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Yukon First Nations launch nutritional meals program in rural communities

November 20, 2019 News Release



Children and youth in Yukon First Nations rural communities will have access to two meals a day, five days per week with a new initiative launched through the Council of Yukon First Nations. A group proposal submitted by CYFN totalling \$4.4 million in Jordan's Principle funding was recently approved by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC).

The funding will be used to purchase and transport fresh, nutritious food into the communities; assist with harvesting traditional foods; pay for cooks; upgrade kitchen equipment and facilities, and to hire two CYFN coordinators to manage the program.

Yukon's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Brendan Hanley, supported the group proposal, stating: "Food insecurity is an urgent public health challenge in Canada that disproportionately affects First Nations peoples. Canada is the only country in the 34-nation Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) without a national school food program."

Those participating include Liard First Nation, Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation, Vuntut Gwitchin Government, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Ross River Dene Council, Selkirk First Nation, First Nation of Na-cho Nyäk Dun, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, Kluane First Nation, White River First Nation; Champagne and Aishihik First Nation, and Teslin Tlingit Council.

Quotes

The food we eat is linked to our culture, our identity and our overall health, so assisting communities to build food security while revitalizing traditional diets, is vitally important for Yukon First Nations. We also know that a healthy diet improves concentration and learning. The potential benefits to this program are countless.

Council of Yukon First Nations Grand Chief Peter Johnston

In Ross River we have already implemented the hot meals program and, although it's too early to say what effects it may have on our youth, we feel better knowing every child is guaranteed two balanced meals during the school week. We know this will have a positive effect on our community as a whole.

Ross River Dene Council Councillor Verna Nukon

Quick Facts

- CYFN is the service coordinator in the Yukon for Jordan's Principle, a child-first and needs-based principle used to ensure that First Nations children have equitable access to all government funded public services. In order to ensure "substantive equality" this can also include services that are not ordinarily available to other children, such as a community-wide food program.
- A 2016 report, Health and Health-Related Behaviours among Young People (Yukon) states that more than 25 per cent of Yukon students reported going to bed hungry because they do not have enough to eat.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada reports that 58 per cent of all annual healthcare spending in Canada is for the treatment of chronic diseases caused by unhealthy eating and lack of physical activity.

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