

Pan-Territorial On-The-Land Summit

Mr. Speaker, this government made a commitment in its mandate to enhance access to culturally-appropriate programs and services.

The last government convened a Minister's Forum on Addictions and Community Wellness to travel across the Northwest Territories and come back with recommendations that would have a real impact in dealing with addictions. The top priority identified by the Forum was more on-the-land healing programs. This is the wisdom of our communities.

This wisdom is supported by research that confirms that a relationship with nature has positive benefits for physical and mental health, as well as social well-being and that this impact is stronger for those whose lives and traditions are fundamentally linked to the land. Research also indicates that health and indigenous connection to the land are positively linked. This belief informs the GNWT's commitment to supporting and investing in land-based healing programs for indigenous communities.

In keeping with this commitment, we will host a Pan-Territorial On-The-Land Summit in Dettah next month. Over three days the Summit will explore the themes of healing; culture; guardianship; collaboration; and evaluation. The federal government through Health Canada shares our commitment to land-based programming and is a major funder of this initiative.

On-The-land wellness programming partners and experts from the North, other parts of Canada and the circumpolar world will come together to exchange knowledge, share best practices and discuss opportunities and challenges. Leaders

in land-based programming from across Nunavut, Yukon, and the NWT have been invited to attend, including Elders, youth, Aboriginal governments, non-government organizations and staff from Health Canada and the three territorial governments.

The Summit will also recognize the knowledge in the room by prioritizing opportunities for open discussion between participants to build networks and dialogues. It will be informative, motivational, and will foster new relationships for those delivering programs to continue their work in improving community wellness.

The Department of Health and Social Services is working with Health Canada, the NWT Association of Communities, and an expert advisory committee to bring together the Summit. The event is by invitation only due to space and budget limitations. However, we are committed to sharing the benefits and outcomes of the Summit as broadly as possible. Webinar registration is available for some sessions, along with live broadcasts on CKLB radio, so that all residents have an opportunity to hear the plenary presentations.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there is a large disparity between health and social outcomes of indigenous people and other Canadians. The legacy of colonialism and residential schools, and the resulting disconnection from land and culture, has played a part in this. This Summit is an important venue that provides an opportunity for all of us to learn from one another, showcase and celebrate the innovation and successes demonstrated by land-based programs across the North, and continue our collective efforts to support connection to land and culture as an investment in the well-being of our residents and communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.