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Lac La Ronge Indian Band

MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

LLRIB Family Wellness Conference draws more than 1,600 participants, celebrating culture, healing and community strength

(Treaty 6 Territory, Woodland Cree) Lac La Ronge Indian Band, Sask.— More than 1,600 people participated in the Lac La Ronge Indian Band's (LLRIB) Family Wellness Conference this week, a successful three-day event that brought together families, Elders, youth and leaders to focus on wellness, cultural connection and healing.

Held July 8 to 10 at the La Ronge Urban Reserve, the conference addressed urgent community issues including mental health, addiction recovery, intergenerational trauma and the impacts of wildfire displacement. The event featured keynote speakers, cultural activities, hands-on workshops and entertainment for all ages.

"This conference was about coming together in a good way and creating a space for healing," said Chief Tammy Cook-Searson. "We are proud of the response and the strength our community has shown."

The speaker lineup included national voices such as Guy Felicella, harm reduction advocate; Waneek Horn-Miller, Olympian and youth role model; Joe Calendino, former gang member and youth mentor; and La Ronge's own Joey Genereaux, who shared a message of resilience and personal growth.

Local speakers also played a central role, including:

- Leonard Halkett – Elder and Knowledge Keeper
- LLRIB Councillor Linda Charles
- LLRIB Councillor Gerald McKenzie and Franklin Carriere – King Trapper demonstration and Life of a Trapper
- Sally Ratt – Suicide awareness
- Laurie Roberts – Community health worker
- Sandra and Joe Ratt – Career mentors
- Cody Demerais – Youth wellness speaker
- Keith Goulet – Importance of Cree language
- Russ Mirasty – Former lieutenant-governor of Saskatchewan and retired RCMP
- Staff Sgt. Derek Eberle
- Michael McCormick – Northlands College

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A youth sports panel featuring local athletes and coaches was held on Day 2, emphasizing physical wellness, teamwork and the role of sport in community building.

The Cultural and Healing Village featured moosehide tanning, birch bark crafts, fish net making, traditional medicine, beading, art therapy and more. Two community-built skiffs were completed and given away to Jamie Misponas and Hudson Venne, honouring the return of traditional canoe-building knowledge.

Daily meals, a petting zoo, bouncy castles and family activities made the event welcoming for all ages. Evening programming included an open mic night, jiggling contest, live entertainment and a movie night in the park.

Chief Cook-Searson said the conference was a step forward in how the Nation is addressing complex social issues through culturally grounded, community-driven approaches.

“Healing takes time, but this conference showed the power of what we can do when we come together,” said Cook-Searson. “By grounding our efforts in culture, community and care, we’re moving forward together in a good way.”

The event was hosted by the Lac La Ronge Indian Band with support from the Town of La Ronge, Piwapan Women’s Centre, Kitsaki Management, Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority, Cameco, La Ronge Band Health Services, LLRIB Indian Child and Family Services, Northlands College, and other community partners.

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