

Sharing our History

(Right) Beluga whales hunted near York Factory. The meat from the whales was traded with Inuit in the North, while the oils and bones of the whale were used locally.

(Far Right) A Dene Elder from York Landing.



Figuring out Food in Princess Harbour

When Barry and Steven decided to make a go of it in Princess Harbour, a hamlet of less than ten mostly aging residents near Bloodvein First Nation, some major adjustments from their urban lifestyle were needed. Years later, they enjoy a lifestyle Steven describes as “so relaxed, we can go through the day at our own pace. There’s no need for a clock.”

The two have found a number of ways to provide for their needs living off the land. Between gardening, seed saving, canning, preserving and smoking fresh-caught fish and wild meat, Barry and Steven estimate that at least 50% of their diet comes right off the land, depending on the season.

One challenge Barry and Steven face, along with many Northerners, is rocky soil. However, Barry explains a solution to this lack of workable, nutrient-rich topsoil can be found at the local airstrip. Decades ago, trees, vegetation and topsoil were scraped away in order to expose the harder clay base more suitable for landing aircraft. All Barry needed to do was load up the 4x4 with soil piled along the airstrip and use it in his new garden projects.



Another challenge faced by northern and remote communities that Barry and Steven overcame is the expensive freight cost of building materials. The pair salvaged materials from un-used local buildings and used local

materials such as driftwood to construct sheds, a greenhouse, and a root cellar.

Because their below-ground-level root cellar tends to collect water, they are trying an above-ground root cellar, using piled earth surrounding the walls to provide cool food storage temperatures.

Barry and Steven are able to give plenty of food away to people nearby and in surrounding communities. They have developed close community ties with Princess Harbour partly through sharing food: “We produce enough for all of us... we’re like family.”

Submit a story

Please send along your northern food stories and photos and share your stories with neighbours in the north.

Send your story ideas to:
chloe@foodmattersmanitoba.ca



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Submit a new name for the newsletter!

The new newsletter needs a new name!

If you have a great idea, submit it to chloe@foodmattersmanitoba.ca



Food Matters Manitoba
Northern Harvester



Soup Recipe Inside!

Fox Lake Cree Nation's famous goose soup, made every year at goose camp. If you have a recipe that you'd like to share, please send it to chloe@foodmattersmanitoba.ca.



Northern Lifestyles students sewing their moccasins.

Northern Lifestyles in Saskatchewan Schools

Interested in a class where you net fish, seed and harvest wild rice, build (and sleep in) overnight winter shelters, perform water testing for environmental research, certify in Trapper's Training, learn about boreal plants and survival skills from local resource people and Elders, create your own mukluks, gauntlet mitts, and mossbag, explore the lakes and rivers on canoe and finish up with a meal of duck, goose and beaver that you trapped yourself? Welcome to the Northern Lifestyles course at Churchill Community High School in

La Ronge, Saskatchewan – a locally developed course taught at schools across Northern Saskatchewan because of the uniqueness of traditional/contemporary community lifestyles in the north.

One person cannot teach everything and the success of the class is based on partnerships developed by the instructor, Christine Ravenis. The course involves a diverse

Northern Lifestyles student showing off a recent catch.



group of stakeholders, within and outside of the community, whose participation and support contributes to its success. The course also has a focus on reciprocity and the students give back by helping deliver turkeys to band members, contributing to environmental testing and helping out at the local Elders Care home.

Practical survival skills are an integral piece to the course. “The knowledge and contributions of our local resource people and Elders is invaluable,” says Ravenis. “We have local resource people teach about the plants of the boreal forest. They teach about their medicinal and nutritional value and students get to go out and harvest wild mint, rat root, sage and sweetgrass. They also teach about how people got their nutritional needs met without stores.” Local resource people are also brought in to share and support the students in trapping and processing skins, fishing (both on water and ice), canning, smoking meat, and making moccasins, mukluks, gauntlet mitts, and mossbags. “When they make the mossbags they are also learning about traditional child rearing. They get to harvest the moss and they learn about its many uses.”



