

Beaufort Delta

Small Scale Foods Program



2016/17 Year in Review



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The Small Scale Foods Program

Vision:

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (Beaufort Delta) had invited the Inuvik Community Greenhouse to deliver the Small Scale Food Program to the Region, and provided necessary funding for travel, materials and staff hours.

Objective:

To encourage gardening in the communities of Inuvik, Fort McPherson, Tuktoyaktuk, Aklavik, Tsiigehtchic, Paulatuk, Ulukhaktok and Sachs Harbour.

How:

By offering support from the Inuvik Community Greenhouse in the form of seminars.

Why?

To promote healthy lifestyle choices, and encourage local people to take part in their food security by growing vegetables.

To provide a sense of ownership and pride in their community, through taking part in the gardening program.

Community Snapshots

Inuvik



1 Typical weekly veggie box selection

Inuvik has the largest and oldest community greenhouse in the Beaufort Delta. The summer of 2016, the greenhouse started a few new projects. The most successful was the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Veggie Box program. Each week, from July 1 – September 15, members of the community were able to purchase a box of mixed vegetables picked that day. Each box cost between \$25 and \$35 and included 6-8 items. Some of the things included were peas, beans, kale, lettuce, bok choy, radishes, carrots, beets, rhubarb,

Saskatoon berries, raspberries, broccoli, cauliflower and herbs. Each week was slightly different, based on what was fresh and available. While the greenhouse market plots provided the bulk of the vegetables, there was also a partnership with local gardener, Les Kutny, and his land was harvested for the boxes, as well as the garden plot that was set up in front of the IRC building. For 2017, 8 people have already signed up in advance for these weekly boxes, and the goal is to increase them from 10-12 per week to 20 or more. With some help from the IRC, they may be able to be included in the food mail program to the more remote communities in the north.

Aklavik

In 2016, Aklavik formed a registered garden society, called the Peel River Garden Society. They had some issues getting their greenhouse built, but we assisted in planting in the chair's yard in early June. It was very windy, and the ground had a lot of clay, but the garden society was persistent and had moderate success in their harvest. They also developed a rule and membership structure, and with the greenhouse being completed in August, they are positive 2017 will be an excellent gardening year. We planted a number of veggie starters, and also worked on flower pots together during the IGH visit in June. The idea the gardeners had was to provide flowers to the elders, to promote what the PRGS was



2 Aklavik Community Greenhouse



3 Peel River Garden Society food preservation workshop

doing. Our second meeting was cancelled, but we managed to have a successful canning weekend in January. The PRGS has already planned another canning session, with not only garden society members, but members of the community. They are expanding this season, and building beds around the new greenhouse, which will hold berry bushes they will transplant from around the region. It is their hope to attract more locals and elders by growing the plants they most wish to harvest from.



5 Aklavik gardeners planting their outdoor beds

Fort McPherson



6 Fort McPherson gardeners planting outdoor beds

Fort McPherson also did not have a greenhouse to use in 2016. However, the members of the Gwich'in Green Thumb Gardeners were still very keen to get gardening, and planted using the outdoor beds that were provided by ITI in 2015. Many of the gardeners were interested in “cut and come again” types of crops, and grew a great variety of greens. They reported at the end of the season that every community event through the

growing season, featured a huge Caesar salad – made with their romaine lettuce! During the food preservation seminar, we were able



to not only can a fish soup using the pressure canner and a locally caught fish, but we made 3 types of jam from local berries picked by a member. With the greenhouse being completed at the end of 2016, garden society members are looking forward to their best year yet in 2017.

7&8 Food Preservation seminar in Fort McPherson



Tsiigehtchic

Unfortunately, only two people expressed interest in gardening in a greenhouse during the initial visit in 2016. Of those two, one moved to Whitehorse, and the other started a fishing camp and is very busy. At this time, the greenhouse is not built, and the garden society is registered, but there has been no contact with the Inuvik Greenhouse. We hope that in 2017 we will see more activity, especially if the greenhouse is able to be built. There were two visits to Tsiigehtchic in 2016, but only minimal work was done with the fledgling society.

Gardeners who are working in the garden beds built in previous summers with the help of ITI purchased plants and seeds from the Inuvik Greenhouse when we visited in June. Time was spent answering questions and offering assistance. The Executive Director visited some homes and helped out with planting of seedlings, transplanting and soil preparation.

Tuktoyaktuk



8 Tuktoyaktuk Community Greenhouse

The community greenhouse has been operational since 2012, and while it has a small number of active members, they are producing a large quantity of food each summer. The new EDO, Annie Steen, is very interested in gardening and has been helping them be successful. In 2017, the greenhouse will be moved to a better location – next to the elder’s home. This will make it more accessible, as some members felt its location was difficult to access.

