

Norman Wells Community Wellness Plan

Drafted by the Norman Wells Land Corporation

1. Introduction

The Norman Wells Community Wellness Plan (NWCWP) is a partnership between the Norman Wells Land Corporation, the Government of Northwest Territories' Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS); along with local youths, leaders and community stakeholders in the community of Norman Wells. The goal of the NWCWP is to increase the participation of leaders, youths and community stakeholders in the development and delivery of health and social programs and services in Norman Wells. Therefore, the Norman Wells Community Wellness Plan strives to have a holistic approach that involves youths, local leaders and community stakeholders that were engaged in the month of February and March of 2013 by the Norman Wells Land Corporation. Participants of the engagement sessions provided feedback on existing wellness programs and services in the community of Norman Wells. Further, participants discussed methods on how to establish on existing wellness programs and services and/or establish new wellness programs and services that will be utilised by the community at large. In essence, all participants were tasked with answering four (4) questions: 1) Where are we now, 2) What do we have to work with, 3) Where do we want to be in the future, and 4) How do we plan to get there.

2. The notion of 'Wellness'

The author of this plan wish to note that the concept and definition of "wellness" within the Community of Norman Wells is subjective to differences of personal and professional experience; therefore the impact of the plan will be determined by the readers and decision makers accordingly. That said majority of the participants throughout the engagement sessions focused on social wellness within the community, as well as active living, while limited discussion on healthy living, nutrition, or mental wellness.

3. Youth Engagement Sessions

The youths were the first to be engaged to discuss the four questions, and during the engagement sessions, youths were tasked to provide their daily activities that can be

categorised into three (3) groups: 1) physical sports, 2) academic, and 3) after school programs and activities.

3.1 Afterschool programs and activities

There are general consensuses among the youths that within the community of Norman Wells, there are a variety of physical sports activities that they can participate in, and more importantly, they enjoy doing so. In terms of academic activities, youths have stated that there are minimal activities that they engage themselves in afterschool as existing programs does not enable them complete their homework assignments. That is, there are limited tutorial services for youths that have difficulties with school work and more so, there has yet to have a sustainable youth oriented afterschool program that involves both academic and non-academic activities. From the youths perspective it is essential to have consistency in regard to the programs that are made available to them as most youths recall of programs that would only last a few months before being cut.

Furthermore, youths in Norman Wells have expressed that there are no programs and services that are available for youths after nine (9) PM nor for youths above the age of eighteen (18). Given such limitations, youths have expressed that regardless of the attractiveness of programs and activities that are being offered in the Town of Norman Wells, the fundamental needs for having a vibrant and healthy community in terms of social programs and services will not be achieved unless programs and services are made available to youths above the age of eighteen (18) and beyond 9:00PM, as most adolescents do not want to be in the same gathering place with youths that is younger than they are. As a result of the engagement sessions with youths, a number of recommendations made by the youths that, in their opinion, would enhance the general wellness in the community of Norman Wells.

3.2 Cinema and Coffee shop

Youths, especially those above the age of eighteen (18), would like to see more gathering between the same age groups such as a “movie night”. The primary argument provided by the youths is that by having a place where they can associate themselves with will lessen the

likelihood of placing themselves in an avoidable situation that would get them in trouble with the law or with other individuals. Further, a place of gathering such as an “open late” coffee shop will ensure that youths have a go to place, especially during months where the school is closed and all other extra-curricular activities are on hiatus. The coffee shop concept would also enable a form of fundraising for school, youth and/or other related activities throughout the year.

3.3 Establishing a Permanent Recreation Centre

Among the many wishes youths have, the general consensus is to have a permanent recreation centre that would allow youths to engage themselves in active and non-active activities such as arts and crafts, general socialisation among the youth groups and a homework club. That reason is that the current Youth and Elder Centre is no longer attractive to youths, regardless of the age, as there has been a lack of upkeep in its interior and the facility itself is, in the opinion of youths, “boring”.

3.4 Bike Trails and Hiking Trails

In terms of physical activities, youths would like to have a bike and/or hiking trail established for summer and winter recreation. Based on the discussions among the youths during the engagement sessions, youths find that the current trails available are not extensive enough nor be suitable for mountain biking. As well, youths would like to see more promotion among organisations for physical activities either from the Town of Norman Wells, the Norman Wells Land Corporation and/or the local high school. In a more specific term, youths would like organisations to sponsor multi-day trips that would include hiking, biking and camping, as many youths have yet to experience the natural wonders of the landscape surrounding the Town of Norman Wells.

