



**OUR CULTURE IS OUR WAY...**



**PEHDZEH KI FIRST NATION 5 YEAR  
(WRIGLEY) HEALTH AND WELLNESS  
PLAN 2024**

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## INTRODUCTION

The community of Wrigley nestled on the banks of the Mackenzie River is a small community with a large member list - very few reside there. The few that reside there work for the local First Nation office or the Government – Pehdzeh Ki Contractors is the First Nation’s construction company whom keeps local members working year round. With the upcoming construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway Expansion going north which is apparently commencing in 2027 is scary and unpredictable for our small community.

The lack of programs, facilities and awareness is not helping the community prepare for such a massive construction within the community’s back yard. The social issues that the members experience and live daily today is not being acknowledged and the help & services is not available.

With perseverance and hard work we maybe able to prepare ourselves for impacts that are coming our way.

Traditional knowledge is very important to our people and if we encourage the practice of our way of life – the hunting, living off the land and speaking our language with our children, we are headed in the right direction. Bringing back traditional medicines, sewing, drum making and harvesting is knowledge that has been handed down many generations.

Pehdzeh Ki First Nation’s Wellness Plan involves programming with elders, youth, children and traditional teachers. We want awareness out there not for people to hear but also see – posters, websites and communication outlets – access to computers, telephones and etc.



## AWARENESS

Getting the information out and actually have people listen to you – especially in a small community like Wrigley when one has to compete with the vast technology that is available for just about every age group. The kids do not play outside any more, even the older kids are stuck playing games with their friends over the internet how can we compete with that? Someone mentioned regional camps that is a great idea – invite the whole region and make it memorable every time it is hosted. Invite people that are interested in small communities and their endeavours.

- Addictions awareness
- Suicide awareness
- Bullying
- Mental health awareness – letting people know there is help available
- Effective communication with all age groups
- Indigenous Health Worker – making their services more available how?
- Traditional programming needs to be more upfront – like the English schooling

Phone calls to mention a program is more efficient then posting it or putting it on a website – door to door like the surveyors they know how to get the information out there - go to the person's house or call. Small towns people like company even if its to drop off information.

Pehdzeh Ki First Nation's goal in the next five years is to put awareness out there – no matter how small the issue is we talk about it. We will encourage members and regional participants the importance of communicating and helping one another – unite. Like the elder once said "imagine if all aboriginal people united as one – we would be a strong nation". That is not the case we are all separated and disagreeing on matters that should be dealt with as a unit. That is a goal that may take time and patience.



## Bringing Youth & Elders Together

Our youth today are headed down a very destructive path – a path that leads to drinking, drugs and young pregnancies. Now weed is not the only drug accessible to our kids – the list is endless of the drugs now in our area. Elders are needed to lead our children down a path that has been in our culture for many generations – living off the land, teaching our language to our youth, harvesting game and fur bearing animals. Sewing to the crackling of fire and the quietness outside brings harmony, respect for our land and ourselves, and this quiet time is when people reflect on their day, their life and solutions are spoken about when people are in this setting.

Our elders need to help our youth, they need to meet us half ways – that is not the case, it is like we all threw in the “hat”. Nobody cares about our way of life any more – much easier to turn the TV on or the radio rather than go outside and listen to the birds, river flowing and dogs barking in the background. I remember when sitting on the bench and watching the Mackenzie river flow was entertainment enough for us.

In our plan for the next five years to combat a solution for our Bringing Youth & Elders together:

- One idea is to have a permanent culture camp at RB2M
- Find that group of kids that are interested and keep their interest – word of mouth – one tells another.
- Invite interesting people with interesting careers – i.e. Dakota House, Harlem Globe trotters, Recovered Youth, Recovered Elder (Shows that we are all human and addictions are not prejudice), and drum music.
- Traditional ways are integrated into every camp and workshops hosted on PKFN territory, if elders were involved hands-on in creating a mandate for our cultural camps that might bring more interest to get involved with our programs
- Mentoring program for kids/youth/young adults with elderly people – it needs to happen during school hours when the kids know they have to be in class? Otherwise they are not patient enough to attend or listen. Has to be crafty, interesting and active.





