

2025-26 ANNUAL REPORT

Supporting Wellbeing





Request a Training

Apply now to bring culturally-relevant mental health training to your community



Donate!



If you appreciate our work, please consider making a donation

CONTENTS

Who We Are.....4

How We Work.....5

Year in Review.....6

Welcomes & Farewells.....8

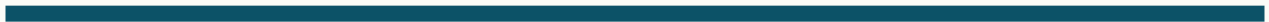
What We Do.....11

Highlights.....19

Lessons Learned.....24

In Numbers.....28

Thank You!.....30



Who we are

Supporting Wellbeing (SWB) was established in 2020 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. We envision a future where Northern residents have access to on the land programs that are culturally affirming and trauma-informed, supporting and strengthening Indigenous cultures, languages, and ways of life throughout the North.

SWB is guided by an Indigenous-led steering committee and advisory council with land-based leaders from across the Northwest Territories (NWT). SWB delivers a six module training that teaches people how to support their participants and staff on the land.

SWB was created to respond to the community-identified need for a made-in-the-north, trauma-informed, and culturally affirming training for people who deliver land-based programs. Since its inception, SWB has centred Indigenous approaches to wellbeing and is grounded in the experiences of northern land-based programmers.

Our staff



Rachel Cluderay
Project Director



Maxine Lacorne
Project Coordinator



Katharine Thomas
Communications Coordinator



Cole Hardisty
Casual Training Coordinator

How we work

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

Indigenous Self-Determination: supporting Indigenous sovereignty, rights, and the value of Indigenous knowledge and ways of being.



Photo by Katharine Thomas

Year in Review



August 15-17

Maxine gives a presentation at the Northern Gender Equality Gathering in Inuvik



August 25-29

SWB Training in Echaot'ı Kóę



January 23

Virtual Q&A about SWB Training



January 21

Jennie, Matt, and Dene join the SWB Steering Committee and Advisory Council



January 26-30

Dehcho First Nations SWB Training in Łíídlı Kúę



Welcomes

This year, we welcomed three new Steering Committee and Advisory Council members, and one new Casual Training Coordinator to the team. With these new SC/AC members, all NWT regions were represented in our leadership team! By hiring a Casual Training Coordinator, we were able to enhance our capacity to support communities in the coordination and planning of SWB trainings.



Jennie McPherson

Jennie is Sahtúgot'ı̨ne Dene from Délı̨ne. She has spent over twenty years supporting Indigenous-led initiatives grounded in land, language, culture, and wellness across local, territorial, federal, and international contexts. She joins our Advisory Council as the Sahtú Representative.

Matt joins our Steering Committee as the South Slave Representative. He grew up in Sòmba K'è, and his family are from Salt River First Nation and Nova Scotia. Matt loves being out on the Land. He is currently finishing up a degree in Indigenous Governance.



Matthew Brien



Denenize Basil

Denenize is originally from Łutsek'e and now lives in Sòmba K'è. He was raised on the land, and has been involved in many on the land programs over the past 15 years. Denenize joins our Advisory Council as the Akaitcho Representative.

Cole joined our team from January to March 2026 to add much-appreciated support as our Casual Training Coordinator during a very busy training season. Cole is from Łı́ıdlı̨ Kúę and Sòmba K'è and is one of our most experienced SWB facilitators.



Cole Hardisty

Farewells



Brenda Baton

A huge thank you to Brenda Baton for her service on our Steering Committee as our Sahtú representative. Over her 3 years with our organization, she ensured that Sahtú voices and perspectives were reflected in our work. Her contributions strengthened our evaluation framework, supported programming decisions, and guided human resource matters.



