

April 9, 2020

Yellowknife, NT

Dene Elders present united stance against COVID-19

Elders from across the Northwest Territories agreed that this is the time to utilize traditional medicine and traditional knowledge to battle the coronavirus pandemic.

More than a half dozen Dene elders, from Fort McPherson and Deline in the north to Fort Simpson and Kakisa in the south participated in a conference call on April 8, 2020.

The conference call was organized by Dene National Chief Norman Yakeleya who wanted to hear from Elders on what was going on in their communities in respect to the COVID-19 threat.

Speaker after speaker emphasized that this is not the time to ignore the healing properties of traditional medicine.

Spruce gum in particular was cited as an example of something that, when chewed and swallowed, is effective at removing toxins from the body.

Clean water - lots of it - berries and fish were also mentioned as things that should be consumed at this time to help attempt to keep the virus at bay.

Elders were also adamant that this is not the time for the over consumption of alcohol as some of them called for restricted hours and rationing at the territory's liquor stores.

Elders eluded to the fact that European diseases and viruses have plagued Indigenous communities in the NWT for centuries.

Elders pointed out that some of their Elders not only survived but thrived after various epidemics in the north.

Elders called for prayers and spiritual unity in their communities at this time as well.

They all agreed that this devastating virus will be defeated but that will come sooner, they said, if people help each other and remember that we are all