4. Leadership Engagement Sessions

Leaderships within the Community of Norman Wells were tasked to answer the same four (4) questions as were given to youths; however the focus of leaderships was on the concept of engagement of youths, traditional and on the land activities, and the need for greater

collaboration between various Government departments. It should be noted that there were limited participation from elected leaders; therefore this section of the plan would require further discussions to ensure inclusivity of leader views and opinions.

4.1 The need to engagement youths

Leaderships within the Town of Norman Wells believes that, as of current, youths are not engaged sufficiently enough to actively participate in government funded programs; which have often resulted in government programs not being fully utilised. That is, of the existing funding programs available from departments that promotes activities such as on the land, and life skills development, only a few organisations apply for the funds and most only apply once which makes it very difficult to retain active participation from youths.

4.2 Collaboration between GNWT departments and local organisations

Leaders of Norman Wells believes that currently every department and local organisations are delivering its own programs and service, which in most cases are duplicate of outcomes and results. As such, leaders believe that a grand scale project should take place that encompasses all departments and organisations that will be delivered in multiple years. Leaders believes that this approach would enable greater funding capacity that would enable larger number of youth participants to take part in, which will therefore increase the overall impact on the well-being of community youths. Additionally, during the discussion it has been noted that often organisations compete for the same participants or funds, therefore an option to resolve such needless competition is to have one organisation or department to manage and implement the project with funds from multiple sources.

5. Community Stakeholder Engagements

The engagement session with local stakeholders and community members focused on the same four (4) questions, however the discussions were focused on healthy living and child care. Participants hold the opinion that the community has some choices for overall wellness in terms of physical activity; and that the community does have a limited variety of choices for individuals to "get active". For example, community members can walk on the trails around the

town, join the 24 hour fitness centre, swim in the pool, skate or play hockey on the ice. Further, as a community, there are groups who organise physical activities, such as the Bear Run, Diva Drills, softball, yoga and many others. The participants further argue that the town's facilities are fairly well maintained and they are somewhat accessible to the residents. However though, in terms of healthy eating, the community only has two grocery stores which offer a selection of healthy food choices and a couple of restaurants.

Most participants believe that given the size of Norman Wells, there is fair amount of healthy choices for residents. That being said, there are improvements that can be made by local leaders and organisations, however the town does have a good variety of choices for individuals to make healthy choices if they choose to do so.

As for future programs and services, participants would like to have quality early child care as most believe it is essential to establishing a vibrant community. Further, there should be more programs and support services made available for new parents through Health & Social Services including but not limited to prenatal care and physical activities for the youths. Overall, community members hold the opinion that there is great variety of activities for adults in the community, but there is a need to start focusing more on youths and getting them engaged in physical activities at an early stage.

Community participants, on an overall basis, believe that there is a need to build partnerships between various departments and local organisations to develop and implement social programs and services within the community; however, historically, most partnerships last less than two years. That said governments and stakeholders must be willing to put forth the financial backing in order to make these improvements. More importantly, community members believe that having a vibrant and healthy community is a shared responsibility, not only the responsibility of one or two groups.

6. Moving Forward note and synthesis

The author of this plan, with all considerations given, that the current information is insufficient to develop a community wellness plan. That is, even though the information gather are directly

from community members, there is perhaps additional information needed in order to achieve a true holistic approach in developing a community wellness plan that are viable, usage and achievable; and that will deliver the results and impacts expected by everyone in the community.

The author would like to suggest the following goals and objects for future references:

- Develop and implement integrated Community Wellness Plans in the community of Norman Wells, in order to leverage existing capacity, increase human resource capacity, create economies of scale and broaden access to services in the community;
- Use best practices from this project that could be developed into community wellness planning templates to facilitate similar wellness planning initiatives in other northern communities; and
- Contribute towards the ability of individual community organisations to identify and address health issues, needs, options and priorities, in order to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population.

Furthermore, it is within the opinion of the author that any wellness programs and/or services should focus on multi-year deliver, with no less than three (3) years in order to ensure that the impacts of such programs and/or services are measureable for its intended results and outcomes. Historically, and based on the discussions with engagement groups, individual organisations and departments would often initiate a program for a single fiscal year, and would then cease to continue said program as program funders or its agents hold the belief that it is not being fully utilised by community members. That said, social programs often require extensive time for community members to utilise and of getting used to.