

NORTHERN MANITOBA FOOD, CULTURE, & COMMUNITY FUND 2014





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across Manitoba food security challenges many communities. The Northern Manitoba Food, Culture & Community Fund (NMFCCF) supports northern communities to address these challenges by funding local food security and community economic development projects. In 2014 NMFCCF supported thirteen projects with grants totaling almost \$212,000.

For many communities participating in 2014, food security issues take root in the Residential School System and community displacement from traditional territories. Communities face limited seasonal road access, flooding of land and waterways, disruption of traditional hunting, fishing and gathering areas and a diet shift from traditional to processed foods. Some families live below the poverty line and cannot afford healthy food.

Project descriptions (pages 5-26) are drawn from community reports and interviews with project leaders. The stories highlight how communities across Manitoba are responding to food security and community economic development challenges. Communities produced honey, hunted caribou, fished, gathered food and made preserves. Other projects focused on gardening including building and using greenhouses to support northern agriculture, seed saving and cold-climate horticultural training.

All initiatives increased the capacity of communities and individual community members – and many involved youth and Elders sharing food and traditional food skills. Six projects provided on-going employment opportunities, and supported hunter and fisher livelihoods; four communities plan to transition their projects into social enterprises.

The NMFCCF is a collaborative of Northern Manitobans and private and government organizations committed to principles of shared learning and reciprocity; it is guided by five Northern advisors and a peer review committee. For more information about the fund, contact: Julie Price, julie.price@tidescanada.org or visit: www.tidescanada.org

In 2014 NMFCCF received...

67 project inquiries

31 applications

Project proposal value:
\$575,000



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MEET THE FUNDERS

BARREN LANDS FIRST NATION

CARIBOU HUNT

LOCATION: Brochet, Manitoba

OBJECTIVE: “Re-skill” youth and adults in the community, improve traditional food access for elders and improve the livelihoods of hunters and the community.

Barren Lands First Nation/Brochet is on the north shore of Reindeer Lake, 1,000 km north of Winnipeg and north of the 57th parallel. Community members speak Cree and Dene. There are only seasonal roads, and flying to Thompson is expensive. The Northern Store is the only place to buy food. People hunt, fish and try to use cultural foods. Hunters receive support to fill community freezers for those who need traditional food sources such as wild meat and fish.

Successes

- Thirty-six caribou were taken for 16 Elders.
- The seven hunters traveled over five hours on skidoo to get caribou and were out on the land for three days and two nights. They were happy to have their costs paid and to receive a \$600 per hunter honorarium.
- The hunters did the cutting out on the land.
- Most people have freezers to store the meat.
- Three youth helped deliver caribou to Elders. They worked hard, did the heavy lifting and were given a small honoraria. They were proud to be part of sharing food with the Elders.
- Elders were happy to receive and share the meat with their families; most do not have skidoos and no longer go out on the land.

Challenges

- The community does not use caribou hides much anymore. In Lac Brochet there are people that still use the hides, often smoking them and making them into products.
- The grant arrived late, and money from another program had to be used temporarily.
- Caribou were a long distance from the community. It's not possible to project the location, timing, or herd whereabouts year to year.
- It was hard to distribute the meat evenly among community members as those delivering the meat did not know the different pieces of the animal.

Next steps

- Give each hunter responsibility to connect with, hunt for and deliver meat to a specific Elder.
- Increase the Health Program involvement.
- Use teachings about preparing caribou and making dried meat with the youth.
- Increase youth involvement in the hunt and in processing (some is done on the land, some cutting is done in the community).



BARREN LANDS FIRST NATION GARDEN

LOCATION: Barren Lands First Nation & Brochet Community, Manitoba

OBJECTIVE: Expand the garden and continue to build capacity of youth and adult gardeners.

Located 928 kilometres north of Winnipeg, 619 people live in Barren Lands First Nation and Brochet Community. Cree, Dene and English are spoken in the remote community connected only by seasonal roads. The nearest service centre is 320km away (Thompson) – and roundtrip flights are \$578. The average income of residents is \$16,834. With just one food store and no access to the Nutrition North Subsidy program, food prices are high: \$14.95 for 4L jug of milk and \$33.00 for 10lb bag of potatoes.

