



K'asho Got'ine Community Council

# Fort Good Hope Community Wellness Plan

2024 - 2029

## Introduction

Fort Good Hope is a community of 500 located on the east bank of the Deho (Mackenzie River) just south of the Arctic Circle. The majority of residents are K'asho Got'ine, the Indigenous people of the area (including both Dene and Metis).

The K'asho Got'ine Community Council (KGCC) is a Charter Community created under legislation of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and exists as a modified *Indian Act* Band functioning as the municipal government. In addition to the Chief and Council of the Fort Good Hope Dene Band additional municipal councilor seats are open to non-Band members, collectively these individuals are the Chief/Mayor and Council of the KGCC.

The KGCC works closely with Yamoga Land Corporation and the Fort Good Hope Metis Nation Local #54 Land Corporation which represent the rights of Dene and Metis, respectively, under the *Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement*.

## Community Engagement

The KGCC held a community engagement session on June 13, 2023 in Fort Good Hope open to all residents. Targeted invitations ensured attendance of staff from potential partner organizations like the Cassien Edgi Health Centre (GNWT) and the RCMP.

Residents responded to the following questions:

- What does wellness mean to you?
- What are your wellness priorities?
- Where do we want to be in community wellness?
- What resources do we have to work with?
- How will we get there?
- How will we track progress?

Participants stressed that wellness is about connection to family, community and the land. Many people feel better and healthier when they are on the land and have opportunities to practice and take pride in their culture and language. Being on the land also brings families and people together and creates a supportive community environment.

The importance of wellness from a personal perspective was also acknowledged, including mental, physical and spiritual health. Residents spoke about lifestyle habits of exercise and diet, and also of mental and spiritual health work relating to addressing addictions, managing stress, dealing with toxic relationships and healing from trauma.

The lack of adequate housing in Fort Good Hope was seen as a barrier to wellness for the community and families, particularly young families. Similarly, the need to provide educational and employment opportunities for youth is important in ensuring they have the means to live a healthy life.

## **Land, Culture and Community Connection**

### **Vision**

K'asho Got'ine use their land and continue to practice their land-based culture as a community and as family groups. Youth are fluent in the K'asho Got'ine language and learn traditional knowledge and skills from the Elders in a land-based environment.

Fort Good Hope is a happy and supportive place to live where residents have access to regular community gatherings and activities in town that create connection between individuals and offer opportunities for people to learn K'asho Got'ine traditional knowledge and skills.

### **Goals**

- Individuals and families are active on the land on a regular basis.
- On-the-land gatherings and activities provide regular opportunities to build community connection between individuals and families.
- People have opportunities to learn Dene culture, skills and language in a land-based environment.
- Consistent opportunities for people, particularly youth, to learn the Dene language.
- Regular community events in town ensure people can practice their culture when they are not on the land and creates space for all residents to gather together when they cannot access the land.
- Stable services in the community and proper planning for the impacts of climate change allows people to plan and budget properly for on-the-land activities, ensures community cohesion in emergency situations, and allows people to focus on important work relating to land, language and culture instead of being constantly reactive unpredictable circumstances.

### **Actions**

- Continue with annual moose hide-tanning camp at the community culture camps, open to all age groups.
- Create a plan for regular programming throughout the year for people to learn Dene culture and skills. Options include drum making workshops, Dene drumming, sewing, fish camps and preparing dry fish, and making snowshoes.
- Review Dene language learning programs and resources and create a plan for delivery of consistent language-learning programs.
- Offer monthly community events to create space for community connection. Options include drum dances, cookouts, talent shows and jam sessions.
- Continue work to encourage Canada to complete the all-weather Mackenzie Valley Highway, as all-weather road access will help stabilize the costs of goods and services,

increase travel options in emergency situations, and mitigate the impacts of low water levels on barge shipments.

- Seek funding and resources to prepare a climate change adaptation plan for Fort Good Hope. The plan will discuss the impacts of climate change on transportation infrastructure and systems (e.g., shorter winter road season, low water levels impacting barge shipments) and the risk (likelihood and severity) of emergency events like forest fires or flooding. The likelihood of a community-wide evacuation during an emergency event, and plans and considerations for evacuation, should be addressed in the climate change adaptation plan.

## **Addictions and Mental Health**

### **Vision**

Residents who struggle with addictions and want help can access support programs without barriers. People have access to relevant treatment programs including local, regional and on-the-land options. On return from treatment people have continued support in Fort Good Hope to support their long-term healing journey.

### **Goals**

- People returning from treatment have access to ongoing support in the community, and support from the community.
- Residents who decide to seek help for addictions issues have fast and reliable access to treatment programs in Fort Good Hope, or regionally, run by Dene counsellors and wellness workers.
- The Band actively intervenes in the drug trade and activities of drug dealers to curb and eliminate the flow of hard drugs into Fort Good Hope.

