

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