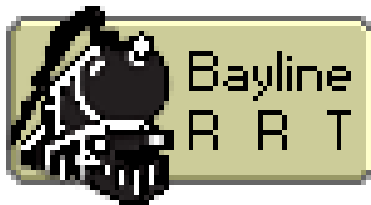




Northern Grocers Forum Report

March 2009



REPORT BY

Manitoba Food Charter
641 St. Matthews Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3G 0G6

Tel: 204-943-0822
Fax: 204-774-1847

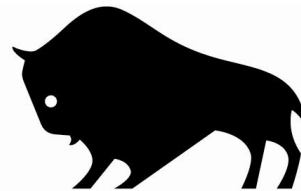
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2009 northern Grocers joined community food security organizations Manitoba Food Charter (MFC) and Bayline Regional Roundtable (BRRT) in Thompson and The Pas to identify ways to increase access to affordable healthy foods in northern Manitoba.

This report outlines the process and findings of the 2009 Northern Grocers Forums as well as several opportunities for action. Below is a summary of seven key opportunities for action developed in consultation with northern Grocers and other stakeholders. Additional opportunities for action can be found in the discussion section of this report.

Key Opportunities for Action include:

1. A community accessible refrigerated rail car on each of the northern rail lines
2. A Northern Grocer Mentorship program for new and existing grocers or convenience store owners wanting to expand into grocers
3. A pilot Food Buying Club based out of Thicket Portage
4. Developing partnerships between grocers and the province on a Northern Food Prices Food Survey program
5. Increasing community access to the Food Mail program for eligible communities or to a similar program such as the Canada Food Subsidy Program as suggested in the recent Food Mail program review.
6. Involving grocers as key partners in community food self-support initiatives
7. Decreasing freight costs for healthy foods for the North

This project builds on the 2003 Northern Food Prices Report and works towards the overall goal of decreasing retail costs and increasing the availability of affordable healthy foods to northern Manitoban communities.

Next steps include meeting with communities to determine their priorities for action, developing a strategic action plan, and seeking funding partners.

The forums were funded by Population Health Fund through Public Health Agency of Canada, Rural Secretariat, and by Northern Healthy Foods Initiative through Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

INTRODUCTION

The 2009 Northern Grocers Forums were coordinated by Manitoba Food Charter (MFC) and Bayline Regional Roundtable (BRRT). The goal of the forums was to develop input for a strategic plan on how to work with grocers to decrease retail costs and increase the availability of affordable healthy foods in northern Manitoba. A variety of retail outlets from independent small stores and convenience stores to larger chain stores were invited to attend. A Food Mail representative from Perimeter Airlines as well as representatives from Northern Healthy Foods Initiative and Public Health Agency of Canada also attended.

Twenty-three Grocers Forum participants were invited to brainstorm on a range of topics including increasing access to affordable healthy foods in their local community; expanding their product range and suppliers, working with their local schools to supply snack programs; helping children and their families in their communities eat healthier; creating local employment; buying directly from farmers; and to network and discuss opportunities with grocers from other communities as well as with agencies that seek to support northern grocers.

Grocers are new partners in recent community and government efforts to increase northern food security. In the past, community organizations such as MFC and BRRT and have organized projects and events in response to community demand. However, in the case of the Grocers Forums the organizations were the ones to approach grocers, unsure if they would be willing to become involved in this work and share their current and historical efforts to increase access to affordable healthy foods in the North. While not all grocers invited were able to attend those that did participate were glad to be invited and indicated this was a first for them as well. There was keen interest on all sides about Manitoba initiatives to increase northern food security.

The Grocers Forums were also different from past events because the focus was on hearing from and networking with people involved in the business side of the food system as opposed to previous work with grassroots community groups.

The idea behind working with northern grocers was two-fold. Firstly, it was an opportunity to get grocers involved in and aware of broader food systems and health issues in the North and to see how their businesses and communities could benefit from working towards making affordable healthy food more accessible in their communities. Secondly, it was an opportunity to develop an understanding of the infrastructure and realities of food distribution to northern Manitoban communities in an effort to get a sense of what types of changes are realistic.

There were presentations on a range of topics including a brief history of food security work in the north; Manitoba's Northern Healthy Foods Initiative; breakfast and snack programs in schools; Food Buying Clubs; the federal Food Mail program; a Freezer Purchase program; and

community food security programming by Bayline Regional Roundtable, Northern Association of Community Councils, Frontier School Division, Four Arrows Regional Health Authority, and Manitoba Food Charter. There was also information presented on reflections and lessons learned from the former Seymourville, Manitoba, Lakeview Co-op.

By the end of the forum a lot of learning happened on all sides and resulted in the identification of seven key areas for action. Based on consultations with participants at the forums, these are concrete ideas for action that are relevant and realistic. Next steps would involve meeting with communities to determine their priorities for action, further developing content for a strategic action plan, and seeking funding partners.

MFC and BRRT look forward to continuing to work with northern grocers to increase the availability of affordable healthy food in northern Manitoban communities.



Thompson Northern Grocers Forum participants listen to working group feedback and recommendations

DISCUSSION

FORUM OVERVIEW

- A list of northern grocers and convenience stores in Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (ANA) communities was compiled into a Northern Grocers Directory (Appendix A).
- Two forums were planned in an effort to get participants from the North-Western region of the province interested in and involved in the project. Thompson and The Pas were identified as key grocery hubs for the north. The experience of MFC and BRRT has been that people from The Pas and surrounding area rarely make it to events held in Thompson. Also, despite the fact that The Pas is a main food producer in the North, there has not been a lot of connection around food security issues between The Pas and Thompson. For this reason, the organizers wanted to make an extra effort to get people from The Pas and surrounding area involved in the project (see Appendix B for methodology).
- The forums were scheduled to be a day and a half each in length. The first day was a half day used to introduce and discuss being a grocer in the North and the issues around getting affordable healthy food into northern Manitoban communities. The second day was a full day to work on developing ideas for action and next steps. Presenters were invited to attend the forums to discuss a variety of northern food security projects and programs including (see Appendices C, D, E and attached PowerPoint presentations for more information):
 - 2003 Northern Food Prices Report
 - Northern Healthy Foods Initiative
 - Community food security programming by Bayline Regional Roundtable, Northern Association of Community Councils, Frontier School Division, Four Arrows Regional Health Authority, and Manitoba Food Charter
 - Camperville Food Security project
 - Healthy Breakfast and Snack programs in schools
 - Food Mail program
 - Seymourville, Manitoba - Lakeview Co-op: Reflections and Lessons Learned

Store owners were also invited to talk about their businesses.

PROJECT GOALS

- The facilitation plan was developed based on discussions with grocers as well as around project goals and can be found in Appendix F.
- The project goals for the forums included:
 - conducting a strategic planning with northern retailers towards strategic regional solutions to decreasing food costs in the north with potential sourcing from Manitoba
 - developing key northern partnerships between Northern Retail, Northern Healthy Foods Initiative, and community sectors
 - learning about successful northern retailer models in Manitoba and Saskatchewan
 - developing a strategic plan with northern retailers to increase affordable healthy foods in strategic regions
 - supporting small northern retailers and entrepreneurs in micro-enterprise development and diversification to include affordable healthy foods and other small businesses such as bedding plant sales
 - researching and identifying Community Economic Development food solutions through purchasing within the community
 - strategizing long-term sourcing of foods from northern Manitoba producers as well as identifying existing sources from Manitoba producers
 - documenting existing community needs from food retailers

PROJECT CHALLENGES

Northern Grocers Directory

- There were many challenges to organizing the forums as well as getting grocers involved. One of the first challenges encountered was that no comprehensive list of northern Manitoba grocers existed. To that end a Northern Grocers Directory (Appendix A) was developed and it should be noted that although the list of grocers is extensive it is not exhaustive.

- Some of the challenges encountered when putting the directory together included:
 - not being able to find or reach community contacts
 - out-of-date business and community contacts information on “Manitoba Community Profiles” web pages and the phone book.

Attendance

- 14 participants and 5 organizers attended the forum in Thompson. 4 participants and 2 organizers attended the Forum in The Pas (Appendix G). Grocers and communities represented at the forums include:
 - **Dwyer’s General Store – Wabowden**
 - **Cross Lake Family Foods – Cross Lake**
 - **A & M Convenience – Thicket Portage**
 - **King’s Health & Variety and Leaf Rapids Consumers Co-op – Leaf Rapids**
 - **Northern Stores – Lac Brochet / Northlands, Shamattawa**
 - **Carroll Meats – Thompson**
 - **Camperville Food Security Project – Camperville**
 - **Berscheid Meats – The Pas**
- Due to poor weather and a low number of participants at the forum in The Pas, the event was shortened to one afternoon and the following day was used by organizers to meet with local grocers, food producers, and Manitoba Agriculture, Food, and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI) (see Appendix H for a summary of meetings). Meetings took place with:
 - **The Grub Box**
 - **Giant Tiger**
 - **IGA**
 - **Tri-Family Health**
 - **University College of the North, Culinary Arts program**
 - **Local Birch syrup producer**

- **MAFRI Farm Production Advisor**
- Although there were quite a few communities represented at the forums, the amount of community and regional representation at the forums could have been higher.

