

NORTHERN SUN



In what feels like no time at all another Summer season has come to an end. This summer was full of learning, growing, sharing, and for the first time in a long time, gathering and celebrating together.

This summer our Northern community partners were busy taking on incredible food initiatives and harvesting in their communities. At the turn of the season, we visited Evan of Crane River tapping Maple trees for syrup. Later in the summer members of seven communities came together in Kinosao Sipi/Norway House for the annual Grow North gathering. We've collected stories of four dedicated community members; Lester, Floyd, Sheri, and Renuka. Read all about them and our stories of the summer inside!



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MAPLE TAPPING IN CRANE RIVER

As the seasons started to change, the trees of Manitoba began to thaw, and with it, an opportunity to seize the liquid gold running through the maple trees across the province. The warmer weather came in waves, giving opportunity for the trees to thaw, then reverting back to cold days and colder nights. This pattern meant timing a multi day trip to join a plentiful harvest was going to be difficult. The goal was to join the community of O-chi-chak-ko-sipi for tree tapping, with the land based Jordan's principle, Evan Laquette coordinating the event. The school and community were all invited to join, regardless

of the conditions.

Right as the plans were coming together, warnings came for Manitoba's storm of the century. The trees, still yet to produce a steady stream of sap, were set to be delayed even more. Evan made the call, deciding to go ahead with the plan but only as a one day stint before the storm was expected to hit. So Monday morning I headed up to O-chi-chak-ko-sipi to join Evan, his Co-worker Kyle Richard, and anyone else who wanted to come along for the journey.



Maple Tree with taps to collect sap for syrup



When I arrived, Evan met me at the band store, proceeding to give me a short tour while we gathered supplies needed for the tapping. After that, we headed down to the community beach, a campground with a dozen or so perfect maples all tapped with buckets already hanging and slowly filling with sap and slush. Kyle joined us as we prepped a fire pit for boiling down the sap. After the fire was big enough, we threw on a pot and dumped all of the sap that was harvested into it.

The next few hours were spent maintaining the fire, stirring the sap, topping off the pot, and meeting with community members who came by to check out the action. The wind coming off the lake made the fire shift its hot spots often. We continued to boil the clear liquid down until it slowly shifted into browner and browner states, thickening at the same time. Evan walked me through the steps of maple tapping, how to identify the best trees, how to make sure not to damage the tree, and a bit about the history of maple tapping with the community.

Once the syrup boiled down enough, we moved the operation inside, allowing for a more controlled final stage, ensuring we didn't over boil it. After carefully eyeing the sugary liquid while on low heat, the final product was ready. The timing was perfect - the syrup was ready before the threat of the storm got too severe for me to travel home.

Thank you Evan and the rest of O-chi-chak-ko-sipi for welcoming me into your community on such short notice. I look forward to more visits in the future and the continued spread of maple tapping knowledge in the community!

- Myles King, Northern Coordinator, Food Matters Manitoba

◀ Evan Laquette, Kyle Richard, and youth tending to the sap

GROW NORTH 2022

This year we were finally able to gather for Grow North after two years of isolation during the pandemic. Grow North brings together community members who are taking on food initiatives in their communities. This year, the Food Matters

team and seven communities gathered in Kinosao Sipi/Norway House to teach, learn, grow, share and celebrate together after many years of isolation and anticipation.

Smoking Geese

Earlier in the season, many communities came together in Churchill to take part in a Goose Hunt. Some of the goose from this hunt were smoked and used in a soup for the welcoming meal at Grow North.



Berry Picking

Elder Madeline Gamblin-Walker from Kinosao Sipi/Norway House led the group in blueberry picking. The blueberry harvest was eaten with breakfast and mixed into soups.

Vermicomposting

Frontier School Division and Leaf Rapids Grow North program presented a workshop on vermicomposting.



Fishing

Small groups went out fishing on Molson Lake. This fishing expedition was led by Lester Balfour. Nets were set and many fish were caught. Here is a fisher-in-training with a Northern Pike.



Harvesting Traditional Medicine

While the fishing took place, others went out on boats to harvest traditional medicine. It was then processed back at camp for future use.



Canning

Once the fish were caught, it had to be processed. Pictured here is OCC/o-chi chak-ko sipi Elder Rose leading the fish preservation and canning workshop.



Continuing the Conversation on Food Security

Throughout the weekend community members shared their thoughts on food security in their respective communities.

FISHING WITH LESTER

Lester Balfour has spent the summer taking youth out on the water to teach them how to catch and harvest fish in Kinosao Sipi/Norway House.

Over the past couple of months, Lester has spent over fifty days harvesting and processing food with youth. On his trips he often has around twelve youth with him on every fishing outing, with new youth from the community joining him every time he goes out.

Together Lester and the youth have caught and processed over 500 fish! The 500 fish caught include Whitefish, Walleye, Sturgeon, Trout and Musky. Most of the outings have been on nearby Molson Lake. From these trips, the food goes to the families of the youth, Elders, and others in the community who benefit greatly from Lester's harvests.

Outside of pole fishing and net fishing, Lester has taught the youth how to fillet fish, can food, build and use a smokehouse, process moose, and even speak Cree. Occasionally Lester will indulge the youth with some water tubing and baseball once the hard work of catching and harvesting fish is complete.