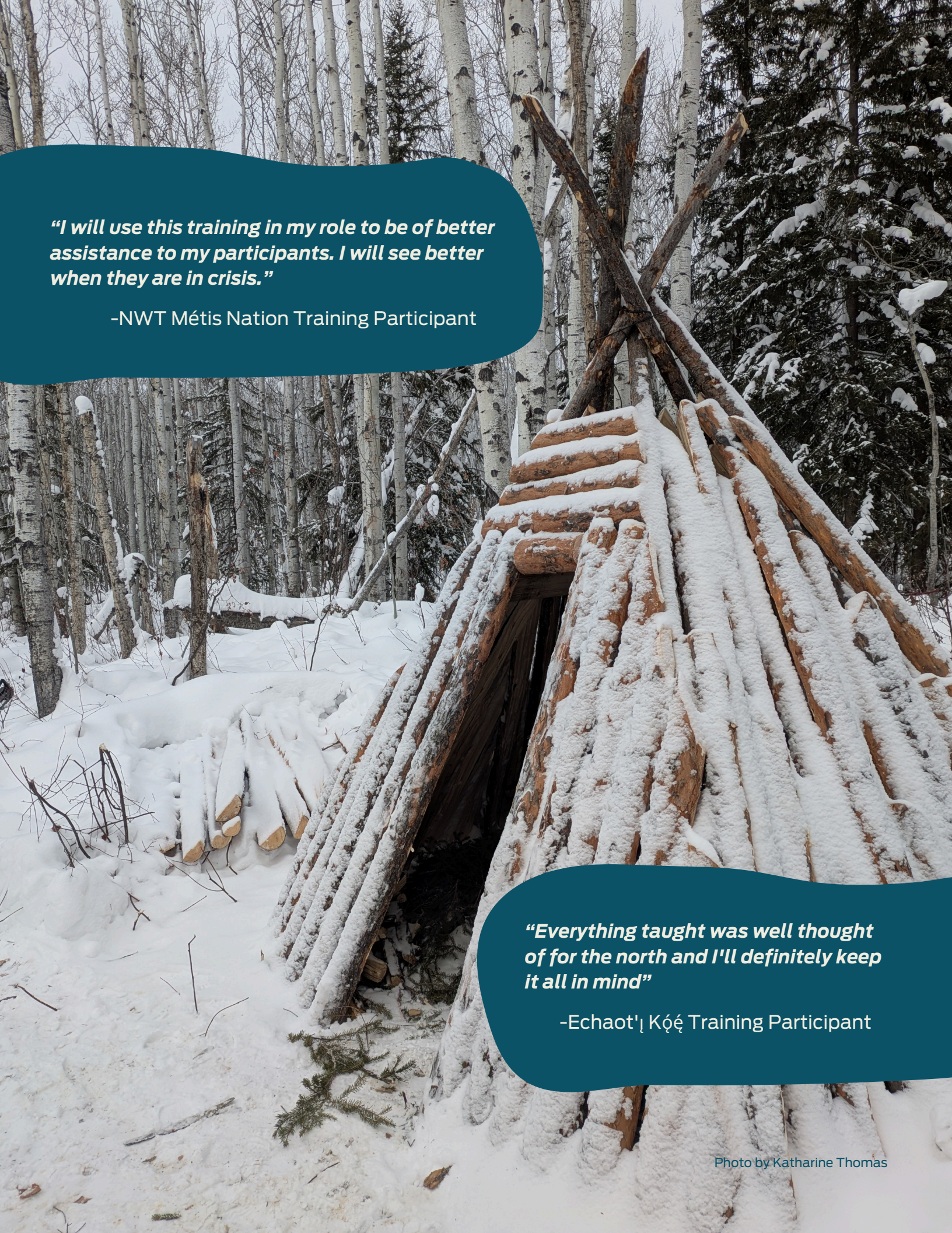
Brenda Dragon

We're very grateful to Brenda Dragon for her contribution to our Advisory Council. She brought strong leadership experience and valuable connections to the South Slave region. Brenda contributed her expertise to many areas of our project, including policy development, curriculum design, business planning, communications, and human resources. Her business expertise and land-based knowledge was invaluable. We're so thankful for the perspective she brought to the project.



Aneka Westergreen

A heartfelt thank you to Aneka Westergreen for being a part of our Steering Committee for the past six years, helping shape SWB from an idea to a full-fledged organization. Aneka played a large role in the development of the SWB Training curriculum and even took part in the pilot training. Her leadership, insight, and professionalism have been deeply appreciated and will be missed.

A photograph of a winter forest. In the foreground, a log cabin is partially visible, its roof and walls covered in snow. To the left, a stack of logs is also covered in snow. The background is filled with tall, thin trees, some with snow on their branches. The overall scene is serene and cold.

“I will use this training in my role to be of better assistance to my participants. I will see better when they are in crisis.”

