The Medicinal Uses of Our Land

Benefits and preparation techniques for harvesting traditional medicinal plants in the Fort Good Hope region, Northwest Territories

Prepared by: Brandi Corris, K’asho Got’ine Charter Community Council
Fort Good Hope

With contributions from many local Elders:
Florence Barnaby, Vicki Orlias, Celine Proctor, Marcella Ellton, and Cecile Grandjame

February 2015
Benefits of Labrador Tea & How to prepare it:

- Good for children and is a relaxant and high in vitamin C.
- Do not boil or steep the tea for more than 10 minutes. Only keep for a few days.
- Elders drink one cup of this per day for good health.
- Steep one heaping teaspoonful of leaves or flowers per person in boiling water for 5 minutes.
Benefits of Sphagnum Moss & How to prepare it:

- You can use wet sphagnum moss for washing dishes, cleaning hands, and wiping off fish.

- Back in the day, our elders used this type of moss for diapers. They used the moss to absorb the waste. When I heard this, my first question was what did they use for the actual diaper? What they told me was they used sugar, oat, and dog food bags. Back then the bags were made of cloth-like material, so that’s what they used. Before they did anything with the moss they had to hang it on branches to dry it out and rid it of any bugs. Once they did that, they cut a hole in the diaper and stuffed it with the moss as if it were a pocket, then sewed it shut. Then, they cut the cloth-like material into strips like string for the sides of the diaper to tie it.

- Sphagnum Moss is also used as mosquito repellent. When dried out you can put it on a plate and burn it; just as you would burn a coil.
Benefits of Juniper berries & How to prepare it:

• Juniper berry tea can be made by washing and boiling the berries as a medicine for chest pains, bad colds, coughs, and congestion. The steam is also effective against these symptoms.
Birch Fungus

Benefits of Birch fungus & How to prepare it:

- *Cut up and boil to use for stomach ailments*
- *Rub ashes gently on skin sores and pimples*
- *Burn pieces on a plate to repel mosquitoes*
- *When dried and pounded, birch fungus makes a good fire starter*
Spruce Boughs

Benefits of Spruce boughs & how to prepare it:

• Are used for flooring in tents
• Lay the boughs (brush) down with needles pointing towards the ground
• The aroma of the boughs (brush) inside of a tent keeps people healthy
Rose Hips

After the showy pink flowers bloom in June and July, the fruit develop into Red berries called Rose hips. Pick and eat when they are ripe in August and September. Spit out the seeds or you will get “itchy bum”.

The benefits of Rose Hips & How to prepare it:

- Rose hips are high in vitamin C and is a good cold remedy
- Boil the pink flower petals until the water is pink. Store for a month, and use the liquid as an eye wash to remove dirt and infection.
- Use boiled petals for heat rash and cuts.
- Use boiled petals as a skin softener (face wash).
- Use rose petals to make a tea or eat alone (the pink ones)
- Rose hips contain calcium, iron, Vitamin A, and phosphorus.
Benefits of Tamarack and how to prepare:

- Tamarack tea is good for upset stomachs, colds, headaches, fatigue, and for general good health.
- You can add spruce gum to make a stronger medicine or add birch fungus.
- Cut branches into 15cm (6”) lengths and boil gently for 5 to 10 minutes, adding water as it evaporates.
- Tamarack tea is made from the cones (only 4 to 5 cones are needed)
- The elders say medicine from tamarack and spruce is good for cancer.
Birch

Benefits of Birch & how to prepare it:

- Cut young birch trees into small pieces (stems, twigs, and leaves) and boil in a large pot. Strain the boiled juice and pour into jars. Drink one-half cup in the morning before breakfast and another one at night before going to bed. Treats stomach ailments such as heartburn and ulcers.

- Make only enough medicine for One week, as it will spoil.

- Sticky gum may also be chewed and swallowed with this medicine.

- Wrap birch bark around fractures, it will act as a cast and help heal it.
Benefits of Bearberry and how to prepare:

- They are rich in Vitamin C and Carbohydrates

If you do not have any water, these berries will quench your thirst. Fresh or dried leaves can be used as a tea substitute or additive. (Too much tea can cause constipation and stomach problems)
Benefits of Red Willow & how to prepare it:

• Collect the bark year round – peel the bark off the stem and boil it slowly until the liquid turns orange for 2 to 5 minutes, then cool the liquid.

  The film that forms on the surface is to be rubbed on your skin to heal sores, scabs, eczema, insect bites, sunburns, and rashes.

