



Sandy Lake youth run for diabetes

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Alex Fiddler of Sandy Lake First Nation was impressed by the turnout for the North West Company's Run for Diabetes event on Sept. 15.

"We were quite surprised how many participated," Fiddler, the Brighter Futures coordinator for the First Nation, said. "We didn't expect that many people to come on down. The atmosphere was very good downtown."

The Run for Diabetes had more than 100 people take part, either running or walking in a 5-kilometre (5K), 2.5K or a kid's fun run track. Participants ranged from six to 65 years old.

"Parents pushing their babies and toddlers in a stroller also took part in the run," Gary Manoakeesic, Sandy Lake's diabetes prevention coordinator, said.

Organized by Fiddler, Manoakeesic, diabetes and health worker Starsky Goodman, and members of

the North West Company, the Run for Diabetes was aimed at promoting a healthy lifestyle and raising awareness about diabetes in the community.

After a study conducted from 1993-1995 on more than 700 community members, Sandy Lake was ranked first in Canada and third in the world in the number of diabetes cases per capita.

Manoakeesic said the high rate arose from the high cost of healthy foods on reserve combined with the sedentary lifestyle most community members took up after settling in the community and away from the traditional lifestyle.

"We were in the process of not doing anything at that time because a lot of people were on the verge of change from old ways because of technology," Manoakeesic said. "The change was so fast that we forgot all the stuff like being active and doing outdoor work."

The introduction of technology that helped to bypass hard labour as

well as TV, video games as entertainment contributed to the lethargic mentality.

"Running would be a good sport and educating the people on how important it is to go outside and be active," Manoakeesic said. "Back in the day, they stopped doing that and got sick in the process."

The North West Company's regional manager also took part in the run. Local Northern store manager Tim Roach helped to co-organize the event and provided grapes, oranges, apples and bananas to the participants following the run. Participants were also given t-shirts and medallions.

Having moved to the community last May, Roach said the run allowed him and other Northern store workers to acquaint themselves with the community.

"I loved it," Roach said of the run. "The community here is fantastic. I can't say enough about it. I really enjoy being a part of the community right now."

Roach was surprised at the number of participants.

"There were a lot of people doing the 5K," he said. "I was pretty shocked."

This is the first Run for Diabetes event sponsored by the North West Company. Sandy Lake began organizing its annual run 10 years ago.

Fiddler said he hopes the eclectic mix of people, including the older participants, will inspire youth to be more active while Manoakeesic said he hopes the runs will continue throughout the years.

"Hopefully in the long run, we help prevent the younger generation from getting diabetes," he said.

Photos submitted by Lisa Roach

Top: More than 100 community members took part in the Run for Diabetes.

Right: A young participant holds his medallion and munches on a post-run snack following the run.