-NWT Métis Nation Training Participant

“Everything taught was well thought of for the north and I'll definitely keep it all in mind”

-Echaot'ı Kóé Training Participant

What we do

2022-2027 Strategic Plan

This section is a summary of the 2025-2026 strategic plan activities. For a complete version of SWB's strategic plan, please visit supportingwellbeing.ca

Strategic Direction #1

Planning for Operational Efficiency

Strategic Direction #2

Communicating & Advocating for Benefits of Supporting Wellbeing

Strategic Direction #3

Creating, Delivering, and Sustaining Innovative Curriculum

Strategic Direction #4

Support Diverse Needs of Communities

Direction #1: Planning for Operational Efficiency

- Created an operational workplan and budget for the 2026-2027 fiscal year
- Established and coordinated quarterly meetings with our Steering Committee and Advisory Council, including our annual in-person meeting
- Hosted monthly staff meetings and weekly 1-on-1 check-ins between staff and the Project Director
- Updated our Human Resources and SWB Trainings policies and procedures
- Implemented performance reviews for the Project Coordinator and Communications Coordinator
- Leveraged approximately \$696,400 from twelve contributing organizations to supplement the \$500,000 Arctic Inspiration Prize award received in 2021. In addition, SWB received donations, fee-for-service revenue, and substantial in-kind support from partner organizations.



- Supported staff in their professional development, including:
 - Maxine completed Psychological First Aid Training
 - Rachel and Kat attended Dene Nahjo & YKDFN Hide Camp
 - Rachel and Maxine completed the Crisis & Trauma Research Institute's Responding to Trauma and Grief with Decolonized Practices training
 - Maxine and Rachel participated in a Facilitation and Evaluation Workshop hosted by the NWT Literacy Council
 - Maxine and Kat completed the ICA Facilitators' Group Consensus Methods training
 - Kat attended regular Tłychq Yatì lessons with Collège Nordique and Bushkids



Photo by Katharine Thomas



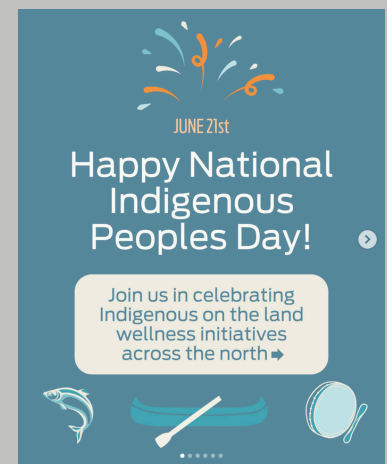
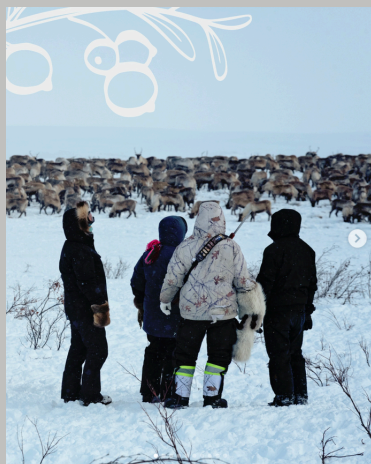
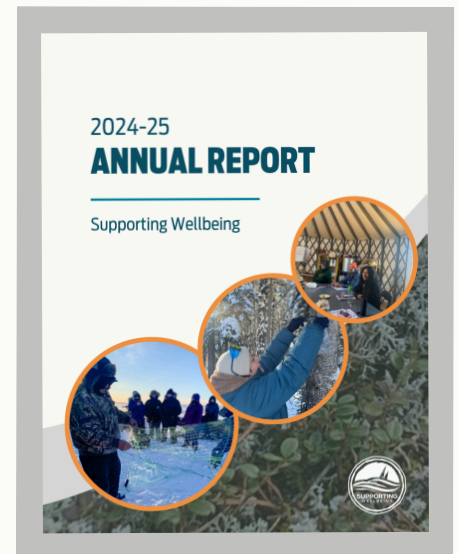
Photo by Katharine Thomas



Photo by Rachel Cluderay

Direction #2: Communicating & Advocating for Benefits of SWB

- Published our 2024-25 annual report
- Hosted a Virtual Q&A to answer questions about SWB Training
- Purchased a camera to better capture photos of trainings
- Grew social media following by over 40% and reach by over 200% compared to the previous year
- Added tools and resources to our website for easy sharing with training participants
- Received over 30 applications for Supporting Wellbeing training, thanks to a dedicated social media campaign, cross-posting on community pages, and widely-shared posts



- Hired a photographer to document activities during the Reindeer Station training
- Took part in multiple networking events and opportunities, including:
 - Maxine attended Resilient Together Strengthening NWT Communities in Crisis Conference hosted by United Way NWT
 - Maxine attended and presented at the Northern Gender Equality Gathering, hosted by Canadian Women's Foundation in Inuvik
 - Kat attended the Northern Gender Equality Gathering, hosted by Canadian Women's Foundation in Kangiqtinik / Rankin Inlet
 - Maxine attended three meetings as part of the Complex Trauma Project, hosted by Thunderbird Partnership Foundation
 - Kat attended a Roundtable on Northern Disaster and Emergency Response and follow-up virtual meetings, hosted by Canadian Women's Foundation
 - Rachel was appointed the NWT representative for the NWT On The Land Collaborative



