

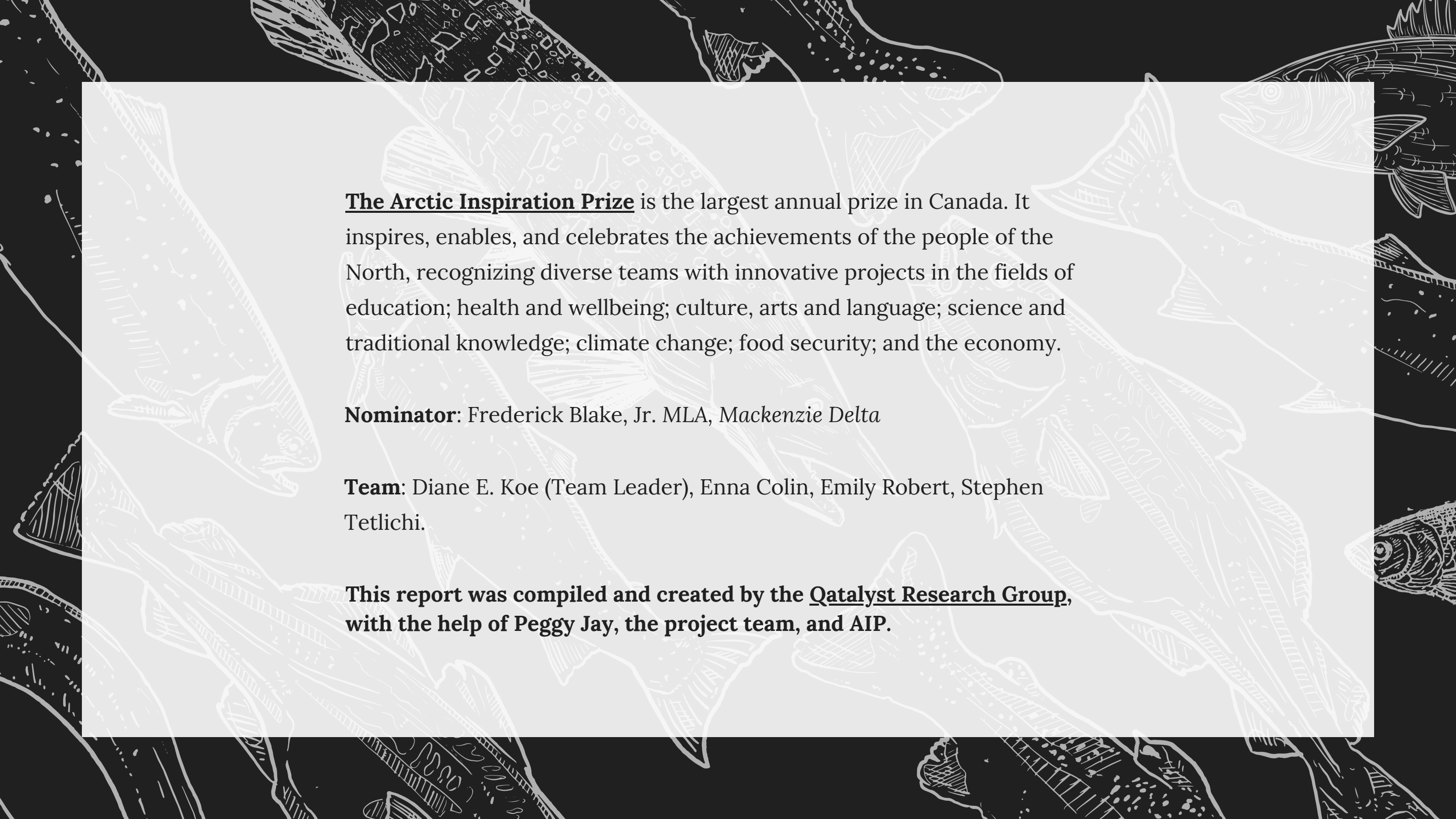
2021 Arctic Inspiration Prize \$95,000 winner

FISH CAMP AT HAPPY'S LANDING

ARCTIC
INSPIRATION PRIZE



PRIX INSPIRATION
ARCTIQUE



The Arctic Inspiration Prize is the largest annual prize in Canada. It inspires, enables, and celebrates the achievements of the people of the North, recognizing diverse teams with innovative projects in the fields of education; health and wellbeing; culture, arts and language; science and traditional knowledge; climate change; food security; and the economy.

Nominator: Frederick Blake, Jr. MLA, *Mackenzie Delta*

Team: Diane E. Koe (Team Leader), Enna Colin, Emily Robert, Stephen Tetlich.

This report was compiled and created by the Qatalyst Research Group, with the help of Peggy Jay, the project team, and AIP.

IMPROVING THE COMFORT AND SAFETY OF THE CAMP

With the support from the Arctic Inspiration Prize, the Fish Camp at Happy's Landing was able to create a more comfortable space for attendees and ensure the health and safety of participants. Funding helped create sturdier tents for attendees, provide air conditioning as respite from the heat, and supported the purchase of groceries, gasoline, other supplies, and the salaries of some workers and trainees.



