

FOR RELEASE  
January 14, 2016

## **Government of Yukon announces new youth mental health program with support from Bell Let's Talk and Northwestel**

WHITEHORSE—The Government of Yukon, Bell Let's Talk and Northwestel today announced contributions totalling \$500,000 to support the launch of the *FRIENDS* cognitive behaviour group-based intervention program throughout the territory. The *FRIENDS* program will provide mental health prevention and treatment services by trained facilitators in rural Yukon and Whitehorse, including for adolescents at social or emotional risk.

"The *FRIENDS* program clearly supports the mental wellness project under the Health Investment Fund and its focus on training front line workers," Minister of Health and Social Services Mike Nixon said. "In partnership with Bell Let's Talk and Northwestel, we will work together to identify community leaders to be trained as *FRIENDS* facilitators in Yukon communities."

The *FRIENDS* program is focused on preventing childhood anxiety and depression using proven cognitive behavioural principles and building emotional resilience. The World Health Organization has described this approach as effective in the prevention of anxiety disorders and the program, developed in Australia, is in use in countries around the world.

"Given the urgent need for more child and youth mental health support and services in Canada's North, Bell Let's Talk is very proud to support the launch of *FRIENDS* in Yukon," Bell Let's Talk mental health initiative chair Mary Deacon said. "We believe innovative programs like *FRIENDS* can make a real difference for people in remote and isolated communities with limited resources."

*FRIENDS* reduces the incidence of serious psychological disorders, emotional distress and impairment in social functioning by teaching children and young people how to cope with and manage anxiety both now and in later life. *FRIENDS* program facilitators will be trained to work collaboratively with community service providers, including First Nations providers, to enhance the supports available to youth as part of a continuum of care services.

"Northwestel is pleased to be a part of programs that expand the mental health resources available to Northerners," Northwestel president and CEO Paul Flaherty said. "The *FRIENDS* program is an important initiative that will help our young people develop the tools they need to manage their mental health, and to lead healthy lives today and well into the future."

The \$250,000 donation from Bell Let's Talk and Northwestel is part of funding announced in May 2014 for community mental health resources in Canada's northern territories, focusing on assisting youth in rural communities. The Government of Yukon is matching the \$250,000 gift.

Learn more:  
The *FRIENDS* program  
Bell Let's Talk  
Northwestel

### **Our partner organizations**



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### **See backgrounder.**

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## **Backgrounder**

### **Bell Let's Talk Day is January 27**

When you join in the mental health conversation on Bell Let's Talk Day each year, you help reduce the stigma and support those who struggle with a mental illness, while also driving Bell's mental health funding at no extra cost to you.

On Bell Let's Talk Day 2016 this January 27, Bell will donate 5 cents to Canadian mental health for every text message, wireless and long distance call made by Bell Aliant and Bell Canada customers, every tweet using #BellLetsTalk, and every Facebook share of the Bell Let's Talk Day image at Facebook.com/BellLetsTalk. After the first 5 Bell Let's Talk Days, Bell has committed a total of \$73,623,413.80 to support mental health initiatives across the country.

Bell's donations are made at no extra charge to Bell Let's Talk Day participants, though normal long distance or text charges, if any, apply.

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