

# Be a heritage advocate: Grow your food

## Back in Time



**Matthew Lovegrove**  
Curatorial Assistant,  
Sunshine Coast  
Museum & Archives

**H**ands up if you are sitting inside on the last rainy days of winter planning your summer garden. Well, I can see that I'm not alone. As the days get warmer and your plans become realized in the sprouts that break the soil, know that your work is deeply rooted in a rich history of harvesting the edible landscape of the Sunshine Coast.

For thousands of years, the Sechelt and Squamish Nations followed the seasonal ebb and flow of naturally occurring food sources by fishing, hunting and picking plants and berries. By becoming attuned to yearly cycles of food availability, their cultures flourished through a deep connection with their landscape. With the arrival of Europeans, a new mode of farming was introduced: stump farming saw pioneers using blasting powder to remove (read: detonate) large tree stumps that remained from the logging process. With the land

cleared, many families set up small subsistence farms that allowed them to grow their own food to make ends meet in between seasonal employment such as fishing and logging. In the 1920's, The Howe Sound Farmers' Institute was formed as an advocacy group to spark interest in local farming. It was members of the institute that banded together to create the Howe Sound Canning Co-Op, a jam cannery that operated in the Henry Road area of Gibsons. The strawberry, raspberry and blackberry jam they produced was marketed under the name Malkin's Best and won awards from as far away as England. This winter I made my first batch of blackberry jam, and al-

though it won't win any awards, it's somehow comforting to know that the berries were picked along the pathways and trails of my community.

Following the history of food production into the present day, it is with sadness that we hear news of Robin Wheeler's passing. Expert gardener, food security advocate and passionate teacher, Robin inspires us to embrace the edible landscape and to discover the wonder of harvesting our own food just like the First Nations and pioneers before us. Join the tradition that Robin lovingly embodied in her life: grow your own food and dig your roots into the history of food production on the coast. After all, we've all got to eat.



Welton (Welt) Palmer with two pails full of strawberries from his farm on Russell Road near Gibsons. These strawberries would be sold to the Howe Sound Co-operative Cannery for use in making the cannery's 'Malkin's Best Gibsons Landing Pack' jam.