

# Pimicikamik Traditional Food Scan



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# Part 1: Local Food Traditions

## GATHERING OF ELDERS

A gathering of Elders was held in February 2013 to discuss the traditional foods of Cross Lake. Elders were invited to share their stories about traditional food in the community.

During the gathering the Elders painted a picture of a time before

they gained as children from their family or others in the community.

In addition to drying and smoking, freezing was identified as a common method of food preservation. One Elder spoke about preserving food using a log cabin, creating a safe area to prevent animal invasion. In the

## A CHANGING DIET

Much has changed in the Cross Lake diet since the time described by these Elders. The Elders attributed the lifestyle change primarily to the arrival of Manitoba Hydro in the community. According to the Elders, the hydro dam has affected the fish population and plant life in the region.

“ It was my grandmother who was in charge of everything out on that trap-line. She was the matriarch of the family, so she assigned people to do different jobs, and that, and everything worked out well.”

running water or electricity when store bought foods were rarely eaten. Foods bought from the Hudson Bay Company store included oatmeal, flour and tea. Otherwise, food was either harvested from the wild or gardened.

One man described the summers he spent each year with his parents and grandparents. Each summer was spent in the wilderness, where the family lived primarily on wild game and fish. These meats were then preserved by pounding and drying or smoking for consumption throughout the year. Throughout these summers, the Elder described how he learned about survival, medicinal plants, hunting and preserving traditional foods through the oral teachings of his parents and grandparents.

This story was typical of many of the Elders present, who talked about their experiences and knowledge

spring time, blocks of ice were cut and placed in the log cabin covered with saw dust. Vegetables and meats were then stored inside. Another way to create a deep freeze was to throw hay in the basement of a house during the winter time. Another Elder remembers how her parents dug down in the muskeg, the layer of bog before the permafrost. They would section off the sides with wood and bury their fish and meat during the summer and fall months.

“ It was a good life, a healthy life. And our food was always boiled. There was no frying of food, it was all healthy. Then I started school and there were changes, but I adapted to the changes.”

Residential schools were also responsible for changes in diet. Children were forced to attend residential schools limiting their connection to traditional foods. The linkage between the older generation and the youth were also disconnected. The result is that generations of children did not learn traditional food skills and were consequently unable to harvest, preserve, or prepare traditional foods. One Elder remembers she still returned to the trap line during the summer months. However, due to the children having to attend school, the family had to relocate closer to the settlement area in Norway House. The surrounding area's game supply ran short, and individuals had to travel further and further to hunt.

In previous interviews with Cross Lake community members, there are accounts of livestock such as chickens being raised. Clearly these were not traditional, but certainly contributed to healthy food options. These practices ended as welfare

## PART 1: LOCAL FOOD TRADITIONS

decreased financial support for people who owned livestock and gardens. All of the livestock in Cross Lake had to be surrendered to the mission. When the mission closed down, the livestock were no longer kept in the community.

“ The food today isn’t as tasty as it used to be. There’s no flavor, it’s bland.”

Today sturgeon, muskrat, beaver and goose/duck eggs, are not commonly eaten by most community members. Other wild meats and fruits are consumed by the families and friends of people who harvest them. This does not make up a large percentage of many families diet, rather they are used as a supplement or a treat.

Traditional Foods Identified by Gathering Participants		
Meats	Methods of Preparation	Method of Preservation
Moose	Boiled	Pounded, dried, smoked
Duck	Boiled, smoked	Smoked, dried
Prairie chicken	Boiled, smoked	Smoked, dried
Geese	Boiled, smoked	Smoked, dried
Muskrat	Boiled, smoked	Smoked, dried
Beaver	Boiled, smoked	Smoked, dried
Sturgeon	Boiled, smoked	Dried, smoked
Jack fish (Northern Pike)	Boiled, smoked	Smoked, dried
White fish	Boiled, smoked	Smoked, dried
Eggs (goose, duck)	Boiled only	None
Musk rats	Cooked over fire	None
Wild Berries		
Strawberries	Eaten raw, in a jam	Canned, dried
Raspberries	Eaten raw, in a jam	Canned, dried
Saskatoons	Eaten raw, in a jam	Canned, dried
Gardened Vegetables		
Potatoes	Boiled, soup	Deep freeze
Carrots	Boiled, soup	Deep freeze
Onions	Boiled, soup	Deep freeze
Turnips	Boiled, soup	Deep freeze



## Part 2: Current Food Systems

Cross Lake has many existing community food assets in addition to challenges. The following section will identify the assets that community members identified.