The factors that affected the attendance at the forums include:

- **Management structure**
 - Many managers of corporate stores do not have say in decisions about how the company is run. For example, they do not have the ability to decide where the store sources its products from or which, if any, charitable or community based projects the store participates in.
 - This was a challenge when organizing the forums as it made it difficult to get grocer representation from all communities and in some cases, from the only store in a community. For example, more than one manager from a corporate store said that they did not see the value in attending or were told by their manager that they could not attend because the issues being discussed at the forums were out of their scope of responsibility.
- **Lack of replacement staff**
 - Some of the grocers invited to attend were not able to stay for the duration of the forum because there was no one in their community that was available or had the skills to cover them while they were away for a couple of days.
- **Lack of interest in food security issues**
 - The low numbers in The Pas were due to the combination of lack of interest in food security issues in the region and dangerous travelling conditions. The number of grocers who said that they were not interested in attending or that were not even interested in learning about the forums over the telephone was much higher in The Pas and surrounding communities than in and around Thompson.
- **Organizing an event from outside the community**
 - Organizing events from out of town can be a challenge. It can be very difficult to reach people by telephone, especially people who are busy with work and who do not know you or understand why you are calling. Further, it can be difficult to have a conversation and get people on

board with the work you are doing when you can not speak with someone face to face and do not have a scheduled time to talk to them.

- **Length of forum**

- Although the majority of participants at the forum suggested in their evaluation of the event that it be longer in the future (Appendix I), the length of the forum was cited as a reason why people could not attend. According to some grocery store managers, 1 ½ to 2 days is too long to be away from the store.

- **Weather**

- As mentioned above, the low numbers in The Pas were due to the combination of dangerous travelling conditions and the lack of interest in food security issues in the region. At the time of the forum in The Pas, it was too icy for planes to land at some points and too icy to drive on the highways.



Bill Chernick, Perimeter Airlines; Phyllis Castelle, Cross Lake Family Foods; and Viola Cook, King's Health & Variety; share their recommendations at the Thompson Northern Grocers Forum

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

Some of the best things about the forum identified by participants include (see Appendix I for more detail):

- meeting people with a common purpose
- learning about all of the support organizations available to grocers and communities
- an expanded vision of the North
- concrete learning about costs
- learning tips and information that can be taken back to communities

Some of the ways in which the forum could be improved include:

- making it longer
- inviting more government agencies
- more speakers
- more time to talk about reducing the cost for groceries
- more attendees

On a scale of 0 – 3 participants rated:

- learning what they wanted to learn at the forum – 2.6
- how much their knowledge of the topics changed – 2.2
- plan to use the ideas or knowledge learned at the event in their communities – 2.5

Participants overwhelmingly agreed that the information they learned at the forum was valuable and relevant to their communities. Some of the ways in which they plan to use it include:

- to start a Food Buying group
- to help with gardening projects for children
- as justification for community development projects and programs
- doing a report on the forum to their community and encourage involvement

- to raise community awareness and increase mentorship
- to participate in the Freezer Purchase program
- to look into being a distributor for the Food Mail program

Participants also indicated overwhelmingly that they would like more information and to stay connected to other northern communities working on food issues in the North.

THE NORTHERN GROCERY SYSTEM IN CONTEXT

When asked about the best part of being a northern grocer participants explained that there were many benefits to being a grocer in the North such as being a part of and being connected to the community; creating employment in the community; the daily challenges that keep the work interesting; and having the opportunity to influence community food security (a complete list can be found in Appendix J). Participants were also asked their expectations for the forum which ranged from learning from others to access better, healthy food; to building relationships and networks; to decreasing costs and increasing the profitability of northern grocery stores (a complete list can be found in Appendix K).

The forum was a useful venue to develop an understanding of the context that northern grocery stores operate within. The northern food system is complex and northern grocers face unique challenges as well as many opportunities to making affordable healthy food available in northern communities (Appendices J, L, M).

Summary of Northern Grocer Challenges

- **Inadequate transportation infrastructure**

There are many transportation issues that contribute to the availability, accessibility, affordability, and safety of healthy foods in the north. These include:

- Cost of freight
- Infrequent train schedules
- Reliability of trains to depart and arrive on time

- Lack of storage to keep food refrigerated after shopping until train departure
- Lack of cold storage on trains
- Length of train rides
- **Lack of community capacity to operate a store**
 - Not all communities have the capacity to run a store. Specific knowledge and skills are needed to run a successful grocery store and they don't currently exist in every community
 - It can be difficult to attract and retain staff
- **Lack of community support for a local grocery store**
 - Community members don't always support their local store. One of the reasons for this is that shopping in other communities can be a form of entertainment (a trip to Thompson, a trip to Winnipeg, etc.). Another is that interpersonal issues such as jealousy sometimes develop in communities when someone is able to run a successful business.
- **High cost of doing business in northern Manitoba**

If I'm going to introduce a new food or product it has to be displayed properly and I won't have time to see to that if I'm running a till or pumping gas

Some grocers indicated that attention is often focused on the high cost of perishable products in remote communities but little information is presented on the input costs of running a grocery facility in the north as opposed to the input costs of southern stores that ship food into northern communities.

Some of these costs include:

- Freight. For some grocers boxes of bananas that are shipped in must be wrapped to prevent freezing at a cost of \$5 a box, while the weight of the box (approximately 2 lbs) adds another \$2 in shipping costs.
- Building and heating costs
- Staff housing and travel
- Storage costs

- **Food Mail program is underutilized and needs more northern suppliers, particularly out of Thompson**
 - Food Mail is a federally funded freight subsidy program to reduce the cost of healthy food in select remote northern communities. It is managed by Canada Post and funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Food Mail is delivered to communities in Manitoba by Perimeter Air.
 - Although Food Mail is accessible by individuals, groups, and businesses alike, the program is highly underutilized. The majority of people who use Food Mail are individuals and retailers as opposed to community groups or organizations. Currently, there are less than 5 retailers in Manitoba using the program.

Summary of Northern Grocery Opportunities

- **Engage northern grocers as key partners in the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative. Possible partnerships include working on projects such as:**
 - **Northern Food Prices Survey program**
 - **Northern Grocers Mentorship program**
- **Grocers can influence eating habits and impact health by:**
 - **Doing education around healthy living that goes hand in hand with food**
 - **Bringing fresh foods into stores so people can see, smell, and touch it**
 - **Organizing taste testing of healthy foods**
 - **Developing community consulting groups to provide feedback from the community about foods available in grocery stores**
 - **Trying to give communities a chance at better food prices through a freight subsidy program such as Food Mail**
 - **Using healthy items as promotional items**
 - **Supporting community cooking classes**
 - **Supporting a community kitchen**
 - **Supporting community gardens**
 - **Sourcing locally when possible**

- **Supplying healthy foods at cost for breakfast and snack programs**
- **Participating in a community food and bulk buying club**
- **Develop marketing and logistic supports for northern producers to get food into northern retail facilities**
- **Create supports for warehousing**
- **Adjust the living allowance / social assistance levels to reflect the reality of specific zones**
- **Improve government infrastructure such as airstrips, roads into communities, coolers on trains, etc.**
- **Develop government policy for maximum food prices on healthy foods**
- **Grocers collect information that could be useful to governments developing food programs, projects, and policies**
 - Grocers collect information such as statistics on food prices and consumption trends that could be useful to a project such as a Northern Food Prices Survey program and were open to sharing that information.

**As grocers we live in these communities
and as retailers we are probably closer
to these consumers than others and we
know the communities and the realities
of their food security**



Participants at The Pas Northern Grocers Forum

KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

Although there is an immediate need for people to be able to access affordable healthy foods in northern communities, it is also important to consider how to create long-term sustainability in the northern food system. Participants identified the recommendations below that aim to address both immediate needs for affordable healthy foods as well as the need for a northern food system that is sustainable in the long-term (Appendices N, O).

Key opportunities for action include:

1. A community accessible refrigerated rail car on each of the northern rail lines

- There is a lack of cold storage on trains in northern Manitoba. Not only does this affect the quality of produce being shipped, it also affects the safety of foods such as meat. If the quality and safety of healthy foods could be improved, the demand for them may increase and provide opportunities to produce locally, expand already existing local production, and support local grocery stores.

2. A pilot Food Buying Club based out of Thicket Portage

- Thicket Portage does not have its own grocery store but does have a convenience store owner interested in expanding into one. A pilot Food Buying Club could be developed in partnership with the existing store owner. The Food Buying Club could be based out of Thicket Portage and serve other communities along the Bayline rail line as well.

3. A Northern Grocer Mentorship program for new and existing grocers or convenience store owners wanting to expand into grocers

- In some communities there is a lack of capacity to start and/or run a successful grocery store. Independently owned stores do not have as many opportunities for their staff to network with other grocers for capacity building. A mentorship program would help to build that capacity for new and existing grocers.

