

Northern SUN

Stories of growing & gathering



Malcolm, a first year gardener, holds up a cabbage he grew.



Onions harvested from the community garden.

Sharing the Harvest in Brochet

This summer was the second year of community gardening in Brochet and it has grown in incredible ways since it began. Trina, the local Community Health Representative, has been spearheading the project and had a vision for 2014 of what was needed to make it even better for the community.

To carry out her vision, Trina applied for funding for the garden through the Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, and Community Fund, with support from Food Matters Manitoba. They received the grant, and used the funds to bring a group of community members down to Leaf Rapids for an intensive northern gardening training and to hire five staff to help with the garden over the summer. Having the extra helpers working in the garden all summer made a huge difference to its success. Together with Trina, they supported community members to grow a tremendous amount of nutritious food for the community.

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Growing Hope in a Garden:

Reviving an Opaskwayak Cree Nation tradition

Traditionally the majority of families of Opaskwayak Cree Nation (OCN) had their own small gardens or gardened communally but, over the last three decades, gardening in the community gradually died out. This year a group of dedicated community members decided to reverse that trend and start a community garden.

Through the support of OCN Chief and Council, three portions of land on the reserve were dedicated to the growth of orchard trees and vegetable gardens, and the Opaskwayak Culture and Healthy Living Initiatives (OCHLI) group was born. The group made plans for the gardens and, in early 2014, successfully applied for a grant from the Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, and Community Fund.

Each gardening member made a commitment to spend at least one hour per week in the garden. Over the summer, they slowly overcame the initial aches and pains that came with gardening and were thrilled to see what materialized from the seeds they so carefully planted. As word about the garden spread, people who initially saw themselves as “too old to do anything” began to take part and the garden became a positive central focus for the community.

The garden season wrapped up with some learning and sharing events for the group and planning is already underway for next season. As interest and participation in the garden grows, so too does a renewed sense of hope as more and more members of OCN realize the benefits of exercise and activity that can come from building a garden in their community. ●



Community members picking veggies and weeding.



Patti Constant helps out with the harvest.



Mabel Bignell and granddaughter.



The potato garden.

Harvest in Brochet *continued from page 1*

When fall approached, community members harvested all of the food remaining at the garden and divided up the final harvest to give to the Elders. The following day Malcolm, a grade 9 student who worked in the garden all summer, delivered the foods that he had helped to grow. The Elders were thrilled by the gift. They expressed their thanks and delight about all that had been grown. As the day of deliveries came to a close, Trina shared some reflections on the summer: "Gardening is everybody's business," she said. "People in the community, when they see what we've grown here, they are amazed. Now support for our project will really grow, as we've got the Elders on our side." ●



Nikki and Els Veurink putting honey into containers for storage.

A Sweet Harvest in Meadow Portage

Things were buzzing at the Veurink family farm this year as the family decided to try their hands at keeping bees. With support from the Northern Association of Community Councils, the Meadow Portage family received twelve hives to get started. One of the Veurink daughters, 16 year old Nikki, took charge of the operation as her own personal project on their family farm. With some help from her siblings and parents, Nikki was able to extract 353 kgs of honey (that is almost 800 lbs) at the end of the season. That amount will get even larger once their hives get fully established over the coming years. The family kept the bulk of their honey for their own personal use this year and will add it to things like baking and drinks. Nikki also gave some of their honey away to community members as a way to promote Manitoba beekeeping and to start marketing their honey, as the family hopes to sell their excess in the future. Next year, the Veurinks plan to split their hives to increase the yield of their beekeeping project. ●



Brochet residents learn how to start seeds in Leaf Rapids.



Linda and her grandson beside their home garden.



Hank Veurink running the motorized extractor.



Starting a Community Garden

by Leon Simard

A community garden is a shared space where a group of people come together to grow food. Community gardens can consist of individual plots, a shared plot, or a combination of the two. Community gardens can:

- Provide access to fresh, healthy low-cost food
- Encourage physical activity for all age groups
- Create a social gathering place for the community and encourage the sharing of inter-generational knowledge
- Enable participants to learn basic gardening skills, from sowing seeds to harvesting and food preservation
- Provide a space to build self-confidence, wellness and personal skills
- Improve the local environment

Although there is no one way to start a community garden, the first step is to identify a group of interested people. Finding partners within the community can help a lot with successfully starting the garden.

Tips to get people involved in the garden:

- Let people know the benefits (eg; health, education, social activity)
- Get the word around - talk about the garden to friends and families
- Partner with community organizations; talk to groups such as schools, health centers, seniors groups or local councils, clubs and businesses
- Create garden posters and put notices on local websites and social media
- Make a display to give out information at community events

Once you've got community support, the next thing to figure out is where to build your garden. There are many things to keep in mind when selecting a garden site. Key questions for site selection include:

- Does it get at least six hours of sunlight per day?
- Is there access to water?
- Is there enough space to allow for growth and expansion?
- Is the area flat?
- Is it close to the people who plan to use it?
- Is it visible from the road? (A visible site will be safer and attract community support)
- Is there space for a storage shed, rain barrels, greenhouse, rest area or washrooms?

The pictures at the top of the page are from community gardens in Peguis, Little Black River and Canupawka.

Honey Dill Carrots

Ingredients:

- 1 pound of carrots, peeled and cut in thick slices
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon lemon or orange juice
- 2 tablespoons fresh dill, chopped (or 1 tablespoon dried dill)
- salt and pepper, to taste



1. In a medium saucepan, bring water to a boil. Add salt and carrots. Cook for about 5 or 6 minutes, until tender.
2. Drain the carrots and return them to the pan. Add butter, honey and lemon juice. Cook for about 5 minutes more, until a glaze coats the carrots.
3. Season with dill, salt and pepper and toss to coat.

Apitaye Massou! | Wiisinin! | Bon appetit!

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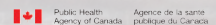
Please send along your northern food stories and photos and share your stories with neighbours in the north.

Send your story ideas to:
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