### Community Food Assets Identified

#### EDUCATION

Elders are a part of the education system sharing their knowledge with children and passing down their wisdom. This has occurred both in formal settings (through local schools) and informally within families and the community.

Several educational institutions were also identified as local assets. The University College of the North Regional Centre of Cross Lake was identified as a key asset. Higher education can support a better understanding of the history of colonization as well as provide important employment and leadership opportunities for those in the community. There

have been gardening programs and a composting program started at D.R. Hamilton School and Mikisew School.

#### ACCESS TO FOOD

Cross Lake has two grocery stores, one of which is locally owned. There is an adequate supply of fresh produce and meat at both of these grocers. Listed below are the prices of food items compared to the prices of a Winnipeg grocer. While prices are lower than remote northern communities, they are still substantially higher than in Winnipeg.

*“Percentage more expensive” compares the average cost of the two stores in Cross Lake with a Superstore in Winnipeg.*

	Cross Lake		Winnipeg	% More Expensive
	Northmart	Family Foods	Superstore	
Eggs (1 dozen)	3.25	5.95	2.67	42%
Milk (4L)	6.89	6.45	4.56	46%
Sugar (1kg)	3.29	3.65	1.69	105%
Flour (2.5 kg)	9.19	8.95	6.89	32%
Lard (1lb)	4.29	4.35	2.37	82%
Salt (1kg)	1.75	1.35	.97	60%
Iceberg lettuce	1.75	1.79	1.58	11%
Tomato (per lb)	1.81	2.72	.86	164%
Carrot (907 g)	1.89	2.99	.68	259%
Red potato (10 lb)	9.75	6.99	6.98	20%
Ground beef (per lb)	2.89	3.61	3.12	4%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>46.75</b>	<b>48.80</b>	<b>32.37</b>	<b>40%</b>

#### ENTREPRENEURS OF THE NORTH

Along with grocers, some community members sell confectionary items from their homes to local kids and adults. Touring the community, we were brought to two separate home-based stores. Business owners had created an attachment outside or inside of their homes where they primarily sell candy, chips, pop and ice cream.

There are two operating restaurants in Cross Lake, one of which offers catering services. Neither of the restaurants offers traditional foods on their menus. The Cross Lake Inn Chinese Restaurant offers a variety of Chinese Canadian dishes, most including some kind of vegetable, meat and sauce. The Kipapanow Restaurant is a standard diner, offering breakfast, lunch and dinner. The gas station restaurant closed their doors this summer to serve as a catering only service offering diner foods. There are a few members of the community who cater from their homes, and are able to cook and prepare a large selection of traditional foods upon request.

#### TRADITIONAL FOODS

Due to Cross Lake’s location and since most of the population holds treaty rights there is greater access to hunting and fishing grounds than in urban or southern areas. Hunting and harvesting are active practices in Cross Lake.

Hunters have commented on the varieties of animals that are both abundant and scarce in the area. Duck, geese, beaver, and rabbit are plentiful while moose, caribou, deer, muskrat, and lynx are scarce. Hunting occurs mainly from fall to spring. When animals are breeding and with offspring in the summer time, they are generally left



## PART 2: CURRENT FOOD SYSTEMS

alone. One hunter commented that fish and moose yearlings are typically hunted during the summer. A yearling is a one year old calf left by its mother because of the new breeding season.

Smoke houses can be seen throughout the community. One community member demonstrated how to smoke fish in her personal smoke house that her son built for her during his shops class in high school. The fish is placed on metal grates at the top of the smoke house. A fire is lit, usually using a wet grey willow or birch wood with no bark. The fire is kept low, allowing the smoke to billow up and out of slots at the top of the smoke house. The process to smoke pickerel takes about two hours.

### Community Programs

#### CROSS LAKE CHICKEN CLUB

Nine families raise chickens as part of the Cross Lake Chicken Club. Students at D.R. Hamilton School have also participated in raising chickens. Chicken is not a local animal, but it provides an opportunity for community members to raise and produce



their own food source. This project is supported by Food Matters Manitoba with funding from Manitoba Hydro, Province of Manitoba Northern Healthy Foods Initiative, Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, and Heifer International.

