



FOR RELEASE  
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## **Yukon youth help tackle mental health stigmas**

WHITEHORSE—A group of students and school organizers met with Minister of Health and Social Services Mike Nixon this week to share what they learned at a youth conference on mental health held last fall in Ottawa.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada's (MHCC) HEADSTRONG initiative will be the nation's largest mental health, anti-stigma initiative for youth. At the summit in November, young people from across Canada gathered to learn how they can make a difference in breaking down perception barriers around mental health.

"When I heard some Yukon students attended the HEADSTRONG summit, I wanted to hear from them first hand. Our discussions highlighted that we need to collectively raise awareness about mental health and wellness," Nixon said. "As a society we are certainly talking more about mental health, but the time has come to end the stigmas associated with mental illness."

Students participated in workshops and exercises and learned from speakers who experienced mental health problems or illnesses and are now in recovery. Students also explored practical ways to reduce negative stereotypes about mental health and learned about the impacts of bullying, depression and suicide. They were then tasked with taking the message back to their schools and communities.

"I would like to thank this group of students on setting such a fine example of leadership," Nixon added. "The issue of mental health can be difficult and challenging and these young people should be commended for their willingness to become part of the solution."

The Mental Health Commission of Canada is a catalyst for improving the mental health system and changing the attitudes and behaviours of Canadians around mental health problems. The commission recently received an international Innovator Award for its efforts to reduce stigma.

"I've worked in mental health for more than 30 years," Mental Health Commission of Canada CEO and president Louise Bradley said. "And at this point in my career, there is nothing more exciting than identifying emerging leaders in our communities. Young people have so much to contribute, and there is so much we can learn from them."

Learn more: Mental Health Commission of Canada

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