

NORTHERN SUN



ANISKOTAPAN

The Cree word aniskotapan, or capan for short, refers to knots in a string. It is the word for both great grandparent and great grandchild. Capan acknowledges the continuous spirit that flows through time that is in each of us, connecting the generations to the knowledge of millennia.

Elder Dave Courchene spoke these words to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2014): “It’s going to be the spirit of our ancestors, the spirit that’s going to help us to reclaim our rightful place in our homeland. There’s certainly a lot of challenges, but with the help of the spirit, we will overcome [them]... We’ve arrived in a time of great change and great opportunity... We are the true leaders of our homeland and we have a sacred responsibility to teach all those that have come to our homeland... We have great responsibilities as people to take care of the Earth, to speak on behalf of Mother Earth. That is our responsibility and that’s the kind of leadership that we must reflect as a people.”

In this issue of the Northern Sun, we are happy to share stories of work going on in the North where the spirit is flowing.

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LEARNING FROM THE LAND

The Northern Lifestyles program at Churchill Community High School (CCHS) in La Ronge focuses on instruction for preserving, maintaining and enhancing a unique way of life which is still practiced by people in Northern Saskatchewan. It was developed by Northern Lights School Division, Ile a la Crosse School Division, Lac La Ronge Indian Band and Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation to connect a new generation to the traditions. While the primary subjects for learning are the students, there are opportunities for community-wide learning, connecting the youth with Elders and parents/guardians from the community who partner in the delivery of the program alongside Christine Ravenis, the course teacher.

Much of the experiential learning takes place outside the classroom. Specific activities revolve around the seasons: Boreal Forest Berries and Mushroom Harvest, Sage and Sweetgrass Harvest, and Winter Camps, for example. There is also the intriguingly named, "Post-Apocalyptic Survival Training", a 3-day program held in the fall. Completing the program, students accomplish many certifications, including, Trapper's Training, Hunter's Safety, Wilderness First Aid and Chainsaw Safety.

Working the CCHS trap line is one of the activities woven throughout the year. Christine writes about some of the experience shared by the students in the January trap line trip.



"Youth have been growing in appreciation for their heritage, developing skills and knowledge and gaining confidence and self-esteem."

**Jarret Nelson,
Prince Albert Grand Council**

"We made it to the cabin, despite some mechanical challenges with our old bravos (aka snowmobiles). At the cabin, we cooked a delicious lunch of moose meat and garden onion. We had hot tea made with blueberry leaves, rosehips, mint and rat root.

After talking about the Birds Canada - Saskatchewan Bird Atlas research project we are part of, we set up the bio-acoustic microphones and set the date to start recording on March 15. We hope to hear sounds of owls through the breeding season as they return from their winter grounds. We will return with second semester students in February to set up another two microphones, then again in June, to collect the data boxes and send them to the University."

Trap line lessons prepare students for their place in the string of connection within the local and broader community, ensuring the movement of the spirit is strong in Northern Saskatchewan.



LEADERS FOR OUR HOMELAND

All you have to do is exchange “hello” with Jacob Bird and you start thinking, “this guy has a future in media”. His deep, rich voice is a shoe-in for narration. But it is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of his talents. Jacob has a head full of stories and a passion for telling them through video. FMM commissioned Jacob to make a short film, *Journey to the North*, about a recent Northern Youth Gathering. We are proud to be able to contribute to the development of this young artist.

When the 18-year-old student at Frontier Collegiate in Cranberry Portage signed up for the Youth Gathering it was like the stars aligned. There was funding in place from the Public Health Agency of Canada for a video resource to document the Gatherings and a desire to share the impact of the project in a way that respected the voice of the participants.

Jacob’s face lights up when he talks about his 5-week training course back in 2016 at the Adam



Jacob with Just TV staff Paul James and Addison Sandy

Beach Film Institute in Winnipeg. “It is when my life changed,” he shares. He is grateful for Mr. McLean, his grade 10 teacher in Black River, where Jacob was raised, who arranged for him to take the course. When he entered Frontier Collegiate to finish high school, Mr. Murnick, the video teacher, became his new mentor and encouraged his development. After graduation this spring Jacob is headed for Red River College to further his craft.

