

*mâdawêyatitân Medicine Garden:*  
Increasing access to traditional plants for community well-being

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## Introduction

The following is a policy and program guide related to the *mâdawêyatitân Medicine Garden*. This document intends to guide the *mâdawêyatitân Medicine Garden* programming in ways that enhance community presence at and access to the garden. Various community Knowledge Keepers contributed to the development of this guide. The authors hope the discussions with community members will continue to set the direction of programming and policy related to the garden.

## Organizational Information

Initially conceived in 2003 as the North Central Shared Facility, *mâdawêyatitân* centre brings together many public and community services aimed at building, strengthening and celebrating North Central, its residents and all Regina citizens who may live, work or play in the neighbourhood.

A Cree word meaning “let’s be all together,” *mâdawêyatitân* speaks to the shared use of the facility and the cooperation of the partners. The centre is the first of its kind in Canada and offers an array of integrated programs and services in one central place to build and enhance the community. It brings people together to connect, to learn, to play and to develop skills and to celebrate culture.

## Project Description

This policy and program guide were created with generous funding from the Community Engagement and Research Centre (CERC) at the Faculty of Arts, University of Regina, in the fall of 2022. The interviews were held from winter through summer of 2023. The interviews and transcripts were led by Dani LaValley and guided by Beverly Cardinal (*mâdawêyatitân* centre), Jo Shepherd (*mâdawêyatitân* centre), and Dr. Emily Grafton (Faculty of Arts, University of Regina). This report was completed in December, 2023.

This program stems from an Elder-led or *kêhtê-ayak*-led (Cree for “Old Ones”) project initiated in 2016 by *kêhtê-ayak* and led by Beverly Cardinal, City of Regina, and Dr. Emily Grafton, University of Regina. This project received generous funding from the Government of Saskatchewan, Ministry of Government Relations, and ran from November 2021 to August 2022. It resulted in data that has informed this project, “*mâdawêyatitân Medicine Garden: Increasing access to traditional plants for community well-being.*”

## Background

Saskatchewan can be understood as the birthplace of Canadian settler colonialism. It is the epicentre of settler displacement of Indigenous peoples with the sole purpose of benefiting the project of the Canadian settler state (Daschuk 2013). Of the many outcomes of this colonial settlement, the physical landscape changed through urbanization and traditional native plants regularly do not grow in urban centers.

For those urban Indigenous populations who cannot travel to spaces where these native plants or traditional medicines continue to thrive, the colonization of plant life presents severe barriers to practicing and engaging in Indigenous cultural traditions and practices. This project asks: How do we increase access to traditional plants for those urban Indigenous peoples who cannot access rural spaces and traditional lands to harvest medicines? How does increasing access to medicinal plants foster cultural practices and Indigenous traditional knowledges? How might strengthening the access to and exercise of cultural rights benefit urban Indigenous communities in the North Central community in Regina?

From the work in 2016 led by *kēhtē-ayak*, we heard from the community that there is:

- Interest in access to medicinal plants in the urban environment;
- Interest in access to knowledge/teachings for medicinal use;
- Interest in growing medicinal plants in accessible urban settings.

This program, the *māmawēyatitân Medicine Garden*, will use decolonial and Indigenous-centred methodologies to frame its program and policy development. It strives to foster Indigenous knowledge exchanges through growing traditional native plants of cedar, sage, sweetgrass, tobacco, and other native plants and shrubs to disrupt the colonial green space at *māmawēyatitân* centre. In attempts to do this respectfully, we reached out to community Knowledge Keepers and while we heard of interest in access to medicines and related teachings, we know that there are complexities to these processes occurring within urban space. This garden space is intended to be used for intergenerational and traditional teachings. The plants are intended to be harvested for ceremonial purposes and shared with community members.

## Program Framework: Seeking Collective Well-being

There are three general outcomes to this garden, all of which hold decolonial potential:

1. Access: The garden will reduce barriers to accessing traditional ceremonial plants that many Indigenous peoples face in urban Regina;
2. Knowledge: The garden will serve as a place for urban land-based teachings, foster intergenerational learning, and enrich the community's knowledge and practice of protocols specific to medicinal plants;
3. Community Well-being: The garden, as a place of learning and a vehicle for engaging in Indigenous-centered cultural practices, will contribute to a sense of community well-being and pride.

## Policy and Program Generating Questions

The development of program and policy frameworks for the *mâdawêyatitân Medicine Garden* will be supported by the Indigenous research methodologies of *keoukaywin*, or the Visiting Way (Gaudet 2019). *Keoukaywin* is a Cree and Michif word for visiting and focuses on relationality through the practice of visiting with community (Gaudet, 2019). Following this practice afforded our interviews to follow the practices of decolonial research engagement. For example, we followed up with Knowledge Keepers who had an interest in and knowledge of plants and medicines, including traditional teachings. From these individuals, we followed advice on growing our community engagement of practitioners of traditional knowledge. Moving forward, the programming and policy at the *mâdawêyatitân Medicine Garden* will continue to be framed through the growth of this community.

Through the approach of *keoukaywin*, we initiated visiting and a formal interview process that followed, to varying degrees, a general set of questions. We intend these conversations will frame how the *mâdawêyatitân Medicine Garden* is planted, used (harvesting and teachings), and community access.

### Plants and Garden Space:

1. How can medicines grown in the city be done “in a good way” (or according to accepted Indigenous protocols and practices)?
2. How can the community be involved in creating and participating in the garden space and education programming?
3. How is the presence of plants decolonial?

### Education and Intergenerational Traditional Teachings:

1. How can the garden space educate people?
2. How does the community want to engage in education programs concerning medicines?
3. What do traditional teachings and protocols look like?
4. How does this garden remain a legacy for the community to access and learn from?

### Protocols:

1. Given that this is a ceremonial and sacred space, accessed by urban Indigenous and settler peoples, what protocols should we know and be mindful of?
2. How do we honour and maintain this ceremonial and sacred space?
3. What are the protocols for harvesting and sharing the medicines?

## Purpose & Goal of the Project

The goals of *mâdawêyatitân Medicine Garden* include:

1. Using decolonial principles and land-based teaching and learning to create a beautiful area for the North Central community to access and to address the absence of these plants in urban centers due to colonization.

2. Creating a culturally informed research project that brings kēhtē-ayak and youth together for intergenerational knowledge mobilization.
3. To create a medicine garden that serves the community and increases community well-being.

## Outcomes

The *mâdawêyatitân Medicine Garden* intends to promote Indigenous traditional knowledges and community well-being and pride. The interviews will be used to ensure that the *mâdawêyatitân Medicine Garden* is built in a good way. It will guide the work to create the garden spaces, select proper plants, generate access to plants, and develop the education programming related to the garden for years to come. It will ensure all of this is done “in a good way” or according to the knowledge and experiences of the kēhtē-ayak and surrounding community at mâdawêyatitân centre.

## Benefits and Impacts

The *mâdawêyatitân Medicine Garden* will promote Indigenous traditional knowledges and community well-being and pride. This project intends to be of significant benefit to the North Central community. The kēhtē-ayak tell us, through recent conversations, that it’s time for Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) to take a more central role in Indigenous resurgence within the North Central community. They are proud to be invited to share their knowledge. The project intends to further foster pride in the broader community and ITK through kēhtē-ayak-led teachings about traditional plant uses. The guidance and knowledge of the kēhtē-ayak intend to ensure that this is a decolonizing initiative.

## What We Heard

The following section, “What We Heard,” details the transcripts and notes from the *keeoukaywin* sessions. Dani LaValley facilitated both the interviews and transcriptions.

The informed consent process offered interviewees differing levels of public permissions during the *keeoukaywin* sessions, as is disclosed below. As such, questions and responses are clearly demarcated when the interviewee granted the permission for audio recording and public sharing of the transcripts. In other interviews, audio recording was permitted, but not the public record of the transcripts. And in other situations, no permission for audio recording was granted but notes from interviews were granted for public access. In these latter two scenarios, questions are demarcated in bold.

