



GSK Partners with Save the Children to Address Mental Health Concerns of Children Affected by Cat Lake Crisis in Northern Ontario

New program will use art-based activities as an outlet for Indigenous children to deal with distress they have endured.

.....

Mississauga, ON, October 10, 2019 – Today, on World Mental Health Day, GSK announced a grant of \$75,000 to Save the Children to help Indigenous children affected by the ongoing housing and health emergency in Cat Lake, Northern Ontario.

Working in consultation with the Cat Lake First Nation, the new arts-based Hurt & Healing program will help address the distress children have faced, build emotional resilience, and identity and refer children to appropriate care based on their specific mental health needs.

The program, funded by the grant, will benefit some of the most vulnerable children and youth in Cat Lake First Nation, located approximately 600 kilometres from Thunder Bay, and aims to have a long-lasting positive impact on children and the community.

“Since 2016, GSK and Save the Children have worked with over 30 First Nations communities across Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta to build resilience in the face of emergencies such as flood and fires. We are proud to continue our work with Save the Children to establish the Hurt & Healing program, helping support the health and wellbeing of children living in Cat Lake,” said **Alison Pozzobon, Director, Corporate Communication and Community Engagement, GSK.**

The one-year program will create safe spaces for children and youth to express their pain through art. Save the Children will implement evidence-based research and evaluate the program once it is complete to deepen understanding around art-based childhood and youth mental health interventions used in crisis response.

“Many of the mental health challenges we’re facing now stem from the Residential School System, it’s so much more than just the mould problem,” said **Derek Spence, Head Councilor for Cat Lake First Nation.**

In January 2019, Cat Lake First Nation, which is home to around 700 people, declared a health and housing emergency after excessive medical evacuations were required to treat invasive bacterial

diseases, including skin diseases and lung infections after black mould was found in almost 70 per cent of the homes.

Exposure to stressful events can have serious and enduring negative consequences on a child's cognitive development and emotional response, potentially resulting in life-long physiological issues. Arts-based mental health programming has [demonstrated](#) to be effective in understanding children's experiences of pain, how it has impacted them, and what type of care is needed to support the child's needs.

"Mental health is the Cat Lake community's top concern. By providing culturally-safe, art-based mental health support to children impacted by this crisis, we can help mitigate against negative long-term effects. We want to help children living in Cat Lake to lead productive, healthy and fulfilling lives," said **Bill Chambers, President and CEO of Save the Children**. "The Hurt & Healing program will also support in understanding and addressing the mental health concerns that stem from the legacy of the Residential School System."

About GSK

GSK is a science-led global healthcare company with a special purpose: to help people do more, feel better, live longer. For further information, please visit www.ca.gsk.com

About Save the Children

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In Canada and around the world, we give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share. www.savethechildren.ca

Media Enquiries:

Michelle Smolenaars Hunter
Communications & Community Engagement Manager, GSK
905-819-3363

Jessica Bryant
Head of Communications, Media and PR, Save the Children
647-973-1185