Successes

- Gardening staff were supported through bi-weekly meetings, work plans, activity logs and financial management. Gardeners received payment, training and increased confidence. All adult gardeners started large home gardens.
- Over 180 people (about one in three community members) attended training; everyone from elementary students to Elders grew food, and/or received and prepared local food.
- Participants learned and worked together at training sessions in Leaf Rapids, at the Grow North conference, during the Leaf Rapids visit to Brochet, and at the Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development canning and preserving workshop.
- Brochet gardeners gained confidence to garden in their own community after learning directly from Leaf Rapids community members who grow their own food.
- Home and community gardening expanded. Interest in the project grew because of community celebrations where food was shared (e.g., Elders' lunch, Elders' food boxes, youth cooking class). Each celebration strengthened the belief that delicious, healthy food can be grown in the community.
- Brochet's successes were featured in the Northern Sun Newsletter (winter edition, 2015). Trina Halkett (Program Leader) won a Golden Carrot Award from Food Matters Manitoba honouring her leadership and project successes.
- A participant requested rotten produce from the Northern Store for compost to help with the soil.

Challenges

- Active support is improving from Chief and Council and the Health Team. While fencing was donated towards the project last year, moving soil was difficult without the use of band trucks and loader
- Local soil is very sandy. Home gardeners used bagged soil and community gardens used local soil. Neither option is sustainable.
- Unforeseen transportation and accommodation costs were incurred due to unsafe winter road conditions and an inability to secure free accommodation.

Next steps

- Continue support for current gardeners and recruit new gardeners.
- Build raised beds for Elders, new mothers and youth.
- Start a community garden site on reserve lands.
- Continue to employ a leader to support workers. Build leadership by inviting another community member to co-chair the committee.
- Meet with Chief and Council to seek future support.
- House future grants with the Band to allow for more community control.
- Increase greenhouse training for season extension.

Organizations involved

Food Matters Manitoba (FMM) assisted with sourcing and shipping supplies and logistics for garden training with Leaf Rapids Grow North (LRGN).



People in the community, when they see what is grown, they are amazed.

“Oh my gosh, is this from here?”

—Trina, Program Leader



BARROWS COMMUNITY GREENHOUSE

LOCATION: Barrows, Manitoba

OBJECTIVE: Increase access to good, healthy food through gardening and greenhouse use.

Barrows is a northwest Manitoba community of approximately 100 people. The Barrows Council is working to improve the health of residents by increasing healthy eating and sharing knowledge and resources about healthy food. Residents undertook a gardening project to reconnect a younger generation to growing and preserving their own food.

Successes

- Almost every home in the community was involved in growing vegetables.
- Residents were invited to choose and start their preferred plants. A variety of herbs were available and fruit trees were also provided.
- The school brought students to the greenhouse. When parents picked up bedding plants their children often picked out additional plants.
- Strawberry and raspberry plants will be divided and shared among the community in the future.
- All residents enjoyed the fruit, especially the children who eagerly awaited their ripening.
- Everyone in Barrows was invited to attend any workshop or events.
- The greenhouse has benefited, through plants and training, people in the surrounding communities of Westgate, National Mills, Powell, Baden and Red Deer Lake

Next steps

- Increase supply of bedding plants for purchase by residents of the local area, The Pas and Camperville.
- Develop a Community Development Corporation (and council) to access funding opportunities for the community.
- Increase number of fruit trees.
- Describe and refine the operational model so that the greenhouse can become a self-sustaining entity that provides benefits to the community.

Organizations involved

The Northern Association of Community Councils (NACC) was the initial organization offering support to the community gardening programs. Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Development (MAFRD) supported the purchase of a greenhouse for growing bedding plants. With the help of the council, the greenhouse was built and bedding plants were raised. NACC provided preservation workshops in fruit canning.



