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Waywayseecappo First Nation Community Gardening Takes Root

The old rodeo grounds in Waywayseecappo had been overgrown for years, and the horse racing track hadn't seen any hooves in a while either.

But a different sort of foot traffic is descending on the area now that it's been rehabilitated into a community garden. And for those who haven't got green thumbs, a new walking trail around the gardens is open for all to enjoy.

CDPI committee member Glenda Cloud helped to get the project running, and it's now in its third year. The community garden is flourishing, but getting it off the ground presented some difficulties of the four-legged variety. "The first year was a real challenge," said Cloud. "It was new ground, and we had a lot of little friends – gophers, but they were friendly." Despite the gophers, around 200 hills of vegetables were planted. The initial crop of cucumbers, potatoes, and onions has been

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expanded to include tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, peppers, and flowers.

A well-attended community planting workshop brought out all ages of Waywayseecappo residents this year, many of whom used seeds donated from local businesses. The local Food Mart chipped in with potatoes to plant, and numerous participants brought their own seeds as well. A special garden bed has been raised to accommodate daycare children, who planted flowers and tomatoes that produced delighted kids when they began to blossom. "Everyone who came to the workshop got a little plant, a tomato to nurture," said Cloud. "Everything really went well, and a lot of community members joined the garden."

Produce from the gardens is served at the annual Elders Gathering dinner. Along with the meal, a nutrition bingo is held that takes different food groups and puts them on the bingo cards. A CDPI booth at Waywayseecappo's annual Health Fair also promotes the community gardens by offering draw prizes of fresh vegetables grown in the garden. The booth includes a sign-up sheet for anyone interested in the garden project, and everyone who signs up will be reminded to join in the planting in the spring.

Some of the committee's \$3,000 in yearly CDPI funding went towards the purchase of a tiller for the gardens and a lawnmower to keep the walking trail trimmed, which a part-time gardener looks after in the summer. Waywayseecappo First Nation's

Band Office has also caught the gardening bug, offering to bring a tractor and tiller to each home that's interested in creating a new patch. "More people are starting to plant flowers, vegetables, and do rock gardens," Cloud said. "I did one this year and people were coming to ask how I did it – it's catching!"

Waywayseecappo is also excited about an upcoming project to "Take the Blue Outside." The "Blue" is tobacco smoke and it also refers to a blue light bulb homes will get for their main outside entrance if they have a smoke-free environment inside. The harm reduction approach focuses on protection from second-hand smoke. "Protect your family!" reads the advertising. The approach is based on

research that shows that restricting the areas where a person can smoke actually reduces the number of cigarettes smoked per day and this may make it easier to contemplate quitting.

To keep the community excited and motivated about the project, there will be a poster contest, incentive prizes, and recognition for homes that are successful in committing to being a smoke-free environment.

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Take Note

Five Steps to Keep Gophers Out of Your Garden:

- Encourage predatory birds such as owls and hawks to hunt in your garden. Set out bird baths or large shallow containers filled with water to encourage them.
- Clear away weeds and shrubs from around fence-lines so that predatory birds can easily spot gophers at work.
- Line raised vegetable beds with hardware cloth (heavy wire mesh) to prevent gophers from tunnelling in. The hardware cloth should be placed 18 to 24 inches below the surface of the soil
- Leave pets outside at dawn and dusk when gophers are most active. Dogs and cats will bother gophers while they are at work, if not control them.
- Dig around fence-lines and install hardware cloth vertically in the soil as a barrier for tunnelling gophers.

http://www.ehow.com/how_155991_keep-gophers-garden.html

For more on gophers in Manitoba see:

<http://209.85.173.104/search?q=cache:Tr1bkCCFR3sJ:www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/crops/forages/pdf/bjb05s09.pdf+gophers+Manitoba&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=ca>