

First Nations invited to participated in community-based diabetes prevention program

Fort Frances, ON, November 2005- Seven Northwest Ontario First Nations are working with investigators from the University of Western Ontario (UWO) and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH) in Baltimore, Maryland to conduct a community-based program (Zhiwaapenewin Akino'maagewin: Teaching to Prevent Diabetes) to fight the epidemic of diabetes in First Nations. Bearskin Lake, Eabametoong, Eagle Lake, N a i c a t c h e w e n i n , Nigigoonsiminikaaning, Seine River, and Wabigoon Lake First Nations are participating in an integrated program to promote healthy eating and physical activity based on successful programs in schools, food stores, and health/social services in the community. Highlighting the need for action, Councilor Ron Allen of Nicickousemenecaning First Nation reported: "The severity and effects of the diabetes [continue] to be devastating. We have people missing in the community: People who left for the spirit world before their time....We need to be aware to the good foods to eat. We need to exercise to get into shape. In short, we need to make the lifestyle changes to make our selves healthy." The first set of communities kicked off the program in September 2005 and the second set will begin in September 2006. Surveys before and after the first round will assess whether the program has effected changes in eating and physical activity.

If successful, in 2007 this program will be expanded to over 16 First Nations communities in Ontario and Michigan. The principal investigators of the study, Dr. Joel Gittelsohn (JHSPH) and Dr. Stewart Harris (UWO), have over 30 years of combined experience developing successful health promotion programs for Native communities in Canada and the United States. Dr. Gittelsohn stated, "We are very much looking forward to expanding this multi-institutional program to prevent diabetes in First Nations. The partnership of schools, food stores and health services can reach many different ages within communities and should lead to a successful program."

First Nation communities interested in participating in the expanded program to prevent diabetes should contact one of the principal investigators:

Stewart Harris
Centre for Studies in Family
Medicine
245-100 Collip Circle
London, ON N6G 4X8
(519) 858-5028
sharris1@uwo.ca

Joel Gittelsohn
Center for Human Nutrition
615 N. Wolfe St, W2041
Baltimore, MD 21205
(410) 955-3927
jgittels@jhsp.edu



Zhiwaapenewin Akino'maagewin wishes you a healthy Diabetes Awareness Month!

Eat meals lower in fat to help prevent diabetes:

- drain AND rinse ground meat with hot water
- use lower fat cheeses and milks
- use cooking spray instead of oil or margarine
- use beans instead meat in recipes

EAT WELL, STAY STRONG, LIVE LONG!

For more information contact:

Lara Ho, Project Coordinator (lho@jhsp.edu)
162 Third Street
Fort Frances, ON P9A 3A3
Phone/Fax: (807) 274-4658

Or visit www.healthystores.org