### 1. **Albert Robillard interviewed by Dani LaValley, March 27, 2023**

Permission for audio/visual recording was given. This document follows the conversation about the medicine garden project as closely as possible.

**What does increased access to gardens in our city look like, for this community in particular?**

It'll be a useful exercise. I've never seen that in the city. I suppose it helps our community in North Central and I'm sure our community will welcome the garden to our space. We could make use of it for food crops, as well as flowers and so on. Medicines too.

**How do you envision the garden space to look like?**

I would think that you would invite community members who would do the work and actually plant and transplant the tomatoes, lettuce, and beans in the summertime. Corn maybe not so much, it takes up too much space. It depends on what kind of crops you have, how much space you'll need. Potatoes may be possible, and this food would be welcomed for people in the inner city. I know some poor families in the area who would benefit from the crops. Packages to take home food, like carrots. I know at home mother always had a big garden and told us, actually we knew this, that some of the neighbours were very poor and didn't have the space or garden. They would come into our garden and steal things at night but mother knew that and she didn't mind. She said that they can just come and help themselves if they wanted because we always had way more than what we used ourselves.

I used to work at Thomson School, and they had planted raspberry bushes in the summer. I remember people telling me that their raspberry bushes were pulled up from the roots in the middle of the night, someone had come by and vandalised the bushes. That's something I worry about with this garden. Well, I don't know about that. I don't know what the experience was for this building in this neighbourhood for vandalism and graffiti and all that. I think generally, children who go to school here and their families respect the space. If it happens, it happens, but I wouldn't say we shouldn't do it just because of the possibility for vandalism and theft. If they get themselves some food or some of the things that are there then that's what the garden is for. I envision a piece of land that has art from the students, or installations to jazz the place up.

**Do you have any ideas on how to make the place appealing?**

I think a garden is a garden and that's that. The garden itself is art. I wouldn't put any gnomes or anything like that. It's a utility space and I haven't given it that much thought. If I was managing I wouldn't try to put in any other art. It leaves more space for the garden.

**What sort of programming do you think we can make around the garden? What should we be teaching?**

The people that come and work in the garden would have the teachings. You grow the garden by gardening and you know which plants that need to be transplanted from saplings, which ones can be grown from seed, and which ones can be grown from cuttings. Potatoes can be grown from cuttings. If you do it, you learn how and that's the way you should do it. And if anyone wants that knowledge to take home with them to grow their own backyards, then that's great. The goal is that they learn how to garden so they begin to cultivate something in their community and in their own properties. I wouldn't try to do anything formal

about teaching, or anything about agriculture. I think you learn by doing. Especially with something like gardening, it's many things and I like the idea of planting some life. Learning to cultivate some of the medicinal plants. I'm wary of that also, you know. I dug senega root as a child, as a youngster. We had a senega root digger at home but I'd be careful with medicinal plants and try to instruct the limits of their use. We know that senega root is the basis for aspirin, right. If you eat too much of it...the root is pleasant to taste. If you eat it when you don't need it or you take it along with aspirin when you're sick then you're overdoing it. Medicinal plants may be dangerous and so I'd be very careful about purveying those medicines to the community as medicines. It's a specialised knowledge and it needs to be dealt with by somebody who has knowledge about their use.

**How do you think people will engage with the space itself, or with others within the space?**

I think that certain people in the community who are interested and that agree to participate, and I don't know about how you purvey this knowledge about the garden that's available and its use, would be like any other community garden. People come and plant them and there may be a dedicated space for certain people and certain families. Otherwise, there is a general space for gardening and for community gardening and such. I think if it's possible to have enough space, dedicate some space to individual persons or families for their use. Then they can decide how to distribute the produce or how to make use of the space, and what to plant and so on. It takes very little space to plant cucumbers, potatoes, lettuce, and gourds like pumpkin. In one small garden space you can have several different kinds of plants and grow some plants together. Like cucumbers and tomatoes can go all in the same space. Some grow on the ground and some grow up.

**Are you familiar with what types of plants would be best to grow together in a small space like that?**

Oh yes, well I grow a garden at home. Right here in the city. Lately we've been...last summer we only grew tomatoes, cucumbers, and some squash. In times past, in earlier years when we were younger we planted lettuce and peas, and even corn and other plants. We have a fairly large backyard. But not a large dedicated garden space. Of course lots of flowers. My wife does most of the flowers.

**How do you think we can decide which parts of the garden are for the community and which parts are for the school?**

I'm not well experienced in distributing plots of land, but I'd imagine that the people who want to be there will be there. Not everybody will want to participate. Some people find it burdensome to wash carrots and dig for potatoes and all those kinds of chores. They'd rather go to the store and get frozen carrots. It depends on who's willing to take part. It's hard to say who's willing to take part. Those that want to will be there. I have no experience with a community garden and distributing land.

**Do you think you would attend an event for the grand opening of this space?**

Oh yes I would. I suppose the community would attend. I don't know. The community is a

large category, there are many views and opinions and feelings about that I suppose. And experiences. I'd imagine that children would want to take part and come out. Young people like you, and high school aged people.

**At the k ht -ayak meeting we discussed urbanised land space, medicines in the cities. Do you think it's appropriate to share these teachings in oral or written form?**

Oh yes. That'd be okay. The one person I know who'd known about them died in the last few years. A fellow by the name of Crow, he was from the horticulture store. The herbalist at the Fort Qu'Appelle hospital. His name is actually Favel. I knew him because he was oskapios. I am on the council of Elders with the Regina Board of Education and he was the oskapios to some of the Elder's there. And so he used to attend our meetings. He schooled himself on medicinal plants and so on. There is a lot more to it than I know about. In my time when we were growing up, that was 70 years ago, we harvested senega root commercially. You dig it up, wash it, and dry it and sell it by the pound. I forget who it was that bought it, but it was sold commercially. And that's what I did. We used it ourselves, but hardly medicinally. That is to say that if somebody had a headache aspirin or this plant would help. That's what it was traditionally used for. Fevers and pain and so on. I think aspirin is now made of synthetic stuff. I don't know of anyone now who has the knowledge of traditional plants and medicinal plants and their uses to pass on orally or written down.

It's unfortunate that our Elders are leaving us, and every day we lose someone and every day we are losing knowledge.

**Tell me about it.** My dad was actually born a Treaty Indian, and he gave up his...he lost his status in 1886 at the time of the scrip. My grandmother took scrip with my grandfather and in doing so she had to discharge herself from the treaty she belonged to. Muscowpetung reserve. She was Saulteux and so my dad was 18 years old at the time and she and all of her children were also discharged from the treaty. I have a photocopy of the document where she chose to discharge herself. In doing so all her children were discharged and so they became, in effect, Michifs. So my grandfather took scrip. They lived between the lakes there, west of Fort Qu'Appelle. That's where their home was. The land where my grandfather and my grandmother lived, where my dad's family grew up eventually became Indian reserve. I have the correspondence to show that sometime before 1900, when my grandmother died, someone wrote a letter to Ottawa saying that she hadn't been compensated for the land that was taken from them that is now an Indian reserve. The letter came back, and I have a copy of that letter also, that says that my grandfather had been compensated. He died in 1890, so that was the end of the claim I guess. I don't know what they paid him, if they paid him anything for it. But anyway that was the letter that came back from Ottawa, so she didn't get anything for it. So she had to move from the land. That was fairly common because after the surveys of the land that had been lived on by the Michif people, they no longer had title to that land. Once the surveys were completed and the townships system, you know the sections, square miles, and road allowances. The people, the settlers came and settled on the land because they had title to it, and the people that lived there before had no title to it. That's the story of the M tis people around here. I can imagine it would be pretty hard to be uprooted from your home, your garden, the

places you know to pick stuff or fish.

