

Breakfast Club of Canada is thinking ‘outside the school’ to help children

Our generosity is helping to feed the children and families most affected by the pandemic.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 243,500 children relied on the meals provided by Breakfast Club of Canada for a nutritious start to their day. When schools closed in March, the charity’s biggest concern was all the children and their families who relied on them.

“With 1,809 breakfast programs suspended, we needed to pivot,” says Lisa Clowery, director of corporate partnerships for Breakfast Club of Canada. “We wanted to make sure that we would be where the children needed us most. If schools weren’t the vehicle to reach them, we needed to figure out another way.”

A truly localized approach

To help families struggling with food insecurity in every province and territory during the pandemic, Breakfast Club of Canada created the COVID-19 Emergency Fund, to which Intact donated \$500,000. So far, the fund has given more than \$8 million to 900 schools and community organizations across the country.

These organizations have created local, tailor-made ways to get food to those who need it most, including food hampers, backpacks and premade meals, grab and go bags distributed at schools and grocery gift cards. For example, Peterborough Family and Child Centres in Peterborough, Ont., is working with seven community partners to support families with school-aged children by distributing food, grocery gift cards and food coupons. And Oromocto Food Bank, located 20 kilometres south of Fredericton, N.B., is providing family-sized backpacks with pre-cooked meals and snacks for children and their families.

The response from the community has been overwhelming. One family who received a hamper through the Feeding Families initiative in Winnipeg wrote:

“On behalf of myself and family, I really want to express my appreciation to you and the school for the groceries. We were deeply moved by your thoughtfulness in these difficult times. My kids were so happy, and they felt proud to be a part of your school. Thank you so much. Our appreciation goes out to the staff that came to drop it off. We are grateful. Thank you!”

Supporting Indigenous communities

The fund is also focusing on helping families in Indigenous communities, which can experience food insecurity in the best of times. So far, the fund has given \$2.3 million to more than 250 schools and organizations in Indigenous communities — helping over 80,000 children and their families.

One of those communities is the James Smith Cree Nation, located 58 kilometres east of Prince Albert, Sask. On April 1, the Band Chief declared a state of emergency for the community. The grant from the Emergency Fund is helping the James Smith Health Clinic run an at-home breakfast and lunch program, delivering meals to 300 children while school is suspended.

An ongoing partnership

The belairdirect team has been working with [Breakfast Club of Canada](#) since 2018, donating \$1.5 million over three years. Last year, more than 130 employees volunteered their time to help kids get a good start to their day.

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