4. Develop partnerships between grocers and the province on a Northern Food Prices Food Survey program

- A Northern Food Prices Food Survey program has been identified as a priority. Grocers indicated that they would be willing to provide data and that developing partnerships would speed up the process and save money.

5. Increase community access to the Food Mail program for eligible communities or to a similar program such as the Canada Food Subsidy Program as suggested in the recent Food Mail program review.

- A recent governmental review of Canada's Food Mail program has suggested that it undergo changes and become Canada's Food Subsidy program (Appendix M). While the merits and/or drawbacks of this change are beyond the scope of this report, it is clear that freight subsidies for both stores and individuals in all northern communities are a logical way to reduce the cost of healthy foods in northern communities and that more communities could be benefiting from reduced costs for healthy foods.

6. Involving grocers as key partners in community food self-support initiatives

- There are many ways in which grocers can work with communities to increase their food security. Some examples include supporting community cooking classes, community gardens, or a community kitchen. Community initiatives can be supported by grocers in a number of ways. Some examples include ordering supplies that wouldn't otherwise be available in the

community or providing funding or food for cooking classes or a community kitchen.

7. Decreasing freight costs for healthy foods for the North

- In addition to a governmental freight subsidy program such as Food Mail, other work needs to be done to decrease freight costs for healthy foods for the north. Grocers expressed the need for subsidized freight rates in order for them offer lower prices to communities.
- Decreasing freight costs can also be achieved by cutting down the distance food needs to travel. Working to develop marketing and logistic supports for northern producers to get food into northern retail facilities will contribute to the long-term sustainability of a northern food system.

Appendices N and O contain more detailed forum notes on each of these opportunities for action.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the northern food system is complex and northern grocers are faced with many unique challenges as well as presented with many opportunities to work towards making affordable healthy food available in their communities. Some of the challenges of being a northern grocer and factors that contribute to the high cost of healthy food are beyond grocers' control and will require partnerships with others if change in food price and quality is to be seen in the North. Factors such as inadequate transportation infrastructure to get perishable foods safely to communities; lack of community capacity to run a store; lack of community support for a local store; the high cost of doing business in northern Manitoba; and the underutilization of and lack of northern suppliers for the Food Mail program, all contribute to the lack of available, accessible, affordable, and safe healthy foods in northern Manitoban communities.

Despite these challenges there are many ways in which grocers can work towards food security in the North. Seven key opportunities identified by participants include a community accessible refrigerated rail car on each of the northern rail lines; a Northern Grocer Mentorship program for new and existing grocers or convenience store owners wanting to expand into grocers; a pilot Food Buying Club based out of Thicket Portage; developing partnerships between grocers and the province on a Northern Food Prices Food Survey program; increasing community access to the Food Mail program for eligible communities or to a similar program such as the Canada Food Subsidy Program as suggested in the recent Food Mail program review; involving grocers

as key partners in community food self-support initiatives; and decreasing freight costs for healthy foods in the North. Please see the appendices for additional information.

Next steps would involve meeting with communities to determine their priorities for action, further developing content for a strategic action plan, and seeking funding partners.

MFC and BRRT look forward to continuing to work with northern grocers to increase the availability of affordable healthy food in northern Manitoban communities.



The Grub Box, one of the grocery stores interviewed in The Pas

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Northern Grocers Directory

COMMUNITY	STORE	IF NO STORE- WHERE FOOD BOUGHT	CONTACT NAME	PHONE NUMBER
Aghaming	no store			
Baden	no store			
Barrows	no store			
Berens River	Alix Enterprises			204.382.2341
Berens River	Berens River Store			204.382.2760
Berens River	Northern Store			204.382.2118
Bissett	Bisset Variety Shop			204.227.5229
Brochet/ Barren Lands	Northern Store		Lisa McKay	204.323.2099
Camperville	Clarkson's Grocery			204.524.2113
Camperville	Camperville Food Security Project		Heather Souter	hsouter@gmail.com
Churchill	Northern Store	Major shopping go by train to Thompson	Pierrette Brown	204.675.8891
Churchill	The Arctic Trading Company			204.675.8804
Cormorant	Campbells Store	Travel to The Pas for "real food"		204.357.2073
Crane River	Band Store		Donald	204.732.2832
Cross Lake	24/7 Convenience and Coffee			204.676.3398
Cross Lake	Cross Lake Family Foods		Phyllis Castelle Phyllis Ross	204.676.2558
Cross Lake	Mistasineek Gas & Fuel			204.676.3515
Cross Lake	Muskego's Service & Towing			204.676.2936
Cross Lake	Northern Store		Richard Thomas	204.676.2371
Cross Lake	Quick Stop			204.676.3337
Crossing Bay FN	no information			
Dallas/ Red Rose	no store			
Dauphin River	no store			
Dawson Bay	no store			
Disbrose Island	no information			
Duck Bay	no store			

COMMUNITY	STORE	IF NO STORE- WHERE FOOD BOUGHT	CONTACT NAME	PHONE NUMBER
Easterville	Chemawawin Service Station			204.329.2262
Easterville	Griffin's Lucky Dollar Foods			204.329.2156
Easterville	K & K Confectionary			204.329.2233
Fisher River	F.R.C.N. Grocery, Gas & Convenience			204.645.4205
Flin Flon	Candy Bar			204.687.5513
Flin Flon	Co-op North of 53		Tom Ferion	204.687.7548
Flin Flon	Ernie's Wholesale LTD			204.687.3167
Flin Flon	Extra foods		Tara Hydamaka-Turton	204.687.5601
Flin Flon	Gas Bar - Petro Canada			204.687.4742
Flin Flon	The Bargain Shop			204.687.7501
Flin Flon	The Bulk Bin			204.687.6072
Flin Flon	Wal-Mart			204.687.7005
Fox Lake FN	Fox Lake Groceteria	For larger items go to Co-op in Gillam	Mandy Beardy	204.486.2093
Garden Hill FN	G.H. Convenience Store			204.456.2120
Garden Hill FN	Northern Store			204.456.2333
Gillam	Gillam Co-op		Bruce Handspiker	204.652.2661
Gods Lake Narrows	Louie's Grocery			204.335.2540
Gods Lake Narrows	Northern Store			204.335.2323
Gods River / Manto Sipi Cree Nation	Northern Store			204.366.2182
Grand Rapids	G.R. Consumers Co-op			204.639.2434
Grand Rapids	Grand Rapids Esso			204.639.2459
Grand Rapids	Pelican Landing			204.639.2402
Harwill	no store			
Herb Lake Landing	no store			
Homebrook	no store			
Ilford	Ilford Community Store			204.288.4380
Island Lake	Northern Store			204.456.2333
Lac Brochet/ Northlands	Northern Store		Mark Wells	204.337.2160

COMMUNITY	STORE	IF NO STORE- WHERE FOOD BOUGHT	CONTACT NAME	PHONE NUMBER
Lac Brochet/Northlands	Antsanen's Convenience Store		Peter	204.337.2449
Leaf Rapids	Kings Health and Variety		Viola Cook	204.473.8111
Leaf Rapids	L.R. Consumers Co-op		Kirk Glenday	204.473.2411
Little Grand Rapids/ Grandville Lake	Northern store			204.397.2038
Loon Straits	no store			
Mallard	no store	Travel to Dauphin		
Manigotagan	no store			
Matheson Island	Island Delight			204.276.2166
Matheson Island	Island Grocery			204.276.2224
Matheson Island	Matheson Island Co-op			204.276.2136
Meadow Portage	Meadow Portage General Store			204.732.2592
Moose Lake	Northern Store			204.678.2212
National Mills	no store			
Nelson House	Country Foods Program – not a store. Community hunting to provide food for community			204.484.2407
Nelson House	Northern Store		Charles Eva	204.484.2343
Nelson House	Otohowin Gas			204.484.2691
Norway House	Anderson Fuel & Convenience			204.359.4396
Norway House	Apetagon's			204.359.6696
Norway House	Low's Family Foods		Irvin Flett	204.359.6689
Norway House	N.H. Co-op Gas Bar			204.359.4633
Norway House	Northern Store		Dave Moodie	204.359.6710
Oxford House	General Store		Dave Townsley	204.538.2359
Oxford House	Northern Store		Bill McCloud	204.538.2359
Pauingassi FN	Northern Store			204.397.2116
Pikwitonei	Cordell Store	Most people shop in Thompson		204.458.2434
Pine Dock	Matheson Island Co-op			204.276.2136

