

NORTHERN SUN



Spring is a time of renewal. As we shed our winter layers and await the ground to defrost we're getting ready for whats to come. Spring is a busy time for Food Matters Manitoba and for our Northern partners who are preparing for a season of growing and harvesting.

This spring, as we're getting ready for abundance and growth with the warmer months, we're also preparing for the change that is inevitable with the onset of Spring.

Our cover story is a feature on the traplines in Gillam from the perspective of Myles, the Northern Facilitator at Food Matters. The rest of this issue is dedicated to one of our long lasting community leaders, Morgan Serger. Morgan has been an incredible leader in York Landing. Him and his partner, Krista have been incredible and dedicated champions of food security in York Landing since 2016 and will be dearly missed in the community and as a partner of Food Matters Manitoba. On behalf of the Food Matters team, we extend our sincerest gratitude to Morgan and Krista Sergers for their food related initiatives in York Landing and wish them the best of luck in their future endeavours amongst a new community. Thank you Morgan and Krista!

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FROM DESK TO TRAPLINE

As a freshly trained employee in the northern and community partnerships program at Food Matters Manitoba, most of my contact with the north had been from behind a desk due to the pandemic

As inter personal connection and community presence had been explained to me as being such a substantial part of the position, it was becoming more evident that I had to get out of the office and onto the land. Over the winter break, I packed my warmest clothes, and headed up to Gillam. Demian Lawrenchuk, the organizer of my visit, picked me up at the airport and took us out to the bush. Demian led me and a youth to a trapping line to check if any rabbits or foxes had shown up. He showed us how to look for tracks, where to place a trap, and how to camouflage them for success. As a Winnipegger without the slightest idea how to trap, the 8 year old youth was helping me with some pointers.

After learning from some of Gillams youth, Demian and I continued on to meet up with some members of Norway house and Cross Lake for a sweat ceremony. While having been to one previously, meeting with different Cree community members while helping with the preparation allowed me to gain new insight into the tradition. The fire building, sharing of traditional food and overall experience of welcoming gave me a better sense of northern culture and its openness to one another.



Youth from Gillam with a rabbit from a trap



Demian Lawrenchuck and Lawrence Saunders

The following day was spent on a trapping trail. Travelling by snowmobile for hours, stopping every so often at traps set earlier in the season to see if anything had been caught. Our trip to check on the traps took most of the day. There was a single martin in the traps. Each aspect of the trip has shown me a glimpse of the cultural connection between northern harvesting of the land and the respect and importance the harvest has within the communities and practices.

The difference from how I acquire nutrient dense food in Winnipeg was apparent, and time and money for trapping was steep, however the individuals who harvest the land in Gillam are actively pursuing a traditional way of life and gave me a glance into the winter world on Swampy Cree lands that will forever be a lens I hope to see through.

-Myles King, Food Matters Manitoba





Photos by Demian Lawrenchuck

A LETTER FROM MORGAN SERGER

In late 2016 my family and I were invited to and moved to Kaweciwasihk (York Landing).

During the last 5 years we have been blessed to be a part of the community and explore food sovereignty and local food sustainability. This has included some things that have worked well like a greenhouse and garden and other things that have not worked out so well - like planting wild rice! Along with the greenhouse and garden other successful partnerships have included developing healthy soil, snaring rabbits, collecting berries & wild edibles, harvesting medicines, raising and hatching chickens (for year round eggs and meat,) and hosting small workshops on some of these topics.

Perhaps the most enjoyable part of all these things has been the relationships. Though the current health situation has limited some contact over the past 5 years we have been able to get out on the land with community members, have small gatherings to participate in agriculture in the back yard and regular visits of people who just want to come and see the chickens. Some of the chickens that we hatched here in York Landing have gone on to their own adventures and are now laying eggs in Norway House!

As a part of all these relationships we have heard stories from kayas or a long time ago. Stories of wolf and fox farms, gardens and



“The relationships we develop bring a richness to food security and a simplicity to life”

Morgan Serger

harvesting wild foods up on the Kische Kami (Hudson Bay) coast, stories of chickens and greenhouses here in York Landing and just stories that bring up a smile as people reminisce when living closer to the land and food was more common. I am thankful for all the good food that our Creator has made for us and it continues to be a pleasure to explore these relationships and how we can both respect all of creation and use these resources for the health of our families and communities.

One final fun note on our learning here in York Landing - soil development! We've learned there is a specific smell that belongs to healthy soil. This smell mirrors what the science says should indicate healthy soil. We started our garden with less than an inch of topsoil and just pure clay below. The clay smells a certain way and so does the peat moss from the bush and sand from the beach. Good soil has a certain PH and other qualities and as we tilled the ground and mixed the different components

(clay, peat, sand, compost, chicken manure, sticks, charcoal, broken down drywall, etc.) the smell would change.

We didn't get an official soil test but now, at the end of our time here the soil just smells right. There is medicine for the soil just like people. For a while the squash would rot at the blossom ends - so we added crushed egg shells and the core of drywall and voila the plants were back to being healthy! There are many more stories of things we are learning but it all came down to trial and error, listening, learning and just making it work. Now we have over a foot and a half of beautifully smelling and productive soil at little to no cost other than some sweat and hard work. The work is good, the relationships great and the taste of fresh food harvested locally, sustainably and healthily can't be beat!

In hope,

- Morgan Serger



York Factory First Nation Chief and Council
recognizes

Morgan Serger & Krista Serger

for sharing their passion and knowledge with the community
about locally harvested, healthy organic food. They have
had their hands in the earth and on the land through their
greenhouse, garden, and chicken coop in York Landing.

They've promoted healthy relationships with
food - showing great respect for the gifts that the
plants and animals provide. This transference of
knowledge was shared with the youth who were
invited to help tend to the chickens and gardens.

On behalf of the community, thank
you for all you have done and for
your commitment to making local
agriculture successful in the north!

Photos: Morgan Serger's
Krista Serger's greenhouse
and chicken coop in
York Landing.



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