NIQITSIAVUT

Baker Lake Food Security Project, Baker Lake, Nunavut

Niqitsiavut was a project initiated under the Nunavut Food Security Coalition in partnership with Food First NL (Newfoundland & Labrador) and Trent University and with financial administration by the Hamlet of Baker Lake.



To undertake this project, a local advisory committee was formed about 5 years ago and continues to oversee the program to date. The first phase of the project involved a community-led Household Food Security Survey to determine the level of actual household need. The survey results showed that the average household need was significant, and that people wanted better access to country foods, as well as to develop their skills in preparing country foods and in choosing and using store-bought nutritious foods. A plan to address these concerns was developed by the advisory committee and the past three and a half years have seen the implementation of this plan under the continued funding from the sponsor organizations. (Note: the involvement of Trent University came to a scheduled end after the first two years, as it had been mainly concerned with the "how-to" of conducting the household food survey.)

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The program that emerged is run by 2 employees who operate out of a small office space and kitchen in a rented house. Limited space results in a limited number of participants with the interest often exceeding the capacity of 6-8 people. The key programs include seasonal land-based country food harvesting/preparation/cooking such as butchering, nipku making, berry picking, fish processing and a facility-based healthy eating/cooking program that uses both country food and store-bought foods in a variety of ways. The program also works with the high school to provide instruction to their land programs as well and with the HTO which sometimes supplies country food. The program is also able to expand somewhat with the support of the Community Learning Centre which will allow use of their kitchen facility twice weekly as long as programming allows.



Participation is open to everyone and encouraged through ads on the community Facebook page, posters and radio announcements. The program focus is on healthy eating and nutrition, respectful use of all parts of country food that has been harvested, skill development in using recipes and food preparations and exposure to a variety of ingredients and how to use these. Giving back to the community is valued by providing food tastings at various community events, such as Community Health Fairs, and through special events such as cooking heads and hooves for Elders. There are also theme nights when involvement is encouraged through bringing a friend, mother/daughter events with door prizes (usually food hampers) for encouragement. As part of the program, participants are able to take a meal home to their families.

The impacts of this program over the past 2 years were evaluated through a small participant survey conducted by Food First Newfoundland. Results were limited, but positive. More telling are the enthusiastic comments posted on Facebook and the uptake in subscription to the program.