Photo by Katharine Thomas



Photo by CWF



Photo by Brian Kowikchuk



Photo by Katharine Thomas

Direction #3: Creating, Delivering, & Sustaining Innovative Curriculum

- Cole Hardisty and Rachel Cluderay delivered a five-day SWB training in August at Muskeg River, in partnership with Acho Dene Koe First Nation, Dehcho First Nations, Łíídlı́ Kúę First Nation, Kátł'odeeche First Nation, and Zhatıé Kúę Friendship Centre, to five participants
- In partnership with NWT Métis Nation, Kristielyn Jones and Cole Hardisty spent five days delivering the SWB training in Tthebacha/ Fort Smith to ten participants while being mentored by Rachel Cluderay
- We hosted the annual SWB Facilitator Gathering where ten SWB facilitators came together in Sòmba K'è/ Yellowknife for three days in November to learn from each other's facilitation experiences and receive certification in ICA's Group Consensus Methods training



- In January, Kat Thomas and Dēneze Nakehk'ō delivered their first five-day SWB training to 12 participants in Łíídlı́ Kúę, with mentorship from Rachel Cluderay, through a partnership with Dehcho First Nations' Health and Wellness Department

- In partnership with Tłı̨chǫ Government, Cole Hardisty and Wendy Lahey led 11 staff from the Department of Health and Wellness in a five day SWB training in Whatì this February
- In February, we partnered with Inuvialuit Regional Corporation to deliver a SWB training to nine participants at Reindeer Station, facilitated by Cole Hardisty and Kat Thomas with mentorship from Rachel Cluderay
- Four facilitators-in-training were mentored in total, with three successfully completing the mentorship process to become SWB Facilitators
- Cole Hardisty, Dēneze Nakehk’o, and Kat Thomas were mentored from Facilitators-in-Training to Facilitators
- SWB collected evaluations from Facilitators-in-Training and SWB training participants
- We completed a 5-year outcome evaluation
- We hired curriculum developers Wendy Lahey and Kaila Jefferd-Moore to develop Facilitator Training materials and a pathway for SWB Facilitators to become Mentors and Facilitator Trainers
- Updated and finalized the facilitator guide and participant guide for the SWB Training

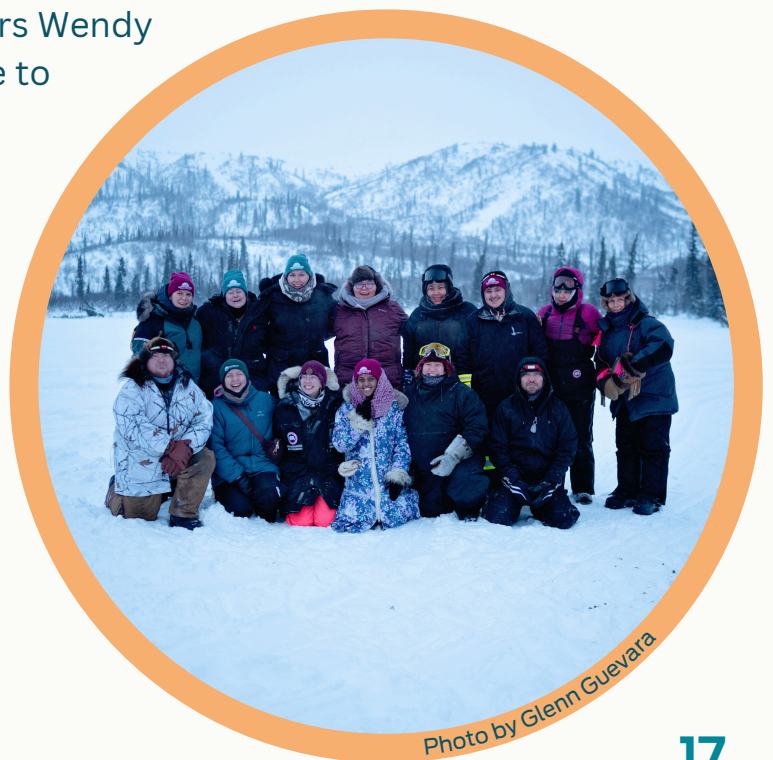


Photo by Glenn Guevara

Direction #4: Supporting Diverse Needs of Communities

- Created a venue checklist to clearly communicate venue needs to partners
- Developed and implemented a partnership agreement that outlines roles, responsibilities and expectations for SWB and our partners
- Partnered with several organizations to deliver Supporting Wellbeing trainings, Acho Dene Koe First Nation, Dehcho First Nations, Łíídlıı Kúę First Nation, Kátł'odeeche First Nation, and Zhatie Kue Friendship Centre, Tłıchǫ Government, and Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
- Secured funding to support land-based activities at each SWB training
- Created a tabling kit to provide an arts-based, grounding space at events and gatherings