#### CULTURAL CAMP GROUNDS

The Cultural Camp Grounds is a meeting place for community members who wish

to carry out traditional practices. The site is used for the skinning and harvesting of animals, such as bears. There are three sweat lodges on site, for both men and women. Feasts are held at the site four times a year. The feasts allow for community members to come together to share food and celebrate the changing of the seasons. These gatherings help to boost morale and strengthen community bonds.

#### ININIW CANOE QUEST

This annual canoe trip is now in its ninth year. The quest is independently organized by community members. It has provided over 200 youth an opportunity to learn about and harvest traditional plants and animals. This year, youth canoed all the way from Cross Lake to Winnipeg, a journey of 890 kilometres. Two Elders went on the journey, sharing their wisdom with the youth. Along the way participants eat healthy foods such as nuts and berries, and learn about medicinal plants and their uses. This year the quest was even recognized in a Members Statement in the provincial legislature by MLA Frank Whitehead.



## PART 2: CURRENT FOOD SYSTEMS



### CROSS LAKE COMMUNITY GARDEN

In 2013, a Cross Lake Community Garden was established with the support of Food Matters Manitoba. It was built in a trailer court known as the Bronx community. It is identified as one of the lowest income areas of Cross Lake. Interest in the community garden has flourished and it has been well maintained by community members.

### SCHOOL GARDEN CLUBS

D. R. Hamilton and Mikisew School offer garden clubs. The garden club is run by teachers and staff at the school, who commit to supporting students throughout the summer with individual gardens at their homes. Students are each provided a raised bed, basic gardening tools, seeds and bedding plants. Their gardens are visited throughout the season to offer support with planting, watering, weeding and harvesting.

### GARDEN ADVISOR

Over the last two seasons, Cross Lake has employed a community member as a part-time local garden advisor. The garden advisor not only provides support

to students in the garden club, but also offers support to additional members of the community who are gardening.

### MANITOBA HYDRO

Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs have several different programs related to food that are provided as part of the Northern Flood Agreement and Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs:

- The Cross Lake Domestic Fishing Program provides funding for local fisherman to supply the community with fish. Fish is provided at no cost to local residents.
- The Alternative Foods and Gardening Program provides vegetable seeds, bedding plants, fruit trees and bushes and are distributed to community members. Four small greenhouses have also been built in the community to support gardening. However these greenhouses are not in operation due to vandalism or lack of interest.

- Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs provides funding for the First Nation schools in Cross Lake to serve a hot lunch program during the school year. The program provides a warm meal with a side of fruit for the students of Mikisew School, Frontier School and Otter Nelson River School.

## Current Challenges

### ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS

#### Pollution

Community members are concerned about pollution affecting wild game and fish. One of the primary motivations and messages for members of the 2013 Ininiw Aski Quest was their concern over the state of nearby Lake Winnipeg. Paddlers brought national attention to the alarming health of Manitoba's largest lake, directly linking their sustenance and survival to the health of the waterways.



### Fish

Due to the fluctuation of water levels from the hydroelectric dam, the spawning of whitefish and sturgeon has been affected. A great decline in population in the last 50 years has been noticed by Cross Lake residents. White fish were once a major part of the traditional diet but are now one of the hardest fish to catch in the area.

### Berries

Local berry bushes have been cut down to make way for infrastructure. Elders commented on visiting local berry patches, but the whereabouts have been forgotten or they no longer exist. As a result, harvesters have said they must travel far to reach berry patches. Fluctuation of water levels significantly decreased the growth of berry bushes around the water.

### Soil

Access to soil has been identified as a challenge for gardeners. Composting and local soil development are still very minimal in the community, so supplemental soil either has to be shipped in or gardeners must work with the soil they have.



## SOCIAL AND HEALTH BARRIERS

### Chronic Disease

Diabetes prevalence is rising rapidly in Cross Lake. From 1998 to 2001 21.2% of the population were treated for diabetes compared with 31% between 2003 to 2006. Increasing diabetes prevalence means there is a need for change in the way people eat and live. Not only do food choices affect diet and health, traditional food choices, such as hunting gathering and fishing all require exercise.



### The culture of dependency

Social assistance, funds from the band or “hydro handouts” have been identified as significant social barriers by community members. Community members would like to see a greater focus on education, training and passing on skills, rather than assistance programs that see community members receive food or money towards food. Ronnie Beardy quoted the saying, “give a man a fish, he’ll eat for a day. Teach a man to fish, he’ll eat for life” to illustrate how food programs should operate.

