



Tsiigehtchic Community Wellness Plan

2024-2029

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Tsiigehtchic

Tsiigehtchic is known for its abundance of fish. Located at the corners of the Arctic Red and Mackenzie Rivers. The Gwich'ya Gwich'in "people of the flat lands" have a long history in the area, the community was a traditional trail that was used during travelling months and also a place to gather and trade in the summer.

Today, residents still remain close to the land. In the summer, after break-up and while the weather is warm, Gwich'in disperse to various locations along the Peel and Mackenzie Rivers, and in the countless channels of the Mackenzie Delta to start fishing. Fishing year-round is practiced, and traditional methods of making dry fish can be seen from the numerous fish camps that pop up during the summer months. During the winter, trappers are busy in the bush setting traps and off on hunting trips.



Self Determination

Tsiigehtchic demonstrates self-determination by approaching community wellness as a responsibility and community mandate. They include culture and community input for planning purposes. This approach allows the people to decide, determine and action their futures.

Communities are developing innovative culturally relevant forms of governing themselves. Moving beyond Canadian legislation where they are often encouraged to self-administer and self-manage Government policies and programs to a place of policy making, and program development that supports Indigenous values. This has been demonstrated through stories and practices of resistance that involve the inclusion of Indigenous voices in this plan. Through the development and implementation of this plan it is hoped that all levels of government will engage and contribute to community wellness.

Governance

The community of Tsiigehtchic is in a period of change, participants voiced concerns of how this could impact current program operations. In 2023 the community voted to become a hamlet, which allows the community to have both a First Nations council and a separate municipal council. As a charter community, Tsiigehtchic currently has a Band council that in effect doubles as a municipal council. Only First Nations members can seek election to that council, whereas in a hamlet, all eligible residents can run and vote for municipal office.

Local capacity is a huge factor in planning. Innovation is seen as a successful long-term approach to sustainable programming. The community wellness coordinator is a part time position funded by band resources and municipal funding, this allows for increased time and resources towards wellness initiatives. The community relies on partners including government, businesses and most importantly community members.



Past Programming

The COVID-19 pandemic affected all aspects of life. One area that was critically impacted was individual and community mental health. Wellness planning and program decisions were held up by restrictions, uncertainty and lack of resources and support.

The wellness coordinator is passionate about providing the needs and desires of the community. They work hard towards bridging gaps and providing services that will bring people together and address some of the day-to-day challenges.

A monthly program calendar is created and shared through social media, the local radio station and posted on the community bulletin board. Each month feedback is requested and programming is tailored to the needs and desire of the community. Past programming focused on youth sports activities, cultural and land-based events and transportation services.

Community Engagement

Indigenous communities have been planning for the health and wellness of their communities since time immemorial, which is and always has been grounded in culture and tradition. The Tsiigehtchic Community Wellness Coordinator hosted two public engagement meetings on June 22, 2023 to gather input for this plan. During the afternoon the group focused on children and youth, opportunities to discuss past events was provided. Stories were shared and images were drawn which demonstrated community wellness from their perspective. In the evening the engagement session was open to the public, the community gathered to share wellness ideas, discuss barriers and ways to move forward. We organized in a circle and took turns working through the facilitated discussion questions.

The engagement strategy was developed by the community, the GNWT (Community, Culture and Innovation division) with help from professional facilitators and researchers to ensure the community values were incorporated into the process following the OCAP (ownership, control, access and protection) principles which align Indigenous interests with data by ensuring priorities, values, culture and worldview are considered.



Systems mapping was used as a starting point to get people together, this method helped the community make sense of the “mess” of how to tackle community wellness. We used the mapping process to provide a visual of the complex relationships that exists in the community. It helped the community identify partnerships and showed them how collaborative efforts create a more wholistic approach to community wellness.

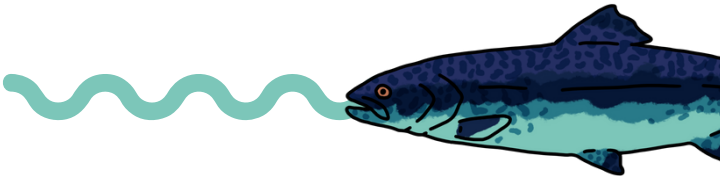
Community input
centered around three
broad questions:

what is community wellness?

what is taking away from wellness?

what contributes to wellness?

