

## **Fort Albany Market**

Our markets were started about 10 years ago as an off-shoot of the Student Nutrition Program that I organize for the students in our school. We feed all the children breakfast each morning and a snack in the afternoon. As well, I cook a hot meal for the Elders Meals on Wheels program twice a week which is delivered to the elder's homes by the Home Care staff from the local Health Services and First Nations office. With these many on-going food programs already operating in the community and the community members just not able to afford to buy healthy foods for their families, we decided to organize produce markets to help with the food insecurity in the community.

As it is now, every two weeks we order about 3,000 lbs of fresh fruits & vegetables to sell. We have, over the 10 years, learned the most efficient, inexpensive way to get that much food here. In the past, we ordered food from Toronto which was then trucked to Cochrane, trained to Moosonee and flown by small plane to Fort Albany. Volunteers then pick up the food by truck and deliver it to the school gym. The food is weighed, priced and organized on tables for community people to shop. The demand for this fresh food is so great that the Market is usually only open for a few minutes and most food is gone. People line up outside waiting for it to open so they can be assured of getting what they want. Any food left at the end of the market is stored in refrigerators in the school and people come in anytime and shop. I work at the school all day so this is possible.

Over time, we have bought from different grocers but now order from a wholesaler in Quebec who trucks it to the train for us. Just this summer we began partnering with him and an airlines to provide us a more competitive price for transporting the food. As well, we are able to access the government subsidy, Nutrition North Canada, which gives us .60lb. on all healthy food. So, on 3,000 lb. that means we receive \$1,800.00 toward our transportation costs which almost pays for it all.

We also sell Good Food Boxes at each market, so a family can pre-order a \$50.00 box of 6-7 each of fruits and veggies. Regular fruits like bananas, apples, oranges, grapes are always in the box but other seasonal fruits like strawberries, blueberries, peaches, kiwis may be added sometimes. Vegetables include carrots, peppers, tomatoes, onions and others are added such as broccoli, celery, potatoes or lettuce. One of our goals has been to introduce unfamiliar foods to the community, so we often have cut-up pieces of fruit or vegetables available at the markets for people to taste. We sometimes include cheese, bread or cereal in the food box if we have ordered it. Usually, we pack 40-50 pre-ordered food boxes that are then picked up when the market opens.

So the markets are able to supply fresh produce to the community as a whole but also supplies the daycare, elders program, school nutrition program and many other events organized in the community such as after school programs, cultural activities etc.