



# ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS BULLETIN ASSEMBLÉE DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS

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## **AFN Launches Fitness Challenge for First Nations Students**

Today Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn Atleo, and AFN Women's Council Chair Kathleen McHugh announced the official launch of a fitness challenge aimed at First Nations students. The challenge will raise awareness about the positive relationship between healthy living and controlling diabetes.

Teachers are organizing students into teams who will engage in 30 minutes of physical activity each day, in ten minute intervals. This can include sports or activities as simple as walking or dancing. The challenge begins today and runs for one month, wrapping up on November 14<sup>th</sup> - World Diabetes Day.

"We are so pleased to have such a positive response from teachers and students," said AFN Women Council Chair Kathleen McHugh. "We are concerned about the high rates of diabetes in our communities, and especially among our youth. It is hoped that this challenge will be fun, teach students about the positive relationship between physical activity and controlling diabetes, and ultimately empower them with healthy habits that they can carry with them throughout their lives."

AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo stated: "We are seeing students and teachers put an enormous amount of commitment and energy into organizing teams for this challenge. This is personally inspiring to me, and I believe that as they move forward these students will become role models for their families and communities. This is a wonderful example of how First Nations youth are making positive contributions to our families and our communities."

Top performers and top teams will have their names entered into a draw, and winners will be announced in December. This year's prizes include: a Pittsburgh Penguin Hockey Jersey signed by Kris Letang (secured by Dan Frawley, former Pittsburgh Penguin captain); a one-day community fitness training session with Ultra-marathon runner Ray Zahab and Zahab's 'Impossible2possible' T-shirts; Nike Air Native N7 shoes for the entire team; a Nike Product Package which includes a bag, water bottle, socks and t-shirt; and a painting by Harry Wilmot entitled "Life Partners."

Aerobic exercise and resistance exercise can help people with diabetes better control their blood sugar levels by burning fat and glucose. Diabetics are also in a high-risk group for heart disease and stroke and exercise can help reduce the risk.

Diabetes is 3 to 5 times more common among First Nations than the general population. Almost all families are affected by the disease, either directly or through friends and neighbours. Many First Nations children and youth are at high risk of developing diabetes due to a lack of exercise, poor nutrition, and obesity.

The AFN is recommending that participants consult a physician before starting a new fitness program. Students do not have to be diabetic to participate in the challenge, it is open to all.

The AFN is the national organization representing First Nations in Canada.

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