



FINDING OUR POWER TOGETHER

ANNUAL REPORT

2021

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FROM THE DIRECTOR



Nicole Ineese-Nash

Boozhoo. Songe Wabigwanikwe niindizhinikaaz, Mamawmattawa nindonjiba, mukwa nindodem. Welcome everyone to our second annual report! My name is Nicole Ineese-Nash (Wildflower Woman) and I am the co-founder and director of Finding Our Power Together (FOPT).

As I have reflected on our second year of operation, I am overcome with admiration, gratitude, and pride. In 2020, myself and a handful of Indigenous and allied youth advocates decided to pull together to support the Indigenous communities across Canada who we know would be left out of many public decision making processes. We knew young people personally in remote First Nations and urban centers who struggled with navigating the isolating and anxiety provoking landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic. We heard from them about loss, grief, and strife; but we also heard about their resiliency, their tenacity, and their desire to do something different. We heard about their power.

As the COVID-19 pandemic waged on, we continued to expand our reach and approach. We developed new programs and worked alongside a number of Indigenous youth across Canada to support each other in this time of uncertainty. And from my perspective, we all learned and grew through these experiences. I am incredibly excited to share with you the work that we have been doing across Canada this past year and the impact we hope to continue making in the lives of Indigenous young people.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

None of what we have accomplished would be possible without our community members who graciously support us and move our work forward. Whether that be through sharing our information, volunteering, working with us, or donating, I am beyond grateful for every single person who has supported the Finding Our Power Together movement in some way or another. What started as a single fundraising event in 2016 has turned into something much bigger, and that is all because of the amazing people who choose to step into their power and share it with others.

If I have learned anything from the last year, it is that we are stronger together. There is no one on this earth who can conquer everything alone (believe me I have tried!). It is more crucial now than ever that we continue to support each other, to hold space for each other, and to spread love and compassion. Finding Our Power Together seeks to exemplify our cultural teachings and beliefs that everyone holds knowledge and gifts; and it is each of our responsibilities to share those gifts with the world. I hope this message finds you in good spirits and good health and inspires you to harness your potential and encourage others to do the same! This is how we find our power together.

I look forward to the year ahead, with a renewed sense of excitement and commitment to imaging a post-COVID future, together.

Miigwetch,

Nicole Inceese-Nash

ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION

FINDING OUR POWER TOGETHER

Finding Our Power Together (FOPT) is an Indigenous-led non-profit organization supporting Indigenous youth to access support and relationships that enable them to thrive. FOPT offers a variety of therapeutic and educational programs designed to develop community, increase capacity, and promote wholistic wellbeing, particularly to save young people from preventable death. We collectively understand the value in bringing together young people and community members from various communities to share resources and maintain connection; We know we can find our power together.

HISTORY

FOPT began as a community-based initiative in Nibinamik First Nation in 2016, founded by Indigenous youth from Nibinamik and other communities in Treaty 9 territory. At this time, many young people had attempted or completed suicide in Nibinamik and surrounding communities. Youth in Nibinamik sought to support their own people and worked with members of Ryerson University to film a documentary video, sharing their experiences of systemic discrimination and colonialism. More than that though, they shared their messages of hope and support for the young people in their community and across Turtle Island.

This film premiered at a fundraising event in 2017 at Ryerson University in Toronto which brought together nearly 400 Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies to share in collective solidarity. We have since grown to support communities and youth across Canada in learning and developing skills and practices to promote life and wellbeing. We registered as a formal nonprofit in May 2020 and have shifted to online support as a result of COVID-19.



OUR VISION

We envision a world where:

- Indigenous young people are rooted in who they are with access to cultural knowledge, language, and ceremony
- Where Indigenous youth have a strong commitment to life through their interconnections to others, to land, and to spirit
- Where Indigenous youth have support from their families, communities, and societies to develop the skills and gifts they would like to
- Where Indigenous youth understand that they are valued, important, and belong
- Where they know their power and use it to help others

Our ultimate goal is to end preventable death by suicide in Indigenous communities and support our young people to thrive.