COMMUNITY	STORE	IF NO STORE- WHERE FOOD BOUGHT	NAME	PHONE NUMBER
Powell	no store			
Princess Harbour	no store			
Red Deer Lake	no store			
Red Sucker Lake	Northern Store			204.469.5392
Rock Ridge	no store			
Salt Point	no store			
Seymourville	no store			
Shamattawa	Northern Store		Devron Janes	204.565.2019
Sherridon	Bayview General Store			204.468.2024
Skownan FN	no information			
South Indian Lake	Northern Store		Stephanie Finley	204.374.2032
Spence Lake	no store			
Split Lake	Northern Store		Darrel Besmet	204.342.2260
St. Theresa Point	Island Lake Trading Company			204.462.2032
St. Theresa Point	Monias Store			204.462.2374
St. Theresa Point	Northern Store			204.462.2012
St. Theresa Point	Pic Convenience			204.462.2277
Stevenson Island	no information			
Tadoule Lake	Convenience Store			204.684.2677
Tadoule Lake	Northern Store		Dwayne Noseworthy	204.684.2278
The Pas	Berscheid Meats		Jim Berscheid	204.623.3930
The Pas	Big E Mart			204.623.7009
The Pas	Extra Foods		Chris Navess	204.623.4799
The Pas	Giant Tiger		Harland Scormell	204.623.3369
The Pas	Grub Box, The		Barb and Bruce Morrish	204.623.6469
The Pas	IGA Foods		Allen Ducharme	204.623.6187
The Pas	Michael's Corner Store			204.623.7888
The Pas	Paskwayak Convenience			204.623.3033

COMMUNITY	STORE	IF NO STORE- WHERE FOOD BOUGHT	NAME	PHONE NUMBER
The Pas	Snakland			204.623.2661
The Pas	Tri-Family Health / Mystik Visions		Gail Thomas	204.623.7042
Thicket Portage	A & M Convenience	Travel to Thompson by train. Have to stay for three days due to train schedule	Joseph Dorion	204.286.3235
Thompson	Carroll Meats		Dave Carroll	204.778.4618
Thompson	Corner Deli			204.677.3997
Thompson	Extra Foods		Samarjit Ghai	204.778.8142
Thompson	Giant Tiger			
Thompson	Safeway		Virgil Dahl	204.677.2600
Thompson	Thompson Gas Bar			204.778.7649
Thompson	Thompson Shell			204.677.2023
Thompson	Wal-Mart		Scott Drummond	204.778.4669
Wabowden	Dwyer's General Store		Denis Dwyer	204.689.2277
Wabowden	My's Place			204.689.2232
War Lake FN	Working on a Community Food Project		Betsy Kennedy	Personal contact information
Wasagamack FN	Northern Store			204.457.2402
Waterhen	Waterhen General Store			204.628.3481
Winnipeg	North West Company, The		Pat Jacob	204.943.0881
Winnipeg	North West Company, The		Paul Dalby	204.943.0881
Winnipeg	North West Company, The		Dick Woodsworth	204.943.0881
Winnipeg	Perimeter Airlines		Bill Chernick	204.480.4002
York Factory FN	Northern Store		Darryl Desmond	204. 342.2260

APPENDIX B – Methodology

Participants - Northern Grocers Directory

- An extensive, though not exhaustive, list of northern grocers and convenience stores in Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (ANA) communities was compiled into a Northern Grocers Directory (Appendix A) based on information obtained from the internet, community contacts and from BRRT and MFC's knowledge of existing stores. The stores were then sorted into lists based on which community they were geographically closest to – Thompson or The Pas.
- The Pas and Thompson were identified as the key regional grocery hubs accessed by northern Manitoban communities

Outreach – Northern Grocers

- Once the lists were compiled written invitations were sent out to selected grocers and followed up by a telephone call from the project coordinator to find out whether they were interested in attending and if they had any questions or wanted further information on the event. If grocers expressed an interest in attending, their name was passed along to the project facilitator who then followed up with another telephone call to get a better understanding of the grocer's stores and what issues they saw as relevant to their business and their community.
- As the attendance for the forum in The Pas was low due to poor weather and low response rates, the forum was shortened and the remaining time was used by organizers to meet with seven grocers in The Pas as well as the Culinary Arts program instructor at the University College of the North (Appendix H).

Evaluation

At the end of the forum, participants were asked to complete a written evaluation form designed to learn why participants had attended the forums, what they learned, what they thought could have been improved, whether they were interested in receiving information in the future about food security work happening in the North, and to gauge the success of the forum to meet its project deliverables (Appendix I).

APPENDIX C – Breakfast and Snack Programs in Schools

Tara Manych – Principal, Mary Duncan School, The Pas, MB.

- There is money out there for programs if you're willing to go get it
- Grub Box in The Pas help by providing fruit and vegetables and other groceries at cost for the program
- Teachers put their own money in to extend the program. Other resources have come from personal donations, organizations, fundraisers, service clubs, grocers, and volunteers. Program can reciprocate with recognition of help
- Some parents are worried about how they'll look if their children participate in the program, so the program is universal and the need to participate in the program is communicated respectfully. Statistics are logged but no names are recorded. There is concern among some parents that if they can't feed their children, or it looks like they're not feeding them, that Child and Family Services will become involved

Additional Information on Breakfast and Snack Programs in Schools

- Cross Lake, MB used to have a Hot Lunch Program paid for by Manitoba Hydro on the First Nation side and by Frontier School Division on the non-First Nation side
- Pauingassi, MB has a well run breakfast program
- Programs not necessarily sourcing food from local stores to provide for breakfast programs.
 - What dictates or who decides where the food comes from?

APPENDIX D – Food Mail Program

Bill Chernick – Assistant General Manager, Perimeter Aviation Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

- Federal program started in 1960s then turned over to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) in 1990s
- Managed by Canada Post and funded by INAC. Food delivered by Perimeter Air.
- Is a freight subsidy program. Charge is set at \$0.40 / lb.
- Consumer contacts retailer to order
- Consumer pays \$0.40/lb to retailer to cover freight. This is only a percentage of the actual cost of freight. When the retailer ships the food, they give the \$0.40/lb paid by the consumer to Canada Post to cover part of the cost of shipping. The retailer does not keep any of the money charged for freight. The food is then transported by Perimeter Air through Canada Post. Perimeter Air then charges Canada Post the actual cost of the freight, which is paid in part by the money paid by the consumer as well as by money from INAC.
- Only used in Manitoba for 56 years
- Steve McDougall from Garden Hill pushed the program in Manitoba
- The program is used mostly by individuals and retailers in Manitoba, as opposed to community groups or organizations
- Only retailers using Food Mail in Manitoba are in Lac Brochet and 2 stores in Garden Hill. The rest are individual orders.
- Key is to try to work with local grocers
- Paid for by bankcard
- First used in Nunavut and North West Territories where freight costs were highest (retail was \$5/lb)
- Huge growth in Island Lake
- Thompson needs more suppliers who will send out orders because of the time frame food must be delivered within.
- 180,000 to 200,000 lbs of food is shipped out of Winnipeg for Food Mail every month
 - 4 retailers participate in Winnipeg

- Are challenges to supplying through Food Mail Program
 - Fairly onerous
 - Have to set up with Canada Post
 - Computer system set up
 - Special packaging and storage required for perishable, frozen and non-perishable items
- Perimeter Airlines gives people 15 minutes to pick up their food and after that the airline is not responsible for it
 - Garden Hill Airport put in 20 food refrigerated shipping containers so that Food Mail can be stored but people usually pick up their food on time
- Benefit to supplier is that they can move much more product
- Benefit to consumer is that they pay much less of the real cost of freight
- Canada Post inspects each box to make sure the food being sent follows the programs guidelines
- Perishables need to be delivered within 48 hours. Non-perishables need to be delivered within 72 hours
- 130 communities in Canada are eligible to use the Food Mail Program
- Only healthy foods can go in
 - Can't do breaded chicken, can do chicken and bread crumbs

APPENDIX E – Lakeview Consumer Co-op: Reflections and Lessons Learned

Armand Barbeau – Community Development Resource Consultant, Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Dauphin, MB

- Lakeview Co-op was a co-op grocery store that was started up by the community of Seymourville, MB but has since closed.
- Seymourville had a co-op 10 years before this one was established
- There was a lack of local support for the Co-op. People weren't dedicated to shopping there. Some of the places they would go to shop were Winnipeg and Pine Falls
- Non-members bought more than members
- They could never tell where the store was at financially. Capacity to do financial record system wasn't there. The one in place was quite complicated. Couldn't be maintained by volunteers. The Co-op was often 6 months behind in recording finances. They couldn't provide financial records for lenders
- There has to be a commitment to carry on with the project even if things are difficult
- Problems with suppliers. Supplier wouldn't guarantee perishables.
- As a solution to difficulties with suppliers, a van was made available to go buy groceries elsewhere and bring them to the community. However, this just added cost to the groceries, especially with increased fuel prices
- There were many problems with store managers.
- Staff had limited training. The staff cash rarely balanced out
- There was no accountability
- The board and volunteers gave up because they were burnt out
- There was a roadblock for a period of time which prevented cottagers from being able to get to the store. Business from cottagers was supposed to be a major source of revenue
- There were many ideas for how to increase sales such as ice cream machines, slushies, and making pizza but there was no follow up
- There was a lack of knowledge on the operations of a store

- Not a lot of support from organizations that could have given support. At the same time, support was not always asked for
- Communication was a major issue. There were no member meetings. There were flyers sent out about the Co-op but that was about it
- Capacity was an issue
- Space was an issue
- Some of the work that was put into making sure the store would succeed was community surveys, a template for the store, a business plan was established, and a supplier info sheet was created
- There used to be a government branch that supported Co-ops
- A lot of partnership required because if you have no one else who is capable to complete tasks, you have to do it yourself
- Need to focus on capacity development. Examples include a grocer mentorship/internship

APPENDIX F – Overview of Facilitation Plan

MONDAY

12:00pm LUNCH

1:00pm Welcome & Who are your hosts?