ON THE LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN

Located on the banks of the Peel River, near Fort McPherson NWT, the **Fish Camp at Happy's Landing** is a place where individuals gather, share, and feast - but most importantly, balance their spirituality and physical and mental health and wellbeing.

The camp started in 2021, and has run each year since. The camp is open to all, but prioritizes Gwich'in families and individuals of Teet'it Gwich'in descent from Fort McPherson. Other attendees included NWT residents, tourists, and the media. The Camp is currently looking into options to run in 2024.

Each group remains at the camp for a two-week period, after which they depart and are replaced by another group.

A COMMUNITY THAT WORKS & PLAYS TOGETHER

In addition to the paid and contract workers, volunteers and participants spent time sharing duties while at the camp. Attendees fished, processed the fish, helped with cooking, and helped keep the camp area clean. The maintenance workers prepared wood and kept the fire going for drying fish and cooking, provided clean water, and helped with other duties around the camp.



CHIEF JULIUS SCHOOL STUDENTS VISITED THE CAMP

Grade 7 and 8 students visited the Camp to learn about traditional food harvesting and preparation.



“MAHSI CHO TO THE AMAZING TEAM RUNNING THE CAMP, FOR INVITING STUDENTS TO VISIT, SHARING THEIR TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND GIVING THE STUDENTS SOME DELICIOUS FISH STRIPS TOO.”

From Fish Camp at Happy's Landing Facebook page.



INCREASED KNOWLEDGE & PARTICIPATION IN TRADITIONAL FOOD HARVESTING AND PREPARATION

While attending the camp, participants:

- Learned how to catch, cut, prepare and dry fish.
- Increased their confidence about traditional food harvesting.
- Increased their pride in traditional ways and methods, particularly those of the Gwich'in.

“OUR ELDERS COME DOWN. WE MAKE MISTAKES, THEY HELP US. AND THAT’S BEEN THE PAST THREE YEARS - I’VE BEEN LEARNING FROM ELDERS. MOSTLY JUST A LITTLE BIT FROM DIANE BUT THE REST I WAS TAUGHT FROM ON THE LAND- SETTING UP, RUSHING AROUND, GETTING FIRE WOOD, SLEEP GOOD, HAPPY, 6:00 IN THE MORNING WORK ... EVERYTHING.”

Emily Robert, Fish Worker Instructor

LEARNING TO PREPARE DRY FISH FROM START TO FINISH

Participants learned how to fish and sustain themselves through traditional, land-based food gathering practices and traditional medicines during the camp. Nutritious foods were shared with attendees, who could stay and cook their meal at the camp or bring some home.



CONTRIBUTING TO FOOD SECURITY

60-70 white fish caught each day, and participants gained the traditional food harvesting and preparation skills that are vital for self-sufficiency.

Those who could not visit the camp were also able to enjoy the fish the camp produced. Packages of fish were delivered at no cost to Elders, single parents, the unemployed and others who struggle to access healthy foods. The Fish Camp also regularly donated dried fish to community events and feasts - all of the fish were donated back to the community.

The work at the camp helps to offset economic hardships for those struggling to access healthy and traditional foods.



INCREASE IN PRIDE OF GWICH'IN WAYS

The Camp is at the edge of the town. It's a very convenient place for community members to drop in and Elders to gather and share their knowledge of Gwich'in culture. The Camp always had meals to share and packages of fish to give out thus teaching youth important lessons about sharing and caring for the community.



“WE'VE HAD ... THE WHOLE COMMUNITY LIKE SHOWED UP AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER, AND ... THE ELDERS ... THEY WERE JUST AMAZED THAT ... HOW BEAUTIFUL OF A CAMP SETTING.”

Diane Koe, Team Leader



EMPLOYMENT & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the coordinator (team leader) for the camp, full-time staff members include a maintenance worker, a wildlife monitor, and two instructors. There are opportunities for up to four trainees who can choose how long to remain at the camp. When trainees leave, they are given payment and provided with a portion of the fish they helped to process. Volunteers are always welcome, as there are plenty of opportunities for various types of work.

“WE TRY TO SUPPORT, WHO WE MOSTLY TRY TO SUPPORT, [ARE] THE SINGLE PARENTS AND THOSE WHO ARE UNEMPLOYED.”

Diane Koe, Team Leader

ATTRACTING TOURISTS TO THE AREA

In addition to community members who visit the camp regularly, there have been many tourists, paddlers, bikers, and road-trippers who have made the visit and learned information about traditional practices of the Gwich'in.

The 2 Travelling Aunties (Norah and Susie from Singapore, @2travellingaunties on Instagram) made a point to stop in and visit in the summer of 2023, learning from Emily Robert about the process of smoking and drying freshly caught fish.

A STOP AT FISH CAMP AT HAPPY'S LANDING IS WORTH THE WILD. A COMMUNITY PROJECT TO PRESERVE THE OLD TRADITION OF FISH DRYING BY THE GWICH'IN PEOPLE AND SHARING THEM WITH PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. EMILY IS SHOWING US HOW THE FISHES ARE SMOKED AND DRIED.

2TravellingAunties on Facebook

Photo courtesy of 2TravellingAunties

OTHER FUNDERS & SUPPORTERS

In addition to funders and supporters, the Fish Camp received in-kind donations. Those who attend or visit the camp regularly bring food or other supplies to show their support.