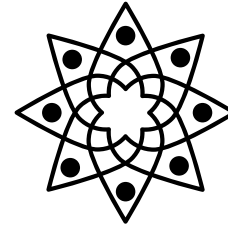
OUR MISSION

Our mission is to support Indigenous young people to realize their own priorities and goals and gain access to various supports they may benefit from. We work towards this goal through developing and facilitating programs and services that: connect Indigenous youth with one another and Indigenous mentors/professionals; utilize traditional Indigenous practices and cultures; increase social connectedness and resilience through group and individual counseling; provide training, skills development opportunities, and activities for practical learning and growth; and promote pride in Indigenous identity and various Indigenous lifeways through sharing and relationship building.

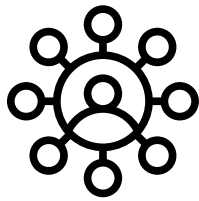
OUR PRINCIPLES



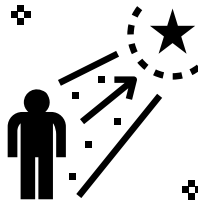
We promote **culture** by incorporating Indigenous teachings, values and language into our mental health practice, where appropriate.



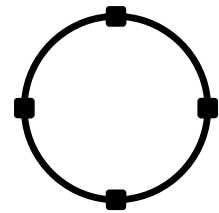
We encourage **interconnection** by welcoming relationships with the land, ancestors and spirit in our mental health practice.



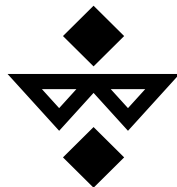
Relationality is fostering caring, reciprocal and respectful relationships with the self, individual and communities in order to nurture the connection we have with all things in creation.



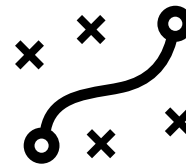
Self Discovery and Determination is supporting the youth to better understand themselves and their emotions and their reactions in order to provide appropriate options for their health



We support **wholism** though honoring individuals in all facets of the self and promoting self-acceptance.



We encourage the exploration of balanced living through reflection and practice of care within all aspects of the self to achieve **balance restoration**.



Context Specificity; we actively acknowledge environmental and historical factors that have and continue to impact each individual and their lived-reality and adapt to suit the specific needs of the individuals and communities.

OUR TEAM

Our team is an interdisciplinary group of staff, students, and volunteers who work holistically to support community needs. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous team members support one another and the community to reach their self-determined goals through the sharing of their various backgrounds in Indigenous worldviews, Child and Youth care, early childhood education and development, psychology, social work, and arts-based methods.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

JUDY FINLAY

JUDY FINLAY Board Member

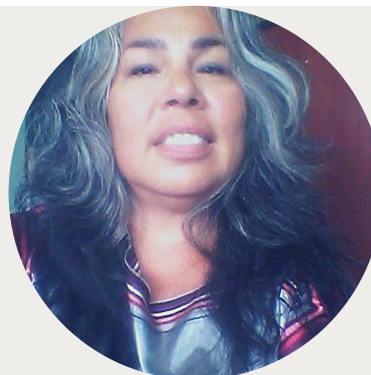
Judy Finlay is an associate professor and graduate program director in the Faculty of Community Services at Ryerson University and has been a faculty member in the School of Child and Youth Care since 2007. She is currently the co-chair and principal investigator of the Cross-Over Youth Project, which is designed to learn ways to interrupt the trajectory of youth in the care of the state from entering the youth justice system. Finlay was the longest standing child and youth advocate in Canada and was Ontario's chief advocate from 1991 to 2007. She has worked for more than three decades in the areas of child welfare and children's mental health.



CECILE AKIWENZIE

CECILE AKIWENZIE Board Member

Cecile Akiwenzie-Martin is an Ojibway First Nations woman of the Turtle Clan originally from Neyaashiinigmiing and married into Mohawk tradition, currently residing in Six Nations of the Grand River First Nations Territory. Cecile is also a mother, a Nokomis, a Lodge Conductor, a Sundancer, an Aboriginal Midwife, RPN, Reflexologist, Aromatherapist, Artist and Entrepreneur. Cecile has received their Spirit name (Manitou Waabshki Mshkiniinh), completed my first strawberry fast, received songs, sundanced in South Dakota and was trained to conduct the Sacred Grandmother Full Moon Lodge. Upon completion, Cecile received a Sacred Pipe for the lodge all under the instruction of the Late Frank Ewart Settee. Cecile has now over 20 years of experience and training in various areas of health and well-being work, providing services to families and people of all ages and from all walks of life.



