

- 58 -

Thicket Portage

CDPI Helps Get Families Out and Active

How do you get the whole town to show up for a long and healthy walk? For starters, give out good prizes! In the tiny, isolated community of Thicket Portage the CDPI committee managed to get about 75 walkers out for a one and a half hour long walk to the airport and back. Not bad for a community of less than 150 people. “Everybody gets involved,” said CDPI committee member Natalie Bittern. “This walk is an annual thing in the community.” Prizes last year included train tickets, bus tickets and donations from a variety of corporate sponsors. As a way of promoting healthy eating, there are also fruit plates to be won. To make it fair, every walker gets their name in a hat and at the end there is a draw for the prizes.

Bittern says there has been a noticeable improvement in clients at the Health Centre. “They want more information on healthy eating and people are starting to

make their own gardens,” she said.

Another successful community and family activity has been fishing. In the summertime children are taken to nearby Paint Lake for a fishing trip and in the winter families are encouraged to go ice fishing. A skating rink has been cleared on the ice close to the fishing holes so that people can also go skating. The work of clearing was done by a volunteer with a shovel last year and was a huge success.

Bittern says children are active in the community all year round. “We have a lot of very active children. They’re bicycling and you can hear them yelling around in the bush,” said Bittern. Laughing, she added, “They call it ‘cowboys and Indians.’” CDPI is planning to give out a healthy snack per day at the school to add to the children’s diet. There is a community sports day and barbeque at the school and family gym nights when the weather gets inclement. Some of these activities are in partnership with other agencies in the community.

In order to promote smoke-free homes, CDPI in Thicket Portage is adopting an idea from neighbouring Cross Lake and handing out blue light bulbs. A blue light bulb outside a home lets smokers know they are entering a “no smoking” zone. “It worked well for them,” said Bittern, “so we’re going to try it here.”

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Take Note

Did You Know?

According to the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 22% of Canadians in small communities (under 1000 people) are totally inactive, compared with 12% of urban residents.

<http://www.cflri.ca/pdf/e/rf0111.pdf>