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**YUKON STUDENTS RISE TO THE HEALTHY EATING CHALLENGE**

WHITEHORSE – For the second year in a row, Yukon students from Kindergarten to Grade 7 rose to the challenge and “dropped the pop” for a week.

“As part of Nutrition Month in March,” Health and Social Services Minister Brad Cathers said, “the department’s Health Promotion Unit worked with schools to promote healthy eating initiatives, hosting the second pan-territorial Drop the Pop Challenge.”

During the challenge, teachers encourage students to replace pop and other sugary drinks for five days in favour of healthier drink choices like milk, water or 100 per cent fruit juices. Teachers support students’ efforts with colourful stickers, posters and temporary tattoos designed by a local artist. Interest in the challenge was high this year, with more than 1,800 students taking part across 108 classrooms in 19 Yukon schools.

The schools with the highest participation per capita in each of four categories received a gift certificate for gym equipment. The classroom in each school with the highest participation received a “smoothie prize pack”, including a blender, smoothie recipe book and a gift certificate for smoothie ingredients. One participating teacher per school also won a \$50 gift certificate for classroom resources from *Scholastic*.

Because school-based initiatives work best when parents are involved, the Health Promotion Unit supported parents this year by providing information on healthier eating. This year’s parent campaign theme was “Thinking Outside the (Lunch) Box!”.

The campaign focused on giving parents and caregivers helpful suggestions for building a healthy school lunch. It provided a colourful card highlighting the elements of a healthy lunch that could be put up on the fridge as well as a copy of Canada’s new Food Guide.

“Teachers can tell students why some choices are healthier than others, but teachers aren’t the ones who pack the lunches each day. Parents play a pivotal role, both as educators within the home and as consumers. This idea of tying the school to home, and the home to school, is one of the cornerstones of a comprehensive approach to school health,” School Health Promotion Coordinator Ian Parker said.

“It’s not just about teachers and what goes on in the classroom,” Education Minister Patrick Rouble added. “It’s about viewing the school as a community and recognizing that many people and agencies have important contributions to make.”

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Contact:

Ian Parker  
School Health Promotion Coordinator  
Health Promotion Unit  
(867) 667-8563  
[ian.parker@gov.yk.ca](mailto:ian.parker@gov.yk.ca)

Marcelle Dubé  
Communications Coordinator  
Health and Social Services  
(867) 667-3010  
[marcelle.dube@gov.yk.ca](mailto:marcelle.dube@gov.yk.ca)

Clea Roberts  
Communications Coordinator  
Education  
(867) 393-7102  
[clea.roberts@gov.yk.ca](mailto:clea.roberts@gov.yk.ca)

## **BACKGROUND – DROP THE POP**

For the purposes of the Drop the Pop challenge, Yukon schools were divided into four categories, based on numbers of students:

<b>SCHOOL CATEGORIES (K to 7)</b>			
<i>More than 200 students</i>	<i>150-200 students</i>	<i>50-150 students</i>	<i>Fewer than 50 students</i>
Christ the King Elementary School	Holy Family School	Grey Mountain Primary School	Eliza Van Bibber School (Pelly Crossing)
Elijah Smith Elementary School	Takhini Elementary School	Hidden Valley School	Kluane Lake School (Destruction Bay)
Jack Hulland Elementary School	Johnson Elementary School (Watson Lake)	Teslin School	Nelna Bessie John (Beaver Creek)
Selkirk Elementary School	Robert Service School (Dawson City)	Ghùch Tlà Community School (Carcross)	Ross River School
Whitehorse Elementary School		École Emilie Tremblay	Del Van Gorder (Faro)
			<i>Due to small populations for this category, \$300 went to 1<sup>st</sup> place, \$200 went to 2<sup>nd</sup>.</i>

Winners in the first three school categories each received a \$500 gift certificate. They are: Grey Mountain Primary, Jack Hulland Elementary and Holy Family Elementary. In the last category, Nelna Bessie John School came in first place and received a \$300 gift certificate. Ross River School came in second and received a \$200 gift certificate.

The number of students participating this year is up by 80:

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>classrooms</b>	<b>students</b>
2006	108	1733
2007	108	1813