



Save the Children Completes Pilot of Emergency Preparedness Program for First Nations Communities

Toronto, May 5, 2016... Save the Children has successfully concluded its pilot project on emergency preparedness for children and families in First Nations communities. Working with the Siksika Nation in Alberta and Wabaseemoong Independent Nations in Ontario, Save the Children set out to help both communities ensure they were prepared to address the unique needs of children and families during emergencies.

Far too often, emergency response plans are 'one size fits all', focused on adults. Save the Children knows that children and their families have unique emergency needs, and any response plan must take those into account. Children are not just small adults; their experiences of emergencies are very different and their reliance on family and social structures to protect them from harm becomes abundantly clear in emergency situations.

With this in mind, Save the Children worked with both Siksika Nation and Wabaseemoong Independent Nations to strengthen their emergency preparedness. This pilot project involved a variety of activities, including multi-day training sessions. Save the Children took the context of each community into account to ensure a collaborative approach to emergency preparedness, working alongside members of the community to ensure they are equipped to be resilient in the face of any disaster.

Siksika Nation made national headlines in 2013 when it was affected by severe flooding. Save the Children was on the ground then, assisting Siksika Nation's 250 evacuated households. Save the Children quickly established a Child Friendly Space, where boys and girls had access to a safe place to play as well as psycho-social support activities. Recovery is an ongoing process and the community continues to feel the impacts of the flood today. In the emergency preparedness pilot program, Save the Children helped Siksika Nation community leaders and frontline workers to incorporate lessons learned from the flood into their emergency preparedness plans for children and families.

Save the Children trained 372 young children and 163 youth in Siksika Nation's four main schools. For younger children, the focus was on basic preparedness - what is an emergency; people, places and things that keep us safe; the basics of an emergency plan and the sort of items needed in an emergency backpack. Save the Children guided older children and youth in creating a 'safety map,' which includes the basics of an emergency plan, and discussed how to deal with the stress that is associated with emergencies and crises.

Save the Children also trained 95 teachers from these schools and supported the schools' leadership with a workshop on school-based emergency preparedness plans.

The impact of the training was recognized by the community, as a frontline worker in the community told Save the Children staff that her daughter returned from school after an emergency preparedness training session, pulled out her disaster family checklist and said, "Mom, we really need to talk about this. It's important."

In Wabaseemoong Independent Nations, Save the Children provided emergency preparedness training to 138 children and youth attending the Mizhakiwetung Memorial School. Following the training

sessions, the school leadership fuelled the school's generator and held a fire drill; important steps in support of emergency preparedness. In addition, Save the Children conducted a collaborative workshop with the Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation, which kicked off Wabaseemoong Independent Nations's process of updating its emergency plan for the whole community.

Save the Children's emergency preparedness work in both Siksika Nation and Wabaseemoong Independent Nations was funded by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. Lessons learned from this pilot phase will be applied to the continuation of our emergency preparedness programming with other First Nations communities.

"Save the Children's emergency preparedness project recognizes that the needs, strengths, and opportunities of each community are unique," said Terry Swan, Director, National Indigenous Programs at Save the Children Canada. "Working collaboratively, we identify ways to strengthen communities and create resilience among all generations. We are grateful to the Government of Canada for its commitment to this program. With this ongoing support, we will continue to work with First Nation communities in need as we expand the program and reach even more children across Canada."

"We all agree that having emergency management plans in place and ensuring residents are prepared for natural disasters is critical for any community," said Indigenous and Northern Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett. "Our government is pleased to have worked in partnership with Save the Children, the Siksika First Nation and Wabaseemoong Independent Nations on this initiative to promote community resiliency."

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For additional information, please contact:

Katharine Harris, National Senior Manager, Communications, PR & Engagement

Save the Children

416 221 5501 x 295

647 973 1185

kharris@savethechildren.ca

About Save the Children

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