The youth are evidently happy to be spending time on the Lake with Lester, where they are learning about their culture, having fun, and bringing home food for their families and community.

Lester Balfour is running his program for youth through the Harvester Program at Food Matters. The Harvester Program gives resources to individuals to engage their community in harvesting initiatives.



“It’s a good life to
eat this well”

- Lester Balfour



HARVESTING IN SHERRIDON

In 2022, the Harvester Program took big steps at Food Matters Manitoba. A partnership was established with the community of Sherridon. Community members began harvesting with resources provided from our Harvester Program.

Harvesters in Sherridon identified gaps in their community that was preventing them from harvesting successfully for their community. They identified that they lacked a proper space to process all of the food that they were harvesting and gathering.

Once this gap had been identified the community decided to build a processing centre that would offer a space to process their harvests and allow them to process more food for their community.

The building of the processing centre is being taken on by dedicated community member, Floyd. Floyd has been hard at work to ensure that the members of Sherridon community have a place to process food for their families. Often he'll have volunteers to help him, but on some days he does the work alone. Every moment Floyd has to spare he is putting towards the processing centre.

When he's not busying himself with the build, you can find Floyd out on the land where he is setting nets to fish and providing several families in the community with fresh fish. Besides fish, Floyd provides some Elders in the community with duck, wild chicken, moose, and most

favourably, beaver.

Besides the processing plant, Food Matters has sent seeds to five families and soil to many members of the community to start or expand their existing gardens.

“One Elder was so proud [of what she had grown] she brought over some of her potatoes. They were huge! The pride on her face was incredible to see”
-Dee Hatley

The community of Sherridon is excited to enter the next year of growing with some left over seeds from this year's gardens.

Dedicated community members, Floyd and Dee are looking to the future, as the processing centre is almost complete. They are planning for their first adventure at the completed processing centre - hosting the community after a successful moose or caribou hunt. They hope to teach the community the process of breaking down the animal and provide cultural teachings to the children and youth.

While the harvesters in Sherridon have primarily gone out on the land without financial employment based support (honorarium, fuel, rental coverage), their use of the initial equipment provided showed amazing promise and enthusiasm. At Food Matters, we hope to have the capacity to support them more in the seasons to come.

“Floyd along with a few other members have been actively providing fish and game to the Elders and community members who are in need. The Elders are very thankful and get very excited to see Floyd when he drops it off.”

–Dee Hatley



A TRIP TO WINNIPEG

In early June, one of our community partners, Sheri and two youth from Shamattawa visited Winnipeg to visit chicken and livestock operations in the area.

The activities of the weekend began at Fort Whyte Alive where they met Heather Skrypyk, the farm's Operations Manager who walked the group through Fort Whyte's chicken operations. Including, what steps they have been taking to minimize the risk of the avian influenza - a large concern in the spring. Heather gave a tour of their rabbit livestock operation, the kunekune pigs. Along the way teaching Sheri and the youth how they tend to and process each of the animals. The tour of Fort Whyte ended with a look at their greenhouse, displaying all of the plants they had growing and their techniques to produce a successful harvest.

The group had a break in their tour at Feast Café Bistro for lunch, a restaurant that makes Indigenous based foods, and Indigenous owned and staffed.

After lunch, the group headed to Liela North school to visit their chicken operation. This middle school, located in the north end of Winnipeg, has been engaging youth by working directly with laying hens. This program is being led by Ashley Taylor, the sustainability teacher at the school, and supported by volunteers.

On Sunday, Sheri participated in a traditional Cree sweat at the sweatlodge located behind the University of Manitoba. Sheri and the youth enjoyed every part of the trip. Sheri was happy to learn more about

chicken and livestock operations that she could bring back to her own projects in Shamattawa. The youth agreed that a highlights of the trip was learning about the rabbits at Fort Whyte Alive!



A GARDEN SCIENCE PROJECT

This past year, one of South Indian Lakes' treasured community food leaders had to leave the community. Renuka Ari became a teacher at the grade school in South Indian Lake just before the pandemic in 2020. In the short time that she was there, her place in the community was highly regarded and influential to many of its younger members.

“I’m a plant person, not a pet person”

says Renuka as she speaks about the indoor gardens she started with her class as a hands-on exploration of ecosystems in her grade school science class.

Renuka started the indoor gardens with some cardboard boxes, a handful of garbage bags, soil, seeds, the enthusiasm of her students, their willingness to get their hands dirty and learn something new, and of course, her own

love of plants.

Throughout this project, Renuka not only witnessed the seeds growing into vegetables that she and her students could eat, but she saw tremendous growth amongst the students in her class. Students who were once anxious found calm and focus while working in the gardens.

The students and many other members of the community helped Renuka to keep the gardens thriving. With all of this help, the gardens yielded lettuce, squash, peas, and tomatoes which were used to make salads for the community at the schools gatherings.

Unfortunately, Renuka had to leave the community of South Indian Lake but is now settled in Grand Rapids where she hopes to initiate another indoor garden at the school!



WAYWAYSECAPPO FOOD HAMPERS



"I was able to purchase 2000 lbs of pork beef and chicken and 600 dozen eggs from local butchers and chicken colonies. The food was given out to community members that regularly access the food bank. The distribution was successful thanks to several community volunteers"

- Brittany Cote



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