GARDEN HILL FIRST NATION FISHERIES

LOCATION: Garden Hill First Nation, Manitoba

OBJECTIVE: Create sustainable employment opportunities and improve food security by developing a local market for Garden Hill fish and a country foods program. Through a fisher-owned cooperative, provide workshops, training and market within and outside the community for fishers.

Garden Hill First Nation is a fly-in community located approximately 610 km northeast of Winnipeg and 350 km southeast of Thompson. About 42% of the population is severely food insecure and another 43% are moderately food insecure;¹ in comparison, 7.7% of households across Canada are considered food insecure.² At the beginning of the project all the Garden Hill fishers were considered food insecure.

Successes

- The fall fishing season started in mid-September, 2014 and continued until the end of October, 2014. Forty-seven fishers worked for a three week period. The total catch was 18,000 pounds of pickerel and 2,500 pounds of other fish (white, jack, trout, maria etc.).
- Purchased freezers and other equipment to establish a commercial kitchen for a country food program with the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative Worker at the Health Centre.
- Purchased fish packaging and processing equipment.
- Established a new management plan and other requirements to begin a fishing cooperative.
- Recruited new board members with skills and experience in fishing, business, marketing, organizing, country food programs and governance.
- Created a plan to upgrade the fish plant to maintain public health standards for processing, filleting and smoking.
- Developed a business plan in consultation with the leadership group. Registered the business name and opened a co-op bank account.

Challenges

- After an initial review of fishing activities, food availability and economic opportunities, it was found that fishers were struggling due to lack of infrastructure and programmatic vision.
- Engaging community members to organize as a cooperative and finding suitable Board members for the co-op and country food programs.
- Finding a suitable place to establish a commercial kitchen and country foods program.

Next steps

- Create training and development activities for volunteers and staff to manage the program more effectively.
- Develop strategy to communicate the roles and responsibilities of staff and community members in community-led development.
- Develop a shared vision and common understanding of community-led development.
- Engage more members of the community in the country food program and its governance.
- Develop strategies and workplan to create stronger market for Garden Hill fish and create more economic and social value of fish products to the consumers.

Photo credit: Mohammad Romy

¹ Thompson, S., Gulrukh Kamal, A., Ballard, M., Beardy, B., Islam, D., Lozoznik, V. and K. Wong (2011). Is Community Economic Development Putting Healthy Food on the Table?: Food Sovereignty in Northern Manitoba's Aboriginal communities. *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development*, 7 (2), 15-40.

² Statistics Canada (2011). Household food insecurity. Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-625-x/2013001/article/11889-eng.htm> 12

GROW NORTH

LOCATION: Leaf Rapids, Manitoba

OBJECTIVE: Educating and empowering young northerners, who are the next generation of leaders, to grow plants and feed their remote communities to address food insecurity and resulting chronic health conditions.

Leaf Rapids is a community north of Winnipeg of approximately 450 people. In this project year the Regional Gardening Program, a Frontier School Division project developed in 2008, became “Grow North.” Grow North adopted a community-based board, a new governance structure intended to give greater control over program resources.

Successes

- The regional coordinator, employed by Frontier School division, teaches local youth horticultural skills and shares horticultural knowledge with neighboring northern communities.
- Provided eleven youth with summer employment in different gardening capacities.
- Secured the nursery with a gated steel fence.
- Completed seed research for the Bauta Institute.³
- Expanded nursery beds.
- Produced significant quantities of crops.
- Hosted funders and educational tours.
- Documented the growing process for future training.

Challenges

- Conflicting visions about program goals contributed to a shift in program focus and staff turnover.
- Loss of experienced staff meant less emphasis on youth learning and training, and more emphasis on youth employment.
- Full funding to run the program as designed was not received.
- Board capacity was limited due to loss of board members.

Next steps

- Frontier School Division to resume the role of umbrella organization for the project.
- Retain the regional coordinator, and refocus on teaching and employing youth.
- Use the virtual broadcast system for outreach.
- Apply to Manitoba Green Team and Northern Healthy Foods Initiative.
- Build community involvement.
- Develop a five-year vision (with succession plan); engage the new school principal, area supervisor and adult education teacher at the Leaf Rapids Education Centre.





