

Food Insecurity in Northern Manitoba: The Research Journey.

Although Health Canada conducted a standardized survey on food security across Canada it neglected to survey First Nation communities.

Dr. Shirley Thompson's

(Natural Resources Institute) SSHRC and CIHR funded research is the first

to research food insecurity in First Nation communities in Canada, finding food insecurity rates of 75% in a survey of 534 households in 14 Northern Manitoba

communities. This rate is eight times the Canadian average and shows that there is a food security crisis in these communities due to the high cost of food, reduced use of country foods due to regulation, and low income. In Nelson House First Nation, which is close to Thompson, food insecurity rates are much lower. People in the community attribute these lower levels of food insecurity with their country foods program. This country food program is paying traditional hunters and fishers to fill freezers with traditional foods, including fish, so that this food is available to those in need and elders without charge.

A feature reporter, Margaret Webb, followed the travels of Dr. Thompson's northern Manitoba food research work and wrote an article in the magazine *Diabetes Dialogue*, published in the spring of 2010. The research involved Natural Resources Institute

(NRI) masters student, **Vanessa**

Lozecznik and fellow student, Ryan Klatt. They were carrying out participatory video research regarding gardening and other subsistence activities, as well as undertaking

food costing, and household food security assessments. Vanessa and Ryan videotaped people in Wabowden, Cormorant, Thicket-Portage, Ilford, and War Lake First Nation on the Bay Line train. Most of these communities do not have any food stores and so people

must travel to Thompson by train, which comes back the next day. The cost of travel to get groceries is \$250 to \$300, which leaves little money left over for food. These communities have high unemployment rates and so people have limited income to pay for food and travel.

Gardening and subsistence food is very important to ensure survival.

Many communities including Wabowden, South Indian Lake First Nation, Leaf Rapids, St. Theresa Point First Nation and Berens River First Nation had community workshops to ask for feedback on the video trailer, *Growing Hope in Northern Manitoba*. It has received international recognition by Intercontinental Cry. This video can be viewed at: www.intercontinentalcry.org/growing-hope-in-northern-manitoba-communities and has been viewed thousands of times. At these workshops, posters and presentations were provided on findings and asked for input into the video and further interviews. The final cut of the

22 minutes version at www.vimeo.com/8114019

will be entered into international film festivals to ensure the stories of Northern Manitobans are heard.

