

TULITA

Community Wellness Plan



Submitted by: Tulita Dene Band
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Tulita Wellness Plan 5 Year Plan 2024-2029

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Tulita Community Wellness Plan

Introduction:

Tulita is a community at the confluence of the Deh Cho (Mackenzie River) and Bear River in the Sahtu Settlement Area. The majority of the approximately 540 residents are Indigenous to the area, being either Shuta Got'ine (Mountain Dene), K'aalo Got'ine (Willow Lake Dene) or Metis.

In addition to the Tulita Dene Band (the "Band") several other entities participate in governance of the community and land. The Hamlet of Tulita is the municipal government, created under legislation of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). There are also two land corporations created under the *Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement* which represent interests of land claim participants in land claim issues: the Tulita Land and Financial Corporation (representing Dene) and the Fort Norman Metis Community (representing Metis).

Community Engagement:

A public meeting organized by the Band was held on June 3, 2023 in Tulita, NWT to gather feedback for this plan. A professional facilitator led the discussion and was supported by GNWT staff and note takers to record community input.

Residents responded to the following questions:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we want to go?
3. What do we need to gather for our trip?
4. How will we know when we've arrived?



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In addition to the engagement meeting several residents also filled out written surveys. The input from the meeting and surveys was collated and analyzed to arrive at eight key themes for a Community Wellness Plan:¹

1. Developing collaborative approaches to community wellness;
2. Working with our Elders to ensure knowledge transfer with our youth;
3. Prioritizing Dene youth wellness;
4. Addressing disconnection by finding ways to be together;
5. Living well on the land;
6. Addressing historical and ongoing economic racism and financial trauma;
7. Continuing support for addictions awareness, prevention, and treatment;

Many specific issues were raised in the engagement process, but there was an overall recognition of the holistic nature of community and individual wellness and of the need for collaboration between organizations and programs to support wellness in a way that involves the entire community.

Participants were concerned about the wellness of Tulita's youth as they are becoming disconnected from their land and culture, and from their Elders, and lack healthy activities and opportunities to engage with the community. It was stressed that the community needs to show youth how proud people are of them for their achievements instead of only focusing on and responding to negative behaviour like drug and alcohol use.

Climate change and the importance of the land to wellness was also a topic of discussion. The impacts of climate change are making it more difficult and dangerous to access the land, which creates food security issues and also

¹ These themes are organized in order of size of the set of data points from community input included in each theme.



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impacts the ability of people to practice and pass on their culture to future generations.

Priority Areas, Goals and Actions

Developing Collaborative Approaches to Community Wellness

Vision:

The Tulita Dene Band actively partners with other organizations, governments and individuals on wellness initiatives from a holistic perspective. Each partner brings its own expertise, strengths and resources to the table to support an inclusive and proactive approach to wellness that is responsive to community needs and consistent in its delivery of programs and services.

Priority Goals:

1. Ensure inter-agency cooperation and collaboration in wellness programming and supports in Tulita.
2. Deliver more community-based wellness programming and reduce reliance on programs administered from outside Tulita.

Programs and Plans to Address Goals:



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1. Organize an inter-agency workshop to review the Community Wellness Plan (CWP). The workshop should establish the start of an ongoing working relationship between multiple organizations on the delivery of community wellness programs. Priority actions include an inventory of existing programs and wellness resources in the community (e.g., funding, staff, facilities), identifying what plans and actions from this CWP can be implemented collaboratively or by individual organizations, and identifying outstanding programs and actions that are needed to support community wellness. This workshop and ongoing working relationship should include participation from the Band, the Hamlet, both land corporations, the RCMP, relevant GNWT staff (e.g., nurses, school staff, etc.), Elders, and other organizations as appropriate.
2. Deliver an inter-agency Healthy Living Family Fair (i.e., delivered in partnership with other organizations in Tulita). The Fair will promote inter-agency collaboration, and will allow each partner to provide residents with information on wellness from its perspective and expertise (e.g., mental health, addictions, education, diet and exercise, boat safety, etc.). The Fair will also allow partners to share information on existing wellness programs and supports in Tulita and informally gather feedback from residents on wellness needs.
3. Reconvene the community Justice Committee (as a mechanism to divert people from the criminal justice system, with a focus on Dene rehabilitative justice).
4. Train/recruit and retain staff
5. Dedicated to community wellness:
(full-time social worker, full-time wellness worker).



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Working With Our Elders to Ensure Knowledge Transfer With Our Youth:

Vision:

Youth and Elders in Tulita regularly spend time together and actively communicate with each other. Youth learn Dene language, culture and knowledge from the Elders. Elders actively support and mentor youth as they grow into healthy adults.

Priority Goals:

1. Create spaces and opportunities for youth and Elders to visit, to promote connection and for youth to learn from Elders. On-the-land learning opportunities for youth are a priority.
2. Youth have opportunities to become fluent in their Indigenous language.

Programs and Plans to Address Goals:

1. Develop plans for a Dene language program for youth, possibly an immersion program, with Elders as instructors and mentors.
2. Seek additional funding for an on-the-land program for youth and Elders. Part of the program should focus on developing strategies and plans for ongoing youth-Elders connection activities while in town.



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Prioritizing Dene Youth Wellness:

Vision:

Tulita's youth are strong, successful people who know their heritage and are proud of it. Families, Elders, leadership and the entire community is proud of the youth and actively supports and encourages their growth including their individual healing journeys.

Priority Goals:

1. Include youth in the development of wellness programming so that their needs are met.
2. Involve youth in community decision-making to build capacity, knowledge and self-esteem.
3. Celebrate the success of Tulita's youth and let them know we are proud of them.