### **Actions**

- Continue offering AA/NA meetings on a regular basis for residents.
- Continue partnership with K'asho Got'ine Housing Society to operate the Kaduyile Transition Home and related support programming.
- Seek funding for additional on-the-land treatment programs based on recent successful pilot programs.
- Work with partner governments and other communities in the Sahtu Settlement Area to explore options for a regional healing and treatment centre.
- Negotiate agreements with Canada and GNWT to engage in community safety work that complements work of the RCMP in Fort Good Hope. This includes two aspects: jurisdiction and enforcement. The Fort Good Hope Dene Band requires adequate jurisdiction to create bylaws that address drug trafficking by, for example, allowing for the banishment of drug dealers from the community. The Band also needs the authority to create a tribal police force with enforcement powers to proactively address drug trafficking and community safety issues.

## **Individual Health and Wellness**

### **Vision**

Fort Good Hope is a happy and healthy place to live. Residents have access to resources that support their physical, mental and spiritual health goals, including opportunity for regular physical activity and access to healthy food.

### **Goals**

- All residents have access to physical activity that they enjoy and is suitable for their level of physical ability.
- All residents and families have access to healthy food, including traditional foods.
- All residents have access to reliable health services.
- Long-term and consistent support services are available for residents who are healing from past and inter-generational trauma.

### **Actions**

- Continue with dust control operations in the summer months and explore new and more reliable dust control. Dust inhibits peoples' ability to exercise outdoors within town in the summer, and severely limits people from walking which is an important basis for physical activity.
- Continue enforcing bylaw on loose dogs to remove barriers from walking and other outdoor physical activity in town.
- Work in partnership with the Fort Good Hope Renewable Resources Council to support community hunts and the provision of traditional foods to residents.
- Continue the community garden initiative and create partnerships with northern organizations like Ecology North who support local food production.
- Continue with dedicated recreation and sports programming for youth, including the partnership with Chief T'Selehye School for the use of the school gym.
- Re-open the youth drop-in centre so youth have a dedicated space to gather in the evenings and participate in youth recreation programming.
- Seek funding for a workshop on managing grief for residents. Consider developing a plan for having consistent grief counselling or other supports available in Fort Good Hope for residents working through grief.
- Collect and distribute information on existing hotline support services for all residents. Hotline (phone and text) support services exist for youth and others and can help with things like suicide intervention. Distributing information on these services in places like the school, community bulletin boards, and Facebook would ensure residents are aware of existing support services and can access them.

## **Youth and Families – Preparing for the Future**

### **Vision**

Fort Good Hope's young generation is prepared to take on increased responsibilities in all areas of work and community leadership as the current generation of workers and leaders retires. Individuals and families have access to adequate housing and life supports so they can build a future in their home community.

### **Goals**

- Youth have all the opportunities and motivation needed to pursue education and training that prepares them for any job in Fort Good Hope.
- All of Fort Good Hope's residents have access to safe and affordable housing options.
- Municipal services are reliable and support health and wellness of residents.
- Residents understand the importance of financial health to individual and family wellness and have access to supports and programs so they can develop skills related to financial health. Financial literacy is a necessary skill and residents need access to educational opportunities to learn this skill.
- Parents and families have reliable access to affordable daycare as this is necessary for parents to work, hunt and harvest, and to pursue secondary and post-secondary education and training.

### **Actions**

- Create a partnership with Chief T'Selehye School, local RCMP and Cassien Edgi Health Centre to develop drug and alcohol education and intervention programs for kids and youth. This programming should also address the risks of smoking cigarettes. Provision of effective and immediate drug and alcohol intervention programming may require additional resources from outside the community such as funding and/or program delivery support from GNWT and Canada.
- Continue partnership with K'asho Got'ine Housing Society on home repairs, renovations and a housing strategy for Fort good Hope. As housing work progresses the partnership will expand to include all homeowners and prospective homeowners with a focus on developing skills and motivation for these individuals and families to provide in-kind support for their home repair and maintenance needs (i.e., developing skills and providing supports so people can maintain their own homes).
- Deliver parenting workshops for new parents and young families, possibly in partnership with GNWT Health and Social Services staff.
- Work with GNWT's Department of Education, Culture and Employment to create regular and reliable daycare services costing no more than \$10 per day per child, in accordance with GNWT's target for affordable daycare. Reaching the \$10 per day target is a stepping stone to the ultimate goal of providing free daycare to all parents and families.



- Contact the Fort Good Hope Learning Centre (Aurora College) to discuss options for offering classes on financial literacy and related skills (e.g., tax preparation and household budgeting).
- Coordinate with GNWT's Department of Education, Culture and Employment to ensure consistent delivery of training programs relating to employability and emergency response (e.g., drivers licensing and other licensing/certification programs, emergency first aid, etc.). Consecutive semesters/years of programming should be complementary to ensure participants are able to meet prerequisite requirements for more advanced training opportunities.