### **Where did your family go after?**

They moved somewhere else. My grandmother died in 1900 and the family scattered after that. They would've been grown up by then and left to different places. My dad eventually bought 50 acres of hills, of land in the valley for 50 dollars I'm told. That is where I grew up. It's about a mile or two from Lebrét. It's between the hills. If you go down #10 highway towards Balcarres, you make the turn to go up the hill, if you look to the north-west into the coulee you'll see the ruins of the log house where I grew up.

## **2. Rod Belanger and another Indigenous Community Consultant (ICC) interviewed by Dani LaValley, March 30, 2023**

No audio/visual recordings. This document loosely follows our conversation and the overall discussion relating to the medicine garden project.

### **Intent about the project.**

Concern about misuse of the medicine garden was the first thing Rod and ICC brought up. They are concerned that the medicines brought to the garden will be touched by people who do not respect the spirit of the medicine. They do not want to be involved in this garden project if there is no spirit involved.

### **Why is spirit so important in a project like this?**

ICC stated that "Without spirit, the medicine turns into gathered plants. There is no significance to gathered plants." The spirit of the medicines is what makes them medicines. If there is no spirit involved, then why bother doing the project at all? It is important that all people involved in the garden project are respectful of the medicine's spirit to keep the intent of the project. Rod stated that "There should be no misuse of alcohol or drugs while making this garden to keep the spirit alive." The people involved in caring for the plants and building the structures needed should be living the good way of life. No drugs or alcohol involved in the creation of this garden because that takes the spirit away. Our people already face this issue every day, and this garden can be a place for them to begin to heal. Our medicines heal us, and that's what this is meant for.

### **How do you envision this garden?**

Everything regarding the project has to be focused on language and spirit. Use the different languages local to this area. The Cree, Métis, Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota all have ties to this land. When we make the signs to label each medicine we should include the name of that medicine in all these languages. You can even have audio recordings that have different people speaking the language of each nation throughout the garden. It's important to represent every person who comes to this garden, because we are all of this land. Rod stated that "Our languages are based in spirit. There are words in Cree that cannot be

translated into other languages because it loses its meaning and spirit when we try to take it out of our language. Our culture is deeply rooted in spirit and that's how our language was created." It's so vital for our people to learn their native language. You cannot begin to understand the meaning behind our medicines if you do not understand our language.

### **What kind of teaching should we include throughout this project?**

Ceremony and protocol need to be involved. When we take things from the Earth we need to give back. It's our protocol to always give as much as we take. Teach young people how to connect to the land and to their ceremonies because so many of them are disconnected. ICC suggested taking this garden as an opportunity to let kids participate in ceremonies. It's close to their home, it's in their neighbourhood, and they have a responsibility to look after the land the same way we have looked after the land. We honour our medicines when we harvest them by offering tobacco and praying. Rod encourages young people to learn how to pray in their language. Not many people know how to, but it becomes more meaningful when you can give thanks and pray in your language. If you are harvesting the medicines then you should also know how to properly store and use them. Lots of people know how to keep their medicine safe and the different ways medicines can be used.

### **What kind of programs should the library run that involve the medicine garden?**

Both ICC and Rod agreed that there should not be any formal education or programs like what you would see in a school. Do not let colonised mindsets and people lead our teachings. The teachings you receive when working with the land are natural, and it's something you need to experience. Our teachers are our family, Elders, and community leaders. These people should be the ones doing the teachings. Don't just read off a pamphlet and call it teaching. Rod stated that "These teachings come from the heart and from generational knowledge. Let honest people do the work because they are passionate about it. Not because there's money involved, but because they know they are doing the right thing for their community". When people learn from our teachers they should not receive a certificate or a credit. They gain experience, and that should be reward enough. Don't give out homework to the kids here, let them come into the garden and do some actual learning. They learn more by doing than by listening to a lecture. Rod did not like the idea of formal teachings being held by the public library or City of Regina. He believes that "You can program whatever you want but I just don't think that is the right way to teach these sorts of things". ICC and Rod both agree that the people who are providing the teachings for the community should be compensated for their work. Money can be involved and exchanged within this project, but you need to know when a person is only in it for the money. Their intentions need to be good and they need to have a good heart.

### **How will this garden benefit the community?**

Having gardens ready for this community will help us get back to our roots. You know how they say we all have roots? Well in this case it is literal and a metaphor. The roots of our culture come from the land and when we go back to the land our roots grow more. It is the connection with the land that helps us build our culture and many families in this community could use some cultural connections. Being in one place and all together doing the same

things builds respect for one another and for the community as a whole. ICC stated that “It helps rebuild the spirit of community and interconnectedness”. If people need a place to heal they can come to the garden and pick the medicines they need, or talk with whoever is there. Being on the land in itself can be healing. People need to be more involved with the land and get more in tune with the medicines growing here.

### **Is there anything else you’d like to share?**

Overall, ICC and Rod agree that spirit and language are the most important aspects of this project. The whole point of growing medicines is to use the spirit of the medicine to heal ourselves. Give what we grow back to the community. It’ll strengthen our cultural ties and get people reconnected to their roots.

### **3. Brenda Dubois interviewed by Dani LaValley, April 6th, 2023**

No audio/visual recordings. This document loosely follows our conversation and the overall discussion relating to the medicine garden project.

### **What does increased access to garden space mean for this community?**

Before you build a garden of assorted medicinal plants, you should look around your own neighbourhood to see what is growing naturally. Brenda pointed out the windows of the Elder’s room and stated that “There are many plants even out here that might be good medicine. You don’t know until you really look”. She then took Dani for a walk to the south side of mâmawêyatitân centre to look at the land. What kinds of grasses, berries, trees, bushes, or flowers grow here? Our air quality relies on trees and other plants. They clean the air for us and are so important to our home. You can get the community involved in deciding what plants would grow well here.

### **Do you think an urban medicine walk would be a good idea?**

Yes! Ask people to join you on a walk and take pictures of plants growing in alleys and cracks in the sidewalk. Even of the land right on the edge of sidewalks. The City likes to plant trees everywhere. She wondered how many of those trees produce edible berries, bark, or leaves that can be used as medicine. If you look around first then you can decide what medicines are lacking in this area. Why are they not growing here? You can grow things like male and female sage, raspberries, strawberries, juniper, tobacco, bear berries, chamomile, and potatoes. Lots of veggies and berries can grow in this region. Brenda believes that sweetgrass would not grow in this area. There needs to be a lot of water for sweetgrass to grow.

### **What do you think needs to be done before we build this garden?**

Look at how much land you have access to. What is City of Regina land, and what land belongs to the school? This’ll tell you how to organize and build the gardens. Even in small spaces you can build things upwards. Stack different containers on one another and grow them on top of other plants. You can make good use out of whatever amount of space you

are given. If you have a lot of space then different families can grow their own food in their own dedicated space. It's hard to go forward when you don't know what you have. You also need to engage the community. Get them excited about this garden so that they will participate in building it.

Brenda began to list certain steps that should be involved in building a community garden. Listed in this order: Engagement, resources, develop/design, implementation, sustainability. Engagement focuses on communicating with the community and staff about the intentions of the project. Educating people on why the garden is needed in our community. Consider who the audience is and why they need to know about the garden. Resources refers to the resources that are currently available in the community. This includes people who have knowledge relating to a garden such as how to can, how to start seeds, knowing which plants grow well together, and how to harvest and process plants when they are ready to be picked. What organisations or groups have access to resources we don't? Developing and designing the garden needs to be a community activity. It needs to bring people together. Brenda suggested that the students at Scott should be a part of the design process. They should share their ideas on how to decorate the garden and which symbols should be used in the design process. Implementing the work that is needed to start the garden is a great opportunity to get knowledgeable people involved. Reach out to different families and get them involved in doing the work. Get the old ones and the young ones together to do this work. Have an Elder or whoever is knowledgeable come and work with the students and teach them what they need to know. Sustaining the garden is the most important part. This garden should be here for the next generation to enjoy. There should be consistent work put in to make sure this garden sticks around for a while.

### **What ways can we make the garden more environmentally sustainable?**

We need to consider how much damage we are doing compared to how much good we are doing.