During the first visit, we planted the greenhouse plots together, and talked about weeding and thinning. We worked together for two full days. Upon arrival back in Inuvik, we did our best to support the Tuktoyaktuk greenhouse, by sharing information and sending ladybugs to them when they had issues with aphids. Part of the problem with the greenhouse structures, is that they do not have enough air flow, and so it gets too hot inside – causing a lot of issues with powdery mildew and aphids. During the second visit, we worked together to close up the greenhouse and get everything ready for winter.

Annie was able to get someone to put on a jam making seminar, but the garden society has requested we come next year to teach about using the dehydrators and pressure canners.



9 Excellent use of beds in Tuk

Paulatuk

We were able to get to Paulatuk three times this year, to help their new garden society. During the first visit, we talked a lot about the goals for the greenhouse and how they would like to see it run. We also brought two large totes of starter plants, and helped with planting, plot prep and the replanting of some things that had been done incorrectly. Most notably, they were planting potatoes incorrectly, but with a little group effort, we were quickly able to rectify that situation. One of the biggest issues we saw at the

Paulatuk Greenhouse was that the people gardening quickly divided up the available plots into their own half plots. As there were only 8 plots, this meant that each person only had two square feet to garden in, and yet each person wanted their own types of plants. For next year, it is recommended they garden as a group, having beds set up for different types of vegetables.



11 End of season in Paulatuk

The second visit in the fall, we focused on planning for 2017 and cleaning up the greenhouse. On the first day, we had 6 people show up for a meeting in the greenhouse, but it quickly became clear there were some difficulties in the gardeners working together to manage the space, and one person who was visiting Paulatuk for the

summer had ended up doing most of the work in the greenhouse alone. The harvest was also not properly attended to, leading to food wastage. Many members admitted no one wanted to eat the food because of the huge bags of manure that were in the space, and the concern of community members around the use of manure in the growing process.

The second day, only myself and two others showed up, but we spent the day moving 100 bags of manure into the shipping container. We also winterized the space, and discussed how to motivate growers next year. It is our recommendation that Paulatuk be considered for a community in which to hire a summer coordinator, if funding is available, as they are very keen on growing food, but are desperately in need of more guidance.

For the third visit, we worked on food preservation. We had eight members turn out, and all were very excited to learn new food processing techniques. Prior to the visit, I dehydrated approximately 25lbs of vegetables, to cut down on shipping costs. We then focused on just a few vegetables that would grow well in Paulatuk, and how dehydrated food could be used. A gleaner from the prairies has been sending bags of dehydrated vegetables, but no one was sure how to use them, so we made a delicious chili and canned it using the pressure canners. A member also supplied local char, and we discussed the importance of having multiple ways to store fish and meat, so that there is always a good supply of food available.



10 Minnie Thrasher prepares fish for canning

Garden society members were excited very interested in how they could use locally grown vegetables, in combination with locally harvested meat, to enhance their traditional diets.



12 Paulatuk Garden Society members, after a fun weekend of preservation

Aside from dehydrating and pressure canning, we also worked on the principles of water bath canning through making salsa and jams. While it was a bit disappointing that we had to use store bought vegetables, we also talked about how the greenhouse could be used to produce higher quantities of food, which could then be used in these food preservation techniques. Last year, only two full sized tomatoes were harvested – and they were actually not even eaten. We discussed how even though it is nice to have ones one garden space, perhaps that could be accomplished at people’s homes, and the greenhouse be kept as a community space for people to gather and learn about growing together. They seem very excited and hopeful for the next season.



13 Paulatuk's preserved food

Sachs Harbour

Due to weather, cruise ships and barges we were only able to go to Sachs Harbour twice this season. The first visit was undertaken by Rosalind, the outgoing coordinator. She took with her two totes of starter plants, and helped the Sachs gardeners start their third season in the greenhouse.



14 Opening the season in Sachs Harbour

Children were excited to garden, and helped get things started. We felt that taking some flowers would not only help them to see something living and growing, but also attract pollinators to the space. Sachs is struggling with the same issues as Paulatuk – limited beds and everyone wanting their own space. However, they are learning together and seem to really care about the future of their greenhouse.



