

24th Street Community Urban Farm - Mashkiikii Gitigan (Medicine Garden)

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2015 SEASON SUMMARY

Mission

The 24th Street Urban Farm Coalition works to create and nurture the culture and practice of local food production, healthy eating, healthy living and related activities along the 24th Street Wellness Corridor and throughout the Phillips Community.

History

Mashkiikii Gitigan (Ojibwe for Medicine Garden) was created by the 24th Street Urban Farm Coalition – a group of neighborhood residents and community organizations – as a way to address the food justice needs of people living in the Phillips area of South Minneapolis, who face many challenges in accessing fresh, healthy foods. In 2013 this farm project was chosen to be part of Phillips Healthy Living Initiative funded by Blue Cross Blue Shield which provided staffing and increased the capacity of the project.

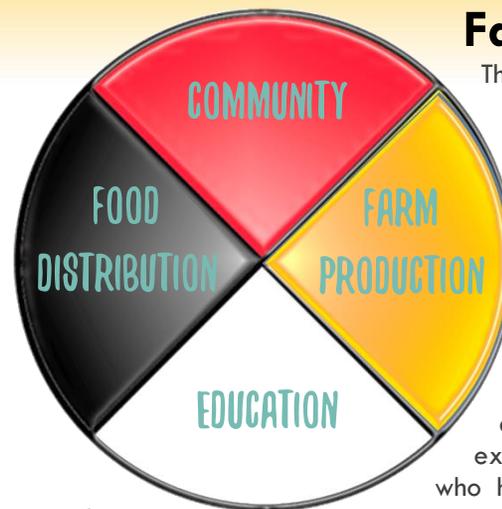
Community

The Mashkiikii Gitigan is now established in the neighborhood as a safe space: a welcoming, healthy, creative and abundant garden where community and local workers gather to learn, enjoy an outdoor meal, be productive as well as relax. This success is shown by consistent class attendance, a large community event turnout, as well as overwhelming community participation in our final facilitated planning session. Community input and opinion is an essential part of our project planning. People come to the garden to seek and share gardening support, seeds, starter plants, and advice.



Neighborhood kids watering the wheelchair accessible beds

Michael Carney - Adult Intern: "A lot of people do a lot of healing here. The energy in this garden is something special, something different. It grows as people come here. The garden actually helped heal me. Even more than that; I could say the garden actually saved my life!"



Farm Production

The Mashkiikii Gitigan has a growing reputation as an Urban Farm. We organically grow over 80 varieties of fruits, vegetables, herbs, mushrooms, and flowers including heritage and Native American medicinal plants. In order to achieve a significant amount of food distribution this year, we added growing space by including The Good Juju garden in our project. With the augmented food production we also hired an additional farm assistant, a highly experienced indigenous farmer from Ecuador who has knowledge of indigenous foods, seeds and processes needed to have a successful harvest of unique Native foods. Additionally, this increased farming area has enabled greater compost production in which we utilize the community resource of discarded food to grow our own organic compost.

Grandma Joan - Native Elder: "The Mashkiikii Gitigan is an ongoing learning experience - every year I just keep on learning! The Soil - I learned so much about the soil this year. And the lessons on healthy herbs - it's a great experience. I get excited when I think of May! Oh Goody! They're going to start beautifying the garden!"

Food Distribution

This year we established ourselves as a professional and consistent organic vendor at The Four Sisters Market on Franklin Avenue within the Phillips/Ventura Village Community. Additionally, we set up an innovative "Karma Market" within our garden space. Students from Grow Your Own class, IHB patients, Waite House community members and neighbors came to the market regularly to purchase healthy, organic produce in exchange for a free will donation. Often the food was harvested straight from the garden according to their requests, including the Latino community who gathered corn husks for their tamale production! New developments this year included direct produce sales to the community chef at Waite House. Quality organic produce is consistently shared with interns, neighbors and students, as well as used to cater our own community events.

Chanelle Gallagher, Market Manager: *“The Four Sisters Farmers Market is the newest Farmers Market in Minneapolis and we just finished our pilot season. Mashkiikii Gitigan, 24th Street Urban Farm was present at every market which showed us their commitment to providing fresh produce to the Phillips Community!”*



Assistant Farmer, Rosa, running one of the weekly Karma Markets

Education

Grow Your Own curriculum was taught weekly from May to the end of September. Returning students from the previous years participated as well as many new students from both the local community and other urban areas. In addition to our Grow Your Own classes for adults and 4H Garden Club for youth, we added a two day Seed Keeping Workshop presented by Upper Midwest Indigenous Seed Keepers' Network. A stimulating advanced class was taught by Nance Klehm, internationally respected ecological systems designer, as a collaboration project on bioremediation which brought in a new student population



to The Mashkiikii Gitigan and resulted in new bioremediated beds, mushroom beds, crop covers, and compost heaps built for the farm. Another very popular addition to our education this year was the Native Herbal Medicine class taught by Doreen Day implementing Native traditions, in which students were able to use herbs and medicinal plants from the garden to create their own herbal remedies. To increase awareness and demand for Urban Farming, we provided many educational tours for groups including: American Public Gardens Association, London Freedom Seedbank, Minnesota House of Representatives, Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs, Augsburg College, and Gandhi Mahal Restaurant



Good Nature 4H Garden Club at Mashkiikii Gitigan

Doreen Day - Native Herbalist/Educator: *“When I first came to the Mashkiikii Gitigan to teach I didn’t know anyone there. When I walked away I had made new friends! This is truly a community driven garden - students have ideas and participate in the learning process.”*

Coalition Members

Active Members: Women’s Environmental Institute ☀ Indian Health Board ☀ Native American Community Clinic ☀ Ventura Village Neighborhood Association ☀ Waite House ☀ Supporting Members: Dream of Wild Health ☀ Indigenous Peoples’ Task Force ☀ UMN SNAP Education

2015 Awards, Press, and Grants

Homegrown Hero Award, Christina Elias – Mashkiikii Gitigan Farmer & Project Manager, Homegrown Minneapolis Food Council

Phillips Healthy Living Initiative Grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield

Ventura Village Wellness, Gardening, and Greening Grant

Seward Community Fund, Seward Community Co-op

Seward SEED Program, Seward Community Co-op

“Community Partnerships” Video, Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers