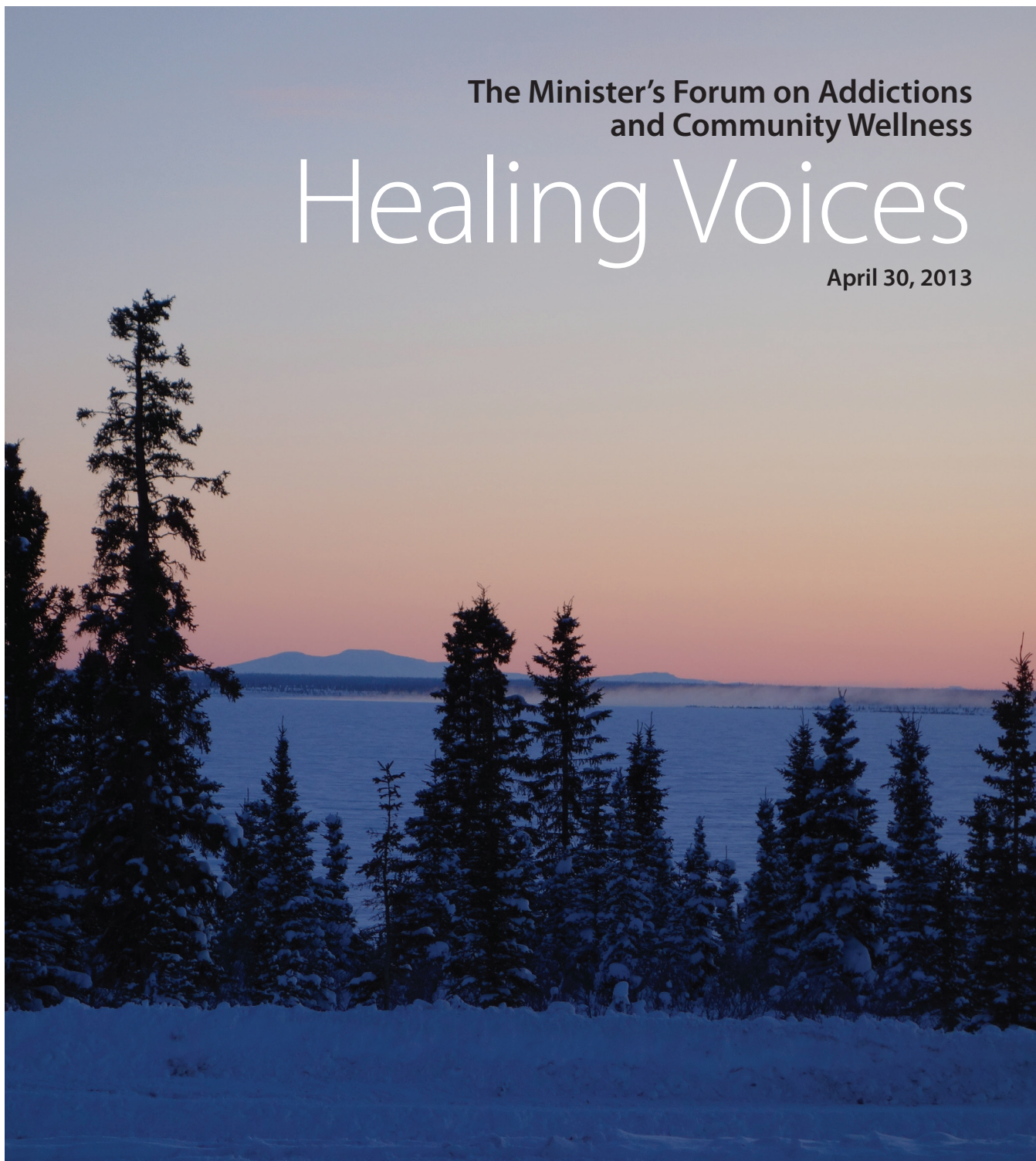


The Minister's Forum on Addictions  
and Community Wellness

# Healing Voices

April 30, 2013







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## Message from the Chair



An emotional young man told the Forum, "I want more family time." Another person told us, "We need to continue to speak out regarding addictions and healing." An older man reminded the Forum, "We come from strong people and we need to return to traditional values that make us strong."

The voices we heard were positive, forward-looking and deeply passionate. Some were skeptical, many were hopeful. The voices reflected the need to be positive and a strong desire to look for solutions in a different fashion. Many people - young and old - agreed far too often, we, in the North, keep doing the same things over and over again, hoping things will change. More than one community said sending people to jail has not helped the individual, and communities want to be involved in the justice system. Others said trying to sober up a person in isolation is not working, so if a community has addictions issues, all should be involved in recovery. Young and old want to return to their roots, and once again be proud of who they are.