ITHINTO MECHISOWIN: FOOD FROM THE LAND

LOCATION: South Indian Lake, Manitoba

OBJECTIVE: Achieve food sovereignty by strengthening and expanding the country foods service to community members in need and “re-skilling” community members.

O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation (OPCN), commonly known as South Indian Lake (SIL), has a population of 1200 made up almost exclusively of Aboriginal, mainly Cree, peoples. Historically, people lived well and had sufficient resources. A drastic shift in OPCN’s socioeconomic situation came in the 1970s when Manitoba Hydro supported by the Manitoba government developed the Churchill River Diversion (CRD), a hydroelectric dam.

Successes

- There were good opportunities to train youth, including rabbit hunting, snaring and trapping, and moose hunting, berry picking and medicine picking at inland lake camps (Almond Lake and Gawar Lake). A planned survival skills course was delayed due to weather.
- A partnership with Big Sand Lake Lodge, a community owned hunting lodge, donated meat from thier hunt, providing over one thousand pounds. Many people volunteered up to four days of their time to cut meat; this was an opportunity for community members to learn about the program.
- Nineteen boxes of surplus meat were delivered to Elders; winter deliveries to Elders continue in 2015.
- Many members living outside the community asked about the program.
- On Thursdays, people came for food; including Elders, single parents, those with a doctor’s note or a special request for help. Lots of new people continue to come.
- More people seemed inspired to harvest their own wild meat.
- Health Center clients were grateful for the program, and shared stories about increasing their control over diabetes, their weight and hypertension.

Next steps

- Big Sand Lake Lodge may change over the next few years due to declining interest from American hunters. OPCN may use the lodge more for the community.
- Add three greenhouses (at food center, at school, at health complex).
- Add stove to the Food Program office.
- Partner with the new youth worker and support local volunteers for on the land activities.
- Improve policies and training for volunteers.
- Decrease committee size.
- Invite more of the funders to attend 2015 Kiwikapawetan summer gathering.

Challenges

- Boat safety, hunter safety and firearms training are needed to harvest or lead workshops. Criminal record checks and child abuse records checks are required to take children and youth out on the land; many are not able or willing to get these trainings or checks.
- Youth do not have appropriate winter gear for some activities.
- People are not accustomed to keeping receipts which makes reimbursement difficult.
- Weather has been challenging.
- Not everyone is eligible for food. Those who can hunt, trap, or gather are encouraged to do so, or to volunteer.
- Some people on social assistance use the program to offset their costs, but might use the money for other interests (gambling, alcohol).
- The youth worker was not given support and could not continue.
- Working with Manitoba Hydro is a challenge. Historically they have funded fishers to travel to inland lakes but this has recently been discontinued.
- There are waiting lists for the youth training sessions.

MATHESON ISLAND COMMUNITY FOOD

LOCATION: Matheson Island, Manitoba

OBJECTIVE: Provide locally grown, harvested foods to Matheson Island residents; prevent diabetes and heart disease among future generations.

Matheson Island is home to 111 people. Located on Lake Winnipeg at the end of Provincial Road #234, the closest grocery store is 110 km away. The community is connected with the mainland by a cable ferry in the summer and by a winter road in the winter months. The school has 17 students from Nursery to Grade 8. Most community members are Métis and First Nation; many uphold the tradition of trapping and hunting, in addition to working in commercial fishing. Many residents have diabetes or heart problems.

Successes

- Twenty trees and 40 shrubs were purchased at a 75% discount and were planted. Varieties include apples, cherry, saskatoons, honeyberry and cranberry.
- Trees were in a highly visible area and residents independently harvested cranberries and apples.
- Fourteen raised beds were built for community members and distributed to homes; ten more houses are on a waiting list.
- Soil was brought in by truckload and dumped outside of the cemetery. People who received raised beds retrieved soil in the spring.
- Lumber for two gazebos was purchased, with support from another grant. One was built to shelter community members who gather in the orchard area.

