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YUKON MOMS GATHER TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL BREASTFEEDING WEEK

WHITEHORSE –Breastfeeding moms in Whitehorse are being invited to come out and challenge Nunavut for first place in the Quintessence Foundation Breastfeeding Challenge.

Beginning at 11 a.m., Oct. 1, moms and babies will attempt to regain their record for the most babies breastfeeding at one time.

Community Health Nurse and breastfeeding mom, Kelly Lemoine, says the number of babies actively involved at 11 a.m. will be counted and then submitted to the Quintessence Foundation.

“This is a friendly challenge between regions and meant to promote and encourage breastfeeding,” Lemoine said. “Last year the Yukon counted 35 moms and babies during the competition period, but Nunavut came in first. Let’s see if we can recapture our title as the Canadian champs in the North.”

The numbers are calculated as a ratio of each region’s birth rate. Dawson City, Haines Junction and Whitehorse are registered sites. This year the Whitehorse site will be at the Whitehorse Health Centre with door prizes and light snacks provided.

“Breastfeeding can be challenging at times,” Lemoine added. “In general, Whitehorse and the Yukon are very supportive of breastfeeding and there are great resources available locally for new moms and dads.

“Although breastfeeding has clearly been shown to be best for mothers and babies, many women wean their children prematurely, well before the recommended guidelines. The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding to the age of six months and then continued breastfeeding with complimentary foods to two years or beyond. It is a community responsibility; this is really what the Challenge is all about,” Lemoine said.

Yukon’s most recent statistics regarding breastfeeding, from 1997 to 1998, indicate that 94 per cent of new mothers breastfed their babies at birth, 75 per cent continued to breastfeed at three months and 55 per cent at six months. By 12 months only 30 per cent of moms continued breastfeeding their babies.

Lemoine has been involved in the Challenge since 2002. That was the year the Yukon came in first across Canada.

“This is the first year I will be involved as a breastfeeding mother and I really look forward to my family being counted,” Lemoine added.

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For more information about the challenge contact: www.babyfriendly.ca.

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