



Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOOD SYMPOSIUM TO FOCUS ON NUTRITION, HEALTH AND CONNECTION TO TRADITIONAL FOODS

THUNDER BAY: Nishnawbe Aski Nation will host First Nation leaders, delegates from across NAN territory and special guests for tomorrow's launch of the 2014 Food Symposium "Traditional Foods without Borders" (August 26-28) focusing on nutrition, health and our connection to traditional foods.

"Food insecurity has been a critical issue for years because of social disparities that impact our members' ability to maintain a healthy diet, and the high price of food in remote First Nations is a contributing factor to nutrition-related health issues such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease and cancer," said Deputy Grand Chief Goyce Kakegamic. "The epidemic of diet-related illnesses makes the restoration of our traditional foods essential for our survival, and we must restore locally produced food as an integral part of resilient ecosystems and sustainable economies in our communities."

This year's event coincides with the recent release of the First Nations Food, Nutrition and Environment Study which documents the significant barriers many First Nations face while trying to access safe and healthy food. NAN First Nations have solutions to rebuild food sovereignty, and have established community-based initiatives such as local food production and educating youth on traditional hunting and fishing practices. Yet there remain large barriers to overcome in terms of government policy and lack of a coordinated approach to reducing hunger.

"Limited funding and a lack of federal support has made it extremely difficult for us to address the broad issues of inefficient and unsustainable food distribution systems, high food costs in remote communities, and environmental threat posed to forest and fresh water foods," said Kakegamic. "Access to food is a basic human right, and the Government of Canada must take a strategic approach and develop a national food policy where First Nations are major contributors to ensure all our people at all times have access to healthy and nutritious food."

Food Symposiums are held annually to connect individuals from across NAN territory to collectively address the region's food system challenges while finding shared community-based solutions. This year's event will include presentations on the politics of food, traditional trade routes, nutrition and health, workshops on traditional food preparation, as well as hands-on demonstrations on forest garden building and greenhouse construction.

NAN also has developed a Food Strategy based on six key pillars: 1. Traditional Practices, 2. Imported Foods, 3. Local Production, 4. Nutrition Practice, 5. Planning, Policy and Advocacy, 6. Research and Knowledge Transfer. NAN has established collaborative relationships with other First Nations and organizations to promote food security and advocate for changes to current food system.

The right to food for Indigenous peoples was highlighted in a 2012 report by the United Nation Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, who examined food security and how the human right to adequate food is being realized in Canada. There report made several recommendations to improve food security, but was ignored by the federal government despite the approximately two million people in Canada who have been declared as food insecure.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities in James Bay Treaty No. 9 and Ontario portions of Treaty No. 5 – an area covering two thirds of the province of Ontario in Canada.

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