Solutions are not simple or easy, but many are sick and tired of being sick and tired. They want changes! They want things done differently! They want funds reallocated into traditional activities! They want all governments to work together and set the standard in working together! People want less talk and more action. People say addictions are everyone's problem and we must all do our part. They want Elders to speak out more often. They want young people to learn about addictions in schools. They are demanding more sober events and want more opportunities to share the beauty of working on healing and wellness. They want to hear about healing practices in other parts of the North, the country and the world.

Thank you, Minister, for creating the Forum. Mahsi cho to the hardworking, dedicated and caring forum members for their valuable time and efforts. Thank you to the department staff for their valuable assistance, and especially Marlene Villebrun, who at times went beyond the call of duty. But most of all a big expression of gratitude to the young, the young at heart, the struggling students, women and men, and all the professionals who took the time to share their past and future with us.

If there is one hope I have is that we will never stop talking about healing. We must continue to share, to cry and to give each other hope. Success belongs to those who dare.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Andrew".

Paul Andrew



# Executive summary

*"Thank you for coming. I'm really glad the territorial government is honouring the Aboriginal communities and listening to what they want."*



Heartfelt appreciation and hope are what greeted the Minister's Forum during four months of consultations throughout the NWT. With courage and honesty, communities opened up at public forums and private meetings to deliver strong messages to the Minister about what should be done to address addictions. Confidence was expressed on all sides that this report would not "sit on a shelf" - that it represented a serious commitment to change addictions and mental health services, based on what the people say is needed. The creation of the Forum to gather those voices was one of the recommendations from Health and Social Services' three-year Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan, "A Shared Path Towards Wellness," released in June 2012. It states, "community-based mental health and addictions programs are to be driven and guided by communities and supported by government, rather than the other way around." The Forum's job was to seek that guidance, and advise on the medium-to-long-term directions communities want to take to combat addictions.

People made it clear they want on-the-land programming, and lots of it. Reconnecting with their spiritual and cultural identities - so closely tied to nature - was for many communities a necessary component to all six pillars of healing: Prevention, Intervention, Treatment, Outreach, Aftercare and Enforcement. As such, the Forum has identified **community-based and operated, on-the-land programming** to be the peoples' top priority. It is a stand-alone recommendation that forms the foundation for many of the 60-some recommendations that flow from it.

The second priority recommendation is **active programming and services for youth**, which includes time on the land in camps learning traditional and modern skills. People believe that funding and resourcing safe, substance-free places that offer recreation and enrichment programs is the best way to deter youth from alcohol, drugs, gaming and gambling. The "Take A Kid Trapping" program was often cited as positive, but too short. For many remote communities, youth centres are key gathering places that need serious investment. Youth want music lessons, cultural activities, dance instruction, art, more sports and more information in school and online about the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol. People in communities want training to help youth with addictions, and they want the government to **improve its referral system for youth** needing treatment.

The Forum heard repeatedly that residential treatment centres such as Hay River's Nats'ejée K'éh are important, but there needs to be changes to make **easier access to treatment, with ongoing, gender specific, intake**. The people also want the programs to be longer, include families and be culturally relevant, with on-the-land components. Almost every community said that once a person is released

from treatment, they often return to the same lifestyle as before, with little aftercare. The Forum is recommending Nats'ejée K'éh staff coordinate with inter-agency representatives, led by community wellness or mental health and addictions workers, to develop a **mandatory, six month aftercare** program for people leaving treatment, that could include time on the land. The Forum also recommends a **mobile healing team** be established to address primary issues such as childhood sexual abuse, abandonment, violence, mental abuse and residential school trauma.

Many successful programs delivered at a community level in the past have been discontinued because of loss of funding. **Multi-year, base-plus, core funding** for addictions programs and services is recommended.

The final primary recommendation is to turn negative conversations around substance abuse into positive celebrations of individuals who break free of addictions. To **celebrate success and encourage sobriety**, the Forum recommends media campaigns and activities to mark milestones achieved by those who struggle with addictions. Volunteer-led healthy activities, such as sober celebration dances, are in big demand.

Many people in the NWT strongly believe that **culturally-relevant treatment delivered close to home** works best. When people in Ndilo saw a need to help young adults heal from trauma and substance abuse so they could finish their education, they created "Believe in Yourself." Mornings are spent at the Wellness building, where the coffee is always on and home-grown curriculum combines counselling, aboriginal history, art, and self-esteem building. There are also two on-the-land sessions plus job placements. Afternoons are spent at Aurora College upgrading. "I believe this program saved my life in so many ways," said one student. "Believe in Yourself" is a success its organizers want to share with other communities.