Community Engagement



Next potential drivers were considered and discussion around the relationship between the key issues and drivers occurred. An example of this is addiction which takes away from community wellness, drivers of addiction range from trauma, lack of support and mental health. The relationship between these factors are interconnected and it's complicated to talk about one without the other. In order to tackle a problem like addiction it needs to be a wholistic approach and not organization can address addiction, it's multidimensional and requires a systems approach. This allowed the community to see the importance of collaboration, connection and partnerships.

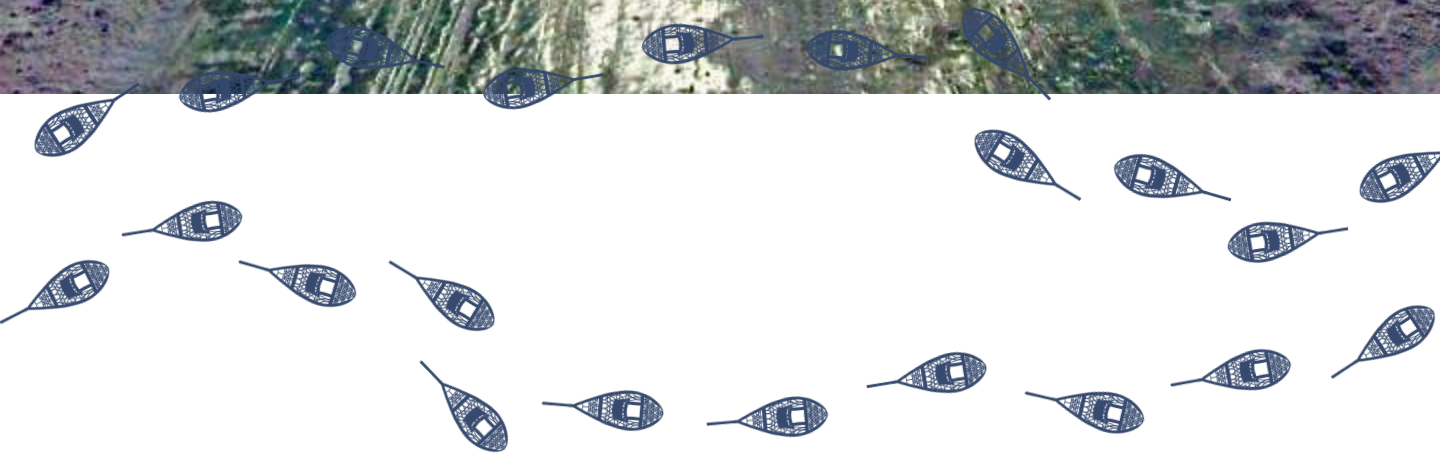
Next, we explored questions related to moving forward with wellness these included:

What are the biggest problems facing your community?

What types of programs and services does the community need to address these problems?

What skills do you need to support community wellness?

What are the opportunities & barriers?



Direction for Wellness

Tsiigehtchic like many other Northern communities is remote, experiences harsh winters and has limited resources available. However, when participants described the town, it was beyond the physical location, there were shared circumstances and a togetherness.



Embrace Community

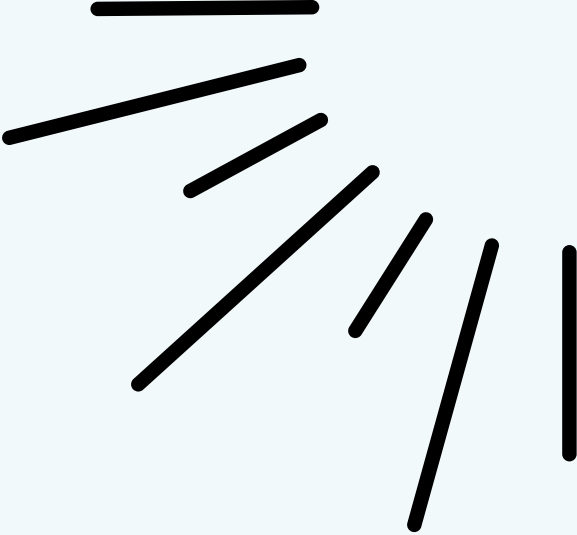
Tsiigehtchic has a story that is shared and important, this story is an aspect of who they are as a people. Community as a core value is embraced and used for social change. This requires a shift in the story we tell ourselves and rewriting our stories to promote healthier vibrant communities.



