



Indigenous Services
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Services aux
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News release

For Immediate Release

Indigenous, Territorial and Federal leaders mobilize funding to support unique northern physical distancing initiative

March 30, 2020 — Yellowknife, Treaty 11 Territory, Northwest Territories — Indigenous Services Canada

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) came to an agreement today, with support from Indigenous leaders, to help Indigenous families who are choosing to be on the land as part of the territory's response to COVID-19. The federal government, through ISC, is providing \$2.6 million in federal funding, which will be administered by the Territorial government through their existing partnerships with regional and community-based Indigenous governments.

Consistent with recommendations of the Northwest Territories' Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. Kami Kandola, the planned northern community "At Home On The Land" initiative is aligned with broader public health recommendations for increased physical distancing during the Coronavirus pandemic. Many families in the Northwest Territories have already begun to move onto the land to cabins and camps where they can maintain safer physical distances than if they were to remain in their home communities. The funds will support many other families who would not otherwise be able to be on the land because of the financial burden of acquiring necessary provisions, such as wood and fuel, food, First Aid equipment, transportation and other items suitable to their situation and culture.

Conventional physical distancing measures, like staying at home, that are recommended by Canada's public health officials can have detrimental health effects in some Indigenous communities where housing can be overcrowded. When equipped with the proper supplies and equipment, going on the land in small groups is a positive and healthy form of physical distancing – an important measure in preventing and reducing the spread of the virus.

The GNWT is asking harvesters to keep in mind the advice of co-management partners and engage in safe and responsible harvesting practices when out on the land:

- Be prepared, dress for the conditions and bring a communications device
- Always tell someone where you are going and when you will be back
- Harvest only what you need

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Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) officers will continue to conduct regular patrols and enforcement activities throughout the Northwest Territories (NWT), including the no harvest zone for Bathurst caribou.

Quotes

“Strong, collective action from all levels of government based on recommendations from the Chief Public Health Officer will help all of us mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in our communities. Being on the land is a way of life for many northerners and a good way to slow the spread of this virus. By all of us working together, we will make a difference in how COVID-19 impacts our own families, our neighbours and all residents of the Northwest Territories.”

The Honourable Caroline Cochrane
Premier of Northwest Territories

“The ability to go on the land is about much more than supplies and equipment. It is built on a rich history of traditional knowledge and skills shared through generations of First Nations, Inuit and Metis families and communities in every corner of the Northwest Territories. I am pleased that this new funding will help supplement this knowledge with the necessary resources for families to be safe, healthy and comfortable on the land.”

Michael McLeod
Member of Parliament for the Northwest Territories

“We know that our communities are at higher risk during this unprecedented pandemic. Elders and knowledge keepers have always told us ‘a day will come, when we will need to go to the land’ and now is that time. Our people are remarkably strong and powerful, and we will do what is required to keep each other safe. Being on the land is our way of life. With the closing of the schools, this is also an opportunity for families and their children to learn more about our culture and traditions and what has sustained us as Dene people for thousands of years. I commend both the GNWT and ISC for swift action and prioritizing the health and well-being of the Dene Nation. Mahsi.”

Norman Yakeleya
Dene National Chief

Quick facts

- The funding will be allocated to :
 - Akaitcho Territory Government
 - Dehcho First Nations
 - Gwich'in Tribal Council

- NWT Métis Nation
- Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated
- Tłı̨chǫ Government
- K'at'l'odeeche First Nation
- Acho Dene Koe First Nation
- Salt River First Nation
- Délı̨ne Got'ı̨ne Government

Associated links

To view the Current Mobile Core Bathurst Caribou Management Zone, visit:
<http://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/mobile-zone>.

For the latest updates to ENR services, including changes and cancellations, visit:
www.enr.gov.nt.ca/coronavirus.

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For more information, media may contact:

Vanessa Adams
Senior Communications Advisor and Press Secretary
Office of the Honourable Marc Miller
Minister of Indigenous Services
343-543-7645

Press Secretary
Cabinet Communications
Government of the Northwest Territories
Presssecretary@gov.nt.ca

Media Relations
Indigenous Services Canada
819-953-1160
SAC.media.ISC@canada.ca

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