People are hungry for **workshops and training** in areas such as parenting, grief, trauma, mental health and addictions. The Forum recommends scheduling flexible hours for community health and wellness workers so people can access programs and support in the evenings and on weekends. **Pay equity** should be established for non-government health and wellness workers, including elders, who work in addictions; as well as **northern-based diploma and degree programs** in addictions through Aurora College. Nurses, doctors, RCMP and teachers should get cultural and addictions awareness training.

People working in corrections and policing, and inmates, said our current justice system is not deterring crimes related to alcohol and drugs. The government is encouraged to **establish wellness courts and other diversion programs** (on-the-land programming) for people with addictions, as well as increase counselling, treatment options and communication with families, for inmates within our prisons.

Communities identified illegal gambling houses and bootlegging as big problems. Increased cooperation between police, community leaders and residents, as well as **assessing the effectiveness of related municipal and territorial laws** on gambling and bootlegging is recommended, as well as **increased liquor inspections**.

The Forum found there is still much work needed in raising awareness and understanding of what mental health means, as well as removing the stigma surrounding it. **A full-scale mental health awareness campaign**, in all official languages, is recommended.

The Forum suggests an **advisory board with regional representation** could oversee the implementation of the peoples' recommendations, provide annual reports on progress in addressing addictions, and continue to explore new ways to improve the delivery of addictions programs and services. As one community member told the Forum, "The NWT can model change for the rest of the country."





# Introduction

In December 2012, the Minister's Forum on Addictions and Community Wellness began its travels to 21 communities in all regions of the NWT. Its 12 members had a single purpose: to listen to northerners about what they feel are the best ways to stop the destructive impacts of alcohol, drugs and other addictions on individuals, families, and communities.

The Forum reached out to residents, leadership, wellness workers, students, teachers, elders, police, nurses, counsellors, government employees, inmates, victim support and mental health workers, to share what has worked in the areas of addictions and community wellness, and what needs to change. What they heard in between those questions were stories of heartbreak, of lives and families that were destroyed by addictions; in short, what has not worked.

But they also heard stories that inspired: stories of people coming together to support one another in order to reconnect with their cultural identity and values. They told the Forum about their desire to shield the next generation of northerners from the damaging effects of alcohol and drugs. The Forum asked and was told about promising new approaches that created hope for those individuals struggling with addictions as they strive to create new lives for themselves.



Through this report, the people hope the government hears their "healing voices," and answers them.


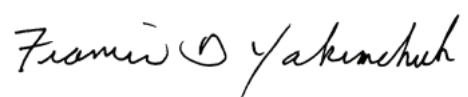
## Members of the Minister's Forum

   
 Jeffery Amos Paul Andrew

   
 Anita Daniels Joanne Deneron

   
 Pat Martel Hazel Nerysoo

   
 Laurie Sarkadi Jill Taylor

   
 David Poitras Frank Yakimchuk

   
 Wilfred Simon Marie A. Rabesca



# The people's top priority: on the land programs

*"Working with elders on the land is profound change, it is health."*

*"We are capable of having a program on the land – one, two months, that teaches our youth traditional and modern skills, how to build a log home, how to check nets."*

*"Trapping, snowshoeing and getting fresh air helped more than prescription medication."*

*"Even alcoholics from the streets act like professionals in the bush."*

What the Forum heard more than anything else during its travels is the land heals. People throughout the NWT believe there is great value in addictions programs related to Aboriginal culture and spirituality, especially on the land, with their families. So strong is this belief, with so many examples of its success, that the Forum is making on-the-land programming its number one recommendation, and the underlying foundation upon which many other recommendations are built. Think of these programs as the roots through which good things flow, so a plant can grow and flower under the sun. Many addictions and primary issues such as residential school trauma and child sexual abuse trace to a time when ties to the land were severed. Leading people back to their roots can help them heal.

People want programs that balance the instruction of traditional skills with opportunities for individuals struggling with addictions to re-establish cultural identities and connect spiritually with nature over an extended period of time. In this context, on-the-land programs are believed to help people heal spiritually, as well as to heal their relationships with others. This is accomplished by leaving behind the stressors of modern life that may contribute to addictions, and allowing people to get back to basics. Non-aboriginal people as well say they benefit from this reconnection. In its purest form, an on the land experience should help a person to understand they need water, air, fire and earth—not alcohol or drugs -- in order to survive. On-the-land camps can be a delivery point for a variety of programs related to addictions, prevention and wellness; such as aftercare for individuals leaving treatment centres or correctional institutions, grieving workshops, parenting and life skills training, or other needs identified by a community.