Northern Lifestyles class exploring the lakes and rivers by canoe.

Of course no discussion of the North would be complete without including water. The students also spend a week each fall and spring learning about the importance of water by paddling on the network of lakes and rivers that serve as transportation routes. They also spend time studying the environmental impacts of mining and forestry on water quality and perform water tests for the Saskatchewan Environmental Society.

This is the kind of class where students learn experientially. It challenges many of the norms of our educational system and works through an Indigenous worldview. The Northern Lifestyles curriculum guide concludes, “Our hope is to accommodate the development of positive identity and self-esteem within our high school age students, by providing legitimate course offerings that reflect unique traditional/contemporary community perspectives.”

Sharing Our Food Stories

Sharing Our Food Stories is an annual event which takes place the day before Food Matters Manitoba’s Growing Local conference. The event is open to all Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative workers from the Province’s 63 First Nations and community members involved in the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative.

The gathering brings a sense of shared experience and inspiration to the work of many community food champions from across a huge swath of Manitoba’s North. Frances Desjarlais captured this spirit in her opening prayer by asking us to “walk hand-in-hand to work together to help our communities.”

Gerald Mason talked about learning from his grandparents the traditional ways of eating and surviving off the land. He said he is only recently coming to understand the deep value of these life experiences – a sentiment many people in the room seemed to relate to. Mason says now is the time “to carry our traditional knowledge into the future.”

Joseph Le Blanc presented on his efforts to chart this future with the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Food Strategy by restoring



traditional and locally produced food practices in 49 Northern Ontario First Nations. He spoke of returning to measuring community leaders’ wealth by their “social capital” – what they provide and share with their community – rather than their “financial capital.”

Following Le Blanc, Chloe Donatelli presented on the Traditional Food Initiative



Goose Soup



Ingredients:

- 1 Goose
- About 4 litres of water
- About 4 cups rolled oats
- Salt and Pepper to taste

Pluck and singe goose, then put it into a pot and boil it for an hour. Add rolled oats and cook for about 10 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Planning and Resource Development Project being undertaken by Raquel Koenig through Food Matters Manitoba. She proposed the encouraging idea that “food security is evolving from handing out food to empowering people to grow their own food.”

The day finished with members from dozens of First Nations and northern communities gathering at round tables to share their own food stories. People shared about all the traditional foods, from blue berries, to beluga blubber, to blackbirds that their community members have eaten living long, healthy lives, and the many challenges they face when trying to access these foods today.

As each group presented their food stories, the room filled with an acknowledgement of the rich history and opportunity each community lives with and the responsibility they share reclaiming access to healthy and traditional foods. A big thanks goes out to all the participants at Sharing Our Food Stories, as well as the Government of Manitoba and Health Canada First Nations and Inuit Health Branch for their continued support of the event.



For the Love of Chickens

Marvin “Budgie” McIvor, a resident of Cross Lake, Manitoba, is a founding member of the Cross Lake Chicken Club – a group of seven families in Cross Lake who were new to raising chickens last season.

Marvin built an insulated coops for the birds, equipped with roost boxes and multi-level perches. In the summer, the birds are free to move from the coop to a grassy run.

His coop stays warm in the colder months using a heat lamp and an electrical heater. When Cross Lake experienced a 13-hour power outage in mid-January, he worked for hours in the cold to get an old generator going for his birds.

Marvin has not lost a single bird to illness or accident in the 10 months he has had them – a feat that very few first-time chicken raisers can boast. Marvin has grown so attached to his birds he had to ask friends to slaughter his roosters. While he did not eat them, his friends and family, who received the birds as gifts, exclaimed they were more like turkeys than chickens.

His remaining 26 birds, which are all layers, produce 18 – 24 eggs a day. Marvin gives all of them away, substantially contributing to the food security of his community.

This June, Marvin and the now 10 other families of the Chicken Club will get a new batch of chicks. He’s put in an order for 25 more layers.

Standing in his chicken coop, he says through a grin, “Every single one of my birds is going to die from old age.”



Marvin “Budgie” McIvor