- Appointed Steering Committee and Advisory Council members representing all regions of the NWT

- Delivered SWB trainings in four regions and five communities with participants attending from eleven different communities

- Took part in a community of practice hosted by the Canadian Women's Foundation to inform the development of a northern-specific online curriculum of best-practices for working with youth



Photo by Rachel Cluderay

HIGHLIGHTS



Photo by Katharine Thomas

Mentoring new facilitators

Last year we celebrated the success of our facilitator training, where eight people from across the NWT took part in a week-long training and became SWB Facilitators-in-Training (FITs). This past year, we built on that momentum by providing our new FITs opportunities to co-facilitate SWB trainings with the support of a mentor. After each training, FITs and their mentor reflect on the successes and growth opportunities from the facilitation, and jointly decide if a FIT is ready to “graduate” to Facilitator, and be able to facilitate without a mentor.



Complete Supporting Wellbeing Modules

Participate in, and successfully complete, all six Supporting Wellbeing training modules.

Attend Facilitator Training

Attend, and successfully participate in, a Supporting Wellbeing Facilitator Training.

Work as a Facilitator-in-Training

Facilitate Supporting Wellbeing training(s) with a mentor until you both decide you are ready to facilitate without a mentor.

Become a Facilitator

Maintain certification by attending annual facilitator gathering.

Of the eight FITs who completed the Facilitator Training in February 2025, four delivered a training with a mentor this past year: Cole Hardisty, Kristielyn Jones, Dēneze Nakeh'ō, and Kat Thomas. All four were mentored by Rachel Cluderay at trainings in Tthebacha / Fort Smith, Reindeer Station, Łíídlıı Kúę / Fort Simpson, Délıneę, and Echaot'ı Kóę / Fort Liard. After facilitating with Rachel's support, Cole, Dēneze, and Kat felt ready to deliver trainings without mentor support and are now full facilitators!

Mentorship is important for helping build the confidence of FITs and ensuring the quality and consistency of SWB's messaging. Rachel's support was invaluable to the FITs and provided additional support to the training participants.

As a result, in just one year we nearly doubled our facilitator team and expanded our capacity and flexibility to deliver SWB trainings. We're excited to see our facilitators continue to grow their strengths and are looking forward to seeing more FITs mentored over the next year!



Photo by Rachel Cluderay



Photo by Rachel Cluderay



Photo by Katharine Thomas



Reindeer Station Training

In February 2026, we partnered with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) to deliver a five-day SWB training at Reindeer Station, outside of Inuvik. This location is special for us as the site where the first SWB training was piloted back in 2021.

The training was co-facilitated by Cole Hardisty and Kat Thomas, with mentorship from Rachel Cluderay and emotional support from Jo-Ellen Lyslo. Nine participants took part, representing IRC, Parks Canada, and the Inuvik Youth Centre. A major highlight was how well the group connected and their willingness to learn, contribute, laugh and grow together.

“I’m bringing specific practices/tools directly into my programming. I’m hoping to organize this training again for our staff”

-Reindeer Station Training Participant

Land-based activities were memorable and grounding. IRC organized a visit to the reindeer herd and opportunity to learn from the herders, dropped off a whole reindeer for the group to fix together, and a massive evening bonfire on the last night we spent together at camp. On top of that, we were able to walk and snowmobile around the camp and evenings saw multiple concurrent card games take place in the dining space. These moments strengthened relationships and contributed to a general sense of wellbeing and community.

We so appreciate the amount of time and effort from all of the IRC and Reindeer Station staff, who played a large part in keeping us safe, warm, and supported; contributing to the overall success of the training. This training reinforced the value of hosting SWB trainings in on the land and overnight camp settings.



Photo by Glenn Guevara

Lessons learned

One of the most meaningful parts of this work is that it is always evolving. Each challenge we encounter becomes an opportunity to grow, adapt, and strengthen how we support staff, facilitators, participants, and partner communities. This year's lessons learned reflect both the complexity of delivering land-based, community-led training in the North, and the ongoing commitment to improving how we do this work in a good way.



