

A community-based prevention project at point of purchase.

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Type 2 diabetes rate in the Cree communities of Eeyou Itstchee is at least 3 to 5 times above the national rate. Furthermore, all Cree of all ages are at risk of getting the disease. Lack of health professionals specialized in nutrition limit individual intervention. Environmental approaches are therefore an important mean to provide information to a larger group, especially in those isolated communities mainly serviced by local stores.

We report on the development and evaluation of a food shelf-labelling pilot project, adapted from a program recently implemented among the Attikamekw communities. Goal of the project was to educate people at point-of-purchase. Instruments had to be visual, use minimal wording, inform customers on food selection and follow the objectives of the diabetes prevention. Thirty labels, mostly aimed in reducing fat and sugar intake were developed in a stepwise process, allowing the population to be consulted at each stage of the development. Labels were redesigned after each group discussions according to comments. All materials were first developed and pretested in English, but will subsequently be translated in Cree. The pilot test was implemented for six weeks in Waswanipi, one of the Southern communities of the Eeyou Itstchee. An awareness survey was then administered using a 9-item questionnaire among 45 persons (about 3% of total population) from all ages and gender. Respondents were either recruited at the local clinic or when leaving one of the grocery store. Overall awareness of the program was 82.2% and 44.4% of interviewed people had at least sometimes used messages on the labels. We expect to have the same response rate when the prevention project will be officially implemented in all Cree communities.