



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Indigenous Youth take part in Spirit North BARHE PÍCHYABI Loppet
More than 100 children push their limits in cross-country ski race

Canmore, January 22, 2019 – More than 100 Indigenous children took part in the inaugural Southern Alberta Spirit North cross-country ski race, the Spirit North BARHE PÍCHYABI Loppet, at the Canmore Nordic Centre Provincial Park in Canmore, AB.

Starting from scratch by learning basic skills and competencies in the nordic sport just a few years ago, this was the first opportunity for the Stoney Nakoda & Tsuut'ina First Nations students to push their limits in a true competitive event. Under the encouragement of their peers, teachers, community leaders & partners, they left it all on the tracks with pride, determination, focus, athleticism and a sense of accomplishment.

“Today, four schools came together for a great day of racing and camaraderie. Everyone came away with a better sense of the people who they share Treaty Seven land with, and hopefully some new friendships.” said Loppet Race Director & Spirit North Community Leader, Justin Wadsworth. “I am really proud of the students for the amazing progress they have made on and off the skis.”

This is one of several racing events hosted by Spirit North in Alberta, and the first in the Bow Valley. With some communities being involved since the beginning of the program in 2009, many children are now hungry for more and are excited to jump to the next level and go beyond the basic skills. As such, Spirit North is looking into building a race series between its communities.

Olympian Clara Hughes joined the celebration today where she kicked off the races, distributed medals and shared words of encouragement. The Founding Spokesperson of the Bell Let's Talk mental health initiative, Clara, also presented a \$25,000 Bell Let's Talk Community Fund grant to Spirit North to expand its mental health outreach program to Paul Band First Nation, Fox Lake Cree Nation, and Alexis First Nation in Alberta.

January 30 is Bell Let's Talk Day, when Bell Canada donates 5 cents to Canadian mental health programs for each eligible text, phone call, and social media interaction on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, at no cost to participants. You can learn more about how to get involved in Bell Let's Talk Day at Bell.ca/LetsTalk.

About Spirit North

Established in 2009, Spirit North is a charitable organization dedicated to improving the lives of

Indigenous children and youth through the transformative power of sport and play. Program delivery in Alberta, BC, Manitoba & Saskatchewan is possible, thanks to Spirit North's valuable partners ATCO, ATB Financial & Pembina Pipeline Corporation, along with support from the Government of Canada - Indigenous Services Canada, MEC, Chevron, Cenovus Energy and multiple community partners.

Beginning with just 4 communities in its first year, Spirit North now works in more than 30 Indigenous communities reaching an average of 6,000 children and youth annually with programming designed to improve the lives of Indigenous children and youth, through access to sport and physical activity.

To learn more about Spirit North, please visit www.spiritnorthxc.ca

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