Workshop Orientation

Introductions

2003 Northern Food Prices Report; A Brief History of Food Security work in the north; Northern Healthy Foods Initiative

2:30pm BREAK

Identifying Common Issues & Challenges

Northern Food Mail Program

Freezer Purchase Program

Camperville Food Buying Club

Healthy Snack / Lunch Programs

Reflection on the afternoon & Next Steps for tomorrow

5:30pm Workshop Close

TUESDAY

8:30am Welcome

Centering & preparing for the day

Presentations: Participants Share

10:00am BREAK

Next Steps; Putting our heads together

12:00pm LUNCH

1:00pm Revision and refocusing on work done in morning

Putting our heads together

2:30pm BREAK

Putting Meat on the Bones

Next Steps

Closing Reflection & Review of Objectives

4:45pm Workshop Close

APPENDIX G – Participant and Presenter Lists

NAME	COMMUNITY	STORE / ORGANIZATION	FORUM
Denis Dwyer	Wabowden	Dwyer's General Store	Thompson
Phyllis Castelle	Cross Lake	Cross Lake Family Foods	Thompson
Phyllis Ross	Cross Lake	Cross Lake Family Foods	Thompson
Joseph Dorion	Thicket Portage	A & M Convenience	Thompson
Viola Cook	Leaf Rapids	King's Health & Variety	Thompson
Paul Dalby	Winnipeg	North West Company	Thompson
Carl McKay	Winnipeg	North West Company	Thompson
Mark Wells	Lac Brochet	Northern Store	Thompson
Dave Carroll	Thompson	Carroll Meats	Thompson
Heather Souter	Camperville	Community Food Security Project	Thompson
Pat LaChance	Winnipeg	Public Health Agency of Canada	Thompson
Diana DeLaronde-Colombe	Wabowden	Bayline Regional Roundtable	Thompson
Valerie Parker	Wabowden	Bayline Regional Roundtable	Thompson
Jennell Majeran	Thompson	Northern Healthy Foods Initiative	Thompson
Julie Price	Winnipeg	Forum Facilitator / Heifer International	Thompson
Bill Chernick	Winnipeg	Perimeter Airline	Thompson
Devron Janes	Shamattawa	Northern Store	Thompson
Jim Berscheid	The Pas	Berscheid Meats	The Pas

NAME	COMMUNITY	STORE / ORGANIZATION	FORUM
Pat Jacob	Winnipeg	North West Company	The Pas
Tara Manych	The Pas	Mary Duncan School	The Pas
Armand Barbeau	Dauphin	Aboriginal and Northern Affairs	The Pas
Kreesta Doucette	Winnipeg	Manitoba Food Charter	Thompson and The Pas
Holly Sullivan	Winnipeg	Manitoba Food Charter	Thompson and The Pas

APPENDIX H – Grocers Meetings

Grocers meetings in The Pas – March 24, 2009:

Wildly Canadian/Northern Forest Diversification Centre – Owner, Les Tabachuk – 807-473-9885 / 807-473-9801. Part-time staff, Steve Parks – 204-623-4084.

-Visited the building but there was no one there. The staff is only part-time. Called Steve but didn't hear back from him. Didn't call Les as only got his contact information towards the end of the day and he does not live in The Pas, so would have been unable to meet with him anyway.

-The rice gets dropped off at this building then is shipped to Ontario to be packaged and sold. In The Pas the rice is available exclusively to the IGA. Uncertain whether it's distributed anywhere else in the province. The health food store in The Pas has tried to get some of the rice to sell, but has not been able to. The health food store has found another local producers rice to sell.

-Al McLauchlan's birch syrup also goes to this building. It is processed by Al before it is dropped off to Wildly Canadian (Al delivers it as syrup, not sap). The syrup is then sent to Ontario to be packaged and sold. We do not know where it is sold (probably Ontario if that's where the rice is being sold) but there is little available for retailers in The Pas. Like the wild rice, the syrup is available exclusively to the IGA.

-Do not know what other products go through the company as we were not able to speak to anyone who works there.

Tri-Family Health/Mystik Visions (Health Food Store/Metaphysical Gift Shop) – Spoke to Owner, Gail Thomas 204.623.7042

-Has been in business for over 10 years in The Pas. There are still people in the community who do not know that she exists. She said people often come to her when they need to.

-Sells some local products. Says will only bring in what people will buy otherwise it's not worth it. Sells local sweet grass, sage, wild rice, soup mixes, teas from Boreal Gardens, rock salt from Saskatchewan. Unable to get Wildly Canadian Rice.

-Would like to see a farmer's market downtown because the current market is only accessible by car. This suggestion was also made by a professor that I spoke to at University College of the North.

-Was very helpful in locating someone who could talk to us about where to get birch syrup. Said birch syrup isn't sold a lot of places. Did not know where it was sold.

The Grub Box – Spoke to Owner, Barb Morrish 204.623.6469

-Ships a lot to Pukatawagan. People call their order in and pay with credit card or send money and their orders through Missinipi Air. Missinipi Air is owned by tribal councils. Missinipi Air is expensive to ship through and does not give The Grub Box any discounts on shipping.

-Suppliers a big factor in pricing and getting food to locations. Suppliers have a lot of control. They can dictate to a certain extent what a store buys. For example, they will ship food but grocers have to order a minimum amount of product, even if it is more than they need or can sell.

-Milk at the Giant Tiger in The Pas is their loss leader. It's cheaper than anywhere else in The Pas. The Grub Box is losing \$0.02 a jug on their milk right now trying to keep up.

-The costs of doing business are all going up.

-Generally no problems with getting food picked up in communities when it is delivered.

-Agreed that it would be helpful to have a refrigerated rail car or some way to keep things cold when they're being shipped.

Giant Tiger – Spoke to Ed, Food Department Manager. The General Manager is Harland Scormell. 204.623.3369

-Giant Tiger has a lot of people coming from Pukatawagan to buy groceries.

-The store allows people to buy groceries and then keep them there until their train leaves.

-There is a person from Pukatawagan who does mass grocery shops based on community demand, then sells the products in Pukatawagan cheaper than they are available from the Northern store in the community.

-The Giant Tiger in The Pas is trying to get involved in shipping food to Pukatawagan and other communities to increase their sales. They are going to set up a system where people order and pay for their groceries, then Giant Tiger sends them out. This is lucrative for the managers at Giant Tiger as they get commission.

IGA - spoke to Manager, Allen Ducharme 204.623.6187

-Store is band owned.

-Some of the communities it services include Easterville, Grand Rapids, Moose Lake, Pukatawagan. It services mainly Pukatawagan.

-The store provides food to a breakfast program in Pukatawagan. The program is funded by Arctic Beverages. Arctic donates \$3000 bi-weekly.

-Allen's mother started a lunch program called Kookums Kitchen. Now called the OCN Mentor Program.

-The store uses the Keewatin Rail line to ship to Pukatawagan.

-Gave us contact information for a community dietician named Lucia Rhodes who is working with NORMAN Regional Health Authority and who is interested in doing educational grocery store tours with people to promote healthy lifestyles. 204.623.9681.

MAFRI – Spoke to Marnie McCracken 204.627.8255

-Seeds not available in many communities. MAFRI has done some work to get seeds to people who can't buy them in their communities. Pat Jacob from North West talked a bit about selling seeds in Northern stores. Said there are a few stores that do however, it has been tried in the past and they often don't sell.

Birch Syrup producer – Spoke to Producer, Al (Allan) McLauchlan W 204.627.8580 C 204.620.2846

-Produces birch syrup which he sells wholesale to Wildly Canadian. Has also sold just the sap in the past which was used to make birch wine.

-Tapped around 400 trees last year and hopes to tap more this year. Will be in the bush tapping trees early spring.

-Will not be selling the sap this year as there is no demand from the wine maker. Unsure why.

-Grew up in south-eastern Ontario in a community called Port Hope, where his grandparents tapped maple trees.

-Birch syrup has much more water in it than maple so needs to be boiled down longer. The product is still a bit less viscous than maple syrup and less sweet. Sugar is added to the syrup to make it into breakfast syrup.

University College of the North, Culinary Arts Program – Spoke to Chef/Instructor, Rob Gemmill 204.627.8504

-Spoke with Rob Gemmill, head of the UCN Culinary Arts Program who was interested in sharing information about the program. Sourcing local foods and hosting local food community dinners were also discussed. Plan to feature the Culinary Arts Program in upcoming newsletters.

