



Growing Forward

Canada/Northwest Territories
Growing Forward

Small Scale Foods Program

Ready, Set, Grow!

2012 Annual Report



Overview

The 2012 planning and growing year represents the final year of the Small Scale Foods Programming being administered and delivered from Hay River. With the implementation of the Growing Forward 2 (GF2) Agreement, the Small Scale Foods Program will now be administered through the five regional offices of the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment. The GF2 Agreement provides for a joint funding arrangement between the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and the federal government. The Growing Forward 2 Agreement will provide up to \$1.2 million per year for the NWT agriculture sector over the next five years.

Overall, since its implementation in 2006 under the then Canada – NWT Agriculture Policy Framework Agreement (APF) and the subsequent Growing Forward Agreement (GF), the Small Scale Foods Program has been met with resounding participation and interest. Community gardens have been established in 30 of the NWT's 33 communities, and these gardens have encouraged the public to take interest in their own backyards as well.

Community Gardens range in size from a simple 5 by 10 metre site on open ground to larger one acre sites. Production methods have varied from row planting on flat ground to a wide variety of raised bed and container systems that incorporate a number of innovative approaches.

Eight communities have established greenhouses with locations ranging from Hay River in the southernmost part of the Northwest Territories (NWT) to Tuktoyaktuk. Tuktoyaktuk has a successful community greenhouse for the first time and the entire community was invited to participate. Other communities with greenhouses of varying sizes include: Lutsel ke, Tulita, Norman Wells, Deline, Enterprise, and Trout Lake, as well as the previously established Inuvik community greenhouse. Inuvik's greenhouse has garnered international attention due to its unique status as one of the most northern greenhouses.





Small Scale Foods

It's About Community!

From the beginning, the goal of the Small Scale Foods programming was to encourage community consultation, community direction and community ownership. Programming focused on community buy-in of a project that was self-directed and easy to access. Government played a minor yet important role in facilitating access to sites, advising on technical issues such as soil requirements and seed varieties as well as supplying minor equipment and supplies, seeds and supplements. After that, it was the community that brought the project together.

The Process

Involvement by All

Initial consultation with all communities began by identifying key individuals who would be willing to take the lead in organizing initiatives. Often, this person was already a very busy person who found time to dedicate to the project regardless. In some cases the municipal government, band office or Development Corporation in a community would assign someone as the key contact. In any case, the person identified was seen as the contact through which all communications were relayed. It was then up to the community to come together to move the gardening project forward.

Communities were first encouraged to start standard gardens with support from the community in identifying and accessing a site, establishing agreements for watering and security and encouraging participation. Programming assisted in some aspects and despite searching for ideal sites, it sometimes became a case of: "This is what we have, how can we make it work?"

Workshops that provided basic level entry knowledge were offered in the spring of





every year through winter road access to those communities that requested them. These workshops expanded into school based programming for all grade levels.

In addition, program staff offered educational opportunities in the garden throughout the summer to give on site answers for any questions presented. These community visits were rarely limited to the community garden, and the visitors often expressed interest in growing their own backyard gardens. Visits were often accented with tea and conversation resulting in an extended stay in the community.

Program personnel consisted of the Consultant for Agriculture, Agri-foods and Commercial Wildlife Development who oversaw all aspects of program delivery, communicated with regional and administrative offices and delivered workshops during off seasons. In addition, students were hired on a summer basis, undertook training then ventured off into communities to provide assistance and encouragement. These students were hired to assist, but not to do the work themselves. These instructions may sound straightforward, however, it was difficult to adhere to in cases where a lot of work was needed to bring a site up to spec and community participation was lacking. Again the premise: Community Project, not a Government Project.

As knowledge and comfort level increased some communities requested, and were provided with, greenhouses of varying sizes dependent on the number of people involved and their level of expertise. In some communities, a greenhouse was not an option but a necessity, as was the case in Tuktoyaktuk with never-ending cold winds blowing off the Beaufort Sea.

Regardless of what they or any of the sites were referred to as, the environment was always one of cooperation, learning and fun. It was not about growing what was expected but more about trying to grow whatever the group wanted, and seeing if it was possible.

In many communities decisions were made to encourage backyard initiatives. This may have been a result of the lack of a central site or simply the preference of members of that community. In other locations the community garden did exactly what was intended and provided a forum where people could come together, share, laugh and learn. This collaborative effort helped increase interest, and many people started using numerous different planting methods in their own yards or whatever space was available. As word got out more people began participating actively in both the community garden as well as their own private garden.





