



"KITIGAN" GARDEN PROJECT SPONSORED BY

L A I D L A W
FOUNDATION

"MNO-BIMAADIZIDAA"

TOGETHER WE CAN MOVE FORWARD AND LIVE WELL

Aaniin, the Mississauga Nation Chiefs approved a funding application to create gardens by learning to save the seeds, understanding the environment (soil), the plant cycle/seasons while out on the land. Rebuilding a strong connection and relationships within and across Michi Saagiig communities with youths and families though storytelling, 13 moon cycle teachings, grandfather teachings, medicine wheel teachings and our ways of knowing.

We had our first zoom virtual meeting with Elder Peter Schuler, Dr. Andrew Judge and Michi Saagiig members. Watch video to listen to their stories on how they become interested in learning about the medicines and plants; who inspired them; and tips in starting a garden.



Photo credits: Rachele King and Cathie Jamieson

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Featuring this month: Luke Rouillard's "KITIGAN" means Garden



Photo Credits by Luke

Aaniin, Waawaashkesh Nini n'dijnakaas, Migizi n'dodem, Mississaugas of the Credit Nidoonjibaa

Hello my name is Waawaashkesh Nini, Luke Rouillard, I am from the Eagle clan, I am from the MCFN, I am a Michi Saagig Nishnaabe father of 4, traditional fishermen, knowledge keeper, fire keeper, flag carrier, Feather keeper, wood carver, archer and also a gardener.

I've had a fascination and interest in gardening in my teens after I worked in a food processing plant and worked on vineyards and seen first hand what happens to our food, from then I've always wanted a big enough garden to provide food for my family that I know it's safe from GMO, pesticides and other chemicals.

This is my first year being able to build and grow a garden the size I need. I made two long mounds approximately 4 feet wide by 1.5 foot high. In my longer mound, I have Nishnaabeg blue flint corn, Kentucky pole beans and sugar pumpkins, and in the shorter mound I have the same corn and beans. I planted butternut squash as a setup to 3 sisters garden with the beans planted close to the corn so it can use the corn as a trellis while converting the nitrogen in the soil into a nitrogen the corn for better use. The pumpkins /squash act as not only a spiney barrier against garden pests but also acts as a mulch keeping the sun directly hitting the soil and drying it up too fast and keeping weeds to a minimum. In the tuppermade is my sunchokes (Jerusalem artichokes) which is part of the Nishnaabeg 4 sisters garden, it can be planted as a wind barrier in high wind areas as well as be used in place of corn as a trellis for beans.

The corn I have, I received from Elder Mark Sault, my beans and gourds were store bought packs, but also organic non GMO. My mshkiki and sunchokes came from Kayanase greenhouse. Next year I'm hoping to get and plant heirloom gourds and beans.

My interest in Mshkiki plants and wild foraging started at a very young age, some plants I just intuitively knew were medicine such as plantain for wounds. My parents would take me out a lot while growing up to pick wild berries to preserve. However, most of my Mshkiki plant knowledge came later, from my mid 20s, I started actively learning more about different plants, how they are beneficial, how to process them. My garden is 100%organic, using only fish and hardwood ash for fertilizer, no pesticides or chemicals or GMO. A lot of my 4 sister's garden knowledge is thanks to help of a friend in Hiawatha, whom I bug constantly when I have a gardening question.

Because I am a fire keeper, in need of the 4 sacred medicines, which is why I also planted sweet grass, Prairie sage, Seema and a couple cedars this year.

With the advent of the pandemic, I took this opportunity to teach my kids about sustainable food and medicine growing practices, as well as food security.

We planted many plants this year, everything having a purpose, as well as planting a 4 sister's garden, medicine garden; we planted roses to train as a thorned barrier and to draw in pollinators as well as collect the petals for medicines such as salves, blueberries, and elderberries, lilac. Next year I am adding wild roses and wild raspberry clones and expanding my mounds to grow more corn as well as adding 2 more mounds for our other fruits and vegetables we want next year.

Miigwech for reading and good luck with your gardens!



Watch for more details about upcoming Zoom virtual meetings with Elders and Mississauga Nation members telling their stories about their gardens, medicine and plants.