



Supporting Wellbeing



**Supporting
Wellbeing won
the 2021 AIP
\$500,000 prize.**

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: Dr. Candice Lys

Executive Director, Fostering Youth eXpression among Youth (FOXY)

Team: Rachel Cluderay (Team Leader), Noel-Leigh Cockney, Debbie DeLancey, Wendy Lahey, Mande McDonald, Donald Prince, Jimmy Ruttan, Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault, Kristen Tanche, Jennie Vandermeer, Anneka Westergreen

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

In the North, by the North, for the North

In 2018, the Northwest Territories Recreation and Parks Association (NWTRPA) and ʔehdzo Got'ıneᑦ Gots'é Nákedı/Sahtú Renewable Resources Board brought together on-the-land leaders and mental health professionals to discuss challenges in delivering land-based programming.

The leaders shared that many land-based program leaders have experienced trauma themselves and there is a need for a culturally-affirming, trauma-informed training that will support them in their work.

Supporting Wellbeing is designed to be culturally affirming by prioritizing Indigenous ways of taking care of each other.



Photo Credit: Anneka Westergreen

Supporting Wellbeing is guided by the experience, knowledge and expertise of a Steering Committee and Advisory Council, which includes land-based leaders from across the Northwest Territories.

On-the-Land (OTL) Programming

Land-based programs are Indigenous-led initiatives that integrate Indigenous knowledge, cultural practices, and connection to the land as key components of healing, education, and community wellbeing. These programs are designed and led by Indigenous communities and leaders who, themselves, have often experienced mental health challenges and trauma due to colonization.

Supporting Wellbeing is made in the North and is a trauma-informed, and culturally affirming training for people who deliver land-based programs.



Photo Credit: Anneka Westergreen

Supporting Wellbeing Project Timeline

2019

- On the Land Final Report published

2020

- Steering Committee established

2020–2021

- Development of the SWB training curriculum

2021

- Training was launched in March to pilot-test the curriculum

2022

- AIP funding received and SWB became a project of MakeWay's Shared Platform.
- The Steering and Advisory Committees developed a strategic plan to guide work to 2027.
- Leveraged \$262,000 from seven contributing organizations.
- Completed development of the Pilot Facilitator Training curriculum.
- Delivered Pilot Facilitator Training to nine participants on the land outside of Łíídlıı Kúę/Fort Simpson.

2023

- Created the Project Coordinator position and hired a part-time teammate.
- The Project Director role went from part-time to full-time.
- Delivered Supporting Wellbeing training to eight Dene Nahjo staff members in Sòmba K'è/Yellowknife.
- Supporting Wellbeing training was offered in partnership with Dehcho First Nations to eight wellness and land-based coordinators from across the region.
- Delivered Supporting Wellbeing training in Akłarvik/Aklavik to six community members with the mentorship of Donald Prince.

2024

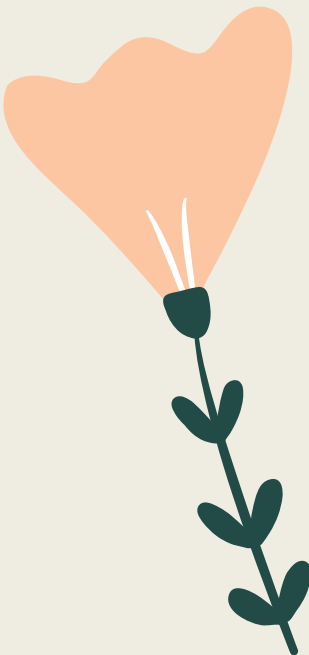
- Facilitated 4 training sessions to 32 on the land leaders. Trainings hosted in Rádeyılłkóé/Fort Good Hope, T'èzehdaà/Dettah, Sòmba K'è/Yellowknife, and Łútsël K'é.
- Curriculum developers and the Project Director updated the Facilitator Training curriculum.
- Project Coordinator starts working full-time and a part-time Communications Coordinator is hired.

2025

- Partnered with the Tłıchų Government for Supporting Wellbeing Training outside Whatì.
- Delivered Facilitator Training outside Łíídlıı Kúę /Fort Simpson for 8 new facilitators to deliver Supporting Wellbeing training.
- Partnered with the Délıne Got'ıne Government to deliver Supporting Wellbeing Training in Délıne.
- Hosted a Facilitator Gathering for facilitators to gather and provide feedback on the facilitator curriculum, netowrk, and improve their facilitation skills.

