

# **Norman Wells Community Wellness Plan**

***Tlegohli Got'ine Government Inc.***

## **Introduction**

Norman Wells is the largest community in the Sahtu Settlement Area with a population of 800 governed by a Town Council. It is located on the East bank of the Deh Cho (Mackenzie River) downstream from Tulita and functions as a regional service centre for other communities in the area.

The Tlegohli Got'ine Government Incorporated (TGG) is a not-for-profit corporation representing the rights of Sahtu Dene and Metis under the *Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement*. The TGG receives and administers community wellness funding to deliver wellness programming to Sahtu Dene and Metis and all other residents of Norman Wells.

Norman Wells is unique to the Sahtu Settlement Area given its relatively large size, diverse population, access to services, and the presence of government and multiple businesses/industries. The TGG can not single-handedly deliver comprehensive wellness programming to meet all needs in Norman Wells, and the implementation of this plan and broader wellness programming in Norman Wells will have to involve closer collaboration between TGG and other organizations. There is also a greater need for flexibility in aspects of the programming based on changing circumstances in Norman Wells.

## **Community Engagement**

Comprehensive community engagement was undertaken by the TGG in the creation of its previous Community Wellness Plan. The success of programming delivered under that plan has been monitored by TGG through ongoing and informal iterative feedback from community members, youth, leaders and stakeholders. Smaller in-person engagement sessions were also undertaken by the TGG between June 2023 and March 2024, along with written and verbal surveys collected during the same time period. This plan is informed by the previous plan's engagement, the goals of the previous plan and by the work and continuous feedback received from the community in the last 10 years.

Community wellness as defined by the people of Norman Wells is rooted in the care of the whole self; physical, mental, spiritual and cultural. The people would like wellness programming to take a proactive and inclusive approach. The need for a well-rounded, long-term approach to wellness was emphasized through a number of community engagement sessions. Additional takeaways include:

- The need for more socialization opportunities that do not include alcohol.
- The increase of drug use in the region and the Northwest Territories as a whole
- A lack of consistent programming
- A feeling of isolation and a declining feeling of close-knit community
- A lack of subsidized healthcare
- A rise in food insecurity.

TGG will continue its holistic approach to wellness with the understanding that more can be done to support and contribute to building healthy families, community, and people at all ages. The TGG wellness programming will continue to focus on coordination and broad collaboration between groups, leadership, and organizations but will strive to include more involvement from community stakeholders such as youth, elders and men. TGG's newest wellness plan will place a higher priority on youth programming, healthy living, including active living and nutrition, and mental wellness.

## **Priority Areas Goals and Actions**

### **Youth**

#### **Vision**

The youth of Norman Wells will have regular access to sport and recreation programming throughout the year and cultural programming more readily available. This programming provides social spaces for youth based on age groups, helps them develop healthy lifestyle habits, and helps them avoid negative social environments and lifestyle choices. On-the-land programming allows for youth to better connect to their cultures and community, providing space for youth to grow in confidence, feel more connected to their identities, and build self-esteem. All of which play an important role in deterring interest in negative influences affecting youth across the NWT.

Youth wellness programming for school-age youth fully supports academic success by ensuring sport and recreation programming doesn't conflict with homework time or tutoring supports. Academic support and sport/recreation programming are incorporated into the same overall program whenever possible.

#### **Goals:**

- Support consistent delivery of sport and recreation programs.
- Support a balance between youth recreation and academics by coordinating afterschool programming so that youth can participate in sport and recreation programming without impacting homework time and tutoring support, or by combining academic and sport/recreation programming for youth.

- Focus on separate sport and recreation programming for youth over 18. Many of these youth and young adults want programming and gathering spaces separate from those for school-age youth and want programming later into the evening (i.e., after 9 p.m.).
- Provide a safe gathering place for youth to socialize when other programming is not active (e.g., late evening, during holiday months when extra-curricular activities are on hiatus, etc.). This will help ensure that youth have a safe place to gather and without being in dangerous or risky situations.
- Create a permanent recreation centre for youth that can house youth programming. This would provide a physical space for dedicated academic and sport/recreation programming, but could also provide ad hoc space for arts and crafts activities, youth socialization and homework clubs.
- Provide consistent opportunities for multi-day on-the-land trips for youth that involve hiking and camping.

