

# Community Wellness Plan

2024-2029



**Délne Got'ine  
Government**

Our People. Our Future. Our Délne.



## Tables of Contents

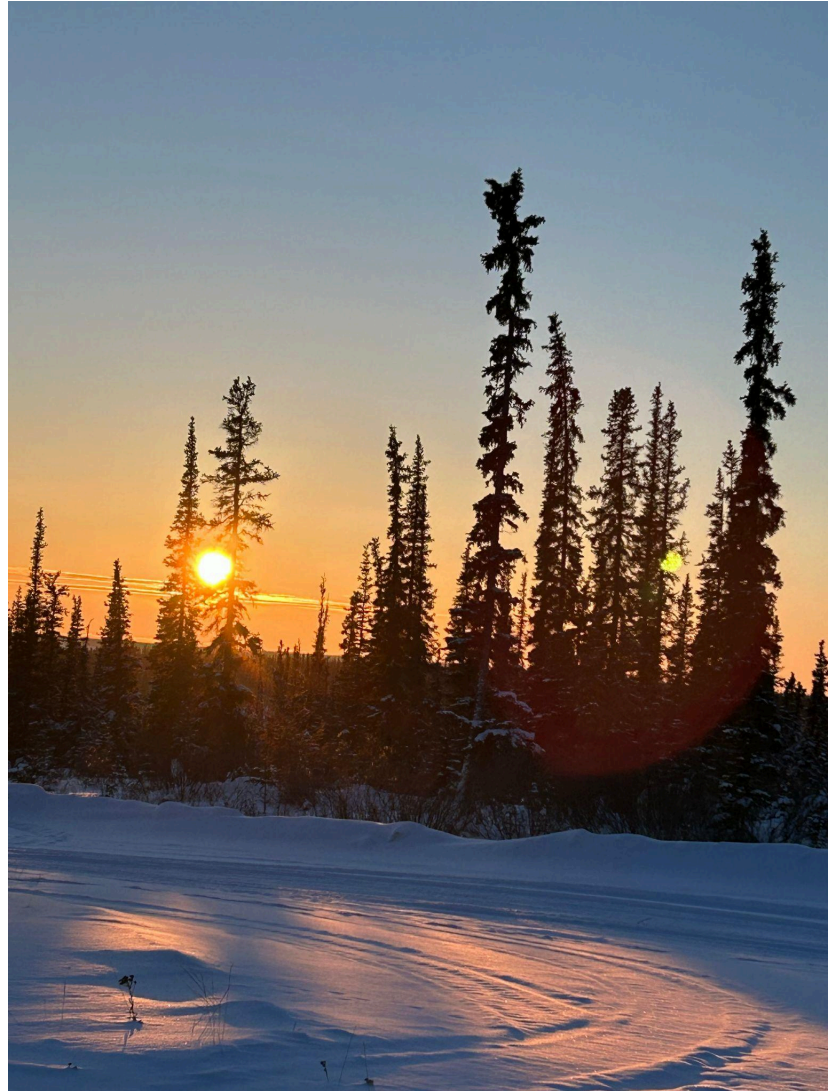
Introduction.....	3
Déline Cultural Heritage.....	3
Self Government Agreement.....	4
Objectives of Community Health Plan.....	5
Community Demographics.....	5
Community Engagement.....	5
Defining Community Wellness.....	5
Medicine Wheel.....	6
Four Seasons.....	6
Community Wellness.....	8
Priority Groups.....	10
Young Families.....	10
Youth and Young Adults.....	12
Elders.....	13
Addictions and Mental Health.....	15
Conclusion.....	16





## Introduction

Délıne, Northwest Territories, is a small Indigenous community of approximately 570 on the western shore of Great Bear Lake, in Canada. The community is about 540 kilometers northwest of Yellowknife, the capital of NWT. Délıne is primarily inhabited by members of the Dene First Nation, specifically the Sahtu Dene. Great Bear Lake, on which Délıne sits, is the largest lake entirely within Canada and the fourth largest in North America. It's known for its pristine waters, abundant fish stocks, and stunning natural beauty. Given its remote location, access to Délıne is primarily by air, although during certain times of the year, when Great Bear Lake is frozen, it may also be accessible by winter roads or by barge during the summer months.



