



## **Fresh Fruits and Veggies to be provided in BC First Nations Schools**

**COAST SALISH TERRITORY- WEST VANCOUVER – May 18, 2011**

The First Nations Health Society (FNHS) and the First Nations Schools Association (FNSEA) applaud the provincial government's announcement to extend the BC School Fruit & Vegetable Nutrition Program into First Nations schools to help ensure proper nutrition for thousands of First Nations students.

The Program was created in partnership with the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, and Education and is led by the BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation. The objectives of the Program are to increase the consumption of local fruits and vegetables, and to increase the awareness of the health benefits of fruits and vegetables, particularly those grown in BC.

"For me, this program takes a small step forward in terms of the food security issue facing many First Nations communities in BC," said Grand Chief Doug Kelly, Chair of the First Nations Health Council. "In some communities, a head of lettuce costs 6 or 7 dollars. We know that many children are rarely afforded the fresh fruits and vegetables that we take for granted in the Lower Mainland. This small investment will yield a great return for our communities."

The Program began as a pilot project in 2005 with ten schools and has now grown to over 1,000 public schools. Through a network of over 4000 volunteers and partners, BC-grown fresh fruit and vegetable snacks are provided every other week to nearly 380,000 students. Today's \$3 million commitment will expand the program, starting in September 2011, to more than 1,400 public and First Nations schools in BC.

"It's hard to believe that these delivery trucks used to just drive right by our First Nations schools. We are pleased when we see these imaginary barriers come down and common sense approaches put in place in support of provincial commitments to First Nations health," said Joe Gallagher, CEO of the First Nations Health Society. "Through educating our youth on healthy foods, the program will foster health literacy and self-care skills that in the long run result in improved health outcomes for First Nations in BC."

FNSEA President Greg Louie stated, "Our 130 schools exist to provide an education grounded in First Nations language and culture that helps our students develop to their full potential. This

program will help provide our students with access to proper nutrition, and support their ongoing learning and development in the classroom.”

-30-

---

**Media Enquiries:**

Davis McKenzie  
Communications Manager,  
First Nations Health Society  
Mobile: 778.835.8276

Kristen Harvey  
Communications Manager,  
First Nations Education Steering Committee  
Mobile: 604.866.3409