15 Food Preservation in Sachs Harbour

The second visit was in February, for the food preservation seminar. Again, I dehydrated a lot of food before going north, so that I could bring more while spending less on shipping. Sachs Harbour also received dried food from gleaners (these ones from the Okanagan), and we used a freshly harvested muskox to make a delicious stew, which we then canned. Aside from the same types of food that we produced in the other communities (salsa, jams, fish), we also discovered a flat of peaches in the co-op, and made preserves and jam with them. We

also tried different techniques of making jam, where we used apples as a thickener. This method is particularly useful when pectin is not available. There was a great interest in pickling, so we pickled eggs. The members were excited about being able to use techniques they can use in the garden to also expand their food selection from the limited availability in the store. One member even brought in an ice cream maker, and we enjoyed jam and ice cream together.

Since the seminar, the recreation coordinator (Doreen Carpenter) who is a member of the greenhouse, has already used the canners to hold a second preservation seminar. They were able to successfully make fruit preserves and jam, and are planning a third seminar soon! The people of Sachs Harbour are well on their way to becoming proficient in home food preservation techniques, and we are excited for what next season will bring.



16 Pickled eggs



17 Rhea Klengenberg makes fresh jam



18 End result of canning weekend in Sachs

Ulukhaktok

We were able to visit Ulukhaktok three times last year. The first visit, was very similar to the first visit at Sachs. Rosalind went and talked to members about preparing the beds, and answered questions about gardening and planting. As they were not yet a registered society, we encouraged them to get registered and work with their EDO to plan for the future of the greenhouse. There was some confusion as



19 Opening the season in Ulukhaktok

Rosalind brought flowers to Ulu, for the same reason as Sachs – she wanted to get people excited in the short term by seeing life, and use the flowers to attract as many pollinators as possible to the greenhouse. We also brought marigolds to assist in keeping out unwanted bugs. However, the members were not able to attend the meetings for the full time since there was a baseball tournament in town, and the message that these were donated by the Inuvik Greenhouse was not passed on by the few members who stayed for the planting seminar. It was noted as well, that the beds are only partially filled with soil. It would be great if members could start composting in 2017, and learn how to build the soil up themselves. We would like to have a longer period of time in 2017 during the planting period, to make sure that we are able to assist them more fully, and perhaps talk about the importance of air flow, composting and pollinator attraction.



20 Children in the communities love gardening!

During the second visit, we were able to close up the greenhouse. One member proudly showed me her blueberry plant... only for us to realize she had been nurturing a very large weed for the entire season! Of course, we all had a good laugh, but at the same time we realized that more education was needed on plant identification. She was very disappointed to hear that she had worked so hard for something that was just pulled up and thrown away. In the spring we had supplied photos that showed plants from seed through to harvest, but they had also not been shared out with the members, and instead went

home with one of the people that came on the planting day. We recommended to them that next year these are laminated and kept in the greenhouse for all to access. Another issue that they face is that the door only has two keys – this means that most members are not able to get in when they wish. The garden society is very interested in building their membership, and creating a larger harvest next season. There were some great potato harvests, and people were pleased with the food they were able to take home from their plots.



21: Ulu garden society member, Susie Memogena shows off her late season pea harvest

The third visit was a very fruitful food preservation class. We did all of the things we did in the other communities – dehydrating, jam making, pickle making, salsa making, pressure canning chili and fish... but we were also given over \$200 in food from the Community Co-Op. Garden society members went into overdrive making marmalade, more salsa, and other delicious jams and treats to share in the



22: donated food from the Co-Op

community. We also experimented with canned duck and goose in the pressure canner. During the winter, the Ulukhaktok Community Greenhouse blew away in a storm, and so the society is busy rebuilding and coming up with ways to build a new greenhouse. Their hope is to come up with the funding to replace their old structure with a geodesic dome greenhouse, which could lengthen their growing season by 4-5 months. This could be excellent for their community building and food security.



23: Darlene Aglegoitok's first batch of marmelade



24: Susie watches over the Canned Duck

Summary

2016/17 was an excellent year to begin to build relationships between the Inuvik Community Greenhouse and the Beaufort Delta Community Greenhouses. We got to see where they are coming from, in terms of knowledge base, and began to understand the gaps in their knowledge, as well as where they are already excelling. There is a lot of interest in gardening in the communities, and also in using food preservation techniques with food that is harvested, hunted and even purchased.

We would like to recommend that this program begin to focus on higher yield food production. While it is nice for individuals to have their own plots, much more could be accomplished if there was a summer coordinator appointed to each greenhouse – someone in each community who takes on the leadership role of planning workshops, work days and volunteer rosters. At the moment, the biggest issue we ran into was lack of communication. Not just between Inuvik and the communities, but even within communities, people were not sure who was in charge. We think, thanks to the framework built by ITI and the Inuvik Community Greenhouse, this is something that can easily be rectified, and we can see even more people gardening, and more food being produced in the 2017/18 season.