## Délıne Cultural Heritage

The community had a rich cultural heritage and traditions deeply rooted in their connection to the land and the lake and a deep sense of spirituality. The community of Délıne relies heavily on traditional activities such as hunting, fishing, and trapping for both sustenance and cultural practices. Caribou, whitefish, lake trout, and other game and fish species are important to their way of life. Délıne has been proactive in preserving its cultural heritage and promoting sustainable development.



Déḻnę has a rich cultural heritage, including traditional storytelling, drum dancing, and artwork. These cultural practices are important not only for preserving traditions but also for fostering community cohesion and identity. Cultural practices are a daily part of life for people in Déḻnę and are an important part of the emotional, mental and physical health of the community.

The community also has a deep connection to its spiritual roots. The community's legendary prophet and spiritual leader, ʔehtsáo (grandfather) Louis Ayah continues to have a massive influence on people. In fact, Ayah's prophecies have so much influence in the community that they were used as the basis for Déḻnę's 2016 self-government negotiations with the territorial and federal governments.



Like many remote Indigenous communities, Déḻnę faces challenges such as access to healthcare, education, economic opportunities, and maintaining cultural identity in the face of modernization and external influences. This Community Wellness Plan brings together the needs and desires of Déḻnę citizens to inform community based programming and the development of the Community Health and Wellness Department.



## Self Government Agreement

The Déḻnę Got'Inę Government (DGG) is the first combined Indigenous/public government in the Northwest Territories. It represents and serves not only Déḻnę First Nation Citizens, but all residents of Déḻnę. Since 1995, the Déḻnę Elders' vision was for their community to have one organization with responsibility for governing the

community, which has the funding and powers to make decisions and deliver programs in a way that makes sense for Déḻnę. In 2016, that vision became a reality as the Déḻnę First Nation, Déḻnę Land Corporation and Charter Community of





Délıne were combined into one government. The DGG assumed the authorities, programs and services of these three organizations, along with self-government authorities. The community now has one government with one set of rules. It can also take on new self-government powers and responsibilities. The Délıne Got'ıne Government has important tools to support and serve the people of Délıne—including all Délıne land claim beneficiaries no matter where they live, and Délıne First Nation Citizens—particularly in preserving their culture, language, spiritual practices and land-based way of life.

## Objectives of Community Health Plan

As the Délıne Got'ıne government takes over the governance and management of the health and wellness of its residents, it becomes paramount to ensure that appropriate programming and infrastructure is in place. While community wellness has many interconnected properties (eg. education, housing, employment), this wellness plan focuses exclusively on the programming housed within the Department of Community Health and Wellness. The programming follows the teachings of the Medicine Wheel focusing on the spiritual, physical, mental and emotional health of the community and is situated within a seasonal framework.

This Community Wellness Plan lays out a five year list of priorities as highlighted by the community to shape the direction of the work of the department.

## Community Engagement

A public meeting was held in Délıne on June 28, 2023 to discuss community wellness. It was facilitated by staff from the DGG and Government of the Northwest Territories and was attended by approximately 30 people from Délıne, most of whom were Sahtúot'ıne Dene. Input was captured by note takers and was written on flip charts by facilitators.

## Defining Community Wellness

Residents responded to the following questions:

- What is community wellness?
- What are the biggest problems in your community?
- What services or programs will solve these problems?



Defining Community Wellness	<p>Community wellness was defined broadly to include aspects of spiritual, mental, and physical health as well as community-level organization and support.</p> <p>The cornerstone of community wellness for Délne is having strong, healthy families.</p>
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## Medicine Wheel

The medicine wheel serves as a framework for understanding and implementing community wellness in Délne. The Medicine Wheel holds profound cultural significance as a symbol of holistic health and interconnectedness. Rooted in traditional knowledge and spiritual wisdom, the Medicine Wheel represents the interconnectedness of all aspects of life – physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. At its core, it embodies the concept of balance and harmony, guiding individuals on their journey towards wellness and wholeness. The Medicine Wheel is also represented as the four seasons– marking seasons of rebirth and growth through different life cycles.

