

ACCESS

MANITOBA

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Community Economic Development: *Made in Manitoba*

by Karen Hurst

On May 14, 2002, more than 100 community economic development (CED) volunteers, practitioners and policymakers from across Manitoba came together at the Delta Hotel in Winnipeg to explore CED best practices. The pre-summit workshop allowed practitioners to build and enhance partnerships, and develop a made-in-Manitoba CED perspective they took to the Western Canada CED Summit held in Vernon, British Columbia, June 25-27th. Summit discussions revolved around innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainable communities.

Community Futures Partners of Manitoba Inc. (CFPM) hosted the Manitoba workshop. "The workshop was a successful and valuable learning opportunity," indicated Maurice Bouvier, CFPM general manager. "The event was a rare opportunity to bring stakeholders together with policymakers to talk about what works and what is



needed to strengthen the community economic development approach in Manitoba."

CFPM is an association representing 16 Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs) throughout rural and northern Manitoba. Community Futures offices operate across rural and northern Canada as a grassroots-driven program created to strengthen rural economies by enabling entrepreneurship and assisting in community economic development. Western Economic Diversification Canada supports the Community Futures Partners of Manitoba and the CFDCs throughout the West.

For more information on the workshop, contact Christine Landry, CFPM marketing and communications coordinator, at (204) 943-2905, ext. 2, or clandry@cfpm.mb.ca, or visit their Web site at: www.cfpmb.ca.*

Forests – Much More

by Karen Hurst

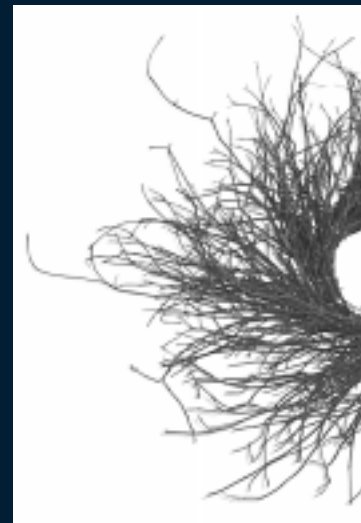
Manitobans from remote northern communities are literally foraging a new path through the forest to enhanced economic security. They are harvesting often overlooked non-timber forest product materials such as mushrooms, berries, floral greens, medicinal herbs, craft supplies, landscaping products, and more. **Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) Training Program** graduates are processing these materials and selling them to vendors in Canada and around the world, including the U.S. and Japan.

The NTFP Training Program is a remarkable example of community economic development at its best. Looking at ordinary things in extraordinary ways, Keewatin Community College, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD), five northern Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs) — Cedar Lake, Greenstone, North Central, North West and Kitayan, and the Province of Manitoba are working together to ensure the success of the **Northern Forest Diversification Centre**. The Centre, established in February 2001, is a subsidiary of Keewatin Community College in The Pas and was set up to develop the non-timber forest products and ecotourism industries in the North. One of the ways it does this is through the NTFP Training Program.

The training program, delivered locally in the communities, teaches students about the industry, including an understanding of their unique community resource base, the market potential, safe and ethical harvesting, and NTFP-based businesses. Students come away with the information and skills they need to assess

opportunities and to develop an industry valued by some at hundreds of millions of dollars annually in Canada. “NTFP Training Program grads know that the forest is more than a bunch of trees,” commented Dave Buck, NTFP project coordinator and instructor. “They recognize the potential and are on the way to developing their new businesses. They have even come together, with the help of the Community Futures Development Corporations, to form the Manitoba Wild Harvesters Association so they can tackle larger markets with a diversified product line.”

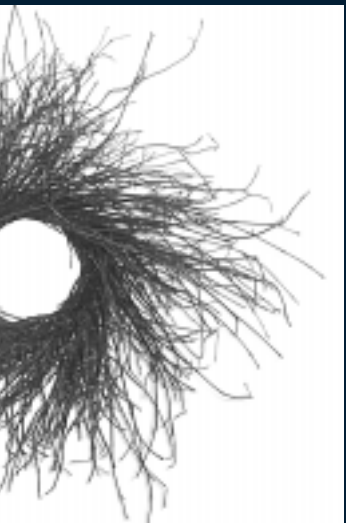
Annette Brightnose graduated from the July 2001 training session held in Cormorant and is a member of the Manitoba Wild Harvesters Association. “Fifteen people were trained in July and now 40-50 people are attending our monthly meetings,” Brightnose said. “The interest in non-timber forest products is growing and we are teaching,



Diamond Willow Tea Lights and Red of the Manitoba Wild Harvesters Ass

Manitoba

More Than a Bunch of Trees



Willow Wreath produced by members of the Manitoba Wild Harvesters Association.

supporting and helping each other.” Brightnose, her husband, Eddie, and their four children aged 6 to 22 years, work together to harvest and prepare their products for sale through the association.

