



# 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;<sup>1</sup> in comparison, 7.7% of households across Canada are considered food insecure.<sup>2</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

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