



Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NAN FOOD SYMPOSIUM CONNECTS PEOPLE & THE LAND

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Deputy Grand Chief Derek Fox applauds all delegates who participated in NAN's 2016 Food Symposium "Wee Tum Ma Keh Wina" (sharing our stories and legends) this week.

"Education on nutrition and access to healthy food have a direct link to the ability of our children to succeed, and it essential that our youth grow up fully-versed in their culture and with knowledge of traditional ways of accessing food," said Deputy Grand Chief Derek, who attended the three-day symposium. "Access to safe, reliable supplies of nutritious food has become a passion of mine, and I fully support and advocate for the excellent work our communities are doing to move towards food self-determination."

Now in its sixth year, the symposium was held August 23-25, 2016 at Camp Duncan, East Loon Lake. The gathering was attended by approximately 60 participants from across NAN territory who came to learn from the knowledge and wisdom of Elders and build skills and relationships with community food champions on traditional food practices and preparation.

Wee Tum Ma Keh Wina highlighted knowledge and hands-on activities using storytelling and legends. Historically, gatherings amongst the Ojibway and the Cree people of northern Ontario were a way of connecting families and clans, and the celebration of the journey through life. Food was a major part of this social connection.

The symposium showcased various food presentations and traditional food and food preparation methods demonstrated by members from across NAN territory. Medicinal tea using local plants, seed savings, wild food canning, smoking wild meat and skinning demonstrations were popular activities.

Debajehmujig Storytellers of Wikwemikong Unceded Anishnaabek Territory in Manitoulin Island provided an exceptional evening performance of storytelling based on the legends and oral history of Anishnaabek people. Participants were fascinated to learn the meaning of the pictographs found in the Peterborough area written by the ancestors over 18,000 years ago, with instructions to ensure the continued existence of the people.

“By working together we are making tremendous progress to improve the health of our people and establish food sovereignty for our communities,” said Fox. “I look forward to bringing education on nutrition and traditional harvesting practices into our schools to immerse our children in their language and culture so they can grow up with strong connections to the land and healthy food practices.”

Food symposiums are held annually to connect individuals from across NAN territory to collectively address the region’s food system challenges while finding shared community-based solutions. Planning for the 2017 gathering is already underway and will involve NAN Elders for direction.

The right to food for Indigenous peoples was highlighted in a 2012 report by the United Nation Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, who examined food security and how the human right to adequate food is being realized in Canada. The report made several recommendations but was ignored by the federal government despite the approximately two million people in Canada who have been declared as food-insecure.

NAN has developed a Food Strategy based on six key pillars: 1. Traditional Practices, 2. Imported Foods, 3. Local Production, 4. Nutrition Practice, 5. Planning, Policy and Advocacy, 6. Research and Knowledge Transfer. NAN has established collaborative relationships with other First Nations and organizations to promote food self-determination and advocate for changes to current food system.

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