

# Sustainable agriculture program continues to thrive in Bay Mills

By Shannon Jones  
Bay Mills News

BAY MILLS — The sustainable agriculture program at Bay Mills Community College continues to flourish and livestock have recently entered the mix.

A Berkshire pig and three Nigerian dwarf goats are currently being housed at the West Campus. The pig will be a breeder, whose offspring will produce pork in the future.

The Berkshire breed — considered a higher quality meat prized for juiciness, flavor and tenderness — is served in many upscale restaurants, according to Steve Yanni, land grant director. The goats are dairy goats brought in from Happy Tails Nigerians downstate.

And with construction of a new building on M-221 complete, the animals will be moved to their new home in the near future, under the name 'Waishkey Bay Farm.'

Plans are also already in place for the next growing season.

According to Casey Munz, sustainable agriculture coordinator, planting will begin in late February/early March utilizing the greenhouses at the West Campus site. The ultimate goal of the project is to teach community members that the county does have the tools and resources to sustain its food source.

"Bay Mills will be a micro-model of what's possible," said Yanni, who believes it is possible

for the local area to produce its own food rather than depending on grocery stores for staples such as vegetables and beef.

The program was already a success in its first year, producing a substantial crop last season. Some of the crops being grown include tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, beans, potatoes, lettuce, and beets. There is currently a winter planting of garlic in the works.

Yanni said the program will continue to produce as much off-pasture food as can be consumed by the community. Last year crops were distributed to the Bay Mills Senior Center, on campus and at the Bay Mills Boys & Girls Club.

The biggest selling point of the program is that all produce grown is pesticide-free.

"People are really receptive to that," said William LeBlanc, agricultural assistant.

While the agriculture program does focus on community farming, Yanni said it's important to note that BMCC is not creating a farm for competition purposes.

"This is a learning environment," he said. "We support local agriculture as much as possible and want to provide a sounding board that helps others better their business. We want to teach young people to understand the local food system from a business perspective."

Aaron Tadgeon, land grant coordinator, echoed Yanni's sentiments about the farm being used as a teaching tool and has been work-

ing with the local youth on projects to encourage their interest in the agri-science business.

"We are in dire need of scientists," said Tadgeon, noting the Ojibwe Charter School students are currently working hand-in-hand on many agri-science projects, including a healthy foods initiative.

Anyone in the local area is encouraged to participate in the program, including local community farmers. BMCC's program enables them to research new farming trends and plans to share the results with the farming community.

Any monies raised from the project are put directly back into the program, from covering the cost of raising the crops to employment. Funding is also being provided by several grants.

Community members are encouraged to provide input to the program and even stop by to visit the animals, but are discouraged from feeding them.

"The livestock is very well cared for. They have their vaccinations and worming done and we need the public to resist the urge to feed them so they remain healthy and we know what they are consuming," said Munz.

Other facets of the project include an apple orchard to be located off Lakeshore Drive on the left hand side of the road, just past plantation road. The property is in the process of being cleared to plant the trees in the spring.



WAISHKEY BAY FARM IS BORN — Bay Mills Community College's sustainable agriculture program recently added livestock to the project. Pictured above (L-R) are Casey Munz, William LeBlanc, Steve Yanni and Aaron Tadgeon showing off their new additions, Nigerian dairy goats.



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