## Recommendations

1. Support community-based and operated on-the-land programs that have clear community-stated goals and outcomes to treat addictions.
2. Develop programming for on-the-land camps that include a diverse range of cultural and traditional experiences, traditional knowledge, and the wisdom of elders, as well as modern approaches and best practices for treating addictions.
3. Provide funding and support that allows on-the-land programs to be delivered over extended periods of time (up to six months), and be available to families.





# Primary recommendations

This section presents recommendations that Forum members have identified as priorities. They reflect the voices of people throughout the NWT. The following four primary recommendations build upon what the people believe is already working to address addictions.



## Programs and services for youth

*"I started hand games with six kids. One shy, little boy came in and I taught him and he went on to Arctic Winter Games, and then to work at the mine, and now he's finishing his education."*

*"I liked when the elders came in and told stories about long ago."*

*"We had a spiritual gathering last year that put elders and youth together. It's helped a lot of people."*

*"I think we need a safe house here like that Side Door. It's hard to find places where there isn't drinking. You leave your house and go to a friend's, but there's drinking there too, so you just drink, then you pass out and someone steals your iPod."*

*"In the 'Believe in Yourself' program I have enjoyed expressing myself through art."*

People believe that active programming for youth is the single most effective approach to preventing addictions. Youth need safe, substance-free places with a wide range of recreational opportunities and enrichment programs that offer positive alternatives to alcohol, drugs, gaming, and gambling. In communities throughout the NWT, residents—including youth—told forum members they want more addictions and wellness education, as well as cultural and recreational activities that promote healthy lifestyles. While the initial investment may be significant, the return includes an addictions-free generation of northerners that helps to reduce the cost of treating addictions-related problems (FASD, chronic physical and mental health issues, corrections, homelessness, etc.).

## Recommendations

4. Support community-based on-the-land programs for youth aimed at addictions prevention, treatment, healing, and aftercare.
5. Fund and resource safe spaces for youth, such as youth centres, in every community in a way that reflects their importance in delivering addictions prevention programs and services to young people.
6. Provide funding and support for activities aimed at youth, including (but not limited to) cultural activities, music, sports, art, dance and new media (video and digital technologies).
7. Incorporate more information about addictions and the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol into school curriculums.
8. Increase collaboration between government departments and non-government organizations that provide

programs and services for youth, such as Take a Kid Trapping (Investment Trade and Technology), Youth Centres (non-government), Active After School (MACA).

9. Increase the Government's use of traditional media and social media to convey key messages and maintain an ongoing dialogue with youth and families about substance abuse, addictions, and treatment options.
10. Provide people in communities with training that allows them to access and provide effective addictions programs and services for youth.
11. Review and revise existing processes within the health and social services system for referring youth to treatment in order to ensure that treatment is accessible for all youth.

## Treatment

*"Healing workshops work, based on loss and grief and sexual abuse."*

*"I went out for 28 days to Hay River, but I had my Dad and my wife to support me."*

*"You have to be sober and make four counselling sessions before you can go to treatment. A lot of people can't do that, so they don't get the help."*

*"The family unit needs to heal. It is not one person, but it is the love and support of your family and community. We need to connect with supportive community members."*

*"Bring life, ceremony and understanding to it. It never made sense to fix someone then send them home without support."*

Residential treatment centres are important, but according to people throughout the NWT, they are just one component of the overall continuum of care. People suffering from addictions have needs that must be addressed before they ever set foot in a treatment centre. They also require ongoing support that extends far past the day they leave treatment. Throughout the NWT, people were united in the belief that a more comprehensive approach to treatment is needed to help individuals who are fighting a lifelong battle against alcohol and drugs.

## Recommendations

12. Adopt culture-based approaches to providing treatment, aftercare and ongoing support for people with addictions.
13. Maintain the cultural integrity of addictions programs and services in order to eliminate barriers to culture-based approaches, such as difficulties securing liability insurance.