### Multi-generational Disconnection

The disconnection with youth and traditional food has been identified as a challenge. The simple act of introducing wild game can at times be met with disgust by younger generations. Not having wild or healthy foods introduced from infancy has caused the rejection of them in later years. There is now even a multigenerational disconnect from traditional foods as many parents are not that familiar with them.

### Economic Challenges

Traditional foods activities, such as hunting, fishing, and gardening, require economic resources. Ammunition, fishing tackle, fuel for transportation, and gardening tools all cost upfront. Additionally very few people go out on the land/water without some kind of motorized/gas powered vehicle, such as a motor boat or snowmobile. The initial investment that is required to undertake these local food activities is an economic barrier for many.

“ We haven’t been able to grow an apple tree any bigger than 4 feet. We’ve tried digging deep holes, but the hard clay underneath collects water and the trees drowned.”

# Part 3: Vision for the Future

The vision for Cross Lake is an independent community with the tools and expertise to develop and sustain itself. There are many projects going on in the community that can be developed or expanded, as well as new projects.

Community members have identified the following key priorities as steps to achieve this vision:

1. **Integrate healthy and traditional food in schools**

By introducing healthy or wild foods to children at an early age they will become more familiar with them. In doing so, it is hoped that students will not shy away from food they are not familiar with as adults. School may be the only place where some children can access traditional foods due to socio-economic barriers.

2. **Exchange program with neighboring communities**

Develop an exchange system with communities that have food items more readily available such as caribou, cranberries, rice or whitefish. This also increased the potential for communities to build intercommunity relationships through the sharing of food skills. This program would help communities who are lacking in certain food items gain access while sharing the surplus of foods found in their home communities.

3. **Whitefish hatchery**

Following the sturgeon repopulation model of Grand Rapids for whitefish populations to return. Having an in-community hatchery and perhaps an exchange between Cross Lake and Grand Rapids could restore the local fishery and reduce a significant barrier to traditional

food consumption. Community members would have the chance to restore the fish population in their community. With the yield of fish, local fishermen could expand and sell their product commercially.

4. **Summer culture camp**

A summer long culture camp for youth with Elders, medicine people and staff to teach them how to live off the land. A program like this would benefit youth by bridging the gap between youth and elders. Youth could learn the fundamentals of survival as well as ceremonial protocols, teachings and practices. A cultural camp would bring the wisdom of the Elders to pass down to the next generation through oral teachings and hands on experiences.

5. **Continued support and expansion of the Canoe Quest**

The supporters of the quest would like to connect to build upon the Canoe Quest program. Interested was expressed in having the communities they visit participate in the quest as they travel along Lake Winnipeg. Each community would have a warrior canoe and join the quest.

6. **Community freezer**

A community freezer could increase access to traditional foods for those who do not have access to wild foods but are able to help process them. With this exchange of work for meat, the community members as well as Elders may access the freezer's contents. There is particular interest in constructing traditional freezers the way Elders have spoken about. This method of traditional food storage is an economical way to preserve foods, as they could be built out of locally available supplies.

7. **Outdoor oven**

This is a facility that could be used for community gatherings or celebrations. The oven would be built in a common meeting place in Cross Lake for all to use. It would help bring people together in celebration and support stronger relationships in the community. People in the community would learn practical skills around oven operation.

8. **Community with coping skills**

Coping skills for mental health or personal problems have been identified as a need in the community. The lack of coping skills may be the effect of drug and alcohol consumption in the community. Having stress management, suicide prevention, and councillors available for individuals or families suffering from mental health problems would have a positive impact.

A Strategic Action Plan was developed outlining these eight objectives. They can be observed in the appendix at the end of this report.

