pushing marijuana!

I think they should legalize it! Do you

people to fax me true funny Northern stories

to a lawyer.

So I will say, see you next week.

Learning Northern animal husbandry

Northern News Services

Sitting at a big table at the Hay River Ski Club listening to Jackie Milne share her passion and vision for the Northern Farm Training Institute, I was once again reminded how lucky I am to live in the NWT and to be in on the cutting edge of Northern holistic farm training.

Jackie's passion is contagious and though we might not agree on political parties, we do agree on almost everything else! (Ponder that).

One of Jackie's mentors is Allen Savory of the Savory Institute and I highly recommend that everyone check out his projects on Google. Watching the online TED talk, the thing that struck me about Allen Savory was his admission that he had personally seen to the deaths of 40,000 African elephants back in the 1950's, thinking it was the only answer to save the savanna grasslands. He says he will have to live with that murderous crime for the rest of his life. When a person has been so humbled and comes back to try and right his wrong, I believe that is a person we should listen and learn from. But more than that, the wonderful results of his new work restoring the worlds overburdened lands through holistic management are proving that by us managing our resources in a regenerative fashion, we can heal the planet.

THE SUM OF
All Our Parts

***Libby Whittall Catling** is living her dream. Along with her husband, stepson and three dogs, they are the only full-time residents of Fort Reliance, on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake.*

Of course the question is, how can we make this wonderful knowledge applicable and practical for the NWT?

The very exciting workshop Roger and I were privileged to attend was all about Northern animal husbandry and which animals can be raised for meat, milk, eggs and wool here in our harsh climate. Meat with fat is the only food that can deliver the amount of dense calories and nutrition needed for most of us to prosper in this severe, cold, dry climate. With the sad end of the once great caribou herds upon us, there is an urgent need for fresh meat in most of our Northern communities. We are being forced into relying 100 per cent on the potentially unstable grocery delivery system from the south to bring us our most important foods. Trying to locally grow the amount of vegetable and grain calories needed to supply all the nutritional needs of everyone in the North is impossible.

The Northern Farm Training Institute's solution is for each of our communities to have their own local meat animals which each community can breed and slaughter according to their need.

If there were still hundreds of thousands of caribou roaming the tundra, this wouldn't be such an important issue. Between resource development, hunters, wolves and the devastating forest fires which destroyed important caribou migration paths, the caribou don't stand a chance of recovery. If the human hunting pressure on the caribou is not completely removed, there is going to have to be a harsh wolf cull.

We must have money to live, few have the stomach for a serious wolf cull and the fires have done their worst already. The only thing else we can possibly do to preserve the caribou is to have a complete territory-wide hunting ban on all caribou until their numbers have been restored. Even with that serious measure, it may be too late.

I have been in our communities food stores and know what is available and for what price. Healthy eating is a luxury few can afford. With our own locally raised and slaughtered meat we could go a long way in providing healthy food for ourselves.

In this very fun workshop there were morning classes about breeds of chickens, rabbits, sheep, goats, pigs and cows suited for the North and then in the afternoons we went out to work hands-on with these animals. Some, like me, had been around various farm animals before but others had never seen a pig.

The breeding female sows are huge but the small piglets are bright cute sparks of piggy energy who had not yet learned the complexities of the electric fencing we were moving to increase their forage area. It was astounding to see what the pigs had done to the area already. Where there had been thick scrubby willow bush with many thistles and thorns was now lovely plowed ground with almost all the roots removed as the pigs had dug thoroughly, looking for the tastiest treats. Jackie left a small group of us with the responsibility to move the electric fence to increase the new forage pasture.

Pointing out some quick directions, she trudged back up the hill to get more grocery store recycled food scraps to entice the pigs away from where we were working. The electric fence setup uses solar energy and is a great idea to keep your animals enclosed and protected from predators.

Finally, after a few more trips up the increasingly steeper hill for ever more treats to keep the pigs distracted, we were done with this very educational job. That's the thing about farming, it generally means hard work but it's the good kind of hard work that leaves you feeling satisfied.

Moving up into the huge main barn, I was instantly drawn to the Icelandic sheep, maybe because they look a bit like miniature muskox with their beautiful horns and long wool.

One young ram had a rare golden fleece. This hearty ancient breed has provided delicious meat, sweet milk and the finest wool since Viking times and the people of Iceland rely on it still today.

They are a kind and patient animal that can defend itself against dogs and coyotes. They also love to forage scrub brush, and in fact, the grazed land is left healthier and stronger by their grazing! (We know this thanks to Allen Savory's studies.)

It looks like I'm running out of space here, otherwise I would share more about ideas to renew the burned boreal forest using grazing animals in small movable enclosures. And tell you about the wonderful family of real authentic shepherds who are overseeing the growing herds of hardy sheep and dairy goats on the Northern Farm Training Institute campus using family-friendly Portuguese Guardian dogs who will not hesitate to take on a wolf.

In conclusion, I want to say how much I really appreciate Prime Minister Harper coming up to Hay River last year to deliver the $2 million grant money the institute had applied for. We can all be assured the taxpayers' money is being managed holistically and in a responsible manner by Northern Farm Training Institute.

I would love to see a lot more of those kind of dollars in the North, helping us to create our own food security and provide healthy local food for the communities.