14. Streamline existing application processes and improve referral processes to reduce paperwork and wait times for residential treatment.
15. Provide ongoing intake and access to treatment centres for individuals seeking help.
16. Develop a communications strategy aimed at informing the public about territorial treatment options and how to access them.
17. Increase the capacity to offer gender-specific residential treatment to NWT residents.
18. Offer residential treatment options of up to 90 days.
19. Provide inclusive treatment options that involve families.
20. Develop residential treatment capacity to address primary issues such as mental illness, residential school trauma, and childhood sexual abuse.
21. Support the development of a culturally relevant mobile healing team of highly trained people who can address primary issues such as childhood sexual abuse, abandonment, violence, and mental abuse as well as residential school effects as needed by communities throughout the NWT.
22. Have Nats'ejée K'éh staff coordinate with inter-agency representatives, led by community wellness or mental health and addictions workers to develop a mandatory, six month after care program.
23. Develop detox programs and services for those who require them that could be completed before entering residential treatment.
24. Ensure that emergency detox services are available at the community level.

## Funding

*"We've raised more than \$26,000 for our hand games tournament. People set nets and we had a community hunt. Everyone pitched in."*

*"Use the profits from the liquor commission to pay for wellness programs."*

*"We used to have sled-making, carving, ulu-making, drum dance, sewing...but then funding became a problem."*

*"We do catering and other such events to raise money for our program."*

Most of the conversations Forum members had with NWT residents about available addictions programs and services lead to a call for more funding. A lack of multi-year funding capable of sustaining community-based initiatives

was reported to have led to the demise of a number of promising programs.

In addition to funding addictions programs, people called for further investment in training and education, so that people in communities are better equipped to deliver and sustain the services needed to address the issue of addictions.

### Recommendations

25. Provide multi-year, base-plus, core funding for addictions programs and services.
26. Invest in research and training to develop programs and services that fully address addictions issues in the NWT.
27. Explore public-private partnerships to deliver addictions programs and services.
28. Encourage community-based organizations to collaborate, instead of compete, for funding.

### Celebrating successes

*"What works for me, I am growing every day, I was willing to learn. I have been reflective, I am celebrating that I am still here."*

*"I am a role model in my home community; we will overcome our obstacles, it is possible."*

*"We have to 'denormalize' being drunk and start celebrating sober lifestyles."*

*"Don't give up, keep trying. You could make a difference in someone's life. There is hope in our future; we can lead healthy lifestyle – volunteer, do activities or join sports."*

So much of what people hear about substance abuse and addictions is negative. Yet, throughout the NWT, the Forum members heard people say that they wanted to celebrate the successes of communities and individuals who were able to break free of addictions. Rather than focusing on the negative, residents asked for opportunities to reinforce positive behaviours and encourage people to embrace sobriety as a way of life.

### Recommendations

29. Introduce media campaigns that profile individuals and communities who are successfully dealing with addictions.
30. Recognize milestones related to addictions, such as quitting smoking or being drug-free for 100 days, by holding community events or celebrations.
31. Develop a campaign that celebrates sobriety and addiction-free living, similar to existing campaigns such as the White Ribbon campaign organized by men to

end men's violence against women, Iqaluit's smoke-free home light bulbs campaign, or wear a heart pin to show you are someone who can help an addict.

32. Recognize the workers and volunteers that support individuals struggling with addictions.
33. Recognize and celebrate leaders who live healthy and addiction-free lifestyles.





# Secondary recommendations

In addition to those priorities listed above, the secondary recommendations should be implemented in order to improve addictions programs and services in the NWT. These recommendations also address the underlying primary issues that contribute to the problem of addictions.



## Social issues

*"At Alkali Lake, in B.C., where they have 98 per cent sobriety, when they came home from treatment their houses were repaired, food was in the fridge and education was available."*

*"The Day Shelter works. It's really needed."*

*"We lost rites of passage through the residential schools."*

*"You can't heal if you can't meet the basic needs of your family and kids."*

The impact of residential schools, poverty, family violence, and homelessness are just some of the social issues that people believe contribute to the high rates of substance abuse and addictions across the NWT. The combination of addictions with any number of these social issues makes the journey toward conquering addictions that much more difficult for many in our communities.

While programs and services that specifically address addictions are required, they cannot stand alone. People need additional assistance and support that will help them to live healthy lifestyles and overcome any other negative social issues they face.

## Recommendations

34. Expand the NWT Liquor Commission's addictions awareness and prevention initiatives.
35. Continue to strengthen, promote and expand current wellness initiatives such as those listed in the Appendix.
36. To combat homelessness, offer affordable housing for low-income individuals and families to provide them with stability and security.
37. Allow those living in public housing to offer temporary safe spaces to youth without penalty.
38. Schedule flexible hours of work for community health and wellness workers on evenings and weekends so that all individuals can easily access programs and support.
39. Subsidize healthy food (milk, eggs and fruit) instead of alcohol, to help people live a healthy lifestyle.
40. Provide a range of parenting skill development opportunities to build healthy families.
41. Promote an understanding that Dene hand games are Aboriginal traditions, and not gambling.