Direction for Wellness

Collaboration

Collaboration is an essential aspect of building strong and thriving communities. Tsiigehtchic has created a unique approach when making decisions regarding community wellness. The first step is to actively listen.



People speak from the heart and with great purpose and that deserves respect. Everyone has a voice and no voice is silenced. This collaborative approach has allowed the community to come together and build resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges.



Direction for Wellness

Elder Involvement

Elders need to be included in decision making and planning processes. This aligns with Gwich'in values of respecting Elders; this respect goes beyond simple acts and is grounded in everything that is done in the community. These relationships support us to live healthier, build capacity and nurture those in need.





Vision

To have a healthy, powerful and vibrant community that has access to programs and services to build healthier lives

Mission

Building on the strengths of the community the wellness plan is grounded in relationships, respect and inclusion, created by the people for the people

Values

Community approach, pride, resilience, trust, respect, tradition, culture, diversity, youth and Elders



Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats

The information from the in-person engagement informed the SWOT analysis. This tool helps with strategic planning and helped determine the communities' internal strengths and weaknesses, threats from the outside and opportunities to expand on. It also directed the conversation to explore how the communities' weaknesses could easily be changed to opportunities and identify where change was possible.



The strength of the community is in their ability, determination and passion for change; participants shared examples of coming together in times of need. One participant shared how community events get done and described it as every community member taking part in the process. The tight knit effort that Tsiigehtchic demonstrates through their community wellness initiatives is inspiring. Threats were expressed as lacking appropriate resources including funding, limited and inaccessible space and drugs & alcohol.



Weaknesses were easily identified and focused on the need for individual healing and lack of community resources, however these weaknesses also encouraged community members to look at areas to expand current programs and possible resource development to create opportunities. The land was talked about as an opportunity, participants shared their seasonal experiences of hunting, trapping and fishing and discussed ways that these skills could be used to develop new and innovative programs.





Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats

Strengths

Government supports
(GNWT, Federal & Regional)
Land
Fish Camps
Traditional Skills
Community pride
Community Dedication
Community Wellness
Passion
Volunteers

Weaknesses

mens representations
Addiction
Dependency mindset
Education rates
Loss of language
Planning vs. Actioning
Mental health
Difficulty collaborating
Lateral Violence
Bullying
Domestic Abuse

Opportunities

Collaborating with other organizations
Land
Youth
Prevention vs. Reaction
Improving communication
Normalizing sobriety
Increased Transportation

Threats

Drugs & Alcohol
Unemployment
Poverty
Homelessness
Child Care services
Stigma
No space

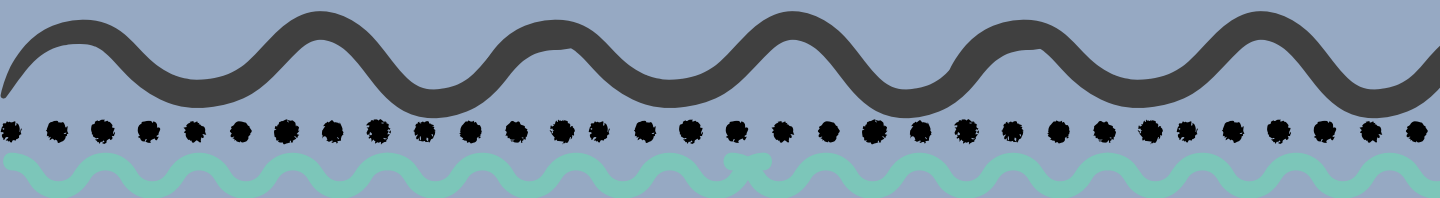
Environmental Scan

An environmental scan supports the SWOT analysis by identifying the scope and control of areas that may impact community planning it also allows for informed and decisive decisions. The scan includes political, economical, social, cultural, technological and environmental factors that impact community wellness. Some questions considered were:

What trends are continuing to be experienced positively or negatively?

