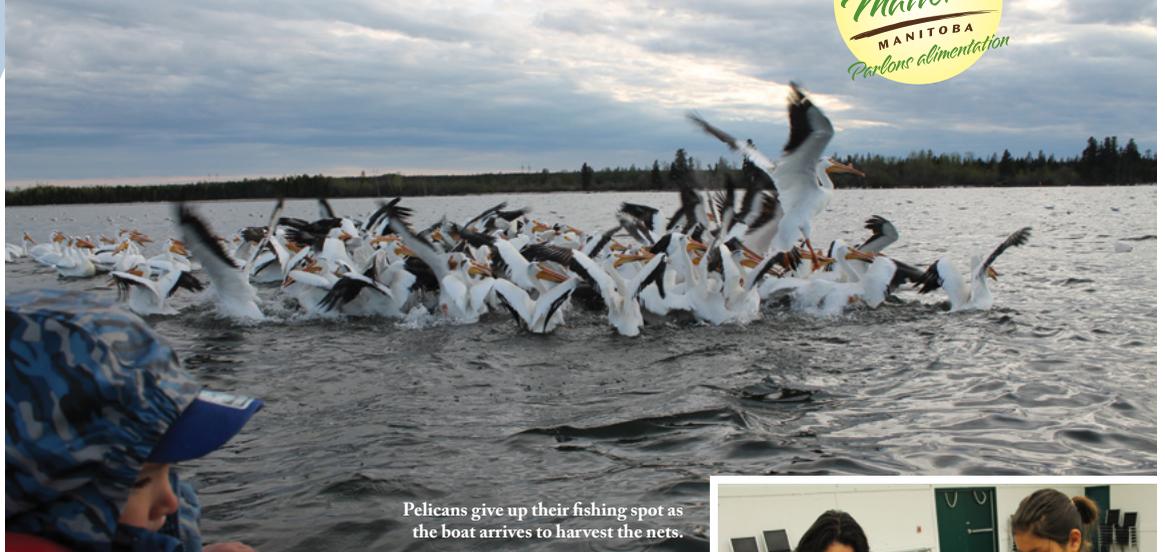


Northern SUN

Stories of growing & gathering



Pelicans give up their fishing spot as the boat arrives to harvest the nets.

Grand Rapids Grow North has a Focus on Fish

Even at the end of the Grand Rapids Grow North Conference, there was still at least one youth who couldn't get enough. Having just won her first fishing rod at the conference that day, Louanna asked Food Matters Manitoba staff if they could take her out fishing that evening. With permission from her mom, the group set out on an evening of fishing. "Holy! It's a monster fish" she exclaimed as she reeled in her first fish of the season! A passing boat of fishermen nodded and called to the shore that it was a good catch.

In Grand Rapids fishing is more than a recreational pastime, it is an important source of income as well as fresh and healthy food. Still, many in the community haven't had much of a chance to learn how to fish or what to do with what they catch. For this year's Grow North Conference, organizers did their best to create that opportunity for people.

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Grow North conference goes practice filleting.



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Louanna, age 12, with her first fish of the season

The night before the conference, local fisherman Kevin Ault took conference organizers out on the water to pull the nets he had set in preparation for the next day’s workshops. Speaking proudly about his home community, Kevin said many fishermen come up from the United States because “Grand Rapids is the best spot to fish in Manitoba!”

The next day, community members rolled up their sleeves for some hands-on activities. Local fishermen showed participants how to fillet northern pike, whitefish and pickerel. Everyone was encouraged to get lots of practice because they got to take home what they filleted. Participants also got a chance to learn how to smoke fish, and took some samples home for themselves.



Co-ops Catching on in Garden Hill

Garden Hill fisherman fishing on pristine Island Lake to sell fish in Winnipeg.

In Garden Hill First Nation, fishing is an important way of life for many.

Over the past year, local fishermen have been working with researchers from the University of Manitoba to make sure that it also becomes a way for community members to earn a good living.

Before the project got started, the fishing co-op in Garden Hill was struggling. Their commercial license didn’t allow them to sell fish in Manitoba and required that the fish be sold whole, taking valuable processing jobs away from the community. This and other factors meant that the co-ops costs were often higher than the revenue they brought in, leaving nothing to put towards improving their business.

This year, with the creation of the new Island Lake Wabung Fisheries Co-op, things are beginning to change. One important piece was creating a solid business plan, which will help guide the co-op into the future. Another key piece was getting a new license, with the support of U of M researchers Mohammad Rony and Shirley Thompson. The co-op’s new license allows them to sell in Manitoba, meaning new customers in the Island Lake area and in the south of the province can buy their fish. They have also received permission for the fish to be processed locally, creating



PHOTO CREDIT: SHIRLEY THOMPSON

Buyer of Garden Hill’s fresh fish at Neechi Commons in Winnipeg.