The DGG recognizes that all parts of the medicine wheel–or a person, the family unit and the community as a whole–must be supported and in harmony in order to have a strong, healthy community. The medicine wheel represents the alignment and continuous interactions between the physical, spiritual, mental and emotional realities. Represented as a circle, the medicine wheel highlights the interconnectedness of the natural world, demonstrating the importance of ensuring that all aspects of the individual are in harmony.

However, achieving community wellness moves beyond the individual and the DGG recognizes that this harmony must also exist within the family unit and the wider community.



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## Four Seasons

In planning and organizing community events and activities, the natural world plays a big part in dictating all aspects of life. Seasonal changes, animal migration, plant growth seasons and ice freeze up and break up are all natural cycles that are deeply intertwined with the planning and organization of the community. Each season holds significance in the community and in the planning of activities.

Throughout this Community Wellness Plan, seasonal activities are taken into consideration when planning activities for each of the priority groups. In many ways, each season is part of the holistic health framework that is represented by the medicine wheel. By aligning activities with the natural system, the programming allows for a deep connection with the environment.

## Community Wellness

Délıne's Department of Community Health and Wellness operates on the profound principle of the Medicine Wheel, recognizing the interconnectedness of spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical health in fostering holistic well-being among its members. At the heart of its mission lies a deep understanding of the importance of connecting people with their cultural practices. By embracing and honoring traditional knowledge and rituals, the department endeavors to strengthen the community's resilience, identity, and sense of belonging. Through the spiritual dimension, individuals are encouraged to reconnect with their ancestral wisdom, find inner peace, and nurture a sense of purpose and interconnectedness with the natural world. Emotional health is nurtured through cultural practices that promote healing, self-expression, and emotional resilience, providing avenues for individuals to process trauma, grief, and stress in culturally relevant ways. The mental aspect emphasizes the importance of cultural identity, storytelling, and knowledge-sharing as tools for cognitive enrichment, creativity, and personal growth. Moreover, the physical dimension encompasses traditional practices such as land-based activities, ceremonial dances, and traditional foods that not only promote physical health but also strengthen the bond between individuals and their environment. By weaving these elements into the fabric of community life, Délıne's Community Wellness Department fosters a holistic approach to health that respects cultural diversity, promotes self-determination, and empowers individuals to thrive in harmony with their traditions and values. Through the Medicine Wheel framework, the department not only addresses immediate health needs but also lays the foundation for long-term resilience, sustainability, and well-being within the community.





Strong families form the cornerstone of a vibrant community, nurturing bonds of love, support, and intergenerational wisdom. Through cultural practices, families transmit values, traditions, and resilience, enriching the community fabric. When families thrive, individuals feel rooted, safe, and empowered to contribute positively to their community's wellness. Délne's Community Wellness Department recognizes that investing in family well-being strengthens social cohesion, promotes mental and emotional health, and creates a nurturing environment where individuals can flourish collectively. By fostering strong families, the department lays the groundwork for a resilient and thriving community.

Access to economic stability, education, food security, and cultural practices are vital pillars in fostering community wellness. Economic stability provides resources for families to access healthcare, secure housing, and invest in their well-being. Education empowers individuals with knowledge, skills, and opportunities for personal and professional growth, enhancing their resilience and capacity to contribute meaningfully to society. Food security ensures that community members have access to nutritious and culturally appropriate foods, supporting physical health and overall well-being. Cultural practices, rooted in tradition and identity, nurture social connections, promote mental wellness, and transmit ancestral wisdom across generations. By addressing these interconnected factors, Délne's Community Wellness Department creates a supportive environment where individuals can thrive holistically. By promoting economic empowerment, educational attainment, food sovereignty, and cultural preservation, the department lays the groundwork for a resilient and flourishing community, where every member has the opportunity to lead a healthy, fulfilling life aligned with their values and traditions. Through collaborative efforts and inclusive approaches, the department strives to build a community where all residents can access the resources and support needed to achieve their full potential and contribute to the collective well-being.

