

Leaf Rapids Horticultural Centre

Location **Leaf Rapids** is a post-mining town. In 2002, when the mine closed, it had 2,000 people and now has about 450 people. It is accessible by all-weather roads. The population has Metis, First Nation and settler people.

Objective To empower youth through gardening to share healthy living practices, increase food security and address chronic health conditions; to be a hub of sharing and learning on gardening and green house techniques for northern Manitoba communities

Leaf Rapids Horticultural Centre, supported by Frontier School Division, is a northern horticulture training and testing centre. It includes two greenhouses, a seed-saving room and the Churchill River Nursery. In 2015 the focus was to engage University of Manitoba students and local youth to volunteer in gardens and greenhouses while redesigning the program.

Successes

- Two students from the U of M Service Learning Program, affectionately known as the ‘garden girls’, managed greenhouses and planted seeds in the Churchill River Nursery.
- Six local girls volunteered on occasion.
- All gardens produced a good harvest. Strawberries could still be harvested as late as October.
- Five greenhouse workshops with classes from Frontier schools provided hands-on learning opportunities.
- Three video broadcasts about gardening techniques were made to share with northern communities.
- Hundreds of plants were given to surrounding communities.
- The main staff person continued to provide knowledge and guidance on northern growing techniques.

Challenges

- School was not built for growing plants. Concerns were expressed about indoor growing stations.
- Youth interest and participation dissipated when the garden girls left.
- A late frost and cool, wet summer challenged plant growth.
- Transportation to and from Leaf Rapids for workshop attendees.
- One staff person is not enough to communicate with and travel to other communities.



Next Steps

- Explore having a communications person to connect with surrounding communities, organizations and support networks.
- Host more workshops to reach a wider range of schools and community groups.
- Provide housing for out of town volunteers.
- Continue testing and developing ideas and processes to green schools and instructional spaces.

NMFCCC Funding

- ✓ 2014
- ✓ 2015
- ✓ 2016