

Northern SUN

Stories of growing & gathering

Winter 2014



The youth learning how to set nets in Peguis.

First Food Matters Manitoba Youth Exchange Great Success

Last month, sixteen youth from nine communities across the province came together in Winnipeg to celebrate and learn about food and culture, as a part of Food Matters Manitoba's first ever Aboriginal Youth Exchange.

During four days of activities and workshops in Winnipeg and Peguis First Nation, the youth learned about gardening, raising chickens, how to set fishing nets, fillet a fish, and skin a marten. They also tried their hand at creating a digital video story. It was an engaging and fun program that provided an opportunity for the youth to learn new food skills, take pride in the traditional food activities within their own communities, and build relationships with peers from other communities. "I learned a lot about non-healthy and healthy foods," said one participant, "the activities and speakers inspired me to eat healthier and limit junk foods."



Commercial fisherman Corwin Sinclair gives Fox Lake youth Micheal Beardy a lesson on identifying fish in Peguis.

Check out videos from the Youth Exchange on our blog at www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca





In this edition of the Northern Sun, we bring you stories from three communities that are using food to feed their people and stay connected to the land and their traditional ways.

Nelson House: Country Foods Program

The Nelson House freezer program is the cream of the crop, as far as freezer programs go. When it was established in 1992, the program's goal was to serve the community's elderly population and ensure they had access to traditional foods. It grew quickly and today serves around 1,500 of the community's 2,500 residents.

Nelson House supports its community freezer with funding from its Northern Flood Agreement Trust. There is currently one full time coordinator as well as four paid harvesters. They take regular trips to hunt and fish which keeps the freezers well stocked at all times. When they aren't out harvesting the food, they are busy processing and distributing it. Distribution is organized according to need, and visits are made to homes without telephones to ensure no one in need is being overlooked.

Doug Hart, who has been coordinating the program for the last 20 years, says the best part of his job is "the outdoor life." Being out on the land is what he likes to do, and getting to use those skills to help take care of his community just makes it that much better. ●



Passing on traditional food skills to youth is an important component of many community freezer programs.

A group of Fox Lake youth learn about fishing.



Logan Mason, from St. Theresa Point, practicing his filleting skills.



Keith Flett demonstrates how to skin a pine martin at Tommy's Point in Peguis First Nation.

South Indian Lake: Ithinto Mechisowin Program

South Indian Lake's freezer program started last spring as a response to the community's desire to return to traditional ways and improve food security. The project was made possible through grants from several funders and in kind support from many partners. Food from the freezer is available to anyone from the community who needs it, and has already been accessed by a third of the community's 1200 residents. Louis Tait, who manages the program, says he has heard from some regular participants that the healthy food they are getting has helped them to lose weight.

Louis is the only staff working on the program, so in order to ensure the freezer is stocked and knowledge is being passed on, he offers honorariums to hunters, elders and other food champions who harvest

food and share their skills with the youth. Teaching future generations to provide for themselves and their community from the land is an essential part of the South Indian Lake program. ●



Ithinto Mechisowin Program coordinator Louis Tait, with Councillor Lora Baker and MP Niki Ashton.



Processing a moose in South Indian Lake.

Sherridon: A Volunteer Operation

Sherridon's program founder, Larry Alm, says the idea for the freezer came to him after he shared a couple of moose he shot last season with his extended family around town. He imagined what a difference it could make if everyone in the small community could have access to that food. That idea became a reality over this past winter, and now a group of dedicated community members donate their time and resources to harvest food for the community's freezer. At first it was challenging finding enough people to help out with the harvesting, but as more households access the food from the program, the team of volunteers wanting to participate is growing. "More and more guys are looking to get involved," says Larry "it gives them a sense of pride in their community."

Though entirely volunteer run, the program would not have been possible without a grant from the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative, which allowed them to purchase a freezer and other equipment and build a space for storage and processing. ●



Floyd North of Sherridon harvesting fish for the Freezer



Stan North and Larry Alm with the moose that got the whole idea started.



Zach Henderson and Demian Lawrenchuk of Fox Lake Cree Nation work hard at filleting some freshly caught fish.

Easy Baked Fish

Total prep time: 15 minutes

Total cook time: 1 ½ hours



Ingredients:

- 2 or 3 lbs locally caught fish (it can be whole or in fillets)
- 2 medium onions, cut into thick slices
- 10 cloves garlic, peeled and left whole
- 2 large carrots, washed and cut into chunks
- 4 medium potatoes, washed and cut into wedges
- Salt & Pepper (to taste)
- 2 tbsp dried parsley
- ½ cup olive (or vegetable) oil
- ½ cup lemon juice
- 1 cup water

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Wash the fish and sprinkle with salt, pepper and three tablespoons of the lemon juice. Put it in the fridge while you clean and prepare the vegetables.

Pour three tablespoons of olive oil over the bottom of a large, deep baking dish and lay the fish on top. Next, lay the onions, garlic cloves, carrot pieces and potato wedges on top. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and parsley, and then drizzle the remaining olive oil on top. Next, pour remaining lemon juice and water over top of it all.

Place the dish in the oven, uncovered, and bake for approximately one hour. Remove dish, and use a fork to turn the potatoes over. Bake for another half hour, until most of the juices have evaporated from the pan.

Apitaye Massou! | Wiisinin! | Bon appetit!

10 Tips for Starting a Freezer Program in Your Community:



A well-stocked freezer in South Indian Lake.

1. **Talk to someone who has done it before.**
2. **Get community support and involvement.** Getting a program up and running takes a group of committed people.
3. **Find a space** to base the program where you can keep your freezer and also process the food.
4. **Find some funding.** Places to start would be your health centre, band, or local government.
5. **Get the right equipment.** Think beyond freezers to processing and harvesting equipment like a meat grinder and fishing nets.
6. **Get youth involved** to help them learn about food traditions.
7. **Get elders and other harvesters involved** to share their knowledge.
8. **Respect community traditions, safe food handling and hunting regulations.**
9. **Help people to contribute.** Even small honorariums to cover the cost of fuel and ammunition can help people put food in the freezer.
10. **Outreach.** Sometimes the people who need the food from the freezer the most may be isolated and hard to reach.

Submit a story

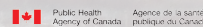
Please send along your northern food stories and photos and share your stories with neighbours in the north.

Send your story ideas to: anna@foodmattersmanitoba.ca



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