## Priority Groups

### Young Families

The Department of Community Health and Wellness is dedicated to supporting parents and caregivers in providing nurturing and supportive environments for their children. Through dedicated programming, expecting mothers and fathers, and parents with children between 0 and 5, are supported throughout and following pregnancy to build parenting skills and raise healthy and happy children. The goal of this pre and postnatal care and programming is a holistic approach, offering support,



knowledge and skills on things like nutrition, healthy pregnancies, parenting skills, and early childhood development.

This includes parenting workshops, access to affordable and nutritious food options, promotion of healthy eating habits, and family-focused recreational activities. By strengthening family bonds and promoting healthy lifestyles, the department seeks to create a foundation for lifelong well-being.

The Goal of the Program:

- ❖ Ensure delivery of comprehensive programming for expecting and new parents to ensure they have the needed supports, knowledge and skills.
- ❖ Ensure traditional Dene knowledge is a part of the knowledge and skills offered to new and expecting parents.
- ❖ Babies and young children are supported in their learning and development through focused programming and education for parents.
- ❖ Young children are raised in Dene culture and with Dene language
- ❖ Parents of young children have access to full-time daycare services.

SPIRITUAL HEALTH	Délne is committed to introducing children from a young age to the spiritual heritage in the community. Ensuring that children are engaged in Dene spirituality will exist as a foundation to introducing children to Dene ways of being and life.
	<b>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Promotion and teaching of our Dene language</li> <li>★ Traditional food awareness, harvesting and preparation</li> <li>★ Trapping, hunting, on-the-land activities for young fathers</li> </ul>
MENTAL HEALTH	DGG recognizes the tremendous toll starting a family can have. To support young families, the department is dedicated to creating inclusive and supportive programming focused on providing education and support to young mothers, and support systems to create healthy families.
	<b>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Educational packages on prenatal, postnatal and healthy families</li> <li>★ Spa nights/self care support for parents/guardians</li> <li>★ Breastfeeding education, promotion and support</li> <li>★ Birth control and natural family planning</li> <li>★ Assistance for high-cost living</li> </ul>
	The Department of Community Health and Wellness will provide opportunities for young families to engage in physical fitness supporting the healthy development of babies and toddlers and pre and postnatal mothers.



PHYSICAL HEALTH	<p>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Moms and tots/babies walks</li> <li>★ Moms and tots gym time</li> <li>★ Home visits and assessments for pre and postnatal care</li> <li>★ Healthy eating and nutrition education for families</li> <li>★ Oral health care activities and awareness</li> <li>★ Food Security Programming</li> <li>★ Jordan's Principle application support</li> </ul>
EMOTIONAL HEALTH	<p>The Department is dedicated to supporting the emotional health and development of families. Recognizing that supportive programming and support systems are critical to emotional health, the department is dedicated to creating structures that promote this development.</p>
	<p>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Effective parenting skills training</li> <li>★ Early childhood development</li> <li>★ Postpartum support and workshops</li> <li>★ Partner postpartum support programming</li> <li>★ Support young adults with cost of living and food security</li> </ul>

## Youth and Young Adults

Recognizing that youth and young adults are the future, The Youth program centers the needs and desires of youth in the community to create a community where they can grow, thrive and learn. Youth are the future of the community and supporting them as they transform into ethical, community-driven adults, is critical to the future of the DGG and the community. The youth program is designed to support youth to grow into strong and healthy people with knowledge and skills in the traditional Dene way and in modern education and life skills. The program will focus on connecting youth with Elders, knowledge keepers and the broader community to create opportunities for them to learn Dene knowledge, survival skills and language. Knowing and living the Dene way promotes mental and physical health in our youth and gives them a mindset of self-sufficiency so they can thrive in the future. The Department of Health and Wellness is dedicated to fostering the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well being of its youth through the implementation of programming to meet their needs.