Jacob identified that he wanted the film to convey adventure, reconciliation, community, resilience and youth empowerment, the core aspects of the weekend long event for him. He is responsible for

the concept, script, photography and editing with the support of Just TV, a program out of the West Broadway Neighbourhood Centre focused on mentoring young video artists. Jacob was able to travel to Winnipeg and work directly with their staff. “Working with them was amazing,” Jacob explains, “I learned so much and I will be teaching that to my classmates back up North.” Jacob has plans to connect with Just TV for more projects in the future.

Check out foodmattersmanitoba.ca to see the video. Plans are for an official launch at the next Grow North Conference in Summer 2020.



Frontier School Division recently brought together youth from around Manitoba to celebrate their culture and share experiences. Drum making, traditional dancing and songs, trapping, soap stone carving, shelter making, and processing a caribou deepened connections for the youth. Demian Lawrenchuk, Northern Partnerships Coordinator with Food Matters Manitoba was on hand to teach and mentor the students.

GROWING A HEALTHY TRADITION

Life Water Gardens is producing fresh produce in January thanks to a state-of-the-art farming system now fully operational in Norway House. Through hydroponic technology, a form of soil-less growing, leafy green produce started from seed can be on the kitchen table in as little as six weeks. The nutrient rich water bathes the roots while specially designed lights support plant growth. As Elder Courchene says, “We’ve arrived in a time of great change and great opportunity.”

The two refurbished shipping containers, manufactured by Growcer, arrived in Norway House in May 2019 and the first harvest of romaine lettuce, kale and salad mix was ready in August just in time for the annual York Boat Festival. The produce will be available to the community through a combination of retail sales through local stores, wholesale to institutions and donations in the community.

Shipping container farms aren’t new, but the Growcer model is designed for use in harsh climates, like Manitoba’s North. The units are insulated enough to withstand days at 60 degrees below zero. Investment in the insulation and high-quality lighting systems means the

units are more expensive, but also more efficient than those designed for milder environments. The “Arctic Growing System Unit” in Norway House can actually be more productive than a similar farm in Toronto or Montreal, producing in excess of 8,000 pounds of healthy food annually.

Even with the cost of the unit and the energy bills required to keep the farm warm, the system can be more economical than shipping produce thousands of kilometers, particularly when factoring in the excellent quality of the locally grown food.

Growcer was founded in response to the high cost of food in the North, initially in cooperation with Inuit communities in Alaska and Canada. In addition to addressing food security, the farm creates local employment. A similar unit has been installed in Churchill and other communities in the North are now expressing interest.

While kale and bok choy may not have been a part of the traditional Indigenous diet, neither were soda and chips and other highly processed foods.





Through the combined efforts of the project partners, Norway House Cree Nation, Kinosao Sipi Business Development Corporation, BDO Canada LLP and Food Matters Manitoba, an environment is being created for a convenient, affordable, healthy food alternative.

The local management team, now trained in operating the farm, will be working with the community to evolve the product line. Future plans include associated outreach initiatives like cooking classes to help in establishing interest and knowledge.

RECIPES IN CREE

Traditional cooking with a twist might be the best way to describe the newest edition of the *Fisher River Food Security Manual* (Cookbook) now with Cree alongside English. There are recipes for local greens and berries, large and small game (moose to rabbits), game birds (geese and ducks), fish, and even a few to satisfy your sweet tooth like rosehip syrup.

An extensive section of practical information is a great resource. Everything from kitchen safety to tips on preparing and preserving food from the land along with reminders about Canada's Food Guide is covered. The recipes and tips throughout were collected from Elders and community members from

Fisher River Cree Nation and augmented by material from publications by nutrition experts.

From the forward: "This cookbook is more than a collection of recipes. It is a path back to our traditional ways that can serve as a guide for anyone with an interest in traditional foods and associated Indigenous language."

The book (\$20) is available by contacting the Department of Indigenous Studies at the University of Winnipeg, 204-786-9035.

We chose this "reminder of summer" recipe from the book, to warm up the kitchen on a cold day.



Oven Barbequed Rabbit (PITAHPISKAHIKAN WAPOS)

- 1 cup vinegar
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- ½ cup ketchup
- ¼ cup butter or margarine
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 2 green peppers, cut up
- 1 large rabbit, cut up

1. Heat oven to 300° F
2. In medium saucepan, combine all the barbeque sauce ingredients. Cook over medium-high heat until bubbly, stirring occasionally.
3. Reduce heat. Simmer 10 minutes.
4. Arrange rabbit pieces in single layer in 13 x 9 baking pan.
5. Pour sauce evenly over meat.
6. Bake until tender, 2 ½ to 3 hours, turning meat occasionally.