## Getting Along

It has been a long time coming – people need to get along. It is sad to see members fighting amongst one another and not getting along – the gossiping is deadly. It leads to sick feelings and your moral is down the drain – who wants to feel that way? All of Wrigley does – then the drinking and the drugs come in to mask that awful judgemental feeling that eats away at your very soul. That is jest of things in Wrigley – sad and tormenting. It seems everything that was ever taught to us is Gone with the Wind – nobody cares about our ancestral teachings; we behave like money is important to our way of life.

Next five years will change with hard work and positive thinking – we go back to our way of respecting, our way of sharing & listening, our way of being on the land, our way of lending a hand with a smile, and mostly learn to care for ourselves – cannot help another if you're not well yourself.

If it takes years and years so be it, we shall start a sharing group, we need to invite outside help whether its an elder or someone that practices living off the land, and has the patience to teach and share their stories. We need to change up our way of approaching such issues – Like Elder Ernie Moses would say at funerals “why do we have to be in a pine box to care for one another?” Why? We are family, we are all related and been through a lot together doesn’t that mean anything? Something to think about not just for Wrigley but all of the DehCho.

Change has to come from each and everyone of us – we have to want things to change, we need to support one another – nobody else will do it for us.



## Cultural Programming

We need to do more action and less talking about cultural awareness. We all gather in room talking about the importance of our traditional ways but the initiation is not taken. How are we to preach at our young people when as the older/elderly group we don't take the next step to start these programs?

Caribou/moose tanning, sinew making, harvesting our game and especially our language should be our number one priority. Language and understanding it, is an amazing progress to witness – our local language teacher at Chief Julian Yendo school does an amazing job teaching the kids. They are speaking dene zhatie, if one person can do that in the short time that she's been with them why can't we teach our young people? Patience is needed – not just the young people but also the older elderly group.

Cultural practice is a must – Dene Zhatie revitalization can be done many ways, someone mentioned year round Fish Camp at Yendi lake, engagement with other communities, street signs in our language – helps with pronunciation of the words and most signs signify a family or something historical – so there would be a story behind the name which can be told in dene zhatie. Bringing cultural food back into our diets and no more processed food is a must, the babies need to be given traditional foods from birth when they can hold a piece of sinew, not have a soother stuffed in their mouths as soon as they cry. Learning starts from birth we need to be more involved with the young mothers/families in the community – cooking classes they take the food home, gardening growing our own food, and healthy eating programs.

Being on the land is tranquil and brings you back to our traditional ways – one sleeps well, eats well and the exercise is from morning to night, and the best part we are all together laughing, joking and helping one another. That is the way our life needs to transition back to – on the land. Making snowshoes, drums and sewing, and making drums for the small boys – recall my little brothers having drums as soon as they can hold a drum.



*Reviving our Culture is being on the land...*

## **Bringing it all together...**

Uniting is our only hope to keep our traditional practices going – we have to work together and help one another. We have governments knocking at our door, we have a mining company at our door and so many people want to do so much things to our land that it makes one dizzy – are we ready, not by a long shot – we have no full time nurse, we have no policing, we have no full time grocery store amongst other things. These are the kinds of stuff we need to get ready for and working together is the only way.

Harvesting rights will be affected, and the areas that we hunt and trap will be forever changed. Our sacred areas will no longer hold our spirituality and ancestral history. Sad and scary but we have to make choices to move forward together, as a team our grandparents, aunts, uncles, and parents did it for generations.

What ever happen to ‘we matter’, our way of life needs to be up front and center, we need to take the initiative to show that our traditional ways are very important. Have a permanent cultural camp – far away from the community far enough cell reception is not available. Include all ages and have programs that involve all age groups – sewing, caribou and moose hide tanning, snowshoe and drum making and story telling. Have people working shifts so that it is always available to people that are willing to spend time there and do personal work or have time away to learn on the land knowledge and skills, there are so many ways it can be done so that it benefits the whole community.



***Tradition is the only way of life...***