

- 35 -

Mafeking

Pulling Together for Sociability and Health

Located about halfway between Swan River and The Pas, the small community of Mafeking has faced many of the challenges typical to northern towns. But shrinking economic opportunities and an aging population haven't stopped Mafeking from pulling together and getting behind a number of CDPI programs. Noella Unger, a local paramedic who is also a CDPI facilitator, says a variety of workshops have been well attended, including diabetes, heart and stroke, and cancer events.

Diabetes awareness breakfasts have proven to be an effective way to screen people for the disease and get them informed as well. Nurses are on hand to do the screenings and give advice regarding diet habits and exercise. "People coming out found the information they learned really important; some of them hadn't realized how the

"People coming out found the information they learned really important; some of them hadn't realized how the actual course of their disease progressed."

actual course of their disease progressed," said Unger. "They got a better idea and understanding of the challenges they faced."

Because of Mafeking's small size, some activities take place as part of a cluster of other communities. Nearby Barrows also has a CDPI committee, and both towns collaborate with Birch River and Bellsite. They all get together for an annual family picnic that's open to everybody who wants to enjoy games and a potluck meal featuring local in-season foods. Last year, CDPI funds paid to install two horseshoe pits, and someone brought a bocci ball set for the day. "Our little park runs right beside the creek – the kids had a great time because they could play in the creek," said Unger. "The goal is just to get people out, get them active, and socialize – some people don't go out as much as they should."

Getting people together in Mafeking should get a lot easier with the completion of a new community centre. The local school has closed due to declining enrolment, but the town recently bought the building and is in the process of repairing the facility, which includes a gymnasium. "Our little community is really starting to pull together," said Unger. "We're getting the school roof fixed and we'll have a real community centre."

Contact Information:

Noella Unger
204-545-2009
nirmu61@hotmail.com

Take Note

The two population groups at highest risk of diabetes are:

- Seniors – 10% of Canadians aged 65+ have the disease, compared to 3% of those aged 35 to 64.
- Aboriginal people – Type 2 diabetes rates are 3 to 5 times higher in aboriginal communities than in the general population.

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ccdpc-cpcmc/diabetes-diabete/english/facts/index.html>

Did You Know?

Manitoba was the first province in Canada to study the magnitude of the diabetes problem.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/diabetes/strategy.html>