What developments in technology can be used to advance programming?

What political impacts need to be acknowledged before the execution of programming?





Political	Economical
<p>GNWT support</p> <p>Collaborative approach with different levels of government</p> <p>Change in community role</p>	<p>Conflicting objectives</p> <p>Resource development</p> <p>Space for programming</p> <p>Funding requirements</p> <p>Reporting requirements</p>
Social	Cultural
<p>High unemployment rates</p> <p>Capacity</p> <p>Community participation consistency</p> <p>Diversity among community</p> <p>Communication is inconsistent</p>	<p>Diversity among groups</p> <p>Spirituality conflicts</p> <p>Stakeholders vary in commitment</p> <p>Culturally grounded programming</p> <p>Elder availability and support</p>
Technological	Environmental
<p>Starlink</p> <p>Internet availability and access</p> <p>OCAP monitoring and control of data</p>	<p>Global Warming</p> <p>Protected Areas</p> <p>Cultural space</p>

Community Goals & Objectives

**Inncrease
Funding**

**Advocate for
adequate Services**

**Create an
environment of
collaboration**

**Create Innovative
Programming**

**Community Transportation
Services**

Community Goals & Objectives

Increase Funding

Adequate funding is a concern, to address restrictive funding policies and reduce barriers to accessing funding initiatives, communities need the internal capacity to write grant applications and proposals. The community identified the need for a grant writing workshop. This would provide the internal capacity to look beyond what is provided and request support through other means.



Advocate for Adequate Services

The community addressed inadequate medical and dental services in the community.

Tsiigehtchic does not have a full-time nurse in the community, and relies on weekly visits if they have health concerns. During periods of river break-up and freeze-up there are limited visits from health professionals.

The need for stronger advocacy was expressed. This happens through knowledge sharing and a better understanding of how systems work together. The community feels as if they are not getting their basic health care needs. Frustration around wait times and inaccessible services has led to challenges and lack of basic health care needs.

Tsiigehtchic does not have an RCMP officer. If services are required, they have to call Fort Macpherson. The reality is that after-hours calls are routed to the Yellowknife communications centre which can be quite challenging to navigate. If and when RCMP officers are called to the community there is a lengthy drive and ferry ride from Fort McPherson.

Participants shared that in the past if there were serious medial and or safety situations it was up to the community to come together to address the situation. The need to provide emergency response training to community members is essential. The community would also like support updating community emergency management plans.



Create a collaborative environment



Having programs that empower communities to continue traditional skills is essential. The community would like to continue collaborative efforts which encourages people to come together at various organizational levels to pool resources.



CREATE INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING



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Transportation Services

Connectivity is vital for the growth and well-being of our communities. Tsiigehtchic struggles with accessing programs and services because of its location and size. Transportation services are needed to help children, youth and families accessing programs and services outside of the community. The community would like to work towards creating a community-driven transportation project which would provide transportation services to families wishing to access to programs in Inuvik.