Organizational Stability

With the help of AIP funding, Supporting Wellbeing was able to ensure organizational stability and a project team.



Rachel Cluderay
Project Director



Maxine Lacorne
Project Coordinator



Katharine Thomas
Communications Coordinator



Values

Reciprocity

With oneself, the land, and each other.

Inclusiveness

Accepting, welcoming, and being intentional about diversity, and celebrating one's strengths.

Accountability

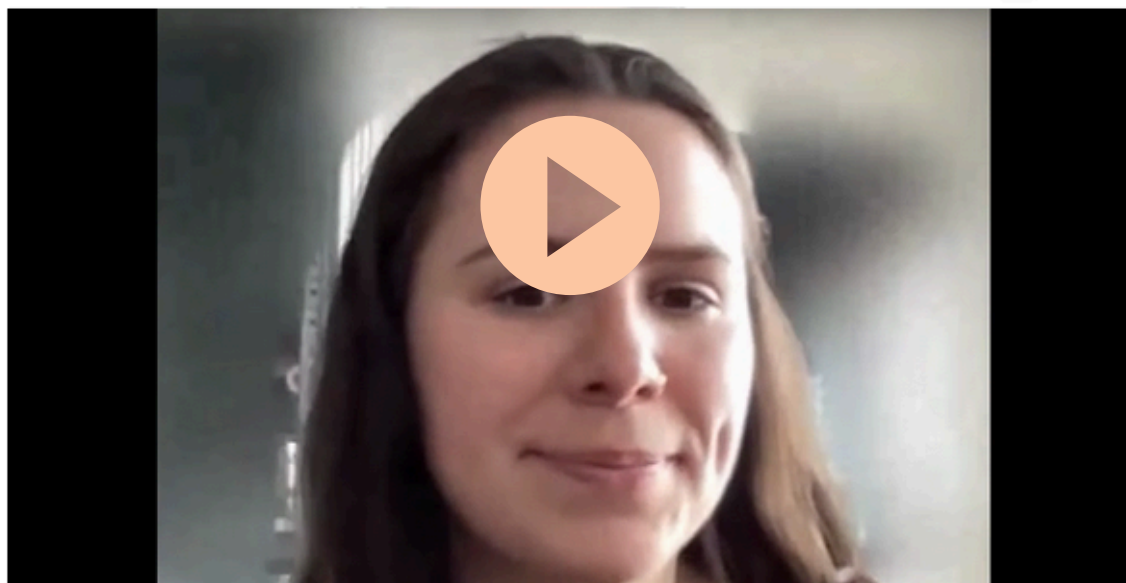
Mutual accountability to each other, the land, our partners, and ourselves.

Wellbeing

Mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual facets are balanced and nurtured together to create a holistic level of wellbeing in which all four areas are strong and healthy.

Indigenous Self-Determination

Supporting Indigenous sovereignty, rights, and the value of Indigenous knowledge and ways of being.



[Click here to Watch the Video](#)



The Supporting Wellbeing Curriculum

Supporting Wellbeing aims to provide tools and resources for people who deliver land-based programming that will better prepare them to mitigate and respond to mental health challenges on the land.

With the help of Donald Prince, the curriculum was developed over 2020, and has been updated several times based on feedback from participants.

The six modules cover:

- Creating community
- Setting up camp for wellbeing
- Intergenerational trauma - moving beyond to resiliency
- Conflict resolution and communication skills
- Suicide intervention and life promotion
- Supporting wellbeing when the program ends.



“For us, it’s an act of decolonization and it promotes cultural safety. Our training centres Indigenous approaches to preventing, responding to, and healing from trauma, and prioritizes Indigenous ways of teaching and learning.”

Rachel Cluderay





Training and Support for OTL Leaders

The training is designed for people who have some level of experience in planning and delivering on-the-land programs but who have little to no formal training in mental health support.

As of March 2025, Supporting Wellbeing has hosted ten trainings in communities across the NWT. In total, these trainings have equipped **88 individuals** with tools and resources to mitigate and respond to mental health challenges during on the land programming.

Training Increased OTL Leaders' Knowledge, Skills, and Confidence

Evaluation of the training demonstrated that both experienced and less experienced leaders benefited from the training:

- **Strengthened Leadership Skills** - Experienced leaders validated and refined their ability to deliver OTL programs while less experienced leaders gained confidence and practical skills for leading programs.
- **Improved Confidence to Support Participants** - Leaders felt more equipped to support program participants effectively, and better able to handle trauma and conflict. Several interviewees felt confident using their skills in real-world situations.
- **Cultural Awareness & Sensitivity** - SWB training helped non-Indigenous leaders set up culturally appropriate programs and provided insights into working respectfully with Indigenous communities and organizations.



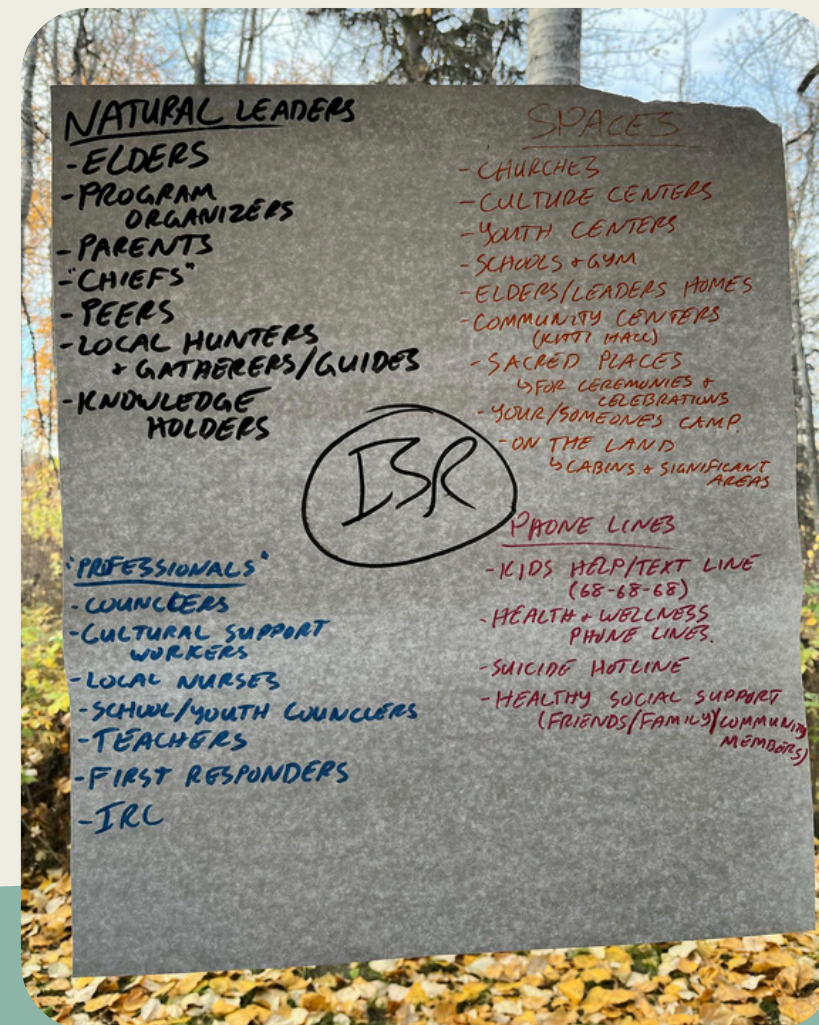
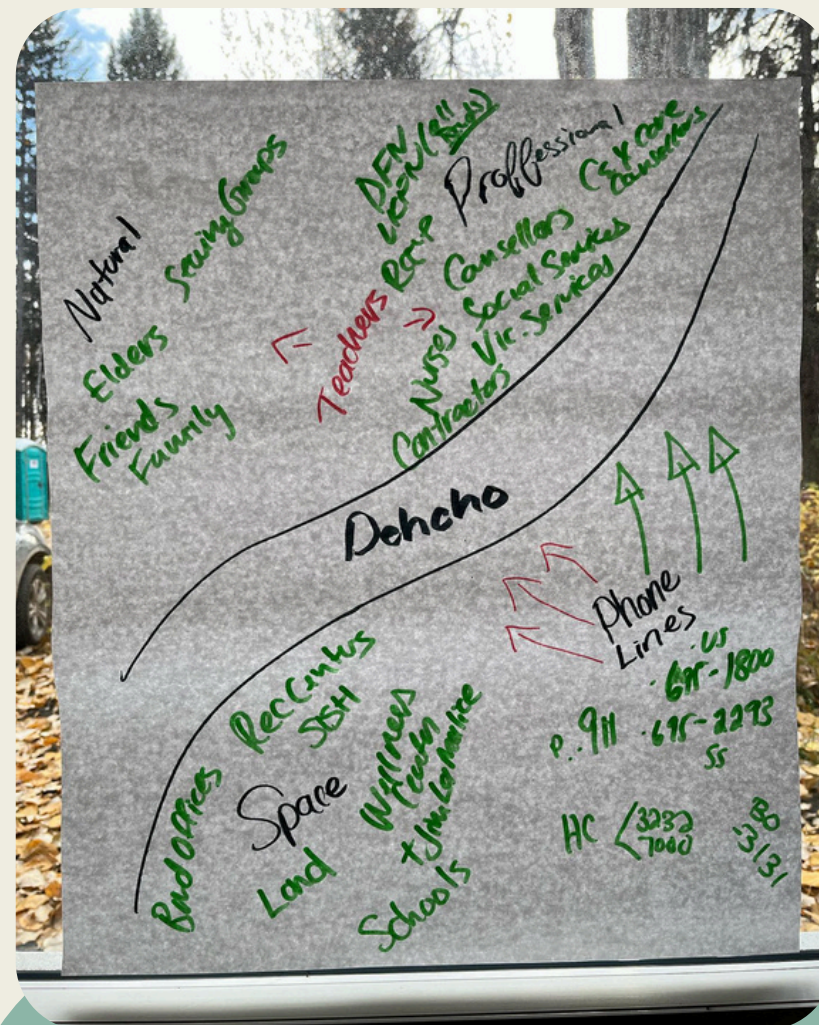
Facilitator Guide

With the help of AIP funding, Supporting Wellbeing developed a Facilitator Guide and delivered Facilitator Training to a core group of program leaders who can deliver SWB workshops.

The Supporting Wellbeing Facilitator Guide contains facilitation tips, interactive lectures, and group activities for each of the six SWB modules. It is a vital resource for the trained SWB Facilitators.



The Pilot Facilitator Training was held at the Fort Simpson Territorial Campgrounds on the land outside of Łíídlıı Kúę/Fort Simpson in the autumn of 2022, with 9 participants.



Of the nine Facilitators-in-Training who completed the Pilot Facilitator Training, all indicated a high degree of comfort with the course materials upon completion of the training, and all indicated that they felt relatively confident or quite confident in their ability to facilitate the modules. All were interested in taking the next steps to become SWB facilitators. Two indicated an interest in eventually becoming SWB facilitators, but first want to take the SWB training workshop. – Evaluation Report



Facilitator Training

The goals of the facilitator training are to equip successful facilitators to:

- Utilize concepts of Indigenous teaching and learning to guide their approaches to facilitation;
- Appreciate key features and considerations for teaching and learning within their culture;
- Model the delivery of the six Supporting Wellbeing facilitation modules; and
- Approach facilitation with a trauma-informed lens.

Two Facilitator Trainings have been held, one in 2022 and one in 2025. Each training equipped eight new individuals to deliver SWB Trainings.





“Supporting Wellbeing is making a difference [by] providing space for people to gain more tools for their toolkit.. People were excited to have these skills to use not only in on the land programming and other programming, but also in their personal life.”

Kristen Tanche



Future Plans

Supporting Wellbeing hopes to deliver at least five adaptable and accessible Supporting Wellbeing Training programs in different communities each year. Additionally, SWB hopes to train and mentor at least two informed and practiced facilitators in each region of the NWT and develop and deliver bi-annual Master Facilitator Training.

They will continue their ongoing evaluation of the organization to sustain relevance, and will explore partnering and adapting the curriculum to Yukon and Nunavut.

Recognition & Sustainability

Supporting Wellbeing won an award for Innovation in Mental Health and Addictions Care, and has received the Premier's Award.

They leveraged approximately \$1.2 million from seven contributing organizations to supplement the \$500,000 Arctic Inspiration Prize award.

SWB has ties to the Western Arctic Youth Collective (WAYC) and Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation (AIWF). The SWB Project Coordinator provided in-kind emotional support at a WAYC retreat. AIWF's former Executive Director, Donald Prince, helped to create the SWB Training curriculum and serves as a Mentor with SWB.

Partners & Supporters

- Dehcho First Nations
- Łíídlıı Kúę First Nation
- K'ahsho Got'ine Foundation
- Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
- Northern Indigenous Stewardship Circle
- Dene Nahjo
- K'ahsho Got'ine Foundation
- Délıne Got'ıne Government
- Łutsel K'é Dene First Nation
- Tłıchǫ Government
- Qmunity Camp NWT
- Foster Family Coalition
- Sahtu Dene Council
- GNWT Health & Social Services
- and many more!