PHOTO CREDITS: MOHAMMAD RONY

jobs for trained community members. These changes cut down transportation costs and open up new markets, meaning the fishermen have a better chance of earning a living doing what they do. They also help cut down on waste, because it means that some of the fish that are less popular for sale in the south can now be sold locally or distributed to community members through the new country foods program.

According to Rony, one of the great things about this project is that it is not only about harvesting food. The community members who have been involved have also learned about business planning and co-op structure so that they can take their co-op to the next stage. A group of artists in the community was inspired by the project, and have now come together to work on starting a co-op of their own. It is clear that the impacts of the project stretch past the fishermen to the whole community.



Certified Garden Hill First Nation's community members fillet fish at the local fish processing and packaging facility.

5 Essential Items in a Basic Tackle Box

Here's a list of a few essentials for summer cast fishing (plus a few extras) from a seasoned northern angler.

- **1 spool of 20-30lb line** - usually when purchasing a new fishing rod, the line provided is 8-10 lbs. This is a good line for small fish like perch, but if you're planning on angling larger fish like northern pike or pickerel it's good to use a stronger line.
- **5-10 metal leads** - these are what you'll be tying on the end of you line. It prevents the fish from biting through the line and makes changing lures easier.
- **10-20 lures** - there are as many lures as there are stars in the sky! Depending on what you're looking to catch, and who you ask, there's a favourite method or lure that works like a charm. Ask around for advice on what to use, or you can experiment yourself to see which works best.
- **Needle-Nose Pliers** - needed for de-barbing fish hooks. In Manitoba it is against the law to use barbed fish hooks, and you will be fined if caught using one. They're also handy for unhooking angled fish.
- **Fishing Gloves** - special gloves with grip that allow you to handle any fish you catch easily.

Optional Extras:

- **Scale & Tape Measure** - to weigh and measure your catch and brag to your friends.
- **Filleting Knife** - to process and take home your catch.
- **Fish Stringer** - if you're keeping your fish to take home, this ensures your catch doesn't flop away and stays nice and fresh.

What are your favourite lures and fishing tricks? Send us your thoughts and we can share them in a future edition!

Preserving Your Catch



Smoking Fish

Smoking fish gives it a delicious flavour and helps it keep longer. There are many different ways to build a smokehouse, and lots of different types of wood can be used to for smoking. Some suggestions are white poplar or black balm (aspen). Make sure the wood is not too dry or it will not smoke well.

- Cut fish into uniform strips.
- Rinse and air dry all fish before smoking.
- Prepare a salt-water brine of 2 ½ tablespoons plain salt to 1 cup water.
- Place fish in brine for 15 minutes per 1-2.5 cm thickness of the fish.
- Remove fish from brine and rinse with cold water.
- Place fish, skin side down, on an oiled smoker rack.
- Start with a low temperature in the smoker, around 66°C/150°F.
- After two hours, increase the heat so the temperature is approx. 93°-104°C/200°-220°F.
- If the smoke house does not provide a temperature above this, the final product can be cooked in a kitchen oven.
- Fish is done when it is dry and smokey in colour.
- Refrigerate or freeze any leftovers. Refrigerated fish should be eaten within 2-3 weeks, frozen will keep longer.

Adapted from: Kéhté Ochek Sipi Minowasowak; The Forgotten Traditional Foods of Fisher River, Community Food Security Manual.

Canning Fish

Fish is a low acid food and must be canned using a pressure canner. Be sure to carefully follow manufacturer's instructions for using and cooling the pressure canner, they can be dangerous if not used correctly.

- Preserve fish in 250 ml (half-pint) or 500 ml (pint) jars only. Larger 1 L (quart) jars are not recommended for preserving fish.
- Jars must be clean, but need not be heated prior to adding fish.
- Pack clean, chilled fish into canning jars filling to within 1 inch (2.5 cm) of top rim.
- Mix together:
 - 2 teaspoons vinegar
 - 2 tablespoons ketchup
 - 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - A pinch of dry mustard
 - Pepper to taste
- Pour this mixture over the fish in the jar.
- Clean the rim of the jar and put on hot sealing discs.
- In a pressure canner at 10 lbs (68 kPa), process 250 or 500 ml jars for 100 minutes.

Adapted from: Traditional Methods of Canning and Preserving; Recipes and Tips from Alberta's First Nations People. Recipe by Florence Youngchief, CHR – Kehewin First Nation.

Freezing Fish

"Anything that lives in water should be frozen in water." – Mary Rain, Elder, Paul First Nation

- Clean the fish; take the insides out.
- Cut it so it is ready to cook.
- Place fish in a clean, empty ice cream pail or milk carton.
- Fill the pail or carton with water and close it up. Make sure to leave enough room for the ice to expand so the container doesn't crack.
- Label and put in freezer.
- The fish will keep for at least 1 month.
- The taste of the fish is better this way than if it was frozen in a freezer bag, there is no freezer burn and it does not dry out.

Adapted from: Traditional Methods of Canning and Preserving; Recipes and Tips from Alberta's First Nations People. Recipe by Mary Rain, Elder – Paul First Nation.

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:
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