

Social Marketing Quarterly: 16(3) Fall 2010

www.socialmarketingquarterly.com

The Food Mail Program: “When Figs Fly” - Dispatching Access and Affordability to Healthy Food

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Abstract

Although Canada enjoys a fairly high standard of health and reports low rates of obesity and lifestyle diseases in comparison with the rest of the developed world, there is an increasing concern regarding the health of the Aboriginal population in the North. A significant percentage of Canada's Aboriginal communities are located in remote regions of the country and thus do not have access to locally grown nutritious foods. In an attempt to improve Aboriginal health, the Government of Canada has implemented the Food Mail Program which increases the affordability of, and access to, nutritious foods and promotes healthy eating among that population. The Food Mail Program attempts to increase access to healthy foods for those in isolated communities in the North by subsidizing the cost of food transport. To date, however, the program has produced mixed results. All stakeholders involved with the program agree that it does provide value and that it serves an important function. However, several changes must be made for the program to reach its objectives. The present case illustrates the significant challenges faced when attempting to change established consumption behaviors and the difficulties of focusing primarily on the supply side of the issue.