Strengthening Partnership Planning and Delivery

Developing and sustaining reciprocal relationships with partners is central to the Supporting Wellbeing training. This year, we learned that clearer communication is needed at the beginning about each partner's roles and responsibilities in delivering a successful training.

In response, we developed a more formal partnership agreement that outlines expectations for both parties, including timelines for receiving key documents. We also developed an internal training procedures document and introduced a training schedule of no more than one training per month, helping to reduce burnout for the SWB team.

These changes help ensure shared understanding, improve coordination, and support a more sustainable approach to delivering high-quality trainings, while maintaining the integrity of the program.



2

Expanding Capacity to Meet Growing Demand

A continued challenge for Supporting Wellbeing is the gap between growing demand and existing delivery capacity. This year, we received over 50 applications from Indigenous organizations and governments interested in hosting a training. However, our ability to respond is limited by a small core team, a small number of Facilitators and Mentors, and the competing responsibilities of those involved in delivery.

To begin addressing this, we are actively seeking funding opportunities to hire an additional full-time staff member. We are also strengthening mentorship pathways to support Facilitators-in-Training to become Facilitators, and developing clearer progression pathways for experienced Facilitators to become Facilitator Trainers or Mentors.

These steps will help build long-term capacity within the program, strengthen sustainability, and support more consistent delivery across communities.



Photo by Rachel Cluderay



3

Strengthening Participant Accessibility and Support

Another key area of learning this year relates to ensuring participants can fully access and feel supported within the training environment.

Emotional support during trainings


While having local emotional support people is valuable and helps ground the training in community context, we learned that existing relationships between participants and support persons can sometimes create barriers to accessing support, particularly where privacy, family dynamics, or community relationships are involved. We also learned that in some cases, individuals identified for this role may not be comfortable providing the needed level of support in a group setting.

To address this, we will strengthen communication with partner organizations about the role, responsibilities, and required skills for emotional support providers. We will also work more closely with partners to ensure selected individuals are appropriate to support all participants, and where needed, explore bringing in external emotional support workers to provide additional neutrality and confidentiality.

Language accessibility

We also learned that language can be a barrier for some participants, as English is often a second language and many participants are most comfortable in their Indigenous language. This can impact understanding, participation, and confidence in engaging with training content.

To address this, we will provide facilitators with more tools to support Indigenous language speakers, including strategies for plain language delivery, pacing, and creating space for clarification. We will also work with partners in advance of trainings to better understand English language and literacy levels within participant groups, and seek funding to include interpretation supports where needed.



“Thanks to this training I will be more aware of where people are at and show empathy and compassion”

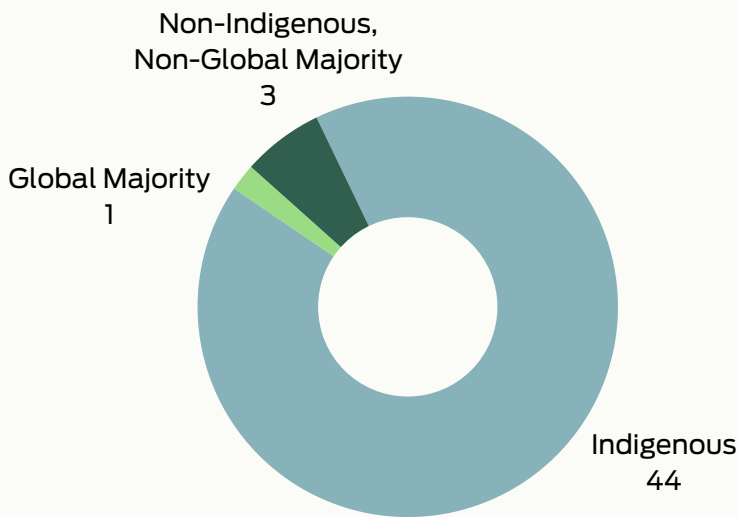
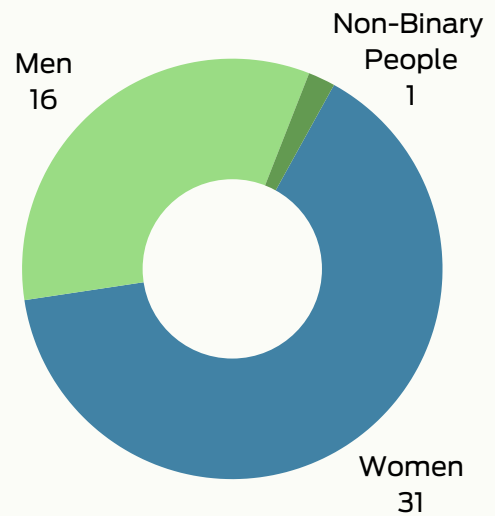
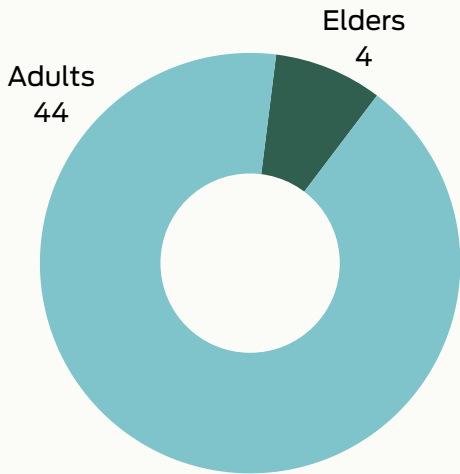
-Dehcho First Nations Training Participant