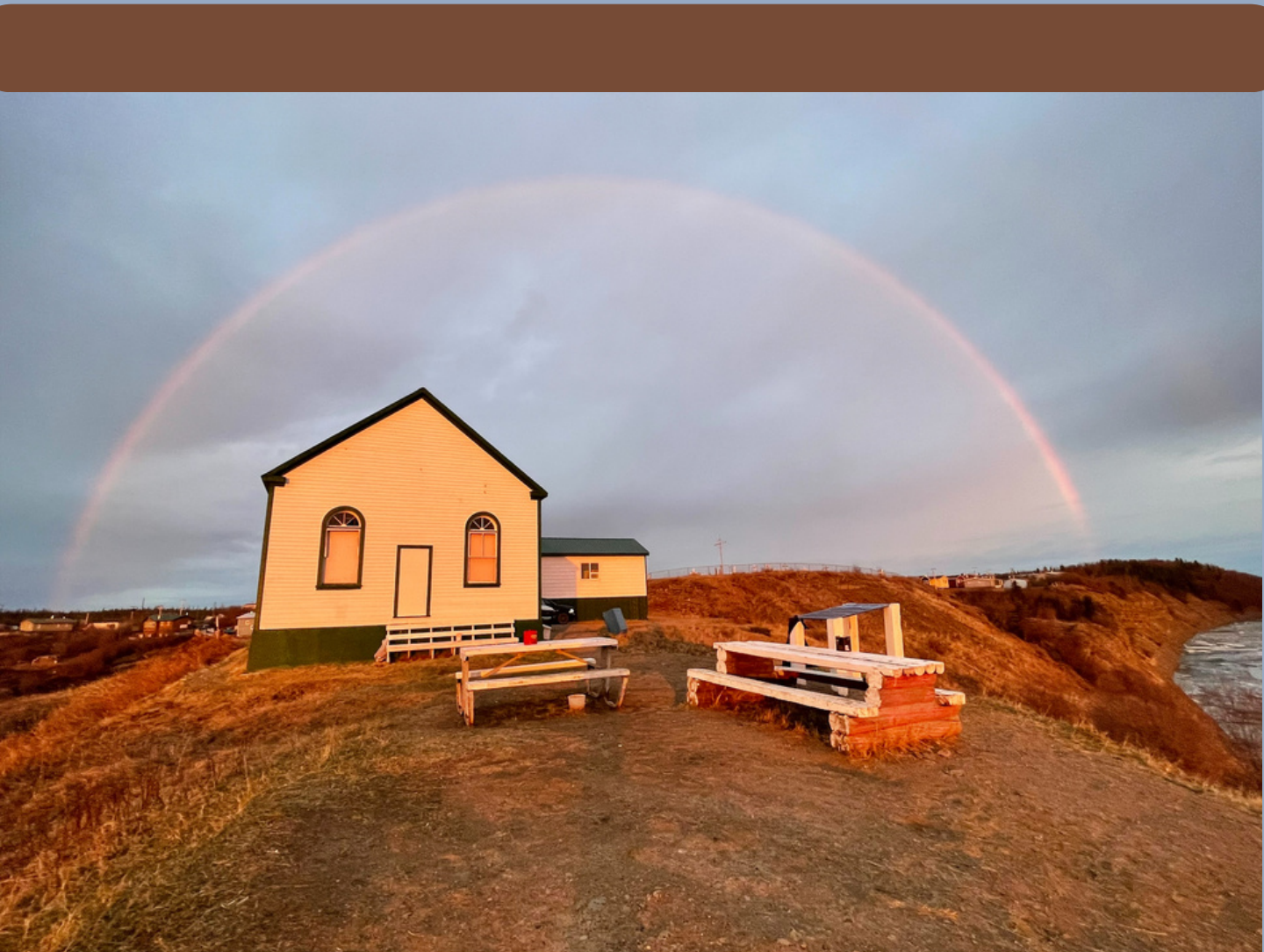


Implementation

The Community Wellness Coordinator is committed to a collaborative approach and provides updates through social media, local radio and written reports. This approach ensures that wellness initiatives are tailored to the needs and concerns of community members and provides a space for continuous feedback.

Using the monthly calendars as guide during community meetings allows for immediate reporting and accountability. Everyone involved in implementation has a responsibility to work creatively within available mechanisms to raise awareness and gather information, work strategically with a wide range of partners at all levels to enhance programs, advocate for the resources required to make the community wellness vision come to life, and track and communicate progress.

Smaller communities need plans that can motivate and guide decision making. The work of bringing community members together and identifying collective goals, resources, challenges and opportunities is an opportunity to think creatively about the desired structure that fits there needs. This is an evolving and ongoing process.



Acknowledgement

The process of creating the Community Wellness Plan 2024-2029 for the community of Inuvik was made possible because of the passion, commitment and thoughtfulness of members of the community who participated in engagement and continue to advance programs that meet the needs of the community.

