

Opaskwayak Cree Nation *Mino Pimatciwin*

Location Accessible by rail, road, water and air, the **Opaskwayak Cree Nation (OCN)** has about 5,000 on-reserve members and 2,000 off-reserve. It is located on the banks of the Saskatchewan River.

Objective To support food sovereignty and healthy living. To increase the number of healthy, active families in OCN by providing garden spaces and opportunities for people to learn and grow food together.

In 2014, three community gardens and a fruit tree orchard were started and families began working to learn together, grow food and increase knowledge on how to use fresh garden foods. This year, the participants planned to add two new gardens in the 'Big Eddy' area of the community, focus on landscaping areas on the reserve for community gathering spaces and build an open-air community kitchen for cooking classes.

Successes

- Three new community garden sites were established and fully utilized.
- Fruit tree orchard continued to flourish.
- Ten new families joined the garden community and were active in planting, weeding and harvesting community gardens.
- More children participated in the planting and harvesting of vegetables and fruits. They were particularly interested in the pumpkins.
- The 'main garden', located centrally, was landscaped and became a gathering spot with trellises, a gravelled walking path, a shed, a fence around the garden and picnic tables.
- The open air kitchen was constructed and nearly completed (except for water)
- New wildflower bed and pumpkin patch attracted community members to participate.
- Plants and tools for the garden were donated by individuals and local stores.
- Gardens became an attraction for neighbouring communities, tour groups, conference delegates and visiting dignitaries.
- Media coverage of the garden was positive with stories appearing in videos, social media and the local newspaper (Natotawin).
- The OCN Recreation Department continued to be helpful and responsive to project needs.
- A beekeeping workshop was held in December to begin planning and training for an apiary.
- Support base was diversified through a new partnership with Lush Cosmetics.

“ *It's important for our community to have healthier food options.* ”



NMFCCC Funding

- ✓ 2014
- ✓ 2015
- ✓ 2016

Challenges

- Due to a late rain season, gardens were slow getting started.
- Two new raspberry patches have not yet born fruit.
- Animals and crows got into gardens and ripped up some plants.
- Watering the garden was challenging in a drier season without adequate supplies.
- Occurance of mild vandalism in the pumpkin patch.
- Community kitchen construction was delayed due to difficulties getting materials and no water hook up.

Next Steps

- Complete community kitchen.
- Schedule waterworks to be piped into the main town site garden for fall.
- Add bees and beekeeping to the project.
- Increase topsoil for wildflowers and community gardens.
- Build brick oven at the main garden.

“ *People always go to see the garden when they come . . . It's become a place to visit.* ”