# Appendix

OBJECTIVE (list of objectives)	TASKS (what you need to do to achieve your objective)	SUCCESS CRITERIA (What you can identify your success)	TIME FRAME (by when you need to achieve the tasks)	RESOURCES (what resources you need for each task)	POSSIBLE OBSTACLES
<b>Sustainable Fishing Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Source funding for necessary equipment</li> <li>- Plan a system for sharing resources</li> <li>- Share the knowledge and training for fishing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Equipment sent to community</li> <li>- Sharing system planned</li> <li>- Training available for interested community members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Short term - within a year</li> <li>- Some supplies and equipment can be sources</li> <li>- Long term-larger items may take longer to source as well as training/workshops</li> </ul>	\$10,000-\$30,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The organization of community boat/nets</li> <li>- Time allotted per individual</li> <li>- Maintenance care of equipment</li> <li>- Disciplinary measures for poor conduct</li> </ul>
<b>Cross Lake Sturgeon/ Whitefish Hatchery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gather information regarding whitefish</li> <li>- Connect with Grand Rapids hatchery</li> <li>- Approach Hydro about funding for Crosslake Hatchery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting regarding hatchery planned</li> <li>- Application for hatchery submitted</li> <li>- Hatchery plans for construction made</li> <li>- Hatchery built and used</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Long-term</li> <li>- 5-10 years</li> <li>- Very large project with many different components to weigh</li> </ul>	\$2,000,000 - 2,500,000 Salary for staff, infrastructure, supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Very large project with a lot of expenses</li> <li>- Could be turned down</li> <li>- Requires expertise</li> </ul>
<b>Community Culture Camp</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A program already in place through NFA</li> <li>- Have culture camps run all summer for youth in the community</li> <li>- Gather necessary equipment/supplies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have a plan for future extended camps during the summer</li> <li>- The supplies are activity used in the community</li> <li>- The culture camp is successfully extended more than 2 days</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Short term</li> <li>- 1 month-1 year</li> <li>- Already plans in place for the month of September</li> <li>- Plans for expansion can be made during the winter months</li> </ul>	\$1,000 - \$10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional funding</li> <li>- Securing elders/traditional teachers and Coordinator for events</li> </ul>
<b>Community Freezer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Get interested community members talking</li> <li>- Source funding for freezer</li> <li>- Find common place for freezer to be held</li> <li>- Build/buy freezer</li> <li>- Find hunters willing to donate to freezer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are many interested community members</li> <li>- Finances are secure for freezer</li> <li>- The construction/purchase of the freezer is complete</li> <li>- Community members are actively using the freezer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Short term</li> <li>- 2 months – 1 year</li> <li>- To find funding and a place for the freezer</li> </ul>	\$1,000 - \$2,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Possible theft of food</li> <li>- Choosing area for freezer</li> <li>- Finding constant hunters to fill it</li> </ul>

# Appendix

OBJECTIVE (list of objectives)	TASKS (what you need to do to achieve your objective)	SUCCESS CRITERIA (What you can identify your success)	TIME FRAME (by when you need to achieve the tasks)	RESOURCES (what resources you need for each task)	POSSIBLE OBSTACLES
<b>Successful Gardening Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community garden (completed)</li> <li>- Contact Hydro to set up mandatory workshops to receive plants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community members are activity gardening</li> <li>- Community members are harvesting their crops</li> <li>- The fruit trees/bushes are surviving and thriving in the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Long-term 1-5 years</li> </ul>	\$2,000-20,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workshops may not be accepted by community members</li> <li>- Vandalism</li> <li>- Theft of produce</li> <li>- Community buy-in</li> </ul>
<b>Annual Canoe Quest</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Welcoming event at the Forks (complete this year)</li> <li>- Future collaboration with Freedom riders</li> <li>- Collaboration with other communities</li> <li>- Expansion of canoe quest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More than 1 canoe taking part in canoe quest</li> <li>- More than 16 people taking part of canoe quest</li> <li>- National attention of Canoe Quest</li> <li>- More attendance to Forks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continuous preliminary goals can be done within 1-2 years</li> </ul>	\$5,000- \$10,000 annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ongoing funding</li> <li>- Need more allies</li> <li>- Coordinator needed</li> </ul>
<b>Ongoing School Project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate creating a visual (hide painting, mural, etc) surrounding traditional food</li> <li>- Select visuals to be circulated to other schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Materials and supplies for visual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Short term 1-6 months</li> </ul>	\$1,000- \$2,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need a facilitator to circulate visuals</li> <li>- Funding</li> </ul>
<b>Canoe Manufacturing Business</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Find a mold for the large warrior canoe model</li> <li>- Have a place for the manufacturing of canoes</li> <li>- Hource supplies/ tools/expertise needed for making canoes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Successfully finding model</li> <li>- Successfully having funds for purchase/ shipment of mold, Supplies, tools needed</li> <li>- Completion of first canoe</li> <li>- Sale of first canoe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Long term 1-3 years</li> </ul>	\$5,000-15,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Start-up cost</li> <li>- Suitable market</li> </ul>

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