Challenges

- Fishers want more information about liability insurance before taking children out to learn fishing.
- Weather was a challenge – the fishing season was bad, the growing season wasn't great.
- Staffing changes slowed the project down significantly.
- There was less participation from the school than expected.
- There was a short trapping season and youth were not interested.

Next steps

- Plan how remaining grant funds will be used in 2015.
- Consider a school field trip to Peguis First Nation in spring 2015. Students could attend a spring planting workshop and be inspired by a visit to the big garden.



MINO PIMATCIWIN: GOOD LIVING

LOCATION: Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Manitoba

OBJECTIVE: Return to sustainable, healthy foods and lifestyles through establishing a community garden.

The Opaskwayak Cree Nation is along Saskatchewan and Pasqua Rivers in Treaty 5 territory and has 5,700 members – 3,200 living on reserve. Despite the population, there are only 20 members over the age of 68. For tens of thousands of years the Opaskwaya Inniniwak were a healthy active nation with sustainable hunting and fishing and many small gardens. In the early 1900s the community was forcibly relocated to an area with hard clay soil and little topsoil. The reserve “pass” system restricted mobility, hunting, fishing and trapping. In the 1960s a Manitoba Hydro dam flooded traplines, changed migration of wildlife and fish, and changed waterways making it increasingly difficult to access traditional food. Residential Schools further disrupted the community connection to language, culture and traditional food knowledge. Processed and imported foods have, for the most part, replaced wild meat, fish, fowl and berries. Food security is a significant concern with many community members living below the poverty line; 65% of the community is diabetic or in poor health, and many rely on medication for treatment of chronic illness.

Successes

- Thirty eight families signed up to create a vegetable garden, raspberry patch and potato garden.
- People attended monthly garden preparation meetings over the winter and each family spent at least one hour a week in the garden during the summer.
- Events were held to encourage community involvement such as a birdhouse competition, a grand opening ceremony and a preserving workshop.
- The gardens produced bountiful crops with large, healthy vegetables.

From community participants:

- “We had fun in the kitchen learning to can the vegetables.” — *Gardener, Age 32*
- “The excitement of seeing new plants and learning the difference between vegetables and weeds...” — *Gardener, Age 30*
- “I learned that chard and beets are really good for diabetics. I learned how to cook them and [I] really love beet tops.” — *Gardener, Age 63*

Challenges

- The chosen site had a clay base that required significant site preparation.

Next steps (from community participants)

- “We need to...space the seeds further apart and thin the plants sooner.”
- “People really like beets. Next year we need to plant more.”
- “Next year we need more recipes and lessons on salad making.”
- “Let’s work with schools so more kids get involved.”
- “The garden has been good for all of us. Let’s make it even bigger and better for next year.”
- “It’s good for the Elders to get moving again...”

Organizations involved

Kinanaskohtmitinan: Many thanks to Opaskwayak Cree Nation Chief and Council and Paskwayak Business Development, OCN Parks and Recreation, Northern Healthy Food Initiatives and MB Hydro.



Step 1: Wahwayneekaniwak
Starting over, preparing Nistum



Step 2: Ehkistiganiwak
Planting and seeding



Step 3: Neetawiginah
Growing



Step 4: Ehmoo nyekaniwak
Harvesting



I have learned so much since starting this program; I have learned how to monitor bee activity, and how to check for healthy bees. I have enjoyed collecting the honey, which myself and my family love to eat.

-Participant

NORTHERN BEEKEEPING PROJECT

LOCATION: Barrows, Dauphin River, Portage, Spence Lake, MB

OBJECTIVE: Continue to explore the potential of beekeeping in the northern boreal forest for food security, community economic development and pollination.

Barrows, Dauphin River, Portage, and Spence Lake are small communities with less than 150 people each, located in the centre-north of the province.

