

## NMFCCC Funding

- ✓ 2015
- ✓ 2016

# Wasagamack Wasake Fishers

**Location** **Wasagamack** is an Ojibway-Cree First Nation community located in the Island Lake region. Accessible by plane and boat in the summer and ice road in the winter, Wasagamack has a registered population of 2,114, with 1,913 living on-reserve.

**Objective** To restore the connection to traditional foods and practices and increase economic opportunity and jobs, by providing facilities and materials for the people of Wasagamack to fish.

Commercial fishing was a practice of the community for many generations but recently stopped. By purchasing equipment and providing training to the community the project planned to encourage fishing to become a livelihood for community members and provide food to eat locally and sell to nearby communities.

## Successes

- Fishing equipment (nets, knives, jiggers, etc.) that was purchased, shipped, and distributed allowed for fishing to occur; 15 fishers went out in fall to fish.
- Women participated in commercial fishing, a first for the community.
- Many young fishers used the mentorship program (Fish Helpers Program) for training and skill-building.
- The program allowed for multiple trips for youth and community members to spend time fishing and cooking at Pelican Lake.
- Fishing provided youth with an alternative to drugs and alcohol.

## Challenges

- Scheduling and pricing the delivery of goods was difficult due to a short winter road season.
- The grant from NMFCCC went through the University of Manitoba as Wasagamack is not currently recognized as a registered charity, resulting in a 15% loss to university administrative fees. However, research partner, Dr. Thompson had a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant and was able to make up the loss and provide further funding.
- The grant money was not transferred to the University until late in the season, resulting in a delay to the start of the project.
- Scheduling, planning and organizing fishing trips was difficult with so many fishers.

“ *People went out and fished! They enjoy being out on the land the way their ancestors used to do.* ”

## Next Steps

- Meet with Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation to plan a workshop on winter fishing and Employment Insurance benefits in relation to fishing.
- Finalize on-the-land programs so they can be offered as accredited high school provincial courses for youth and community members.
- Grow local leadership in the project.
- Structure the Meechim Market so it functions as a store to provide healthier food options.
- Host a healing program for youth that ties into fishing.
- Upgrade ice systems so fish are packed and preserved properly.

“ *There are a lot of community feasts in Wasagamack, and people often have fish on the table. It's not easy to eat at Wasagamack, but if you are eating it is likely wild foods, particularly fish.* ”

