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For Immediate Distribution

First Nations Reserve Pioneers Thriving Market Garden

Saskatchewan's Flying Dust First Nations Reserve is home to a one-of-a-kind garden that has transformed the community. With the knowledge and technical expertise of produce provider, Thomas Fresh, the FD Riverside Market Garden is blossoming further into a source of healthy food options and employment opportunities for its community members.

First Nations experience a rate of diabetes 5x higher than the average Canadian. Recognizing the urgent need to improve the eating habits of their community, in 2009, Flying Dust resolved to plant an organic garden which would provide a much-needed nutritional food source. The original mission of the garden was to, “feed the land to feed the people”, explains Len Sawatsky, the garden’s general manager. With a mission that aligns with First Nation traditions, an initial small garden of two acres was planted, which has now grown into a sprawling 65-acre farm.

Besides successfully feeding the people of Flying Dust, the garden is providing employment opportunities in a region which commonly experiences unemployment rates exceeding 60%. Providing job opportunities within the community is very important, and each year, 16 employees help nurture the garden. In return, they are given more than just a job, but a chance to grow themselves.

One such employee is Mickey, a man with a painful upbringing who at 43, earned a job from the garden after five years of being unemployed. He, along with other workers, were given the opportunity to complete a 2-year diploma known as the “Green Certificate Program”. The second year of this unique certification enables employees to learn how to supervise and teach others at the garden during regular work hours. Sawatsky explains that the garden, “has provided new fulfillment to youth employees, which ultimately will have a great long term impact on the Flying Dust Community.”



The FD Riverside Market Garden is not only helping the people within the community, but it's also attracting the attention of other groups sharing similar values. Thomas Fresh, a produce grower, packer and shipper who is prominent in Western Canada, is a proud supporter of the garden's vision. The strong partnership and ongoing mentorship of Flying Dust has led to the purchasing of yellow, organic potatoes which Thomas Fresh then sells in convenient, 3lb bags available in most grocery stores. With plans to expand this collaboration into other premium, organic produce such as 3lb red and russet potato varieties, carrots, tomatoes, onions and specialty herbs. Thomas Fresh CEO Roy Hinchey is excited to strengthen ties with the Flying Dust Community.

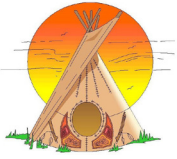
"We are proud and honoured to be working alongside First Nations people who are pioneering new ways of supporting their communities. As a company who throughout our growth has remained true to our original values, it is inspiring to watch Flying Dust do the same."



Having recently become fully irrigated, the garden continues to flourish. With the intention of lengthening their growing season, additional greenhouses as well as forward-thinking vertical growing systems will help take advantage of the already, nutrient-dense soil.

Through the hard work of its employees and dedicated support from the community, the future continues to look bright for this very special garden.





About Flying Dust:

Flying Dust is a 1200-member First Nations Reserve located 300 kms northwest of Saskatoon. This self-sufficient community is home to a school, health clinic, hockey arena and youth centre. As the host of the 2003 First Nations Summer Games, Flying Dust continues to be a progressive and strong community.



About Thomas Fresh:

Thomas Fresh Inc. is Western Canada's premium fresh packer, supplying exclusive Asian, organic and conventional produce from established farms. Thomas Fresh offers the best nature has to offer, and makes every effort to plant, yield and deliver the highest quality produce imaginable.

Learn more at www.thomasfresh.com, and follow @ThomasFresh on most social media platforms to stay up to date on the latest community involvements and products!