Among many products they are working on, the Brightnose family is now collecting dry diamond willow for walking sticks. The willow sticks are cleaned, peeled, sanded and varnished repeatedly until they shine just right. After a leather hand strap is attached on top and a rubber tip is placed on the bottom, a walking stick emerges from what was once considered suitable for the fireplace. “We are a lot stingier with what goes onto the fire now,” commented Brightnose. “We see the forest in a whole new way – it’s full of valuable resources. I’m happy that I’ve been able to pass on my knowledge to my family. And I love that we’re able to spend our long summer days together doing something we enjoy. It’s not all work. It’s fun too!”

“One of the keys to the success of the NTFP Training Program is the aftercare provided through the Northern Forest Diversification Centre,” said Buck. “Government support of the Centre means that we are able to provide NTFP grads with on-going mentorship, market development and coordination.” The Association of Canadian Community Colleges has recognized the Centre as being one of the top 10 “exemplary practices in rural community development.”

Interest in the NTFP Training Program is growing. So far, it has been delivered in the northern Manitoba communities of Moose Lake, Cranberry Portage, Cormorant, Sherridon and National Mills. Plans are underway to offer the course in Lynn Lake, South Indian Lake and Leaf Rapids.

WD is proud to be part of the Northern Forest Diversification Centre and the Non-Timber Forest Products Training Program — a community economic development project with tangible impact on the lives and economic well-being of people and communities in northern Manitoba.

For more information on the NTFP Training Program or products available through the Manitoba Wild Harvesters Association, contact Dave Buck at the Northern Forest Diversification Centre, (204) 627-8681 or dbuck@keewatincc.mb.ca. ❁

Winter Weather – Thompson’s Specialty

by Karen Hurst

Thompson’s long winter season and modern amenities make the city of 15,000 *the* place for companies to test their products in winter weather. The City of Thompson, Thompson Chamber of Commerce and the North Central Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) are working together to develop the **Winter Weather Testing** industry to include automobile, aircraft, helicopter, snowmobile and outdoor clothing manufacturers.

“Winter weather testing is an important industry for our community,” stressed Lynn Taylor, Thompson city manager. “The economic impact of the industry in Thompson is now more than \$3 million annually. As the community works together to develop the industry, there will be an even greater economic impact and more jobs – providing opportunity for Thompson’s youth.”

Ford Motor Company has been testing vehicles in the city since the mid-1990s. Word of the great winter testing weather has spread – Honda, Volvo, Range Rover, Land Rover and automotive parts manufacturers from the U.S., the U.K. and Europe are all discovering the benefits of testing their products in Thompson. From early November to mid-May, the city hosts companies taking advantage of consistent and extreme cold temperatures.

Volker Beckmann, chairperson of the Winter Weather Testing Committee and Chamber of Commerce representative, said, “Companies are discovering the benefits of testing their products in Thompson. Our goal is to develop the

infrastructure needed to make Thompson the Winter Weather Testing location of choice for companies throughout North America and Europe.” The business community in the city is rising to the challenge. Last year, 72 new hotel rooms were built to increase capacity to accommodate more test staff.

“The Winter Weather Testing project is another example of how the North Central CFDC works with the community on economic development projects with broad impacts. We are pleased that we were able to help bring together committed organizations and people to work jointly to ensure the long-term success of this community economic development initiative,” stated Adrian de Groot, North Central CFDC chairperson.

Western Economic Diversification Canada, along with the Province of Manitoba, provided funding for a feasibility study through the **Canada/Manitoba Economic Development Partnership Agreement**. The study looked at the industry, including current testing, employment opportunities, the requirements for development of the industry and long-term strategies.

The study, of interest to companies requiring winter weather testing facilities and businesses interested in investing in the industry in Thompson, may be obtained by contacting Volker Beckmann at the Thompson Chamber of Commerce at (204) 677-4155. ♣

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