Extra Foods – Manager, Chris Navess 204.623.4799

-Were unable to speak with Chris Navess as he was on a conference call. Chris had planned to attend the forum but was unable to at the last minute.

APPENDIX I – Participant Evaluation Summary

What were the best things about the forum?

- Meeting people with common purpose
- Learning about all of the support organizations (MFC, etc.)
- Expanded vision of the north
- Idea for mentorship program – forum feedback
- To meet everyone. Wish it was longer
- Meeting people with passion
- Facing same challenges – community triumphs
- Appreciated coming – uplifting to know you're not the only one
- Learning that people at the Northern Stores really care
- Food buying club/freezer project
- Tips/info to share back
- Concrete learning about costs
- Participation, openness
- Everyone coming together

Why did you come to this event? What did you want to learn? Describe and/or list.

- I wanted to see what initiatives were already underway from government agencies regarding food security in the north.
- Member of a funding organization. Stakeholder.
- I was hoping to learn more about how we could reduce the costs of freight to the north.
- To discover the challenges facing communities in obtaining healthy foods and to describe the Food Mail program.
- I was asked by my boss. I mainly learned that I am not going through the same problems alone.
- Meeting people. Freezer purchase programs for northern Manitoba, Food Buying Club.
- Interesting to hear views/opinions regarding opportunities and challenges.
- To learn about how to cut costs and difficulties of running a northern grocery store. I learned about Food Clubs and Freezer Purchase programs.
- Invitation. How to be a better business person.
- To hear, share, information – To see what other grocers are out there.
- To learn about the situation of northern grocers. To contribute ideas for accessing healthy, affordable food in the north.

Did you learn what you wanted to learn at this forum? (Rating out of 0-3, 0 being “Not at all” and 3 being “Lots”)

- 2.6 being the average response which is between “Somewhat” and “Lots”

If not, what did you want to learn?

- To see what programs are being considered by government agencies.

Please rate how your knowledge of the subjects / topics changed as a result of your participation in this event. (Rating out of 0-3, 0 being “No change” and 3 being “Large increase”)

- 2.2 being the average response which is between “Medium increase” and “Large increase”

How or why has your knowledge of the subjects / topics changed?

- Networking, increased knowledge
- To talk to the other communities
- I learned about the challenges of northern business
- Lots of helpful hints, tips, what worked and what failed
- Learned about Food Mail and Freezer Purchase programs
- Learned more about the situation of Northern Stores and independents in the north

Do you think the information you learned here is valuable? Is it relevant to your community?

- Yes x 5
- Yes, with follow through.
- It seemed to be more relevant to remote southern communities. There is relevance however to the remote for north communities.
- For sure!!! Looking forward to taking this back.
- Yes and relevant to the community.
- Very much so. I can take this info back to my community and hope for positive changes.

Do you plan to use the ideas or knowledge learned at this event in your community? (Rating out of 0-3, 0 being “No” and 3 being “Definitely”)

- 2.5 being the average response which is between “Probably” and “Definitely”

If yes, what do you plan to do?

- Justification; peons for future.
- Food Buying groups
- For the gardening with the children, help out with the gardens

- Start a Food Buying Club
- Do a report to my community; encourage involvement
- Community awareness; mentorship

Planned outcomes

- Camperville wants to participate in Freezer Purchase program
- Camperville wants training for how to build root cellars
- Carroll Meats in Thompson may want to participate as a supplier to the Food Mail program
- Find ways to decrease freight costs for northern grocers
- Joint supports for community growing projects

Potential outcomes

- MFC to attend and present at The Pas Farmers Market in April 2009 (30 - 40 attendees)
- MFC to request annual report from North West Company
- Local supply of Manitoba teas (Audrey Logan)
- Connect Farmers' Markets Association of Manitoba (FMAM) to The Pas Farmers Market
- Send Food Mail program information the Berscheid Meats in The Pas
- Future research into gardening in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta

Describe any new contacts you were able to make and whether these could contribute to future activities / partnerships.

- Northern Stores; Camperville Food Buying Club
- Contacts such as knowing these programs exist will help me in the future
- Government workers; retailers
- Absolutely. I've left my email and I hope that I get further updates
- Made contacts with Bayline Regional Roundtable, Cross Lake Family Foods, A & M Convenience in Thicket Portage, and Northern Store

How would you improve this event? (I.e. location, time, hall, speakers, topics, etc.)

- Extend the invite to other government agencies. I.e. Canadian International Development Association (CIDA), etc.
- Would change the hall
- Length
- Time; more speakers
- Duration increase
- Needed more time to talk about reducing costs for groceries
- Maybe a little bit more time, for first day anyway. If we start at 1:00 pm we could go until 7:00 pm

- Speakers – independent and mentor
- More attendees; more independent grocers; more partner institutions / organizations
- More topic based breakout sessions for next step

Do you want more information and to stay connected to other northern communities working on food issues in the North?

- Everyone said “Yes”

If yes, would a newsletter about community food projects in the north help?

- Everyone said “Yes”

Would you read this newsletter?

- 10 people said “Yes”
- 1 person said “No”

Do you think people in your community would read it?

- 8 people said “Yes”
- 3 people said “No”

What other ways would help your community?

Only one person answered this question.

- Resources, funding, knowledge, dedicated.

Notes:

There was no evaluation done in The Pas for a number of reasons. There were very few participants due to the weather and lack of interest in the project in that region. Because of the low numbers the forum was shortened and the format changed last minute to accommodate the group size and participants decision that there were not enough people to work on the issue for a day and a half. As the participants at the forum had a lot of knowledge and experience in the area of food security in the north, we chose to use all of our time with them to brainstorm ideas around making healthy, affordable food more accessible in the north. In addition to the time constraints we faced, the evaluation was not relevant to the forum experience of the participants in The Pas, as it was designed before the event for a longer forum with more participants and a different format than took place in the end.

19 people attended the forum in Thompson: 1 facilitator, 3 organizers, 2 funders, and 16 grocers and other stakeholders. 11 people completed the evaluation form.

APPENDIX J - Identifying Common Issues and Challenges

Best Part of Being a Northern Grocer / Working on Food Issues in the North

- Part of the community and connected (not so in the south)
 - Retailers and consumers know each other
- Work to provide healthy food for community
- Working with the people
- The community supports are there when the issue is raised and / or focused on
- Opportunity to influence food security in community
 - Captive Market (also responsible)
 - Being a northerner and a northern grocer
 - Being fair to people (treating community like your family)
 - Trying to give communities a chance at better prices (through Food Mail Program)
 - Introducing “new” products to the community
 - Addressing community needs
- Creating employment in the community
- Never boring (daily challenges)
- Actually having a store
- Being independent (not having a boss)
- Not being a southern grocer!
- Understanding what is possible
- The market development and transition from the producer to the consumer and retail

Biggest Opportunities for Your Store / Organization

- Changing eating habits and impacting health (reducing chronic disease)
- Influencing community
- Preventative programs
- Programs to reduce food costs
 - Food Mail Program used by grocers
 - Freight Subsidy = lower cost for all
- Opportunity to work on the 5 pillars of food security – accessibility, availability, production, supply, cultural side
 - For a retailer accessibility= affordability
 - Accessibility: Costs that go into being a retailer (housing, maintenance and repairs, paying salaries, community contributions)
 - Availability: better turnover= more product we can bring in and then quality increases
 - Production: how can we work with providing local supply

- Utilisation: stores can be used as a vehicle for other groups. For example, Community Health Representatives to promote healthy eating through food tasting and teaching cooking skills
 - Retailers can support other groups
 - Carrying diabetic friendly foods
 - Retail Based Nutrition Intervention (RBNI)
 - Increasing number of users of Food Mail Program
 - Expansion to a full grocery from a convenience store
 - Selling own vegetables or country foods (community development) at local stores
 - Want to get fresh foods right there in the store (need to see it, smell it, touch it, buy it) instead of seeing it in a catalogue or flyer. If you have never eaten a particular healthy food, how likely are you to buy it?
 - Additional Social Assistance for healthy foods should be given to grocers and consumers can pick from list
 - Room for growth
 - Opportunity to expand products
 - Good to partner. Grocers aren't always asked
 - Implementing partnerships
 - People will come together for a meeting but the implementation and to do's don't always get done
 - Education around healthy living has to go hand in hand with food
 - Building community capacity
 - Create and sustain programming for long term benefits
 - Connect with local grocers and give them feedback on what they can do better, what products they can carry etc. instead of going elsewhere
 - Community reluctance to come forward
 - Power differential
 - "natural shyness"
 - Develop community consulting groups that include band members, elders, etc. to provide feedback from the community indirectly
 - Store surveys are sometimes conducted by Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and these community surveys can be shared with existing stores
 - North West Company can't carry provincially inspected meat for Manitoba stores even though they supply many of their Canadian stores from Winnipeg
 - Majority of purchasing decisions are made out of Winnipeg from the buying department
 - Prepared fruits and vegetables (fresh fruit salad, prepared veggies and dip)
-