### **Why is community engagement important?**

This whole garden will be for our community. It'll help them learn about the medicines growing in their own backyards. We seem to forget that medicines are everywhere. Gardens also supply fresh food for us. No chemicals, all natural carrots and potatoes! There are people who do not have fresh foods to eat. Brenda believes that the fresh food grown from the garden should be given back to the community, especially those who face food insecurity. There are community fridges that we can fill with fresh peas or strawberries. Whatever is picked from the garden. Growing food from seed is rewarding. You learn something new and you get to benefit from your hard work. It takes lots of dedicated people to make something this big happen. That's why you need to talk to the community. Get them involved so they can do some of the work on their own.

### **What sort of things should we be teaching the community about this garden?**

Brenda suggested that the staff involved in this garden project read Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer. There are certain things you should know about the relationship

between plants with other plants and the relationship plants have with humans. Especially if you intend on educating others about medicinal plants. There should also be different activities to attend to in the garden. Like how to process and can fresh foods. Maybe on how to identify different edible plants in North Central too. Even knowing where our food comes from! Lots of kids and adults don't know how different foods get to their table. Teach the students how to say each plant in Cree, what that word means in Cree, then they can make signs to put beside those plants. Brenda thinks the most important part of gardening is understanding how to sustain yourself throughout the seasons. Knowing when to plant, which foods to harvest, and when to harvest them is key to feeding yourself throughout the year.

#### **Is there anything else that we should do to ensure this garden continues for years?**

Sustainability is a big one. The students at the school can recycle old cardboard pieces to grow seeds in. Use the kitchen scraps as compost to fertilise the soil. You can even sell meals in the kitchen that are made from the food we grow here. Everything from the garden can go back to the garden. It's all about balance and keeping things clean. If you put in the good hard work now, then next year it'll get easier. It'll go on and on and get easier as you go. The more you garden the more you learn. You might learn something new this year and use it to help you next year. Keep these tips written down so you don't forget and the garden will be a beautiful thing.

#### **4. Vincent Ziffle interviewed by Dani LaValley, June 29, 2023**

Permission for audio/visual recording was given. This document follows the conversation about the medicine garden project as closely as possible.

**Dani:** So the first thing I'll ask you is what does increased access to gardens in the city look like for you. So how do you envision this garden?

**Vincent:** Well, I think that even though Regina is not a tremendously large metropolis, it's important to be able to access gardens by foot. Obviously, I'm aware that people can take buses to do things like this. But in the area where I'm at Whitmore Park, near the University, near First Nations University on Treaty 4 territory, we have spaces where people can walk just a few blocks to go use community garden spaces due to the fact that they probably don't have suitable spaces nearby. So, because of that, I think there are never really too few community garden spaces within the city. And because they are as numerous as you probably hope, it's probably a good reason to expand on these projects to make them widely available to each community area. But also encourage people to perhaps use different spaces as well to strengthen the ties between different communities. So, the long and short of it is I'm not too much of a green thumb. I work with medicinal plants, and I do love plant growth, flora, and vegetables. So if others have access to this, including myself, that would be great.

**Dani:** Not a lot of people that have access to things like this. I think that's a reality for a lot of people in this community. They don't know how to start their garden, can't afford anything to build their garden, they don't have access, knowledge or the space in their own backyards to make their own garden. Is there any other way you envision the space, so like how do you see this space going on?

**Vincent:** So at māmawēyatitân centre, would this be happening to the south of the building?

**Dani:** Yes, I believe along the grassy side near the soccer field.

**Vincent:** I would imagine that you'd want to have good access to it year round, even though I know, the students of Scott Collegiate and other community members taking part in events here, would probably need the space as well. And so you want to make sure that there's a way to access it safely. And I guess we are protective of the spaces that people are cultivating the gardens that they are curating. But the one thing that probably could allow for more community members to have an impact on how successful the garden is perhaps monitoring or surveying and asking community members what they would like to have grown in that space, because of course there may be a desire to have a good supply of squash or colourful carrots. Or something else that we see at places like Heliotrope farms when they used to do that. But a lot of people haven't had a chance to actually grow these themselves. So it would be attractive if there was a way to ask these questions, so that then there is a broad range of desired plants and vegetables that may be available to the community. I think that it's important to work with those that have good experience working with indigenous plants or plants native to this area, but also other foods or vegetables, etc., that may thrive in this environment that are nutritious, that are useful to many people in the area. So again, to travel halfway across the city to garden, which is a beautiful thing to do, and when the weather's nice still requires a tremendous amount of effort. Gardening is tough work, right? It's rewarding work, though. So you want to be able to reap the rewards. And so I think that ultimately for it to succeed, there would have to be a lot of buy-in, or commitment by the community. It has to be encouraged or desirable. And so, if you can curate what is being grown in that garden year after year, and then monitor how, I guess, taste, or those desires change. Those appetites change so maybe it could become better that way. To be working with Elders, working with those people that have had a great deal of experience working in gardens for a long period of time would be good to do, I think. I think there is a way to maybe, I don't mean to step on any toes, but I'm not sure what the plan is. I'd certainly like to learn more about how to be a better gardener. So, being able to watch how one tends to a garden or learn how seedlings are nurtured to the point where then they're self sustaining would be a good thing to be able to observe if there are visiting gardeners that could take part, if (the garden) is on that scale. If it's on a smaller scale, maybe that's not so necessary. Since this is an education centre, a community centre, where there's an emphasis on Traditional knowledge as well. Perhaps there's a way to incorporate all those things to help people out of it.

**Dani:** You're not the first person to say that!

**Vincent:** Oh, cool!

**Dani:** Other people have mentioned, like providing education opportunities, like programming and stuff like the library puts on. You can have a program on how to raise a plant, and what kind of plants work well together, and stuff. Others have said we should grow food in the garden. So I think that's a common theme that I've been coming across is that useful medicinal plants, like sage, would be good to have along with a garden that provides food for people.

**Vincent:** So if the emphasis is on medicinal plants, and we do work with a lot with medicinal plants at the First Nations University of Canada thanks to the Elders and other Traditional Knowledge Keepers that help us. Some of those indigenous plants, those indigenous to Southern Saskatchewan in, I guess, the plains area, resist cultivation in some ways. So sometimes there's a desire to have a more concentrated source of sweet grass, or something like that, which generally resists cultivation. So I only know this because Elders have shared this knowledge, although it's backed up by other Traditional Knowledge Keepers that have written good books on the subject. But, there can be challenges there. I'm sure there are other things that are ubiquitous even around First Nations University of Canada, in the Regina area. We can find pasture sage fairly easily around our spaces when we need it. When there's a shortage, for instance, for smudging and things like that as well. But there are other things that would be difficult to grow. I would love to learn more about the strategies one would take to do this in a good way through consultation of Elders from many different backgrounds, many different bands or areas or communities to see what would work in the space. But I always, thanks to conversations with the late Harold Lavallee, understood that food is medicine, too. And so it's not really, from my experience, a very strict line between the medicinal plants and the plants that are good food medicine, so to speak. So yeah, maybe that is a blurry sort of intersection, but I need to learn more to understand it well.

**Dani:** Okay, let's move onto the next question. How do you think people will engage with the space itself? So we talked about it being open to the community and people being able to walk here. What else are you thinking?

**Vincent:** I think having access at a time that's ideal for anyone is an amazing thing. Being able to point out that there are rich spaces within the city where you can acquire or pick medicinal plants is a good idea. But I think it is important to take opportunities to work with Elders frequently to learn about best picking practices, like the offering of tobacco before picking up plants. Different Elders have taught me different things, but I understand having a sincere respect for those plants that you are picking is key. Whether that be simply offering tobacco and having good intent, or even conversing with or sharing your feelings before you do pick the plant so that there is a sincere

appreciation for what you are receiving when you do acquire it. I wouldn't find myself too frequently picking medicinal plants without Elders taking part at first, offering guidance. As a non-Indigenous person, I think that's very important. But I do know that when we work with other school groups there are always great questions that come from students about what to do and not do, so that the steps taken to pick the medicines are done in a good way. Figuring out, maybe, good times to work with a variety of Elders in the community and surrounding areas is a pretty good idea. This may be something that could be made available on social media, or at least posted somewhere. So people know the ideal times to come picking would be. But at the same time, there are, like the other Traditional Knowledge Keepers, other Indigenous people within the community, for instance, that are very well, I guess, in tune with or knowledgeable about when to pick and how to do so. So being restrictive, I think, is probably not a good idea. But having additional help from others is a wise thing.