The Goal of the Program:

- ❖ Youth are strong in Dene knowledge, Dene land skills, and fluent in the Dene language.



- ❖ Strong connections between youth and Elders.
- ❖ Youth have spiritual guidance.
- ❖ Consistent recreation programs and infrastructure for youth that promote a physically active and healthy lifestyle.
- ❖ Youth are engaged in community meetings and leadership.
- ❖ Accessible opportunities for youth to learn life skills. Engage

SPIRITUAL HEALTH	As the future of the community, ensuring youth are invested in the spiritual future of the community is important. It is important to find engaging and accessible ways to involve youth with spiritual and cultural activities so teachings and traditions are passed down.
	<p>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ On the land programming to learn Dene survival skills like hunting, fishing and tanning hides from Elders.</li> <li>★ Develop knowledge sharing platform with Elders</li> <li>★ Develop Dene language classes</li> <li>★ Engage youth with church events and provide opportunities to learn about Délne spirituality and Dene prophets/prophecies</li> </ul>
MENTAL HEALTH	Mental health issues are a pressing concern for many youth in the community. The lack of services in the community to support youth, combined with the history of trauma in the community, has caused tremendous harm to the mental wellbeing of youth. The Department of Community Health and Wellness is dedicated to providing programming catering to the specific needs of youth within the community.
	<p>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Establish mental health programming and counseling services targeting youth</li> <li>★ Provide workshops focused on mental health and addictions</li> <li>★ Trauma informed workshops to develop coping mechanisms</li> </ul>
PHYSICAL HEALTH	Physical fitness and recreational activities have a positive impact on the health of youth. It is important to teach youth from an early age to invest in their physical wellbeing. Dedicated programming will support the physical development of youth by focusing on fitness, sexual and physical health.
	<p>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Develop youth focused recreation program</li> <li>★ Develop a youth center with daily programming focused on providing a multitude of programming options.</li> </ul>





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Sexual education</li> <li>★ Nutrition education</li> </ul>
EMOTIONAL HEALTH	As youth grow, they undergo tremendous changes that impact their emotional development. The Department of Community Health and Wellness will develop programs that support youth develop self-confidence and emotional maturity to confront challenges.
	<b>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Provide workshops dedicated to supporting youth navigate healthy relationships and healthy lifestyle</li> <li>★ Develop Youth Council to develop leadership</li> <li>★ Mentorship program</li> </ul>

## Elders

As the leaders of the community, Elders play an important role in linking the past to the future. Délne's Elders are valued members of the community and require support to ensure that all the support they need to live a safe, healthy and happy life in their homes and on the land. It is important to make space for Elders and community events and remove barriers to their participation.

Goals of the Program:

- ❖ Ensure Elders are integrated and involved in the community
- ❖ Collect, preserve and document traditional knowledge and oral histories from Elders
- ❖ Provide regular activities from Elders
- ❖ Prevent Elder abuse through awareness and programming

SPIRITUAL HEALTH	As the spiritual and cultural center of the community, encouraging Elders to share these beliefs and traditions is important for the growth of the community and its people. A big part of this is ensuring that Elders continue to feel connected to the land and Dene culture as they age.
	<b>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Engage Elders in all community-based programming to base on Délne teachings, skills and traditional values</li> <li>★ Consult with Elders on spiritual and the prophecies of ʔehtséo Louis Ayah</li> </ul>



MENTAL HEALTH	Establish programming to address the specific needs of Elders as they age.
	<b>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</b> ★ Support Elder's mental health as they age through programming
PHYSICAL HEALTH	Create fitness programs focused on supporting Elders flexibility and mobility to ensure they can continue to go on the land as much as possible.
	<b>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</b> ★ Establish weekly Elder group fitness ★ Engage Elders in safe on the land activities
EMOTIONAL HEALTH	Develop programming that allows Elders to feel connected to each other and their community.
	<b>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</b> ★ Workshops on Elder abuse that can be delivered in the community. ★ Organize weekly events to ensure Elders have accessible opportunities to gather together and with the broader community.