• Drinking the liquid, or rubbing it directly on the affected area will soothe stiff and aching joints.

• (Note): it grows in wet areas with cranberries and Labrador tea.
Willow

Benefits of Willows & how to prepare it:

- Any green leaves can be crushed or chewed and applied to bee stings, insect bites, burns, rashes, aches, cuts, and even tooth aches!

- Bark can be made into a tea with the leaves. The bitter taste comes from salicylic acid which is used to make aspirin.

- Back in the day, our elders used to make fish nets out of willows
Blueberries

Benefits of Blueberries & how to prepare it:

- Boil the stems and leaves to make a tea for cold symptoms

You can use to make Jams, pies, and eat with fish eggs. I don’t want to specify on how to make it, everyone has their own way; (elders have the best recipes). 😊

(Note): you can harvest blueberries in July and August
Benefits of Shrubby Cinquefoil and how to prepare:

- Used for fever and sore chest, arms and legs, and coughs.
- To prepare, use the leaves to make tea. Dry the leaves or use fresh; pour boiling water on them and let steep for 5 to 10 minutes.
- Note: (numerous of these 5 pedalled flowers appear from June to October)
Benefits of Raspberries and how to prepare as a medicine:

- A tea from the leaves is recommended as a gargle for sore throats and cold.
- To prepare tea, steep in boiling water and keep covered for about 5 minutes.
- Note: Raspberries are a good source of Vitamin C
Crowberry (Also known as Blackberry)

Benefits of Crowberry/Blackberry and how to prepare:

- Make medicine for stomach aches and bad colds by collecting and boiling blackberry roots, berries, and stems.
- Note: Pick these berries in August and September
Horsetail

Benefits of Horsetail and how to prepare:

- The leaves and stems can be steamed for nasal congestion, colds and stomach ailments.
Yarrow

Benefits of Yarrow as a medicine & how to prepare:

- The boiled liquid from this plant has many medicinal uses. Boil the whole plant to make a tea that provides relief from coughs and ulcers.
- Use the liquid from the boiled flower tops to soothe infected skin and sunburns, or dry up skin rashes.
- Crush the leaves and flowers into a paste and put on wounds to control bleeding.
Benefits of Yellow berry and how to prepare:

- These berries are a special treat that you rarely see.
  (You can eat these berries with many things ex. Ice cream, pie, custard, etc.)

- The White flowers come out in June and the large orange berries are ready to pick in late July when they are soft and plump. Freeze to preserve.
Fireweed

Benefits of Fireweed & how to prepare:

- Boil the whole plant as a medicine and rub the liquid on the skin for rashes.
- A poultice is made from the leaves and applied to burns, bee stings, aches, and swelling caused by arthritis.
Cranberry

The benefits of Cranberries medicinally & how to prepare:

- Cranberry juice is good for kidney problems. Two to Three cups of cranberry juice, made by simmering berries up to 30 minutes, can help with colds and digestion and improve appetite.
- Boil the leaves and drink juice for coughs.
The benefits of Black Spruce medicinally & how to prepare:

- Spruce tea relieves coughing and sore throats and chests.
- Gently boil 5 to 15 cones for 10 to 15 minutes to make tea; pick the cones from the tops of young spruce trees year round.
  - Take it 3 or 4 times a day for 5 days.
- Sticky gum from spruce trees is used to soothe irritated skin and helps to heal cuts and mouth sores.
References:

1. Harvesting the Northern Wild
   A guide to Traditional and Contemporary uses of Edible Forest Plants of the Northwest Territories by Marilyn Walker
   Northern Publishers, 1984 Yellowknife; 224 pages

2. The local elders of our community (Fort Good Hope, N.T) Vicki Orlias, Florence Barnaby, Celine Proctor, Marcella Ellton, and Cecile Grandjambe. Mashi!
1. To the local elders of our community (Fort Good Hope, N.T) who volunteered their time and answered questions about the medicinal uses of our land. (Florence Barnaby, Vicki Orlias, Celine Proctor, Marcella Ellton, and Cecile Grandjambe )

Mashi Cho

2. Special thanks to Bonnie Burksma for doing the illustrations and volunteering her time to make this book possible

3. Also a big thanks to Jaqueline Ho for doing the photography
THE MEDICINAL USES OF OUR LAND

Cranberry

Yarrow

Black Spruce

White Birch

Wild Rose

Tomateck

BY: BRANDI CORRIS