

First Nations
VOICE

Northern and NorthMart bring customers 'big savings'

Shoppers continue to look for more ways to stretch their dollar and many retailers have responded by strengthening their private label brands.

Grocery industry analysts point to building private label products and the loyalty they can bring as a key tactic in defending market share for Canadian retailers prior to the entry of Target in 2013.

The North West Company has had a significant private label offering for some time, and has noticed an increase in customer's desire to make the switch to their private label products since they were introduced to the market.

The heightened savvy and economic drive of shoppers has led to a shift at Northern and NorthMart stores, as the customers recognize a strong value offer and have responded in a 'Big way.'

The stores 'Big Savings' campaign promises to save customers a bundle by making the switch from national brands to their own Best Value, BV and BV Signature store brands.

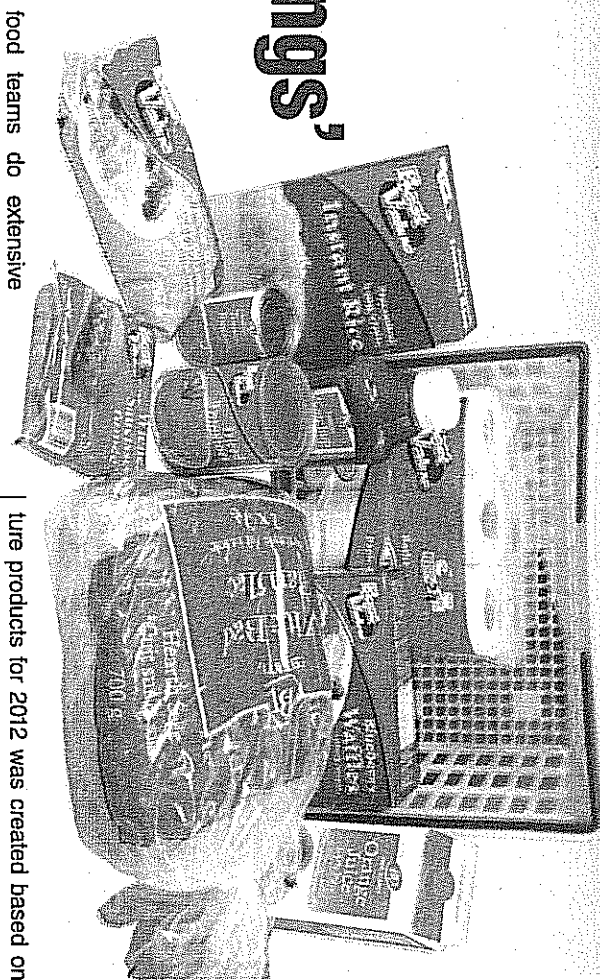
"We all are looking for ways to save, and by making a simple switch to our Best Value

products, you can save approximately 22% on your grocery bill. As an example, on a \$200 grocery trip, that is a \$44 savings just by switching. Over a full year the saving can be substantial," says Jennifer Ewacha, Manager Store Brands, The North West Company.

Northern and NorthMart's Best Value, BV and BV Signature products were first introduced to the market in 2005 to provide customers with a high quality product at a lower price than the leading national brand.

According to Michael McMullen, Executive Vice President at The North West Company, price is only part of the attractiveness of private label products.

"You constantly need to be relevant to your customers. Relevance is gained by the whole value offer, the price and the product," says McMullen. "Our Best Value products are developed for quality, taste and overall appeal. Price is a big part of the equation, but cannot stand alone or our customers will not respond to our BV products on a continuous basis." Creating the Best Value family of products is not a simple task. The North West Company's



food teams do extensive product research to get the best quality product at the best price. Once they identify the products, they are then tested in blind taste tests against comparable products in the market.

"When compared to other similar products our Best Value family of products score equal to or better than the national brand products," says Ewacha.

"We personally taste test every Best Value product in our offices. We rank comparative products in blind taste tests. You cannot advocate for your customers without personal engagement," adds McMullen, who is a big advocate of the development process.

So what's in store for the future? A list of potential new Best Value, BV and BV Signa-

ture products for 2012 was created based on research into what Northern and NorthMart customers are looking for.

One of the latest products to hit the Northern and NorthMart aisles are the Best Value Freeze Pops.

"We knew we could make an ice pop that our customers would love on a warm summer day," says Ewacha. "When we chose the final flavours for Best Value Ice Pops, we went with the top flavours blue raspberry cherry, grape and orange. Even our design with the "Cool" Polar Bear enjoying the cherry-flavoured ice pop speaks to our presence in the North."

A few products coming in 2012 are, Best Value Ham 1 & 2kg, Best Value Coffee 320g, and BV Essentials Light Peanut Butter 1kg, just to name a few.

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1 million

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FIRST PEOPLES ECONOMIC GROWTH FUND SUCCESS STORY

Big Deal Catering is a First Nation-owned and operated catering business which opened the fall of 2011. We've been very successful serving a large, diverse client base throughout Winnipeg. Big Deal Catering also provides food services for my existing business – a nightclub and restaurant in downtown Winnipeg.

I've owned my own business since 2001 and



and then approved a loan that allowed me to expand and renovate my space to include Big