



For Immediate Release
January 26, 2017

Northwest Strong Healthy Kids Community Challenge Launches Theme Two

The City of Kenora, in partnership with the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU), is one of 45 communities across Ontario taking part in the Healthy Kids Community Challenge. The Healthy Kids Community Challenge unites communities with a common goal: promoting children's health through physical activity and healthy eating. The project, which runs locally under the banner of Northwest Strong, has recently launched the second theme, *Water Does Wonders*. A website has been developed to support and promote Northwest Strong and Healthy Kids Community Challenge activities throughout the region.

"We are very pleased to be working with so many community partners to encourage kids and families to drink more water and fewer sugary drinks - and it's really exciting that all of these partners are establishing policies that will help to ensure easy access to water and healthier drink options in their facilities in the long run", states Dr. Kit Young-Hoon, NWHU Medical Officer of Health.

Nearly \$110,000 has been allocated to support 38 partnership projects with schools, early years hubs, municipalities, recreation centres, and sports groups across the Kenora-Rainy River District. In order to be eligible for partnership, groups and organizations were required to establish a policy related to increasing water consumption and/or reducing access to sugar-sweetened beverages among children and families. Priority was given to activities aiming to develop skills, address community needs, ensure access to healthy choices and create a lasting impact.

Many schools in the region will be working toward making it easier to drink water throughout the day. For example, at Obishikokaang Elementary School, all students will be given a bottle to fill any time at one of their five newly added water dispensers. Principal Steven Korobanik explains, "We'll also be providing some education for families on the benefits of drinking water, and students will get involved by designing posters, doing school announcements and setting up infused water stations."

More information about the Healthy Kids Community Challenge, including a list of partners taking part in *Water Does Wonders* activities can be found on the newly developed Northwest Strong website at www.northweststrong.ca. To get involved in the *Water Does Wonders* movement, families and organizations can also visit www.waterdoeswonders.ca and pledge to help children sip more water and less sugar. In taking this pledge, we can all help our families and communities be healthier by making water easier to access and by serving and selling fewer sugary drinks.

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QUICK FACTS

- The Healthy Kids Community Challenge is based on the [EPODE \(Ensemble Prévenons l'Obésité des Enfants – Together Let's Prevent Childhood Obesity\)](#) methodology. EPODE began in France and has been recognized by the World Health Organization as an international best practice in obesity prevention.
- Communities applied to participate in the Healthy Kids Community Challenge between January and March 2014. They were selected based on clear evidence of need among local children and youth, the community's ability to establish strong partnerships with local businesses, schools and health organizations, and a demonstrated ability to deliver programs for children and youth.
- Adult obesity is associated with an increased risk of chronic disease. Currently, 75 per cent of obese children grow up to become obese adults.
- Supporting community-based activities to promote healthier living is a key recommendation of the [Healthy Kids Panel report](#).

LEARN MORE

- Ministry website: [Healthy Kids Community Challenge](#)
- [Ontario's Healthy Kids Strategy](#)