“This training will help me support people, teach youth, share knowledge, speak wisdom”

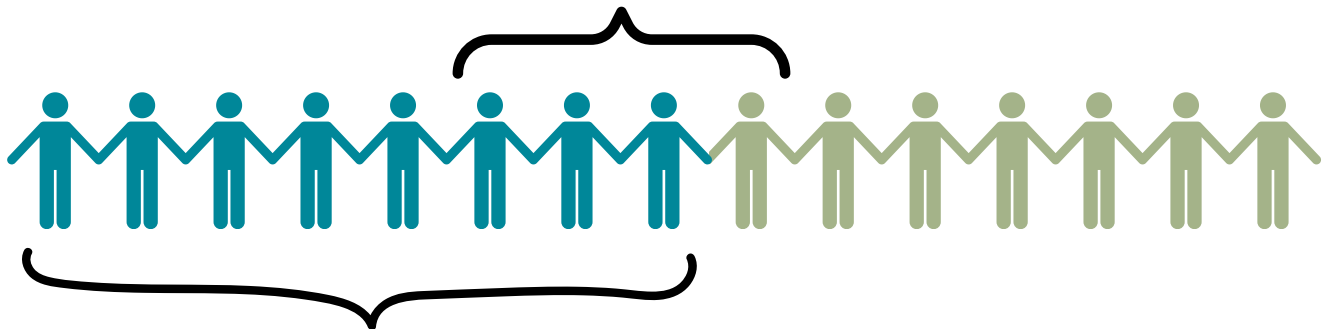
-Tłı̨ch̨ Government Training Participant

