

Don't make me forage for my food

Northern News Services

I've come to the conclusion that having to gather my own food would be a great way to lose weight.

That sad realization was forced unwillingly upon me by another round of berry foraging with my botanical guru David Bob.

Bob, the student wellness co-ordinator at the Aurora Campus, invited me for more berry-picking lessons on a wet, cool afternoon at Jak Park.

Our prey was the much-sought cranberry.

I had visited the park a earliler for some on-the-land workshops offered during the Gwich'in Tribal Council's self-government conference. At that time, an elder told me there were basically no cranberries to be found.

Bob was determined to go out, thinking some patches had been overlooked.

Of course, we had to go bush-whacking to find these patches, mostly amongst game trails that he casually suggested were made by bears.

That was an immediate distraction.

I'm way more interested in bears than berries, and found the idea of coming face-to-face with one in the bush far more intriguing that stooping and picking.

Bob, being a practical sort, pointed out his husky pup Inuk would warn us if any bears were around. That was a not-so-subtle hint to "git picking."

I did my best, and found cranberries a good deal easier to pick than my earlier attempts at blueberries and gooseberries.

It didn't take long for me to discover that every sinkhole in the spongy muskeg in the forest made it easier to spot and pick the berries. Those holes seemed to be a uniform two feet deep, which brought me that much closer to eye level with the luscious fruits.

It also brought me closer to Inuk's level, and that dog likes berries

almost as much as he likes playing.

I had painstakingly picked just enough berries to inadequately cover the bottom of my plastic container when Inuk enthusiastically dumped them.

I groaned, and discussed in some detail with the pup that it had taken me almost an hour to collect that many.

Bob did his best to stifle a smirk as he put him on a leash.

I muttered "I'd lose a lot of weight if I was lost in the

bush." Bob agreed a trifle too enthusiastically.

"Yup, you'd want to be lost with me in the woods if you wanted to eat," he said.

The whole process did provide some food for thought, though, if not my stomach, as I pondered just how much time people spent gathering enough food for a Northern winter while living a traditional lifestyle.

It's a sobering reminder of how easy we have it now, and how much sheer skill, endurance, co-operation and knowledge went into living off the land.

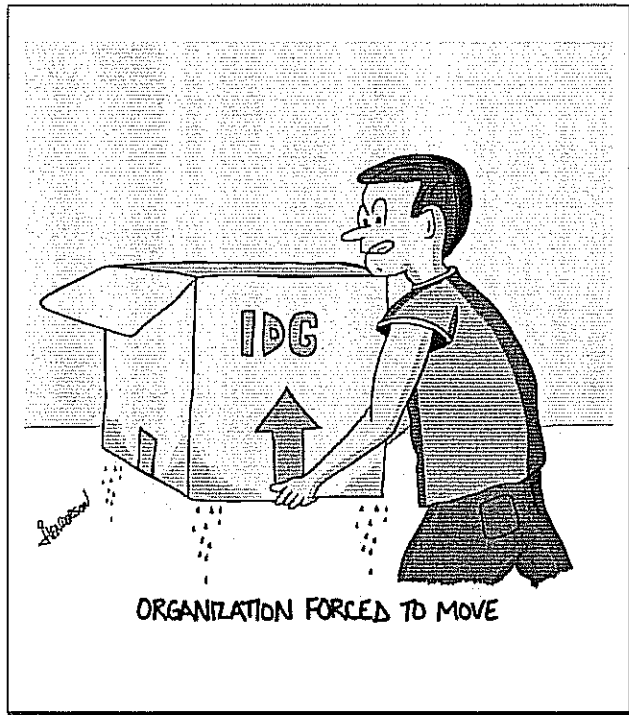
THE ISSUE:
TRADITIONAL LIFESTYLE

WE SAY:
RESPECT THE WAY IT USED TO BE

few days



SHAWN GILICK



INUVIK RESIDENT WINS BIG
Inuvik NorthMart manager Matthew Clark, left, on Aug. 20 presents David Francey with a \$1,000 gift card Francey won in a national contest sponsored by NorthMart and Maple Leaf Foods. Also pictured are his wife Gina and their children Ethan, left, Crystal and Greenlee. On the far right is Inuvik NorthMart meat manager Joe Guenette.

NNSL WEB POLL

How do you choose to support fundraising events like Run for Our Lives and the Terry Fox Run?

- I am too busy to help out. **67%**
- Pledge money to participants. **22%**
- Volunteer at the event. **11%**
- Raise pledges and participate. **0%**

HAVE YOUR SAY

What kind of self-government do you favour? Go online to www.nnsi.com/inuvik to vote in this week's poll.

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INUVIK OFFICE:
Shawn Gillick (Editor)
Deanna Larocque (Office assistant)
169 Mackenzie Road, Box 2719 Inuvik, NT, X0E 0T0
Phone: (867) 777-4545 Fax: (867) 777-4112
Toll free: (855) 873-6675
E-mail: nnsi@nnsi.com
Website: www.nnsi.com/inuvik

PUBLISHER: LW (59) Sigvaldson - jlg@nnsi.com
GENERAL MANAGER: Michael Scott - miscott@nnsi.com

ADVERTISING - DrumSales@nnsi.com
Territorial Advertising Representative: Petra Mermel
Call collect (867) 873-4031
or (867) 777-4545, and leave a message

PUBLISHING OFFICE:
Box 2920, Yellowknife, NT, X1A 2R1
Phone: (867) 873-4031 Fax: (867) 873-6507
E-mail: nnsi@nnsi.com Website: www.nnsi.com

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