**Actions:**

- Coordinate with the school, the Town of Norman Wells and other governments and organizations to support the consistent delivery of youth academic and sport/recreation programming. TGG can work to fill gaps in this programming.
- Organize hangout nights for youth. This would provide a safe gathering place for youth in the late evening.
- Support the establishment of an open-late coffee shop. This would provide a safe gathering place for youth in the late evening and during periods when sport and recreation programming is on hiatus. The coffee shop would also provide an opportunity for fundraising for additional youth programming, and could involve youth employees to provide them with work experience.
- Investigate the feasibility of a permanent recreation centre for youth. This could involve constructing a new facility or re-purposing an existing facility. As creating and maintaining infrastructure of this magnitude is prohibitive for TGG alone a starting point for this work is to discuss potential partnerships with the Town of Norman Wells, Government of the Northwest Territories, industry and other community organizations.
- Create and maintain a biking and hiking trail. Current trails around Norman Wells are not suitable for mountain biking.
- Create a plan to ensure that on-the-land funding sources are being fully utilized by TGG and other organizations. This will help ensure that youth have access to consistent on-the-land programming opportunities on an ongoing basis in Norman Wells.

## **Mental Wellness**

### **Vision**

The TGG will work in partnership with the GNWT, local government agencies, healthcare providers and community stakeholders to address mental health needs within Norman Wells and the greater Sahtu region. There will be consistent collaboration with neighboring communities to share best practices and resources with the creation of annual mental health summits in the region.

### **Goals:**

- Increase community awareness and reduce stigma towards mental health issues. Empower community leaders and influencers to openly discuss mental health to create a culture of acceptance and understanding.
- Expand access to Mental Health services and providers; focusing on accessibility for vulnerable and underrepresented demographics.
- Establish community support networks where individuals with mental health concerns can connect with peers, share experiences, and access resources. This could include support groups, online forums, and community events focused on mental wellness.
- Implement programs specifically targeted towards youth mental health. This could involve school-based initiatives, peer support groups, and counseling services tailored to the unique challenges faced by young people in the community.

### **Actions:**

- Identify gaps in current programming available through various organizations and government run services. Evaluate the effectiveness of mental health programs and interventions and make necessary adjustments and continuously improve mental health services available.
- Develop community workshops, and informational materials to distribute through social and local media, at community events, and the school.
- Invest in training programs for community members to become mental health advocates, peer support workers, or culturally competent mental health professionals. This helps build local capacity to address mental health issues and reduces reliance on external resources.
- Develop culturally relevant mental health programming that integrates indigenous traditions and practices. These programs should be available at consistent intervals and delivered through various formats.

## **Collaboration, Coordination and Cooperation**

### **Vision**

The TGG works with all governments, organizations and other stakeholders in Norman Wells to ensure that wellness programming is consistently delivered, is not duplicative between organizations, maximizes the use of funding sources, and promotes partnership between governments and organizations on programming whenever beneficial.

### **Goals:**

- Identify the various wellness programs and services being delivered by different governments, organizations and volunteers in Norman Wells, and coordinate between these groups to ensure wellness programming is not duplicative and that gaps in programming can be filled.
- Utilize collaboration and cooperation between governments and organizations to maximize the receipt and utilization of funding for wellness programming in Norman Wells.
- Involve all stakeholders, governments and organizations in Norman Wells in the delivery of one multi-year wellness project to develop an effective and collaborative working relationship.

### **Actions:**

- Identify governments and organizations in Norman Wells that deliver wellness programming and prepare an inventory of their respective programs and resources. This can be used as a starting point for supporting collaboration between governments and organizations.
- Organize an inter-governmental/inter-organizational meeting with the goal of creating a plan or process for coordinating and collaborating on wellness programming. This should include discussions on how to maximize the amount of wellness funding Norman Wells is accessing by ensuring all funding sources are being utilized, as well as discussions on how to continue effective ongoing collaboration (e.g., creating a working group with regular meetings).
- Identify one multi-year wellness project that would include all governments and organizations in Norman Wells as a way to build collaborative working relationships. One option is to include everyone on delivery of a youth-focused project such as creation of an open-late youth coffee shop or regular delivery of youth on-the-land camping trips.