**Dani:** That's a great idea. When you say that it makes me wonder if we could get like the Elder we have in this school to be on hand and have those specific times and be ready to take the students here out picking when it's the right time. When you were talking you reminded me that one of my teachers at SUNTEP once told me "There's no such thing as 'Indian time', you go when the time is right". For example, when the berries are ripe you go and pick them. You don't go before, you don't go after, you go when the time is right. You go when it's needed. I just thought I'd share that with you.

**Vincent:** That's right. So how can you possibly be in tune? If you feel, if you understand that something is ready to be picked respectfully, and you realize the next time slot is 2 and a half weeks from now, obviously, that won't work. Right? So there must be a way, perhaps, to share that knowledge. Especially when there are those that we'll be able to work with that will know. The other thing, too, is it's always great to work with a multitude of Elders in a respectful way, providing tobacco, providing honoraria, supporting them for their knowledge, being respectful of what they offer. So if there are Elders at this institution, and other Elders in the community who also wish to share, hopefully there can be ways to seek grants or other funding so as to have a very active program where there's many experiences shared.

**Dani:** Okay, great. Next question. You did tell me that you're non-Indigenous, like not an Elder or Knowledge Keeper, but I would like your opinion either way. Do you think it would be appropriate to share these teachings in oral and written form?

**Vincent:** It's very important to realize that when an Elder or other Traditional Knowledge Keeper shares knowledge, that knowledge is being put in a good place, or being sent out into the world in a good way that is respectful of the many years and many decades of experiences that Elder has had. And ultimately, I hope that whatever the form of transferring or transmission of that knowledge encourages the community to come back to those Elders to ask them questions. I think that, of course, there are documents that we write. I'm in the scientific area, I mean chemistry, some biochemistry, medicinal

plants, etc. And there are ways to, I guess, freeze up that knowledge and base it in that publication. But what I've learned from attending kêhtê-ayak or Elders Council at First Nations University of Canada is perhaps those methods of translation of, or sharing of knowledge, or outloading may not be entirely respectful of a more helpful process of interacting with Knowledge Keepers. So I think that oral Traditions will always trump other forms of communication because it means that you have to approach Elders and other Traditional Knowledge Keepers in a good way, and start with good protocol each and every time. Those people who wish to know are likely in a group, or may not be exactly the same person as the last one, and say "It's me again!", saying that I've learned something new in the in assuming years and I need to approach it in a brand new way, because I have a different way of viewing it. So I think that at each stage being respectful of that is important. And hopefully, that's also just great instruction about the best way to do things in a good way, by offering tobacco, offering honoraria, and developing lasting relationships. Hopefully, those that are somewhat reciprocal. So you're giving back in some way, but also returning to Elders and their community rather than simply saying, I've spoken to this person. I've learned from that person. I won't forget it, and now I'm done with that relationship. That's a sad thing to hear sometimes, because clearly there's so much more to be shared if you can approach it in a respectful way. So I think that, again, we need to find avenues to speak about this and learn to listen to Elders. Following, I guess, more traditional pathways.

**Dani:** Alright, great. Let's move on. What sort of benefits for a community does a garden have?

**Vincent:** Well, there are so many different, I guess, positive outcomes. I can't really imagine any negative ones beyond a bit of sunburn and being bit by mosquitoes. And even if those working with Elders have made errors, I mean, I make errors all the time. If there is a chance to learn from those mistakes when trying to follow proper protocol or engage in a good way, that's still a very positive thing. And it's all part of each person's growth as they learn how to navigate this, because it's very important to do. So the more obvious benefits, if we're talking simply about Indigenous cuisine, you know, flora that we can grow within the province here at this centre. It's something that is very healthy. Clearly. It kind of mimics the farm to table idea of consumption of food in a way that's sustainable. You can basically walk, produce back from this area to your home, and perhaps prepare it that very day. And I think that that's really important in connecting the food that you eat to the land directly in that way. There are opportunities to learn about Indigenous cuisine. A lot of people aren't aware of the amazing dishes that have been created in the recent past by Indigenous chefs and cooks, but also the traditions that are important to know about with respect to using indigenous plants to prepare foods. So that brings people together. That strengthens the community. As I've witnessed, we'll ask people to feast together at the right time and in a good way. If we're thinking more so about medicinal plants and healing that, I think, is at the heart of that process of healing. So my first conversations with Elders revolved around medicinal plants and their inherent usefulness in a way that I didn't understand very well as a traditional chemist. But it's

also something that I realized is very spiritual. And there's a lot of people who want those types of support. And I think it's good to be able to have a way to work with Elders and other Knowledge Keepers to learn about strategies, right, to deal with illness and to deal with wellness. So that's an important thing, too. And you know, I think about medicines in a different way now thanks to conversations with Elder Harold Lavallee at the time, and even Chef Rich Francis, some time ago. That Indigenous medicine or Indigenous traditional plants are healing or healthy medicines. The Eurocentric or Western style of medicine, which we still rely on for good reason in some cases, are sick medicines, right? And so you can...how do you put it? It's good for maintenance of one's health to be exposed to these things that are naturally available and effective at helping someone out. So I think there's great conversations that can come out of something like this. I'd like to sit or stand there as a student to learn from Elders if there's an opportunity to learn more about the medicinal plants in the garden space. And I think that, again, there's probably going to be a diversity of different plants if it's successful. And so there can be conversations about food, there can be conversations about medicine, and I think healing comes from both of those places.

**Dani:** You mentioned earlier, about how some plants resist cultivation. I found that very interesting. I didn't know this. I know that sweet grass likes water, and it would be hard to have a water feature here to help the sweetgrass grow. Are you not knowledgeable about any plants that you would not suggest?

**Vincent:** I can't comment right now, no. I think I would need to have longer conversations with some of the Elders we plan on working with this year, to be sure. Of course as an educator, I'm sure you are an educator in some way as somebody who's part of this institution, right? There are opportunities to learn and share. And I think that we'll, you know, soon learn that there are great plants that are happy to be cultivated in a way that can't be managed with others. So currently, at our institution, at the Regina campus of First Nations University of Canada, working on a tobacco growth tower. So indoor sources of tobacco. So we can have year round ceremonial sources of tobacco that's natural. Before we could do any of that work, we consulted with Elders multiple times to see if that was appropriate to do. And we hope later on what we can do is have a source of tobacco that we can essentially share with anyone who requested it. Anyone who essentially wishes to ensure that they're going to use it in a good way to connect with the Knowledge Keepers. That particular plant is easy to cultivate, or relatively so, but there are others, I think, that would resist that. When we try to grow tobacco outdoors, predation by insects and other critters makes it very difficult. Even though there's nicotinamides in the plant to make it not so delicious to be consumed by many animals. Others find their way to it anyway. So there's a lot of things there, too, I guess. Just think about what you will need to do to ensure that the plants can grow effectively without being preyed upon. There are complex ecosystems with many different plants growing together that somehow, in some ways, support each other to allow for each to thrive. And if you just isolate one particular plant separate from the rest, I suspect that in some instances you may be opening a door. Not to disease, but to predation by other animals

that seek that one plant but it would maybe avoid this if it were an environment of others. Whether it be something that's prickly and painful to be around, or something that's poisonous, thanks to maybe some bitter alkaloids in the actual fluids of the plant, etc. But I'm not a plant biologist, so we'd have to ask somebody like Dr. Fidji Gendron at FNU, or someone at the U of R, or if you have someone else, or an Elder who probably knows much more than any of us.