Successes

- The beekeeping project started in 2013, grew slightly in 2014
- Five families were supported to raise honey bees; two families were new program participants.
- Participants appreciated the learning opportunity for themselves, their families and communities.
- One family used the bee keeping as a school project for their home schooled children.
- Participants freely shared information about their bees with other community members.
- One family appreciated the health benefits of the honey comb.
- In 2014, over 1000 lbs of honey was collected and was used by participants, shared locally, given as gifts, and some was marketed locally.

Next steps

- All three families involved in the evaluation want to continue beekeeping next year. They will continue building their apiary management skills to include 'splitting hives' and 're-queening hives'
- One family is supporting their daughter to expand the apiary in 2015 as her personal business so that honey can support the family needs and be available for sale locally.
- Individual families are working to develop a customer base for their projected 2015 sales. Some have given out samples locally to raise awareness of their apiaries
- Consider establishing a formal cooperative and ways to enhance production and marketing.
- Add another family for 2015.

Challenges

- Not all families were able to produce honey.
- Some hives arrived to families during or after the main honey flow had taken place, limited the amount of honey produced in 2014.
- Families are geographically dispersed, making in-person meetings a challenge

	Honey	Hives
Family 1	800 lbs	12
Family 2	120 lbs	4
Family 3	50 lbs	3
Family 4	150 lbs	4
Family 5	No honey	

Organizations involved

Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and Northern Association of Community Councils partnered on the project.

It is something we have long dreamed about being able to do... but in reality I don't know if we would have ever been able to afford [it without the program]... we are extremely thankful for this opportunity.

- Participant



PEGUIS FOOD, HERITAGE & CULTURE PROJECT

LOCATION: Peguis First Nation, Manitoba

OBJECTIVE: Regain the heritage and culture of community agriculture by engaging a majority of community members to embrace the concept of growing food and passing the knowledge onto their children for generations to come.

Peguis First Nation is the largest First Nation community in Manitoba with approximately 7,300 people. It was originally located on the fertile lands just north of Winnipeg. The band was moved early in the last century as the pressures of settler population growth escalated and provincial officials sought new farm land. The current location of the reserve has fertile land that is very prone to flooding.

Successes

- A hands-on community garden workshop was held in the spring with 30 participants.
- An Elders Day at the garden welcomed over 70 participants and included a sharing circle about the community's gardening history; each participant received a bag of fresh vegetables.
- Two Farmer's markets were held: one in the community; and one at Neechi Commons in Winnipeg raising \$500 from vegetable sales. Vegetables were also given to several homeless people in Winnipeg.
- An end of season teacher's visit and a year-end gathering was held.
- Project support was provided by six community members with professional expertise, four with skilled trades-related expertise; an additional 24 members were involved in the committee or as workers.
- Six acres of garden were created, yielding 12,000 lbs of potatoes, 60-80 five gallon pails of beets, onions, tomatoes, carrots and beans.
- A garden arbour was built.
- Six families grew garden plots.
- A heritage garden was planted with Four Arrows Regional Health Authority.
- Community garden equipment was acquired.
- Fresh vegetables were shared with the food bank, Elders and at community gatherings.
- Received a Food Matters Manitoba Golden Carrot Award (Rural Education category).
- Several unemployed and underemployed community members were hired. There was a sense of pride in the work and the success of the garden site.
- A great demand for pickling vegetables was noticed; many Elders still pickle and are passing on their knowledge to the younger people.

- Open pick days were held and were well attended with many members picking their own potatoes, onions, beets, lettuce and Swiss chard. This gave community members a taste of healthy foods and showed that the community has the resources, land base, and knowledge to grow vegetables by working together cooperatively.

Challenges

- An early heavy frost caused some greenhouse seedlings to be lost.
- The greenhouse had no heat or water.
- Despite great weather including rainfall, watering was required.
- Program staff were concerned that community members would depend on vegetables grown by others.

Next steps

- Encourage more than forty new gardeners to grow produce for their families.
- Acquire honey bees to provide pollination and to produce honey.
- Research historically collected Seneca roots as a product for development to provide more income and employment.
- Explore social enterprise and cooperatives to identify an appropriate organizational structure for the work.

