Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds, Healthy Spirits

Improving Health and Nutrition in Eel Ground First Nation

THE PROJECT - Eel Ground First Nation has partnered with Canadian Feed the Children (CFTC) to improve health and nutrition in the community. The project is responding to an identified need in the community to improve nutrition outcomes and awareness.

It will target:
-school-aged children
-parents and caregivers
-school staff
-the community at large

This four-year project will lay the ground for future initiatives, with the aim of all residents of Eel Ground First Nation having improved food security and enjoying the benefits of healthy minds, healthy bodies, and healthy spirits.
Breakfast and lunch programs operated by Eel Ground First Nation School, supported by Canadian Feed the Children (CFTC), have been operating successfully since 2007. However, there is a need to go beyond the provision of food. Increased nutrition education and general knowledge of the importance of healthy eating habits among parents and the wider community would support children in adopting healthy eating practices and behaviors outside of the school setting, significantly strengthening the impact of the breakfast and lunch program.

The program’s goal is to empower and involve the community in making lifestyle changes to decrease overweight and obesity rates and prevent diseases such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

Areas of focus include:
- Initiatives for children, youth, parents, and families;
- Diabetes in pre-pregnancy and pregnancy;
- Community-led food security planning to improve access to healthy food, including traditional and market foods; and
- Enhanced training for health professionals on clinical practice guidelines and chronic disease management strategies.

Four key integrated components are:
- Availability and Accessibility (availability of quality, nutritious food through the school feeding program, including improved food storage facilities, the Good Food Box, a voucher system for parents allowing low-income families to access fresh produce, and a transportation program, e.g. shuttle bus to Miramichi, that will reduce transportation challenges and expenses for families);
- Nutrition Education (including a dietician 1-2 days/month, to educate students, parents/guardians, teachers/staff, cooks, and families);
- Community Mobilization (including a social media component for students); and
- Capacity Building (including opportunities for information exchange and networking with neighbouring communities, e.g. Elsipogtog First Nation).

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