**Dani:** I do want to ask you more about this tobacco plant. It was grown indoors?

**Vincent:** That's right.

DL: Were you a part of the conversation with Elders when they talked about putting medicinal plants in containers. I only ask this because I was part of the kêhtê-ayak conversations and I brought up having medicinal plants in containers and some people were against that. Could you talk more about that?

**Vincent:** The container you mean, is it like a grow tower with lights? Or is it more like a large building space?

**Dani:** Anything that is not connected to the Earth.

**Vincent:** Oh, ok I see. Okay, so that was my question, too. And honestly, I will only do as I learn, in some sense. I would want to presume that even if we tried to do this in a good way, if it was something that was not advisable, thanks to what we learn from Elders, we'd have to take a different course of action. With the council, there are many Elders councils around the world around North America. So this is just one of them. But at that council space we have over 10 Elders at any given time, where we have an opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback pretty rapidly. And the feedback I received was very positive at their northern campus. It's in Prince Albert. You have a campus there too, a venue that has, I believe, another growth tower that's used for medicine. And even in a recent conversation with Elder Dennis Omeasoo, who is one of the resident Elders at the Regina campus, there was a comment about not just growing tobacco, but other medicinal plants, if it is at all possible in that environment. So that surely is a structure. If it were a growth tower, it's not connected to the land. If it's not that type of growth system, even if it's a potted plant it would not be connected to the land. So I think the takeaway that I received was this is a fine thing to do in some instances, as long as you continue to keep the door open, to ask questions of Elders, or simply ask for their guidance, about what to do. But in addition, don't forget about where these plants come from and also don't just veer towards those environments. The more non-traditional environments for accessing plants, because there's no substitute for going on a picking session with an Elder. There's no substitute for that type of conversation and working on the land in the places where these plants naturally grow. So I think that we have to do both, or maybe even do much more from that. But I think what I'll do is continue to ask questions and then seek advice, because, as a non-Indigenous person, I think I'm in a

very fortunate position. It's very generous for those that know much more than me to allow me to take part and have a chance to learn. And it's very different from the way that I was taught how to learn as a chemist, as a younger person. So it's pretty amazing at this age, in my forties, to be a student again and learn how to listen in a better way than I had done prior. And also to think outside of the box. So chemistry is not just fume hoods, it's not just working on the benches, it's taking the advice of those that are generous and share a lot and meeting them, where things began or where they continue to be most important on the land.

**Dani:** Okay, my final question is do you have anything else to share or any experiences that you think are relevant?

**Vincent:** I think I've talked a lot and I don't want to go on too much, but I just know that working with young people and old people, or sorry, those that have been on this planet a little longer than others and those who've been on the planet shorter than others. One thing that always happens when we're on the land is everybody's kind of on the same plane, right? Like, literally, and whether it be very young people or not, everyone is very quickly respectful of that space. In all of the plains and boreal forest environments which we also get to visit in Saskatchewan. So it's a great leveller. And even if you're not somebody who finds themselves outside of the office too often, or maybe doesn't go camping too often, it's still a great idea to get out of your comfort zone and start thinking about your ecological environments and what you can do to positively impact it. So, once you kind of walk the walk, literally, there's an opportunity there to have a bit more reverence for the things that naturally grow in the space that are also well respected by those that know a great deal about them like the First Nations people in this area. The other thing, too, is when you start to try to curate an environment on the land, which is a great thing to do and I really applaud this effort, there will always be challenges with respect to drought, weeds, and predation. Or even, those with maybe not properly understanding the type of plants that they're picking or how to pick it, or what type, or part of the plan needs to be used the way that it should be used. Of course those opinions differ, but there's just a lot of learning that goes into it. But I think that you can't do much better than consulting with Elders as often as possible, and thinking very sincerely about their advice and what to do with those plans. And they're important, but this is also an opportunity, I think, to bring people together, which is great. So is this happening soon?

**Dani:** I'm not sure. I'm hoping by next year we're cracking the soil open and laying out the foundations within the space.

**Vincent:** Wow, ok.

**Dani:** We'll have to see how it goes. This is the beginning stage, consulting with the community. I liked what you said earlier about asking the community what you want us to grow, like, what do you need us to grow to make your life better? So hopefully, that's the

next step.

**Vincent:** Yeah, I think that's great. I think there's not too many analogs for this. I've heard of other sorts of projects in the last 5 years or so, and some have started, and others have not at all. But few of them started with so much consultation and good conversation, and I think that that's a really useful thing to be able to do. That's the best way, I think, to go forward. And even though it takes more time doing these interviews and working with other community members. That's a really great way to ensure that at least you have a good start. And then also have many more people to talk to after things begin and there's further questions.

**Dani:** It's all about the spirit and intent of the project.

**Vincent:** Yeah, definitely. Have you had a chance to speak with Kelly Christopherson, here at this school?

**Dani:** She used to teach me when I was a student here!

**Vincent:** Oh, no way. Okay. So I've worked with her before because I teach a course called 'Chemistry 101: Chemistry, food and cooking', and we try to work with Indigenous chefs frequently throughout that semester when we teach it. But I know that she has a sincere interest in Indigenous cuisine. And I see a lot of things on Instagram about the different things that their kitchen spaces make with the contributions from students in those courses. So I mean maybe they have in the past grown certain plants that they use in the cuisine. But if there was, and maybe this is a much smaller part than the medicinal part, a chance to have garden spaces or something like that then that's another way to showcase what recipes they're working on and talking about the traditional ways in which you can cook in an effective way various Indigenous plants.

**DL:** That's a great idea. The cafe is right here, might as well.

**Vincent:** Yeah, the students are here so that could be great, and those students could take care, in some sense, of the space itself. I wouldn't want to, suggest what Kelly (now Chef Ryan) should do with the program. But it's probably a great opportunity.

**Dani:** Alright! Thank you so, so much. I will stop the recording, but thanks again.

## **5. Joely BigEagle-Kequahtoway interviewed by Dani LaValley November 1, 2023**

Partial audio recordings. This document follows our conversation and the overall discussion relating to the medicine garden project.

**Dani:** Ok, so as I told you we are trying to get more accessibility for our community, our suburban and rural members to access different medicines in this garden. It's winter now but hopefully this will continue next year. So one of the first questions I will ask you is 'what does increased access to the gardens look like to you'? How do you visualize this garden?

**Joely:** Well, you know, my involvement with the garden is I made the recommendation. So, when Bev hired \*inaudible\*, you know, I don't even know if it was last year or the year before when they brought us together and asked us for some recommendations on integration. And one of the issues that I've seen is, more as an urban person, is access to medicines. And, you know, what happened with Colten Boushie, and the limited access that we have even to, you know, Crown land along the highways or limited access to some of the First Nations, you know, there's been an increased...let's see, how to...increased trespassing issues. To even access some of our First Nations land, you know, and also after what happened with Colten Boushie there's now a group called the Treaty Land Sharing Network that sprouted up to welcome, you know, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to land that wasn't being farmed or ranched. To see if there are medicines or other things like sweat rocks that could be utilised on that land. And so because of that, you know, there are opportunities to go as an urban person to these rural areas. There are still issues in terms of access and permission, right? And so there's no office to call and say 'hey, I wanna come pick medicine'. Who do I ask permission, right? There's still some uh, 'unsurities' I guess, out there. I'm not sure if that's a word! And certain avenues for protocol. You know First Nations University used to have sage that they grew just around their building. And then in 2017 or 2018 they had some new employees come and they ended up mowing it all down.