Use What You Have

Innovation was encouraged and resulted in a wide variety of uses of materials found at the dump or wherever, which included old boats, outboard cowlings, housing package containers and other everyday objects. Interestingly enough, the most popular alternate use containers were tires. Workshops were held on turning tires inside out; which enhanced their look and available space. This resulted in a durable planter that held water very well and warmed up early in the year, thereby increasing the growing season.

Many communities made use of additional shelters to practice innovative planting techniques. For example, sun sensitive plants such as lettuce and radishes were planted on the shaded side of houses to lessen the rapid bolting which was a constant problem. Other unique problems included dealing with bison that viewed the newly developed sites in Fort Liard and Nahanni Butte

as excellent rolling sites. In some communities, voles and lemmings saw this new food source as easily accessible and a welcome change from the traditional diet. The construction of small screen fencing was the first step used to control the issue, and one community tried using sacrificial plants on the outside borders of the garden to encourage the animals to eat those plants instead of the valuable produce inside the community garden.





Regional Community Garden Profiles

Delta Inuvik Region

Overall this Region is progressing well. Regional programming was a little behind and initially focused on the Inuvik greenhouse. It is expected that at some point a majority of the programming will be delivered through the greenhouse staff in some form; be it by offering support or by assisting in the provision and sale of bedding plants. Generally soils in the delta are arable with severe climate and discontinuous permafrost limitations. This soil will need to be tilled for a few years to allow it to warm. Historically, all forms of vegetables were grown in association with mission gardens, and livestock was raised in communities such as Aklavik.

Sahtu Region

All communities in the Sahtu are seasonal access via winter road and air, some on the river system. Soils are generally limited and houses have been built over the prime soils. Initially ground based gardens were preferred, but communities are now moving more toward container based gardens. Greenhouses are generally requested; however, program staff have been encouraging hooped container systems as a start.



Dehcho Region

The Region is made up of six communities, with Fort Simpson, Nahanni Butte, Jean Marie and Wrigley all located along the Mackenzie and Fort Liard Rivers. Trout Lake is situated inland on its namesake lake. The entire Dehcho is characterized by alluvial arable soils, warm summers, and long days with adequate rainfall in the summer; the anomaly being Wrigley, which sits on a gravel ridge. All communities, with the exception of Trout Lake, are accessible year round via all-weather roads.

North Slave Region

The entire Region is located on primarily shield topography; therefore, soils are almost non-existent with the exception of some small pockets. Summers are short and days range from extremely hot to very cool dependent on proximity to water bodies and wind direction. Yellowknife, Behchoko, Ndilo, and Dettah are road access with all other communities, whereas Whati, Gameti, and Wekweeti are limited to air or via winter road.

South Slave Region

The South Slave Region was the first to participate in the Small Scale Foods Program due to the Region's accessibility by road, good soils and proximity. It was in this Region that the Program evolved from conception to implementation. As of 2010, the ITI Regional Offices assumed implementation and oversight of the programming and have continued ever since.



Summary

The vision of the Small Scale Foods Programming was to focus on smaller communities of the NWT, to create awareness of local foods production potential and to build capacity within communities in the NWT. Not only has small scale primary production been established with associated local involvement, but this has expanded to the establishment of small poultry flocks as well as larger scale commercial undertakings in some communities.

The Program has been a resounding success so far and interest is only expected to grow. The theme of the programming continues to be about involvement, self-direction and enjoyment. It is about gaining comfort and experience, learning, building a sense of community and being confident to try without the fear of failure.

Communities aspire to expand on what they know, to interact and share with other communities and to provide a basis for involvement by others. Schools have become increasingly interested in participating in programming and the workshops held in the spring drew the largest number of students to date. Gardening and local foods can be easily integrated into school curriculum and this integration provides students with the opportunity to enjoy hands-on learning.

As ITI moves to decentralized delivery, the present and past teams of the Small Scale Foods Program wish great-success, enjoyment and harvest to all the communities we have worked with.

With the recent signing of the Canada–Northwest Territories Growing Forward 2 Agreement, existing and prospective producers can look forward to continuing support in building, strengthening and sustaining the agriculture industry in the NWT.



For information on Growing Forward,
please contact your regional office of
Industry, Tourism and Investment at:

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Sahtu1-867-587-7170
North Slave1-867-920-8967
South Slave1-867-872-6430
Dehcho1-867-695-7510
or contact the Agricultural Hotline 1-877-821-8256