## Addictions and Mental Health

The community of Délne loves all its people and supports everyone's personal journey of healing and living a healthy lifestyle. However, it is important that support is available for all people of all ages. Programming for people suffering from addictions issues must be provided with culturally appropriate in-community or on the land options for treatment. Secondly, ongoing support is available in Délne for people returning from treatment so their healing journey will be successful. Residential school survivors and others working through trauma have ongoing mental-health support in place in Délne.

- ❖ On-the-land treatment programs and treatment center
- ❖ Aftercare treatment within the community
- ❖ Programming to address past and inter-generational and trauma.
- ❖ Promote and support healthy lifestyle habits for everyone.
- ❖ Establish a Friendship Centre in Délne to provide wellness programs and services, including



❖ Addictions awareness and treatment support programming.

SPIRITUAL HEALTH	For many people in Délne, land based activities are central to their identity and spiritual health. Many southern treatment centers lack this critical aspect to their infrastructure making treatment feel alienating.
	<p>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Develop on the land treatment center and associated programming</li> <li>★ Encourage individuals to participate in church events and events with spiritual activities in the community.</li> </ul>
MENTAL HEALTH	Lack of supports within the community for mental health exacerbating addictions and negatively impact recovery progress
	<p>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Hire Indigenous counselors who will reside in Délne</li> <li>★ Provide information and resources to individuals to undergo various forms of treatment (on the land, southern treatment centers, or out-patient support groups, etc)</li> </ul>
PHYSICAL HEALTH	Recognizing the importance of physical health in the recovery journey, specific programming will be created focused on introducing individuals to physical fitness. This programming will be important for healing those in journey develop healthy relationships with their bodies.
	<p>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Encourage those in active addiction and in recovery to access fitness programs as a positive outlet for healing</li> <li>★ Support those in addictions and in recovery to undergo health exams</li> </ul>
EMOTIONAL HEALTH	While addiction and recovery effects all individuals differently, it is critical for programming to support individuals and their families to understand the long-term effects of addictions.
	<p>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Create comprehensive programming to address addictions awareness</li> <li>★ Establish regular Alcoholics Anonymous or other support programs for people returning from treatment.</li> <li>★ Establish support groups for those living with those with addictions.</li> </ul>



## Conclusion

The Dél̃nē Got'̃nē Community Wellness Plan represents a comprehensive and holistic approach to fostering well-being within the community. Through the integration of cultural practices, such as the Medicine Wheel framework, alongside essential components like economic stability, education, and food security, the plan recognizes the interconnectedness of various factors in promoting health and resilience.

In establishing this Wellness Plan, it was important to embrace and honor traditional knowledge and practices, and acknowledge the importance of cultural identity in promoting individual and collective wellness. By adopting the Medicine Wheel framework, the plan emphasizes the interconnectedness of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, guiding individuals on their journey towards balance and harmony. The Wellness Plan centers not only individual health but the importance of the health of the family and the community in achieving true community wellness. By fostering social cohesion, strengthening family bonds, and promoting self-determination, the plan lays the groundwork for a resilient and thriving community capable of overcoming challenges and embracing opportunities for growth.

Finally, through initiatives that partner with programming aimed at enhancing economic stability, improving access to education, and ensuring food security, the plan empowers community members to lead healthy, fulfilling lives aligned with their values and traditions. The Plan recognizes that community wellness comes in many forms and has many interconnected elements.

Overall, the Dél̃nē Got'̃nē Community Wellness Plan embodies a commitment to holistic health, cultural preservation, and community empowerment. By addressing the diverse needs of community members and fostering a supportive environment where all can thrive, the plan paves the way for a brighter and healthier future for generations to come.