**Dani:** Are you kidding me? I did not know that.

**Joely:** Yes, and you know it's different...there are some little inconsistencies regarding the medicine garden project over there. Obviously, there were people who believed in the medicine garden, but there are other people who don't understand it, so it just got mowed down. And it hasn't been regrown. And so that was one place we could go to feel safe and pick medicines, and now it's not there. So when asked by Bev and her department, that was, that was one thing that has been weighing heavily on my mind...is access to medicines, like sage. Sage especially, you know? But it brings this whole issue of protocol around picking medicines, right? So at that meeting there were some people who were oppositional to it. Thinking that medicines should grow wild and I am not of that position. I think that our people are natural farmers, natural agricultures...and we don't plant mono agriculture. So you know, there's been different ways that we've planted medicines in the past, and transported medicines. So we are just practicing some traditional medicine practices by bringing them into the city. If this is really Treaty 4 territory then that means that this building is on Treaty 4 territory. And the land around this building should be considered in that way. So we should grow medicine on it. I don't know if that answers your question.

**Dani:** Yes, that's a great answer. So the meeting you're referring to is the kêtê-ayak meeting?

**Joely:** Yea, I can't remember when that was. If it was last year or the year before.

**Dani:** I think like, May 2 years ago? Was it at FNU (First Nations University)?

**Joely:** No, it was here.

**Dani:** Oh, maybe there were several meetings. I was a part of one of the kêhtê-ayak meetings and that same discussion was brought up. Do we grow medicines ourselves, or do we let Mother Nature grow it for us?

**Joely:** Oh yes.

**Dani:** And a lot of people believe that medicine should come naturally, and that putting it in a box or in a garden isn't the way to do things. But I like how you specify that our people that we...we don't grow mono agricultural stuff. We build ecosystems with integration...and interconnectedness.

**Joely:** And you know I'd like to think, you know, that we make our environment the best way that we can, right? There are city policies and city guidelines...those are just guidelines, right? They are not laws. A big part of what I was taught is that there are natural laws. And so sometimes people exercise their freedom to manipulate some of these natural laws. You know you hear about them in other cities where they plant fruit trees, even though it may be against city guidelines, you know? And so they try to create some sort of urban garden. And sometimes they'll take a tree and splice a fruit tree in it, right? Or they'll splice different kinds of trees, right? Trying to create this environment for it to develop fruit trees. So people can have access to wild fruit. Technically, right? So our cities and the municipalities don't necessarily know all the time what's best for us. And so, that's why they're guidelines and that's why guidelines change. And so, I was part of an art project at Regent Park just north of here, and we wanted to plant fruit trees. Crabapple and Saskatoon berry trees and the City (employee) that we recently worked with said no. Those trees were going to cost \$7000 a piece to irrigate, to manage. That's the life cycle of that tree, that's the cost for the tree, so no. But then they decided they'll plant 2 and will be responsible for 2. So that was a real big disappointment because, you know, I thought I could just go buy the tree. It'll cost like...it'll be very cheap and I could just plant them myself and they said no. So there's really, you know, these limitations on what you want to do when you follow the guidelines, right? And so I know that there are restrictions even from our own Indigenous populations and people do have some opposing viewpoints. The real issue here is that this is a changing world. It isn't...you know in the past I could go and pick medicines in the ditch and not have to worry about being killed. You know? And now we can't even stop to go to the bathroom...for our men, right? We always have to make sure we aren't parking in someone's farm driveway. And if we do happen to go pick medicines in the ditch, even though it's Crown land and it's not owned by anybody...we have access to Crown land with our treaty rights. There are still some people out there who don't have a clue about treaty rights. So, you know, it truly is a

dangerous world out there just to pick medicines. So I would think that the most viable option for us urban Indigenous people is to plant our own medicine gardens to address some of these outside forces and issues that are forcing us to look at some of our protocols. And addressing some solutions here, right?

**Dani:** I think that's really interesting, that story you told about Regent Park and how the City (of Regina) said no, you can't plant that because of money...are you kidding me? The City plants trees and rose bushes with rosehips and medicines, but they're only ornamental. They aren't meant for medicines when they plant it. That's crazy to me how they would say no...regarding money.

**Joely:** Well, they have a plan. And that wasn't included in their plan.

**Dani:** How do you think people will want to engage with the space itself, so how do you see the community actually engaging with this garden?

**Joely:** Well, you know, I think a lot of it will probably be word of mouth, right? And telling the community that there's medicines here that can be picked. I think that, you know, there needs to be some, because it is a city space and not everybody knows how to pick medicines. There has to be some sustainability practice incorporated in it, right? In terms of cutting versus pulling at the roots. I think right now, having this newsletter, you know, informing people about some of the medicines that are in the garden. Or just, you know, the term of the garden, when it can be accessed for picking, that's an education plan. I'm assuming it can't be picked next summer, probably not even the next summer after that, right? How long will it take, right? I watched this documentary on Netflix, and it was about uhm...planting gardens, but these huge gardens. But really trying to do it without pesticides, you know, really how do you address some of the infestations of insects without pesticides or harmful sprays, or what do you call those things, fertilizers? How do you address it, right? So they had this really radical idea on how to address it using the natural ecology of different kinds of plants or even animals. Introducing different insects and ecology. Really, you know, it's a 7-year plan. Like after 7 years, that's how long it would take for this garden to really start to begin to manage itself, right? So I think there needs to be an education plan around how long, what the life cycle of this garden is, before it can actually become sustainable. Is it going to be 7 years?

**Dani:** That's interesting. 7 years, hey? So at that point it'll self-seed?

**Joely:** Yes, and then it can address the insects, you know the ones that come and eat. The actual biodiversity of the garden starts to look after itself. So that these medicines can grow.

**Dani:** Do you think that there should be any formal teaching that should be happening? You mentioned the newsletter, we can put information there.

**Joely:** I think it's really good to have community workshops. Like, what are these medicines? Lots of people want to learn about medicines. And I think we need to acknowledge the

different territorial knowledge that each community has. We need to be actively engaging in the knowledge that our people have. Too many different pieces of information will become confusing and, you know, compromise the knowledge that we want. We have our different cultures to rely on, you know, we are not pan-Indigenous. We could make a list of different names and uses but it would not be a...an exhaustive list, you know?

**Dani:** How do you think we can involve the youth in this garden? This is a school after all, we might as well incorporate some students into our garden in some way.

**Joely:** Well I think Jo has really helped get it started, you know, with the creating and the planting. Different teachers have different dreams and visions about what to do. There used to be a teacher who had a tower garden here. You know, the tall one with the water inside. I'm not sure where it went, but educators get transferred all the time. Who will stay to work on the garden?

**Dani:** That's a good point, I know many colleagues who have been transferred and uplifted from schools that they've been in for a while. Doing good things while you can, but eventually they move you. It's a good thing the City of Regina is located in this building too, so someone will be able to stay and work with the garden.

**Joely:** Yes, absolutely. And we are a culinary school, you know. Schools are known for things, you know, like the old Cochrane school is known for something. I forget what, but you go to a school because they specialize in something. Our school can be known for the medicine garden. Someone needs to follow this through.

**Dani:** Ok, thank you Joely for taking the time today to sit with me and discuss the medicine garden.

### Concluding Comments

“mâdawêyatitân Medicine Garden: Increasing access to traditional plants for community well-being” is a foundational path forward to developing the program and policy framework for the medicine garden at mâdawêyatitân centre.

Current progress as of mid-December 2023:

- The Canadian Football League's 2022 Grey Cup Legacy Project has committed \$50,000 to mâdawêyatitân centre's land-based learning area. Just over half of this amount has been spent on crusher dust pathways and site materials. The remaining is set aside for ongoing material costs plus programming and honorariums, feast food, etc. as needed over the next few years.
- Many hours of site prep, two community gatherings and 6 Scott class periods so far have been dedicated to covering the first garden site with cardboard, adding soil for new

growing beds, spreading mulch for pathways, and planting a large number of wonderful plants. Please see the Appendix: māmawêyatitân centre land-based learning area for an update of this work!

- We have had two māmawêyatitân-associated Indigenous community members provide a prayer and blessing, one at our first community work bee and one for the Scott Cultural Arts class as they began planting.
- Another lawn area was covered with cardboard and mulch as multi-season site prep for more planting next fall. Scott classes were engaged to do this work between September 20 and 29.
- On Thursday Sept 28, multiple classes rotated through the garden area to discuss the importance of native plants and they will be engaged in planting seeds for overwintering in pots, providing more plants for next fall. Ideally, portions of the transcripts above will be available for students to consider while doing this work next season.