Organizations involved

Support was provided by Four Arrows Regional Health Authority; Peguis Gaming; Peguis Health Centre; Peguis Band; Community Food Bank; and Peguis Development Corporation.

PUKATAWAGEN COUNTRY FOODS

LOCATION: Pukatawagen, Manitoba

OBJECTIVE: To provide healthy fresh food to community members by harvesting fish and meat and to help community members develop communication skills, self-awareness, patience, tolerance and teamwork.

Pukatawagan (Mathias Colomb Cree Nation), meaning “fishing place” in Cree, is a remote Northern community on the shore of the Missinippi of the Churchill River. The traditional local language is Woodland/Asineskak Cree. There is no all-weather road, so residents rely on train and plane for transportation in and out of Pukatawagan. It is estimated that a family of six (2 adults and 4 children) spends approximately \$1,500 a month on food at the community store.

Successes

- Five smoke houses were built.
- Two families smoked meat and shared it at a community feast while the other families used their smoke houses to prepare food for family gatherings.
- Smoked fish was shared with Elders and other community members.
- Two group hunting trips were organized and made down river and community members went out on the land together.

Challenges

- Moose hunting was unsuccessful due to forest fires in the regular hunting region.
- Managing communication in the community was a challenge. The community does not have good internet and phone lines are similar to party lines where use of the line by one person blocks the line for others.

Next steps

- The smoke houses will be used for many more years.

Organizations involved

The Northern Association of Community Councils (NACC) was the initial organization offering support to the community gardening programs. Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Development (MAFRD) supported the purchase of a greenhouse for growing bedding plants. With the help of the council, the greenhouse was built and bedding plants were raised. NACC provided preservation workshops in fruit canning.





Steven, a young helper, was proud to have responsibility for helping to care for the chickens.

SHERRIDON POULTRY PROJECT

LOCATION: Sherridon, Manitoba

OBJECTIVE: Raise chickens to provide meat for Elders and community families.

Sherridon has approximately 80 residents, most of whom are Aboriginal people. The community is accessible by gravel road, located about 156 km north of The Pas. Economic activity in the community is mainly limited to hunting, fishing and a few small businesses, and many community members live on a fixed income. Aside from the small local general store, the nearest major grocery store is in Flin Flon – a difficult two hour drive or \$200 taxi trip. To improve local food security the community has started a number of wild-harvesting initiatives.

Successes

- A 576 square-foot chicken coop was built to raise 250 chickens. All lumber was sourced from a local sawmill and savings on shipping allowed for an additional 100 square-foot storage shed.
- Youth volunteers and community members processed 223 chickens (91% success rate) and distributed 1,611 lbs of meat to six elders and six additional families.
- Community experience raising, slaughtering and preparing chickens increased significantly. Community food champions and other interested community members cared for the chickens; youth volunteers helped slaughter, de-feather, clean, pack and distribute the chickens.
- The project met the needs of community Elders.

Challenges

- Sharing the work load of processing the chickens was a struggle despite many residents having familiarity with processing wild birds. This was resolved through the purchase of a chicken plucking machine acquired through additional funding.
- The use of a large chicken coop had never been done in the north. Heating costs and ventilation were not fully considered in planning; lack of air movement in the coop may have contributed to deaths during hot summer months. Air flow improvements are planned and the community has decided to raise only 200 birds in 2015.

Next steps

- Post public notices about the poultry project activities to encourage community participation.
- Share experiences of accessing resources, garnering community support and celebrating projects with other communities.
- Explore sale of chickens to sustain the project and support neighbouring communities to start their own coops. As sharing of food is a traditional practice, the sale of chickens and eggs is limited.

Organizations involved

Additional planning and support was provided by Food Matters Manitoba and a traditional food distribution project provided processing and freezer space. Food projects continue to be supported by a few key community members and outside organizations including the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative.

I feel better knowing I raised them myself. It's good food.
– Participant



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