

- 41 -

## Pine Creek First Nation

### Gardens Make a Comeback

Years ago, most people in Pine Creek First Nation grew their own potatoes, carrots, and onions on farms and gardens. These days, though, the northern Manitoba community of 1,200 has come to depend on grocery stores and restaurants to supply their food. Like many isolated towns in the north, groceries are very expensive, and restaurant offerings tend toward fast food. Many residents don't own a vehicle, and hiring someone to take them on the hour-long drive to buy fresh fruits and vegetables costs between \$80 and \$100.

*Many of the younger walkers completed the entire trek, and a 75-year-old woman went the whole distance as well.*

Not surprisingly, self-reliant gardening is making a comeback in Pine Creek. The local CDPI committee has supported a community garden project for the past three years, and participation is increasing. "There were some gardens before we started, but now that we have seeds provided more people are interested," said CDPI committee member

Shirley Nepinak. "Younger people are trying it, and this year they're growing corn, onions, carrots, cabbage, lettuce, potatoes, tomatoes, and peas."

The Pine Creek committee meets every month with CDPI representatives from Duck Bay and Camperville, which hosts an annual canning workshop open to residents of all three communities. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs has supplied each town with garden tillers, implements, and loads of black dirt and fertilizer to help with the gardens.

The three communities got together in 2007 for the first annual "Spirited Walk," starting in Duck Bay and ending in Camperville. Each participant got a t-shirt, and for this year's walk, the first 100 participants to start the four-hour walk receive a lightweight backpack with reflective stripes, which they can fill with granola bars, fruit to go, juices, and water. The walk wraps up with a meal for participants. Many of the younger walkers completed the entire trek, and a 75-year-old woman went the whole distance as well. One couple walked from Ebb and Flow, about an hour and a half's drive, and then continued on the Spirited Walk from Duck Bay to Camperville.

Other preventative health programs sponsored by CDPI include exercise promotion and a diabetes screening event. Through CDPI, Pine Creek applied for and got a special grant for exercise equipment for their arena, which also hosts the area's Healthy Snack program. Each of the three

communities received \$500 to distribute nutritious snacks, which were given out at arenas during public skating and at drop-in centres. “The kids looked forward to the snacks and drinks,” Nepinak said. “More of them came out because they knew there would be something there for them.”

**Contact Information:**  
Shirley Nepinak  
204-524-3000  
pcfchr@xplornet.com

### Take Note

Drawbacks to gardening in northern zones include a short growing season, severe winter temperatures, cold soil, Chinooks and high winds, permafrost, acidic and alkaline soil, and drought. **But northern gardening also has several advantages over the southern climes:**

- Sunshine is abundant in the summer.
- Less pollution.
- Longer days.
- Many plants, such as peas, prefer the cooler temperature of the north and produce excellent crops.
- Low humidity reduces the growth and spread of harmful fungi.
- Few insect pests survive the cold winters.

<http://www.telusplanet.net/public/pchenier/thesis/introduction.html>

<http://food.cimnet.ca/cim/43.dhtm> (Manitoba Food Security Network)