## Professional competencies

*"I really think your own people are your own good counsellors. You go out on the land, your own people can help you."*

*"Bring back an elder from my (Gwich'in) culture so I can listen to them."*

*"We need to incorporate the western and the traditional components. The elders are our resource. Our values and beliefs are there. Nothing is broken, nothing needs to be fixed. Dene people have the resiliency."*

*"Aurora College (addictions) training is becoming useless because it's not being recognized."*

People in the NWT believe that the best possible treatment for people with addictions is treatment that is delivered close to home, with the support of family, friends and others in the community. In order for NWT communities to provide that level of support, health and wellness workers and volunteers must be educated and trained so they are able to deliver programs and services to support individuals who are living with addictions. They also need role models who live addiction-free to serve as examples of what is possible. In order to accomplish this, there is a need to provide northern-based education and training opportunities that are built upon proven northern approaches for dealing with addictions.

## Recommendations

42. Establish pay equity for non-government health and wellness workers, including elders, who specifically work with people struggling with addictions that reflects the value of this work, as well as the serious risk those addictions pose to the NWT.
43. Provide cultural and addictions awareness programs for community-based professionals, such as nurses, doctors, RCMP and teachers.
44. Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for community wellness workers and addictions counsellors. This should include modern best practices as well as traditional Aboriginal approaches that have proven successful in preventing and treating addictions.
45. Work with Aurora College to develop a two-year diploma program and four-year degree program for addictions counsellors. Both programs should incorporate experiential and culture-based approaches based on the past work of the Dene Cultural Institute, the Nechi Institute, and Aurora College.
46. Introduce a zero tolerance policy toward alcohol and drugs for all those who deliver addictions programs and services.

## Mental health

*"What do you mean when you say mental health?"*

*"I'm treating people with severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and being highly successful. It's almost impossible to ever dream you'd have this kind of response. It's awe-inspiring to do this work. I have clerical help for filing, I work in consort with nurses to give drugs when necessary."*

*"We're using our correctional centre as an alternative to a hospital-style mental health institution."*

*"The mental health first aid workshops we had last week were very helpful."*

The issue of mental health is intertwined with addictions. Yet it is also an issue that is not well understood by northerners. Many people were reluctant to discuss the connection between mental health and addictions because they do not understand how one affects the other. And barriers around language and translation make it even more difficult for people to talk about it. Does addiction come as a result of mental illness or are those who suffer from mental illness more prone to addictions?

Without a clear understanding, it is difficult to determine the best course for helping individuals to overcome addictions and start on a path towards positive mental health and well-being. And it is this context that helped frame the following recommendations.

## Recommendations

47. Raise public awareness about mental health issues as well as the services that NWT residents can access for support.
48. Provide information about mental health in all NWT official languages.
49. Build capacity for community-based organizations, through training and education, so they can effectively help others access the mental health services they need.
50. Adopt mental health best practices from other jurisdictions that can be applied effectively in the North.
51. Address social and cultural barriers associated with mental health issues and terminology.

## Cooperation and collaboration

*"Pass legislation that would direct or authorize all the helping agencies, the government, RCMP, non-profits, to share information about any individual they feel needs help."*

*"We need more integration between the Tree of Peace, the Day Shelter, mental health and addictions counsellors, social assistance and Hay River."*

*"If my grandson comes to my door looking for a safe place to stay the night, I have to turn him away because housing will charge me if they find him here."*

*"You can't expect the RCMP to come in and police your community, you have to help the RCMP, work closely with them."*

People talked about several different barriers to inter-agency collaboration. Silo'ed approaches, not being able to share information, and stereotyping were all seen as factors that stopped individuals and groups from working together to find solutions to the problems caused by alcohol and drugs.

Throughout the territory, people talked about the need for a collaborative approach to combat addictions. Increased cooperation allows communities to make better use of existing resources and funding. Working collaboratively also allows for a more comprehensive approach to dealing with addictions—ensuring that individuals have access to a variety of programs and services while helping to ensure that no one falls between the cracks.

The successes that come through collaboration were evident, and so are the barriers that prevent community-based organizations and government departments from working together. In order to provide comprehensive programs and services, stakeholders need to be able to freely share information in order to best help their clients. Rather than competing for existing resources, they need funding that promotes cooperation.

Many of the success stories shared with the Forum demonstrated that the cooperation and collaboration of community groups, government departments and agencies, RCMP and concerned residents is an effective approach to dealing with addictions throughout the NWT.

## Recommendations

52. Coordinate inter-agency meetings to address addictions in every community and remove existing barriers that discourage cooperation between groups, such as competition for available funding or limits on the ability to share information.
53. Model a territorial campaign that focuses on alcohol and drugs after existing successes, such as "Don't Be a Butthead".
54. Encourage interagency groups to meet on the land once per year.
55. Hold an annual territorial conference that specifically addresses addictions and community wellness.

## Policing and corrections

*"Instead of building more jails, getting more police, let's put money into prevention and community support."*

*"Why are we spending \$90,000 to send guys to the correctional centre? What are they going to learn there? When they come back they get more violent, more aggressive because they're alone and angry. If you build a cultural centre here they will listen to their elders and have their kids and wife."*

*"I see the strength of the leadership and the support we get is second to none. (RCMP Officer)."*

*"We put people in jail, but it's just for one night. These aren't bad people, they just have addictions. It doesn't work for the long-term solution, but at least we know they're safe."*

*"I'm worrying about my family, I've got no money for long distance calls, being in close contact with your loved ones is important." (Inmate)*

Aboriginal people are disproportionately represented in NWT correctional centres. Ninety-seven percent of inmates at the North Slave Correctional Centre are incarcerated for crimes relating to alcohol. Once behind bars, inmates did not feel there were enough counselling and addictions programs available to them. Those in remand had none. Some inmates' preference is to speak to elders and have culturally relevant supports. There was general frustration at all levels – police, inmates, victim support workers, community member, and counsellors – that the current justice system does not serve to rehabilitate. Hope was expressed that more holistic and restorative justice options, including on the land, and mental health courts, can become viable alternatives.

Some communities spoke of the important role the RCMP played as organizers of recreational programs such as hockey. While this serves as evidence of the improving relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the RCMP, some people shared stories of the role RCMP played in separating children from families to send them to residential schools, and the need for reconciliation to heal old wounds.

People working in victim support say they would like police to make more referrals to them so clients get short-term emotional support. They also expressed a desperate need for more trained staff and volunteers.

Many communities wished the RCMP and liquor inspectors could be more vigilant toward bootleggers and drug dealers.

## Recommendations

56. Establish wellness courts and other diversion programs for offenders with addictions.
57. Establish more addictions counselling and cultural outreach in all territorial correctional facilities.
58. Encourage continued cooperation between the RCMP and other agencies such as victim support workers to deal with offenders that are struggling with addictions.
59. Implement smoking cessation programs and supports in correctional centres.
60. Promote early release to enable offenders to access residential treatment programs.
61. Provide offenders in correctional facilities with opportunities to contact friends and families through phone, email or Skype, at the institution's expense.
62. Encourage reconciliation programs and services aimed at healing the relationship between Aboriginal people and the RCMP.
63. Increase liquor inspections and improve community cooperation with police to eliminate bootlegging.
64. Re-examine current drinking and driving laws in the NWT such as the possibility of changing the laws to zero percent alcohol for drivers under 21.

## Gambling as an addiction

*"I had a casino addiction on the computer, I spent \$500 to \$1,000 per paycheque. But I stopped."*

*"Everyone knows where the gambling houses are."*

*"Gambling is a replacement addiction."*

People throughout the NWT are concerned with gambling and its destructive effects on individuals, families and communities.

The concern for gambling is so pronounced that the Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith has prohibited churches from holding bingos as a fundraiser. According to people who spoke to the Forum, illegal "gambling houses" are in communities throughout the NWT.

In sharing their concerns with Forum members, residents made it clear that they see gambling in the same light as addictions to alcohol and drugs. And they have called for action that will not only raise awareness about the issue of gambling, but will also help prevent and reduce gambling's harmful effects throughout the NWT.

In addition to gambling, Forum members also recognize that problems with gaming and compulsive shopping

are process addictions that are very much the same as gambling. And while the Forum members did not hear concerns from the public about these emerging problems, they believe it is important to note them in this report, in the hope that a proactive approach to dealing with issues related to gaming or shopping addictions might prevent them from reaching crisis levels.

## Recommendations

65. Recognize gambling as an addiction and provide the public with more information and support to deal with problems.
66. Assess municipal and territorial laws related to the legality of gambling to find ways to control it. This would include investigating and addressing illegal gambling houses in communities throughout the NWT.

## Addictions advisory board

What almost every person we spoke to made clear was that now is the time to act, and the dialogue around addictions must continue. The Forum members believe the best way to acknowledge that the peoples' voices have been heard is to ensure that these recommendations are implemented.

Many of the recommendations included in this report will require much work in order for them to become a reality. An addictions advisory board could play an important role in helping to develop culturally relevant addictions programs and services, or increasing the number of youth options for addictions treatment.