In numbers

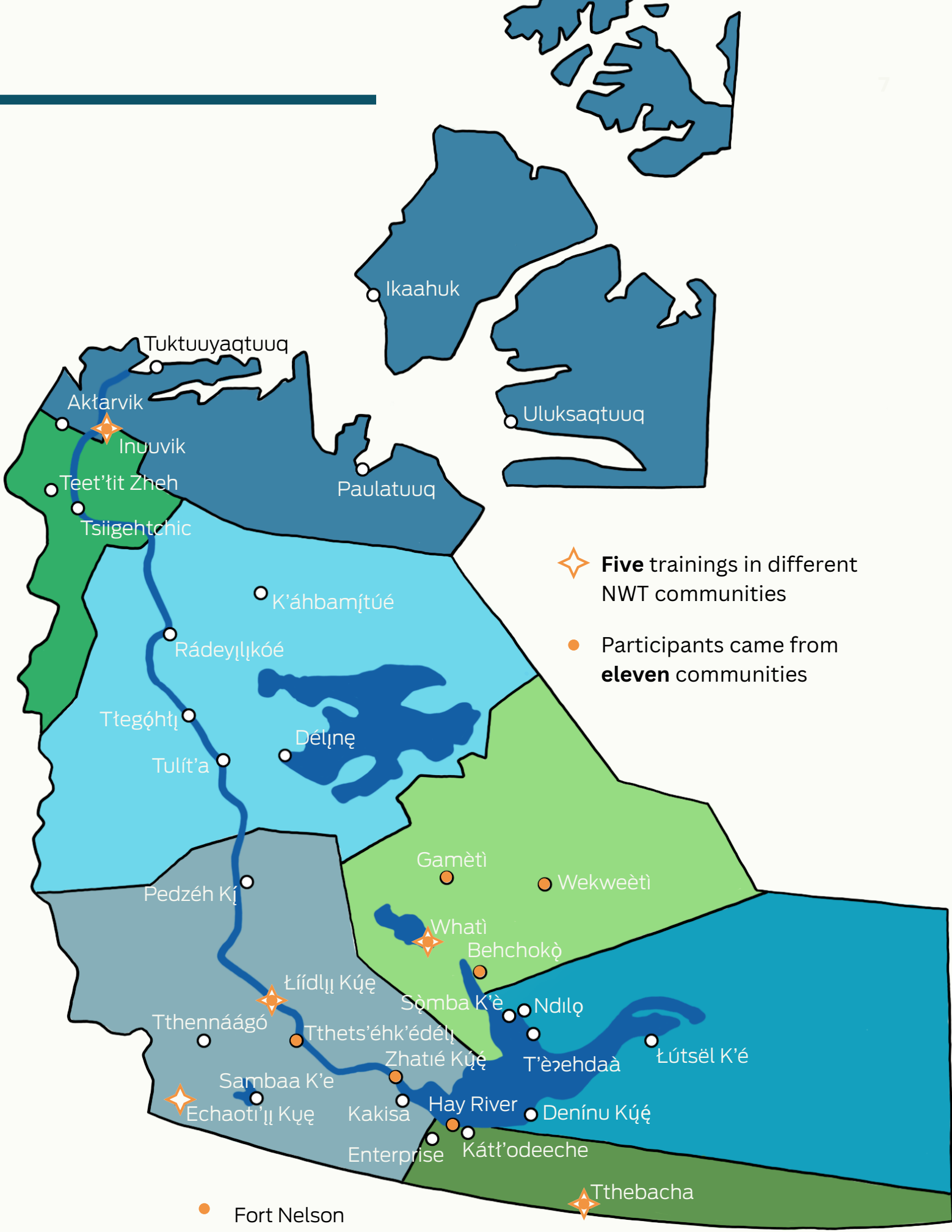
48 people completed SWB Training



Four Facilitators-in-Training (FITs) were mentored



Three FITs became Facilitators, bringing our number of Facilitators to **eight**



- ★ Five trainings in different NWT communities
- Participants came from **eleven** communities

● Fort Nelson

Mársı | kinanāskomitin | Thank you | Merci Haj' | Quana | Qujannamiik | Quyanainni Máhsı | Máhsı | Mahsı

We owe our successful years to the dedication of our Steering and Advisory Committees, staff, partners, and many invaluable contractors! Thank you to our funders and sponsors who make our work possible. We are looking forward to another great year ahead!

Steering Committee

Jimmy Ruttan (Chair), Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
Kristen Tanche (Vice Chair), Dehcho First Nations
Matthew Brien (Vice Chair), South Slave Representative
Brenda Ferdinand-Baton, Sahtú Dene Council
Anneka Westergreen, GNWT Department of Health and Social Services

Advisory Council

Mandee McDonald, Dene Nahjo
Tammy Steinwand, Tłıchǫ Government
Brenda Dragon, South Slave Representative
Tanya Snowshoe, Gwich'in Representative
Denenize Basil, Akaitcho Representative
Jennie McPherson, Sahtú Representative

Staff

Rachel Cluderay, Project Director
Maxine Lacorne, Project Coordinator
Katharine Thomas, Communications Coordinator
Cole Hardisty, Casual Training Coordinator



Training Team

Cindy Browning, Emotional Support
Cole Hardisty, Facilitator
Dēneze Nakehk’o, Facilitator-in-Training
Katharine Thomas, Facilitator-in-Training
Kristielyn Jones, Emotional Support & Facilitator-in-Training
Jo-Ellen Lyslo, Emotional Support
Maxine Lacorne, Emotional Support
Mike Nitsiza, Emotional Support
Rachel Cluderay, Facilitator & Mentor
Wendy Lahey, Facilitator & Mentor

Partners

Acho Dene Koe First Nation
Arctic Inspiration Prize
Aurora Heat
Canadian Women’s Foundation
Dehcho First Nations
Dechina Centre for Research and Learning
Dene Nahjo
Future Generations Foundation
GNWT Department of Health and Social Services
Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
Indigenous Services Canada
Hotì ts'eeda
Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
Makeway Foundation
McConnell Foundation
Nature United
NWT Métis Nation
NWT On The Land Collaborative
Sahtú Dene Council
Tłı̨chǫ Government



Photo by Rachel Cluderay



Photo by Rachel Cluderay



Supporting Wellbeing
A Project on Makeway's Shared Platform

300-4902 St.
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P8
supportingwellbeing.ca

 @supportingwb  @supportingwellbeing