Programs and Plans to Address Goals:

1. Organize a workshop specifically for youth to gather their input on wellness programming in Tulita. This workshop will gather information from youth about what issues they are facing, what types of programming and supports the Band could provide to benefit their mental and physical health, and what are examples of past or current programs or supports that have helped them.
2. Tulita Dene Band will develop a plan to include youth in Band Council meetings and business. This could include creating a youth committee, inviting youth to participate in Council meetings, and having dedicated



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space on Council meeting agendas for youth to speak about their issues and initiatives.

3. Organize at least one gathering to celebrate the achievements of youth in Tulita. This could include a combination of academic achievements, participation and success in sports, progress in learning their Dene language, culture and land-based skills, or other success stories. The gathering could also be a venue for youth to showcase their talent or speak publicly about their success as a way to build confidence, self-esteem and leadership experience. It is important that the Chief, other political leadership and Elders attend to let the youth know they are supported and that the community takes pride in them.
4. Explore options for a Youth Centre in Tulita. The Youth Centre would be a space dedicated for use by youth for recreation programs, wellness programs and youth meetings and community organizing.

Addressing Disconnection By Finding Ways to Be Together:

Vision:

Tulita embraces love, laughter and community connection as essential elements of community and individual wellness. All organizations and residents pool their resources and contribute their strengths to create opportunities for positive social interactions where everyone feels happy and supported.

Priority Goals:

1. Create regular opportunities for residents to gather together to laugh, build community connection and support each other.



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Programs and Plans to Address Goals:

1. Organize a monthly event or gathering open to all residents. These events could be talent shows, feasts, drum dances, film screenings, community walks, or season-specific land-based activities like berry picking or making dry fish. To promote community connection and limit expenses these monthly events could focus on volunteerism (e.g., a feast could be potluck style, talent show prizes could be small and/or donated by other people, etc.). These events could also be used to support other themes of the CWP, like having monthly events be organized by youth (with support from Band staff and mentors) or rotating the responsibility for monthly events between different organizations to promote inter-agency collaboration.

Knowing Our Past So We Can Plan For Our Future

Vision:

All the Dene and Metis of Tulita understand the impacts of colonialism and how it has affected them and the community. They work together to heal colonial trauma and to move forward with self-determination including continued stewardship of the land.

Priority Goals:

1. Dene and Metis understand the colonial history that has impacted the community to support healing from residential school and inter-generational trauma, and to support ongoing efforts for Indigenous self-determination.



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2. Maintain the Dene and Metis cultural and spiritual connection to the land.

Programs and Plans to Address Goals:

1. Support the delivery of workshops or other opportunities for residents to learn about the history and timeline of colonization, including foundational moments in Dene/Metis self-determination movements like Treaty 11, the formation and work of the Indian Brotherhood of the NWT (Dene Nation), the Dene and Metis comprehensive claim negotiations, and the *Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement*.
2. Move forward with efforts to protect the land through mechanisms like Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas plans. A focus should be on protecting Bear Rock.

Living Healthy On The Land

Vision:

The Dene and Metis of Tulita maintain their connection with the land and continue practices of hunting, fishing, trapping and harvesting safely into the future.

Priority Goals:

1. More on-the-land wellness programs with a focus on learning land-based skills and Dene culture.
2. Increase awareness of the impacts of climate change and associated risks to land users with a focus on adapting to these changes and mitigating climate change.



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Programs and Plans to Address Goals:

1. Seek additional funding to deliver land-based programming like culture camps.
2. Develop a climate change adaptation plan for harvesters and land users to ensure people can safely access the land in a changing climate.

Addressing Historical and Ongoing Economic Racism and Financial Trauma

Vision:

Residents of Tulita have stable living conditions with adequate housing and food security. They have equitable access to government services when compared to people in larger population centres like Yellowknife.

Priority Goals:

1. Minimize cost of living increases and support residents who are experiencing financial hardship.
2. Work with partners to ensure medical travel program service delivery is effective and responsive to needs.

Programs and Plans to Address Goals:

1. Enter into discussions with North-Wright Airways on a partnership with Tulita to improve medical travel arrangements, supporting programming that requires air travel or chartered flights, and to manage the costs of cargo and foods that are flown into the community.



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2. Maintain relationships with GNWT partners on medical travel and other health services to identify and address issues on an as-needed basis.

Continuing Support for Addictions Awareness, Prevention, and Treatment

Vision:

Youth in Tulita are aware of the risks that come with drug and alcohol use. All residents who struggle with addictions issues and want to seek help are supported by the community and have options for treatment and healing in Tulita or the Sahtu Settlement Area.

Priority Goals:

1. Support is available in Tulita for people struggling with addiction issues.
2. Alcohol and drug awareness programs promote education and prevent increased rates of addiction.

Programs and Plans to Address Goals:

1. Convene weekly Alcoholics Anonymous meetings on Fridays.
2. Work with partner governments and other communities in the Sahtu Settlement Area to explore options for a regional healing and treatment centre.
3. Work with inter-agency partners to deliver alcohol and drug awareness programs in the school and for the community at large.



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4. Work with RCMP and other partners to limit the activity of bootleggers and drug dealers.
5. Continue to advocate for community members who need seek help for healthy living.

CONSLUSION

Tulita Dene Band Mission Statement:

Tulita Dene Band mission is
"To help Tulita Dene Band membership and all residence to develop and
enhance our lives to become self-sufficient by:
Strengthening our relationships
Provide excellent program and services
In a manner that is consistent with our culture, language and traditional
values and our self-government aspirations."

On behalf of Tulita Dene Band we submit our Community Wellness Plan.