

Maria Campbell, *Eagle Feather News*, August 2012

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Promoting the North takes money

Somewhere in Green Lake country there is a thief and not just one of your ordinary run of the mill kind either. This one is into fried bannock!

That's right, fried bannock! Rose and Rik Richardson have had their restaurant, Keewatin Country Junction, broken into four times over the last few years and each time the fridge and freezers have been raided and ALL the fried bannock is gone.

Hundreds of pieces of lovely, delicious fried bannock stolen and not one left for a hungry traveler's coffee. Can you imagine that? Who would do such a thing?

Grant it, Rose makes the best fried bannock I have ever eaten and that's saying a lot because mine is pretty darn good, but I have to admit hers is better.

It is so good people come from as far away as Europe to have it so I guess if you think about it, an idle thief of thieves with nothing better to do would have to eventually make the decision to steal it.

Imagine them sitting around one night when the talk turns to their favorite pastime, which is stealing of course, and someone suggests the Junction's bannock. Can't you hear the conversation "Hey, man that old lady makes better bannock than my nokom!"

"Yeah I know I stopped in yesterday and she had big trays full sitting around all over the place, oh man it was just brown and shiny and that Rik was eating a big piece covered with jam. Man I thought I was gonna die I wanted it so bad."

And presto the deed is done. The Junction is broken into and then the thief is hooked and just has to keep coming back for more.

It makes sense, addictions are addictions. But like all of them they cost somebody money and for Keewatin Country Junction the cost of a broken window is prohibitive.

So a message for the bannock thief or thieves, Rose and Rik have come up with a plan to help you out because you don't really want to end up getting caught and having to do time for stealing fried bannock, that would be kind of embarrassing.

Rose will type up her recipe and post it on the door and if that does not work for you then leave a note on the door suggesting she do a weekend workshop, open to the public, of course, so no one knows it's you, and you and all the other participants can learn to cook it for yourselves.

Now that's a great idea don't you think?

Rose has always been such a kind and generous woman, even more so since she became a great grandmother.

And come on man, or mans, as my old dad use to say, you don't want your life story to be "the man who stole fried bannock from a great grandmother!"

For the reader's information, Keewatin Country Junction is a seasonal stopping place, opening on the May long weekend until the end of summer.

The menu is small, but great, with fresh homemade soup every day, Indian Tacos and bannock anyway you can imagine it. Fried, baked, smothered with blueberries picked from just down the road and all the pie you can eat and the coffee is fresh and strong.

Rose purchased the train station from CPR more than 20 years ago with the dream of one day operating a Stopping Place at the Junction.

"I wanted to serve good food, promote northern arts and tell the story of our country and people," she says.

But it all cost a lot of money and realizing that dream took years.

She and her husband Rik opened the Junction and after a few rocky years, "things are starting to look a little better."

Promoting the North, its history, natural beauty and resources is something that is close to both Rose and Rik and they work tirelessly to that end.

They have traveled across the country and to Europe checking out markets for local products such as wild rice, berries and indigenous medicines and have found not only the interest but the market as well.

"If we could develop to serve that market we could create a successful business throughout the North," Rik says. "But to do that people need money."

It has always been amazing to me how big companies can get huge gifts and grants of money from our government, both provincial and federal, to develop the resources of our territories but find it so difficult to do the same for the most valuable resource of all and that is the people.

If even one per cent of the resources hauled from the territory was poured back into developing the human resources, be it in education or small business and industry, think how much richer we would all be.

Rich materially and spiritually as well. It is too bad that governments, regardless of party affiliations, are so narrow and shortsighted. Ah well, one day ...