Next steps:

- When available to share, the transcripts will be given to all actively involved Scott teachers/admin, plus the Community Outreach email list, the Community Advisory Committee, the māmawêyatitân Integration Committee, Team Leads, and Owners.
- Consults will be planned over the wintertime on the subject of garden signage that incorporates Treaty 4 and Métis languages and involves community participation.
- Outreach over winter for the coming spring/summer/fall seasons, to ensure interest continues to build and local agencies/other community spaces are informed and invited to participate.
- A garden feast or celebration of the garden should certainly be planned; perhaps a spring or summertime celebration timed for when there are lots of things in bloom.
- Continue to consult with Knowledge Keepers to gain more knowledge on plants and also harvesting of medicinal/food plants. Continue to expand the Knowledge Keepers circle of plant medicine knowledge.
- Work closely with Scott classes and do outreach to invite community participation in weeding, watering, harvesting and more planting activities in the next summer/fall seasons. There is the option of sending out a garden outreach letter to all mailing addresses in North Central with support from the City of Regina's marketing team. This may be done in the springtime ahead of upcoming seasonal activities.
- Work on a seasonal maintenance plan that incorporates Scott classes and community to build knowledge and ownership of the garden spaces in māmawêyatitân centre and North Central over time. Ideally this will include the horticultural student positions mentioned above.

***This document was carefully prepared with the support of the Knowledge Keepers and interviewees included in this document. Our gratitude to those who have and will share traditional knowledge on plants and medicines with this growing initiative. Our gratitude, also, to CERC for funding for honorarium support to the Knowledge Keepers, interviewer,***

*and refreshments at the ground-breaking ceremony.*

### Works Cited

Daschuk, James. 2013. *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*. Regina: UR Press.

Gaudet, Janice. 2019. "Keeyoukaywin: The Visiting Way – fostering an Indigenous research methodology." *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 7, no. 2: 47-64.

**What's the garden all about?**

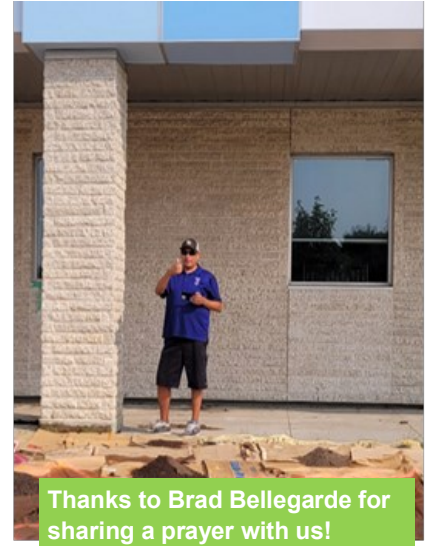
In Spring 2023, mâdawêyatitân centre was provided a monetary grant from the 2022 Grey Cup Legacy Grant Program. The mc Owners and Team Leads agreed that these funds could be used for culturally significant landscape beautification and land-based learning. This will be an opportunity to garden with locally Indigenous plants for the benefit of Scott students, mâdawêyatitân centre staff and groups, the community, and wildlife!

**What am I seeing?**

You will notice many different species are planted in the garden already, including grasses like Canada and giant wild ryes, slender wheatgrass, fescues and more. Flowering plants include sage, sunflowers, giant purple hyssop, purple prairie coneflower, strawberries, and so many more. Check out the little stick labels and make sure you come back next spring/summer/fall to see them after a season of growth! See the back page of this update for some of the lovely plants we are working to include.

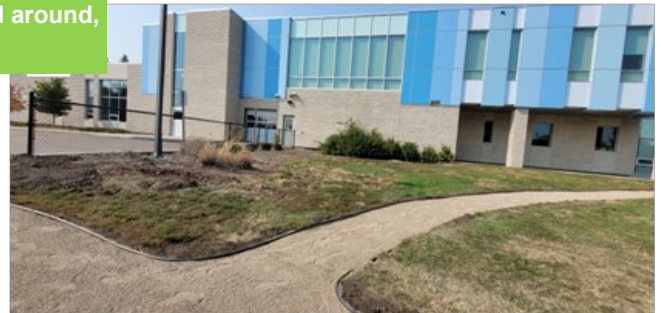
**How do I join in?**

To get involved, just talk to Jo in the main mc office, or email [mamaweyatitan@reginalibrary.ca](mailto:mamaweyatitan@reginalibrary.ca) to be added to the email update list. You can also come by and stroll through any time!



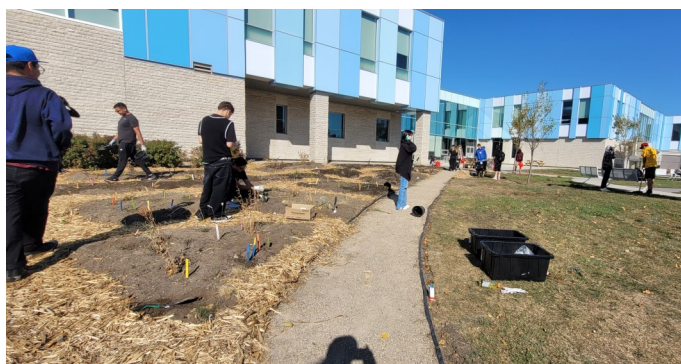
Thanks to Brad Bellegarde for sharing a prayer with us!

Garden Prep with cardboard to suppress grass and fresh soil for planting. Community Work Bee—thanks to Dale Riche for helping drive soil around, and awesome community members for helping shovel and rake!



Scott Collegiate students have been a huge part of the garden effort this fall. The Cultural Arts class researched plants, then designed and planted beds in the garden. A bunch of other Scott classes have also been out planting, mulching, prepping a new area, watering, and more!

Thank you to Joely BigEagle-Kequahtoway for sharing a prayer with us!



The Scott Vocational Assistance Program class painted sticks for garden labels, and have been helping collect and remove tape from cardboard for another area. Thank you, VAP students!



These students are SO awesome and it has been super fun working with them!

Second Community Work Bee for planting. Thank you to everyone who came out and helped put little plants in place or move mulch!

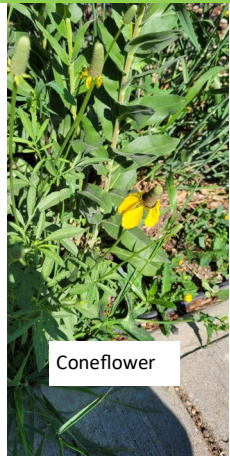


What an amazing first season of gardening for people, plants and wildlife at māmawêyatîtan centre. A special Thank You to the 2022 Grey Cup Legacy Program, whose funding support made this work possible. We look forward to years of growth!

Experience the beauty of the plants native to our region!



Sage with green needle grass



Coneflower



Smooth blue beardtongue



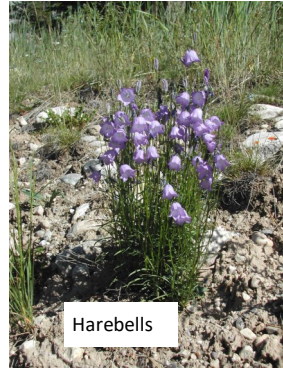
Stiff goldenrod



Oval leafed milkweed



Side oats grama



Harebells



Yarrow



June grass



Sticky geranium



Giant hyssop (purple)  
Cinquefoil (yellow)



Buffaloberry



Strawberries



Saskatoon



Red paintbrush



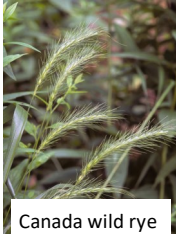
Blue grama



Canada columbine



Hedysarum



Canada wild rye



Silvery lupine



Gumweed



Violets