67. Establish an advisory board with regional representation to oversee the implementation of the Forum's recommendations, provide annual reports on the NWT progress in addressing addictions, and continue to explore new ways to improve the delivery of addictions programs and services.



# Appendices

**Appendix A: Successful programs and services**

**Appendix B: The Healing Pillars**



## Appendix A: Successful programs and services

Forum members asked people in every community for examples of past or existing programs and services that have had a positive impact on addictions.

**Prevention programs** help to delay the first use of alcohol and drugs. Some examples of successful prevention programs in the NWT include:

- D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education)
- Teen Intervene
- Don't Be a Butthead
- My Voice, My Choice
- Not Us
- Believe in Yourself, a youth program operated by the Yellowknives Dene First Nation in Dettah and N'dilo
- Leadership and Resiliency Programs (LRP) offered in high schools (funded by GNWT and the National Crime Prevention Centre)

Other **positive activities for youth** promote positive lifestyles and provide alternatives to using alcohol and drugs:

- Active After-School
- Take a Kid Trapping
- Lights On
- Sports events, such as Dene Games, NWT Track and Field Championships, and Spike It
- Youth mentorship programs
- Programs offered by friendship centres and youth centres
- Emotion-based Social (EBS) Skills Training
- Interact Club at École St. Patrick High School in Yellowknife teaches civic responsibility
- Youth conferences such as YC and Dreamcatchers, as well as regional and territorial conferences
- Cadets and Junior Rangers
- The Phoenix School is a storefront, alternative school that allows youth to pursue their high school diplomas.

Programs and services that contribute to **overall health and wellness** in communities, promote spiritual healing, and provide opportunities for skill development have a positive impact on addictions:

- Cultural events and activities, such as on the land programs, rites of passage camps, spiritual retreats, and drum dance programs
- Workshops that address important issues, such as suicide, grief and loss counselling, substance abuse, mental health issues, and family and lateral violence
- Community justice programs like restorative justice provide alternatives to courts so individuals struggling with addictions can get help without getting a criminal record
- Pre-natal programs
- Healthy Family program
- Events and activities that are inclusive of families
- The Matrix program provides outpatient aftercare for people who are struggling with addictions
- Programs that allow public health workers in high schools, such as the Purple Door in Hay River and the Health Café in Fort Smith
- Group support programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon
- Alcohol free events and activities like the Kole Crook Music Festival and the Midway Lake Music Festival
- National awareness initiatives, like National Addictions Awareness Week, provide opportunities to promote positive messages

## **Appendix B:**

### **The Healing Pillars**

#### **Prevention**

- Includes on-the-land programs focused on youth
- Parenting skill development
- Prenatal support (FASD and drug effects prevention)
- Drug and alcohol education
- Recreation, sports and music
- Rites of passage
- Sober social activities
- Celebrating wellness
- Cultural awareness
- History - how we got here
- Anger management
- Health promotion
- Student exchanges
- Elder/youth engagement
- Affordable housing
- Changing social attitudes towards substance use
- Sober graduations
- Leadership and resiliency training
- Identifying mental health issues

#### **Intervention**

- Identifying and supporting at risk families
- 'Plan of Care' action by Social Services
- 'Teen Intervene' and other programs
- Court directed counselling and treatment
- Justice circles and restorative justice
- Identifying mental health issues

#### **Treatment**

- Residential
- Detox
- On the land with both traditional and clinical support
- Northern and cultural based education and training
- Recognizing the value of experience of support workers
- Research and program innovation
- Healthy relationships
- Elders, Sweat lodges and other culturally relevant and acceptable practices
- Referrals and collaboration to address mental health issues

#### **Outreach**

- Wellness programs
- Providing information
- Visiting people in need
- Being flexible, go where the need is
- Helping clients find support
- Harm reduction

#### **Aftercare**

- 12 step programs and support groups
- Family support programs
- Housing and employment
- On the job training and mentorship
- Upgrading and education
- 'Matrix' and 'Believe in Yourself' programs
- Creation of an aftercare plan
- Celebrating sobriety
- Sober drop in places, social activities
- Safe houses, fitness
- Dealing with grief, trauma, sexual abuse, residential school
- Mobile Team and Healing services
- Spiritual on the land gatherings

#### **Enforcement**

- Wellness and drug courts
- Collaboration and innovation between police, courts and others (inter-agencies, justice committees, community leadership)
- Training and education for front line workers
- Alternatives measures/diversion
- Liquor controls
- Special needs Court Advocacy
- Drug free zones