Biggest Challenges Faced by Your Store / Organization

- High costs of doing business in the north (freight and fuel)
- Input costs out of your control (cost of food and freight, fuel costs, frosts in Florida, operating costs including heat)
- Staffing

- Getting service people (\$300 in south but much higher in northern community, sometimes need to fly them in)
- Remaining competitive
- Affordable foods
- Services in communities
- Staffing challenges
 - Attracting staff
 - Training staff
 - Keeping staff (turnover = more training and decreases efficiency)
- Jealousy of success
- Accessibility to food
- Changing behaviours
- Customer purchasing habits
- Customer loyalty and community mobility are challenges
 - People will spend \$150 to save ¢0.10 on a loaf of bread
 - The grass is always greener in the other community - Wabowden shops in Thompson, Thompson shops in Winnipeg and Winnipeg shops in Grand Forks
 - When customers go out of town to shop they are also going to a movie, staying in hotels and going out to eat so it is also an entertainment factor
 - Stores that service communities for the winter road season are only helpful for those 8 weeks that the communities come out
- Logistics
 - Secure transportation along the “cold chain”
 - Refrigeration
 - Quality delivery
 - “Reefer car” is just a regular boxcar
 - Food safety is an issue
- Food mail program has benefits but also drawbacks
 - It is often only used by people such as nurses, teachers and RCMP officers who have the disposable income to order in bulk

 - Food Mail program has challenges with paperwork. The suppliers have to do a lot of paperwork so they don’t want to participate.

APPENDIX K - Participant Expectations of the Forum

- Generate Ideas
- Have good talk with next steps
- One concrete idea to implement
- Group will generate ideas
- Have a brainstorming session for next steps
- Improve food availability in the north
- Share knowledge
- Share our knowledge of community
- Talk about remote vs non-remote issues
- Learn from others
- Learn from others to access better, healthy food
- Get a sense of views and similarities
- Hear the stories and realities
- Learn what is going on
- Decreased costs, increased profit
- Build relationships and networks
- Networking
- Learn about new job
- How can my organization help
- Throw competition off game
- How to get service people in
- Cost of food to go down
- Reduce food costs
- How to reduce food prices
- Improve the health of northern people
- Get more healthy, affordable food into stores
- Ideas for freight consolidation
- Build networks

APPENDIX L – Miscellaneous Notes on Northern Food System

- Consumers have a lot of brand loyalty in the north and even though a generic brand can be half the price people will often choose the name brand
- In addition to brand loyalty, also “type” loyalty. I.e. will not eat whole grain pasta but will eat regular pasta
- Bulk buying consumers can get 5-10% discount on case purchases
- Northern store pricing is by community based on costs to get product to that individual community, housing costs for staff, heating, salaries, heating, etc.
- Dave Carroll does not have the same buying power as larger stores and is still able to offer a product of equal or better quality at the same price
- Retailers sometimes bid on breakfast and lunch programs. A store in the north cannot offer the same price as a southern retailer who is shipping a product up and not incurring any of the operating costs to stay in the community
- A box of bananas weighs 44 lbs. The box itself weighs 4 lbs. If you are paying \$0.50 / lb for freight then it is costing you \$2 to ship the box. In addition, product has to be wrapped so it will not freeze and the cost of that is \$5 a box. If you have 8 cartons of strawberries in a box you are charging almost \$0.50 more just for the wrapping.
- Local people can supply local Northern store if they have enough product. Special rules apply to meat.
 - Northern Stores sell federally inspected meats that are centrally distributed. There is however, at least one example of a community that sells local, federally inspected Caribou to the Northern Store in their community. The Northern Store in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut carries local, federally inspected Caribou
- Major issues are access and availability, which are mainly retailer issues vs the production, supply, and utilisation issues which are more community based. People can change behaviours around production
- Top three selling items for Northern Stores are: #1 Pepsi, #2 bread, and #3 ready roll cigarettes
- Top two produce sales in the north are potatoes and onions
- Interest in purchasing locally produced items

- Trade shows can be a good opportunity to meet new companies and network as well as save money for residents if products brought in from the show
- North West Company has a dietician. The dietician’s job is to help people make more informed and healthy choices
 - Does a Healthy Living program
 - North West has tried different healthy food initiatives such as education with flyers with recipes – healthier food recipes, oral hygiene. One North West representative said that some recipes were not appealing to the residents (i.e. a main dish made with pumpkin) and that it is very important to remember to create recipes that the community will use
 - Has worked with Community Health Representatives and federal agencies like Health Canada
 - Works with the marketing department
 - Dietician has traveled to communities
 - Has worked to get healthy foods into 4 communities in the Arctic. Worked with community members to promote a healthy lifestyle by exercising and eating nutritious foods
 - Dietician to be the person that can sustain health initiatives company wide
- Some government initiated projects include the Retail Based Nutrition Intervention; Healthy Foods North by First Nations and Inuit Health Board (FNIHB); “Drop the pop” campaign
- People want products they see on TV
- North West stores are time and space constricted which makes it difficult to find innovative ways to change eating habits
 - North West company has standard section sizes depending on the size of the store i.e. 4 feet for jam section
- Community member asked Northern Store manager about how they could prevent diabetes through food
- North West said may be willing to have an educational banner in the store but that their has to be someone there with it to explain to customers what it’s about
- Stores could freeze milk
- Before shipping meat, try to supply own meat

- There is a lack of infrastructure in place to make healthy food affordable and available in northern communities. Government “intervention” required
- Provincial – “Committee of Cabinet” – consumption, Northern Food Basket
- 1972 fresh retail produce first came into northern Quebec through the Food Mail program
- Any undated foods can come in on winter roads and be stored for long periods of time
- Baby food has a 60 day shelf life
- The greater the health value the higher the perishability
- A lot of staple produce is heavy (potatoes, onions and carrots)
- Green peppers and romaine lettuce are cheaper because they are lighter
- Northern stores have been using plastic lobster pails with dry ice to keep their perishables cold when there is no other option
- There are soft spots on the rail line to Churchill. North West has had a train stop before reaching Churchill and all their perishables spoiled.
- It is hard for a full service grocer to stay open in a community of less than 300 people.
- Each individual community has its preferences and cultural buying practices
- North West company is the largest employer of Aboriginal people outside of the federal government
- North West company has 34 stores in Manitoba, 20 non-Aboriginal store managers and 14 Aboriginal store managers
 - Aboriginal managers have better communication with the community
- Forum participants were told that Northern stores have a mandate to always match the lowest local community price and not to undersell the competition. However, milk at the Giant Tiger in The Pas, a store of the North West Company, was selling milk cheaper than any other store in town at the time of the forum and another store owner we spoke to said they were losing money on milk by matching the price at Giant Tiger.

- It was suggested that a survey be done by the outgoing grocer for the incoming grocer in the case of a new store or management to get a sense of what customers want, what they buy, challenges, successes, etc. This survey may help the incoming grocer to be more successful
- In the past there have been community advisory councils set up to provide feedback to Northern stores about their service to their communities. Not everyone is comfortable providing feedback to stores on their own. There was an advisory council set up in Lac Brochet that met quarterly and was comprised of people of all ages including youth and elders
- Every community has a problem with people leaving to shop elsewhere. Tadoule Lake to Thompson. Thompson to Winnipeg. Winnipeg to North Dakota
- Winter road season is a bad time to start a grocery store because people can drive elsewhere to shop
- The Pas is a hub for two rail lines – Hudson Bay Railway Company and Keewatin Railway Company
- Grocers may be willing to cover travel costs to come to another event if there were some concrete benefits that were going to come from it

APPENDIX M - Resources

2003 Northern Food Prices Report

http://www.gov.mb.ca/ana/food_prices/2003report.html

FOOD MAIL PROGRAM

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

<http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nth/fon/fm/index-eng.asp>

