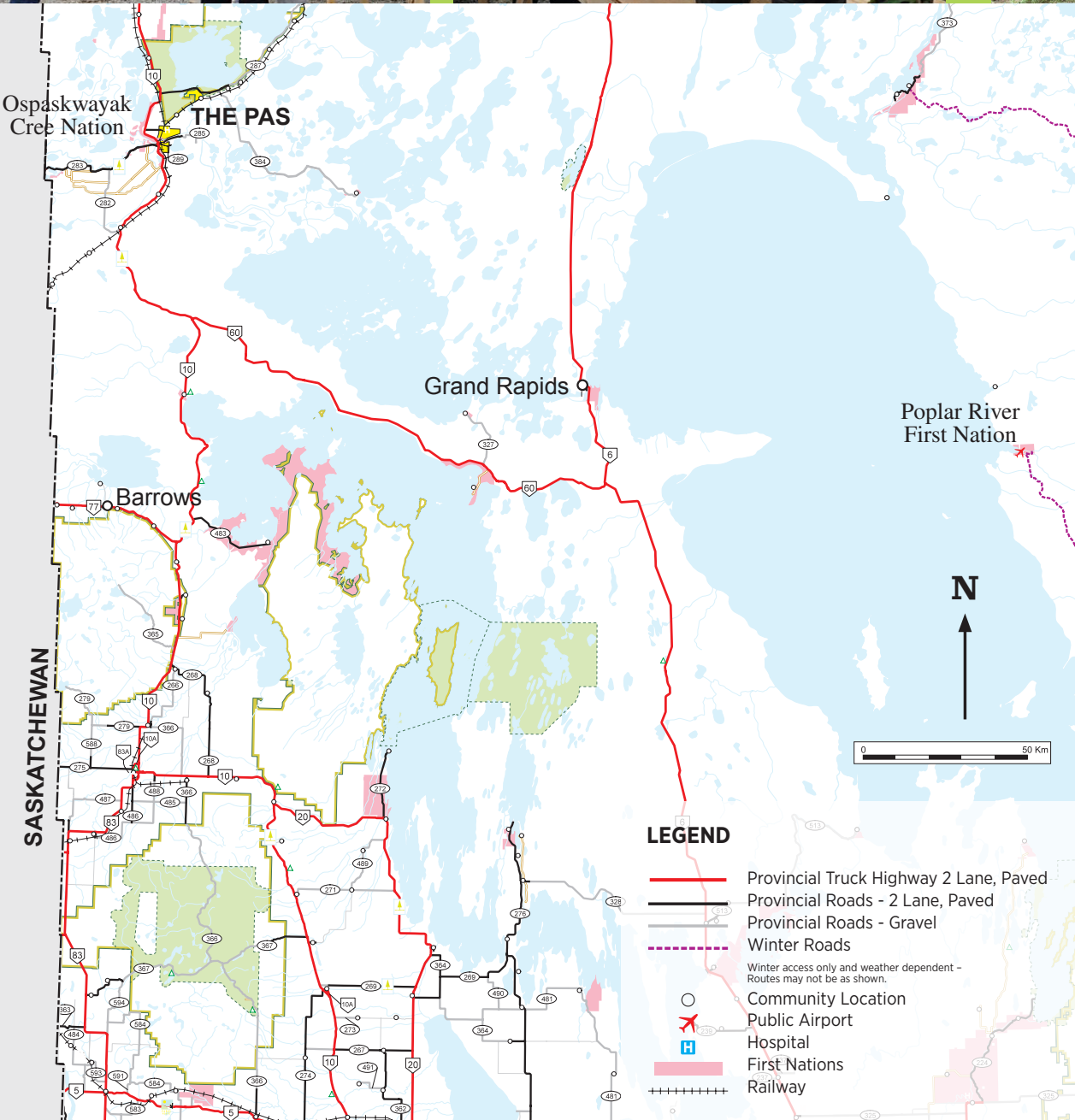
Greenhouse and garden staff are managed by the Health Centre. This year the school is going to get more involved.

In the fall of 2016 there was some vandalism to the greenhouse, but the young people responsible were identified and there have been conversations about not damaging things that are important to the community. “You could tell that this is an important place for us as a community because when it was vandalized everyone was upset. I think we have to keep trying and fixing it up,” said Sophia Rabliauskas, community member. “Our long term goal, after getting our community eating healthier and growing lots of our own foods, is to learn how to form a cooperative. We are interested in selling vegetables and sharing them around the area to other near by communities (Berens River, Little Grand Rapids and Pauingassi). This can only happen once we get good at our gardening and greenhouse operations and get enough people interested,” said Mary Bruce, Health Centre Director. In the coming seasons we are going to work more closely with the school. The school based portion of the project will provide children and youth with the opportunity

to develop skills in food production and gardening as well as food preparation and nutritional information.

Planned activities for 2017 include: repairing and using the greenhouse, installing new fencing around the greenhouse and garden/orchard area, providing employment for a garden/greenhouse coordinator, hooking up the vents and electrical heating in the greenhouse, providing training in greenhouse operation maintenance to staff and community members and providing training to community members in harvesting, drying, canning and freezing. Through these activities people will be incorporating fresh locally grown foods into their household meals and community events. The price of fresh vegetables will be cheaper and the school will have a program to instill pride and ownership in the existing facilities. We believe that in the future by developing curriculum materials and resources, all children attending school will have access to information, training and opportunities to grow and learn to enjoy healthy food grown in the community.





**NFMCCC
funding**

- ☒ 2016
- ☒ 2017

> OBJECTIVES

To increase access to affordable and locally grown organic food options, to use greenhouse technology to extend the growing season and to recruit community members to be active in learning.

> LOCATION

Poplar River First Nation is located on the east shores of Lake Winnipeg. It is a fly-in community with winter road access. Poplar River is home to approximately 1,700 people.

> PHOTO DETAILS

[1] Youth at greenhouse grand opening. [2] Youth watering plants in the garden. [3] [4] Community members checking out the plant selection in the greenhouse. [5] Youth with flower pots. [6] Outside the greenhouse. [7] Youth tending to the garden. [8] Repotting plants in the greenhouse.

Photos by Leon Simard.