Canada Post

<http://www.canadapost.ca/tools/pg/manual/PGfoodmail-e.asp>

FOOD MAIL PROGRAM REVIEW

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

<http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nth/fon/rpt-eng.asp>

BREAKFAST AND SNACK PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS

Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba

<http://www.childnutritioncouncil.com/index.htm>

APPENDIX N - Project Ideas, The Pas

- 1) Community owned reefer box on the train kept at zero degrees Celsius would keep frozen and fresh foods
 - a) Need is that a lot of food is being shipped on the train in unsafe conditions and people will end up getting sick
 - b) Public health concern
 - c) Need a special car for the reefer unit to go on and capacity for this to be unloaded at the community end
 - d) Can funds be found from Healthy Child Manitoba and Community places?
 - e) North West Company offered to pay to add a refrigerated car at one point and the rail line said no.
- 2) Cooking classes
 - a) North West Company provides \$100/month for materials for cooking classes if they are taught by an Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative (ADI) worker or someone from the nursing station. For example, Tadoule Lake
- 3) Healthy options as promotional items
 - a) Buy over \$200 on family allowance day and get a free jug of milk or case of eggs (\$14-\$20 value)
- 4) Northern Stores use Garden Hill as a training site and may be able to supply training for non-competitor community groceries
- 5) Food Buying Club: who pays for the produce if it arrives frozen or damaged
 - a) Need to include a loss margin
- 6) Create supports for warehousing
 - a) Although there is high building costs increased storage capacity would increase the amount of food that could be brought up on the winter roads and the decreased freight costs could be passed on to the community
- 7) Develop marketing and logistic supports for northern producers to get food into northern retail facilities
- 8) Hunter Support Programs
 - a) In Quebec these are funded by the regional government
- 9) Supports for bands and schools to apply for breakfast program funding
 - a) Program needs to be universal
 - b) Challenge is that a lot of bands won't fund breakfast/lunch/snack programs because this is admitting that there is a problem of hunger in the community
- 10) Change focus of Food Mail Program so that it focuses more on delivering perishables than dry goods
- 11) Work to change people's buying habits to plan for a month instead of daily shopping
 - a) People often buy a little bit every day because of large households. If they buy all their food at once and have it in the house, it will get eaten too quickly
 - b) Consumers often can't afford to buy bulk even though it may be cheaper in the long run
 - c) Some Northern stores offer bulk toilet paper and cereal but not much bulk

12) Taste testing can be a good marketing tool

- a) Have to bring in new products to try. In a community called “Fraggle Rock” – an island in the middle of Hudson Bay – they only buy apples and oranges. However, at one point the Northern store was selling a bigger variety of produce. People were buying a wider variety of produce because the store manager brought in “new” produce and cooked it for people to try. When the store manager left, no one continued doing the demos, and produce sales went down again.
- b) One person doing a positive thing in a community can make a big difference
- c) Healthy cooking demonstrations
- d) There have been examples of children developing a taste for healthy foods after only 6 months of being exposed to it

APPENDIX O - Ideas for Action, Thompson

1.FOOD BUYING AND BULK CLUB

Ideas:

- Food Buying Club
- Bulk buying and pre- ordering through local retailer
- Encouraging Food Buying Club in communities
- Breakfast Programs can buy wholesale from Northern stores

Goals:

Access to affordable healthy food facilitated by bulk purchases

Project Objectives:

By the end of this project we will have:

- Meat, veggies and fruits provided to areas where this wasn't normally accessible
- Develop a business model
- Create a membership
- Determine a place for distribution / coordination
- Determine a supplier
- Determine payment method
- Organize volunteers
- Arrange transportation

Partnership:

- Headstart Program, school, nurses, community leaders and members, regional wholesalers, local retailers, local growers, credit unions, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Regional Health Authorities, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Economic Development Worker, MAFRI Co-op specialist

Funds and Resources:

- \$5000 for business plan
- Distribution or staging area (can be attached to store)
- \$5000 Scale and wrapper
- Staff and volunteers

Leader:

Buying club leader (TBD)

- Benefit to have leader who is not the retailer

Timeline:

3 months to set up

Questions:

- What will be the payment method
- What will the lead time be for deliveries
- What will make the mark-up be (Northern stores indicated that retailers should not share their mark-up)
- What is most important to the community (i.e. selection)

This would look different depending on if there is a local retailer or not

- Need to show the community the long term benefit (CED) of working with retailers vs going around the retailer if there is already a local retailer in the community

Notes:

Pikwitonei: population of 60 people and have their own store

Iford: population of 80 people (War Lake is the First Nation and they are working on starting their own store)

Thicket Portage: population of 120 people (1/2 members of Cross Lake)

2. NORTHERN FOOD PRICES SURVEY PROGRAM

Ideas:

- Need for updated Food Costing Report
- Standardized consistent food basket for comparing costs so we are comparing apples to apples
- Food basket can't be priced in some communities because there isn't the range of products
- Grocers can provide costing info
- North West can also provide consumption rate info
- Private companies may be able to provide costing info as it is gathered to determine employee living allowance
- Base price on Thompson
- Develop a government policy for maximum food pricing

Goals:

Develop accurate data to build policy and programs

Project Objectives:

By the end of this project we will have:

- Determined a Northern Standard Food Basket
- Completed survey
- Disseminated information
- Influence policy and program change to increase availability of affordable healthy food: social assistance, subsidy of cost to do business (freight), infrastructure

Partnership:

Retailers, federal and provincial agencies, communities, municipal governments, First Nations councils, Non-Governmental Organizations (MFC, AMC, etc.)

Funds and Resources:

Leader:

Northern Healthy Foods Initiative / Province

Timeline:

Immediately.

- 1st meeting in June of 2009
- First survey 2009 / 2010 and then annually

3.NORTHERN GROCER MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**Ideas:**

- Match smaller community grocers
- Canadian Executive Service Organization(CESO)
- Positive reinforcement campaign
 - Buy local from your local grocer
 - Community Economic Development
 - We're more than just a store, we're part of the community

Goal:

Expanding, establishing, maintaining stores

Empowering store owners and staff

Underlying goal of employment, keeping money in the community, increased access to food

Objectives:

By the end of the project we will have:

Created a resource list, resource data

Delivered workshop training for grocers

Showcased existing grocers

Developed a Manitoba Grocers Network

Raised awareness of existing networks (i.e. Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers)

Effectively communicated / advertised programs

Questions:

Who is the program for? Existing grocers and new grocers

Partnership:

- Grocers
- Business development organizations
- North Central Development (NCD)
- Communities Economic Development Fund (CEDF)
- Academic & Business Communication Inc. (ABC)
- Women's Enterprise Centre, etc.
- Manitoba Food Charter (MFC): facilitate the development of the forum and mentorship programs
- Other community groups
- High schools with a training option for graduates

Funds and Resources:

- CESO: presentation
- Province
- MFC / organisation with the capacity to develop and facilitate the program
- Grocers willing to mentor and make the time
- Money for travel and honorariums

Leader:

- MFC, Heifer International Canada

Timeline:

ASAP

Reference Materials:

- Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers

- “New Careers”
 - Former management training program through the North West Company that was funded by the government and the North West Company
 - Funded by the government and the Northwest Company
 - Still some managers working that went through the program

4.COMMUNITY SELF SUPPORT INITIATIVE

Goal:

For the community to become more self-sufficient in it’s own healthy living programs in order to be less dependent on external sources and take health and wellness into our own hands.

Objectives:

By the end of this program we will have:

- Established healthy eating awareness in our community
- Created a community kitchen
- Established a youth gardening program (grade 5)
- Established partnerships with local businesses and community leaders
- Have a positive reinforcement campaign (posters)
 - Community stores are more than a store
 - Buy local benefits include employment, access, availability, and variety
- Have sought sources of funding (Manitoba Hydro)

Partnerships:

Community leaders and community members, nurses, RCMP, schools, funding agencies, Northern Healthy Foods Initiative, Manitoba Food Charter

Funds and Resources:

Agriculture technical support, logistics support (garden setup \$2800), volunteers (Home Economics teachers), raffles to raise money for kitchen, fencing materials (airlines, grocers and wholesalers), prizes (grocers), airlines

Leader:

One of the community leaders who will designate volunteers

Timeline:

October 2009

Questions:

How to evaluate success or failure

How will gardens stay maintained?

How well will volunteers commit to the project

How will security work?

Where will the land come from?

How late is the school open and who will be the teacher present (community kitchen)?

Notes:

Increase Food Mail use

Soil quality low. Composting from stores for soil quality. Grocers can provide compost materials.

OTHER IDEAS FOR ACTION

- Zone Canada
 - Adjust the living allowance/social assistance levels to reflect the reality of specific zones
 - Currently programs subsidize different regions similarly and there may be cost savings if each region was looked at specifically
 - Need for government infrastructure (airstrips, roads into communities, coolers on trains, etc.)
 - Freight Assistance to reduce cost to consumers
 - Develop government policy for maximum food prices on healthy foods
 - Healthy Eating awareness
 - Shelf talkers
 - Taste testing

- Community kitchen
- Community Economic Development is a key component. Staff of the North West Company indicated that contrary to common perception they are not adverse to competition. They indicated that where there are two or more stores in a community people tend to shop locally more because then they have choice and keep more dollars in the community which also increases sales. More stores develop an environment for other businesses to open and create more vibrant community.
 - Grocers are supportive of Community Economic Development as increased incomes mean more disposable income for increased food purchases.
 - Competition is good because there is a lot of pressure if the train is running late and a whole community does not have milk. Also, competition improves variety and service that stores provide.
- Food Price Studies: Retailers can provide info and systems for data collection = cut cost of survey
- Standardize Food Basket items
- Figure out how can the Food Mail Program can work best for stores
- Northern Foods Campaign (MFC labelling project)
- Figure out what role do / should vitamin supplements have in northern health (especially children/seniors)?
- Figure out how a food buying club can work with a local store