ARLENE HACHE

ARLENE HACHE Board Member

Arlene Hache is a grassroots woman who has experienced homelessness and traumatic impacts of childhood violence. She currently sits as a member of the National Poverty Council. Arlene founded, and over two decades, led an urban-based family resource centre that provided support to marginalized women and their families, the majority of which were Indigenous. She is well-known across Canada's Arctic as an advocate for social change and in recognition of her work was awarded the Order of Canada in 2009 and then the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012. Of equal importance, Arlene was honoured with a Star Blanket ceremony guided by Wisdom Keepers and hosted by Keepers of the Circle, an Indigenous Hub in Northeastern Ontario. Arlene is a published author and has participated on several research teams that give voice to people with lived experience.



OUR TEAM

CURRENT STAFF

NICOLE INEESSE-NASH

NICOLE INEESSE-NASH Director

Nicole Ineese-Nash is an Anishinaabe (Oji-Cree) scholar and a member of Constance Lake First Nation. Nicole is currently completing a PhD in Social Justice Education and Indigenous Health at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto where she is researching land-based education as a mechanism for youth leadership and spiritual healing. Nicole completed both her BA and masters degrees in Early Childhood Studies and Psychology at Ryerson University. She is the director and co-founder of Finding Our Power Together: A non-profit organization providing mental health services, cultural programming, and educational support to Indigenous youth.



NYLE JOHNSTON

NYLE JOHNSTON Cultural Director

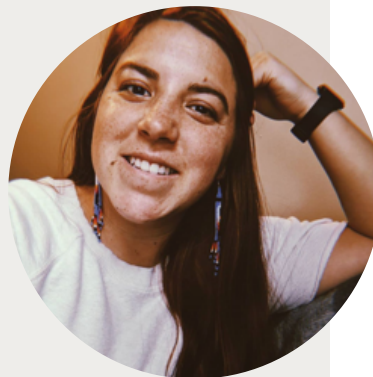
MNyle is an Anishnaabe artist, storyteller and Oshkaabewis (Traditional Helper) from Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation. His art depicts the interconnectedness of all living things and incorporates teachings based on traditional knowledge. Nyle has worked on numerous projects supporting community organizations such as Anishnawbe Health Toronto, 7th Generation Image Makers, Chippewas of Nawash Health Centre, TakingITGlobal, Canadian Roots Exchange, Lower Simcoe Underpass Mural Project, Bold Realities Project, Sketch Toronto and Ink Indigenous Tattoo Studio and Gallery. His work draws inspiration from woodland painters, storytellers and the traditions of his Anishnaabe culture.



VANESSA NICHOLSON

VANESSA NICHOLSON Building Our Bundle Program Coordinator

Vanessa is an Anishinaabe Child and Youth Counsellor and member of Sagamok Anishnawbek. She has an undergraduate degree in Forensic Psychology and a Master's in Child and Youth Care (CYC). She is currently a CYC Counsellor with the Toronto District School Board. She has years of experience working with youth of all backgrounds in a variety of capacities, but most specifically in First Nation Communities within Northern Ontario. Vanessa has a background in child and youth care, trauma-informed and community-based youth practices. Vanessa began her work with FOPT as a CYC placement student in Nibinamik First Nation in the 2018-2019 academic year as a requirement for completion of her graduate studies.



OUR TEAM

CURRENT STAFF

KAITLYN WILCOX

KAITLYN WILCOX **Administrative Coordinator**

Kaitlyn (she/her) is a mixed Potawatomi woman. Through cultural resurgence, Kaitlyn has been unapologetically embarking on a decolonizing journey through the revitalization and reclamation of traditional ways of knowing, being, and doing. Apart from her role at Finding Our Power Together, Kaitlyn is completing her Bachelor's of Social Work with a double minor in Philosophy and Psychology while also en route to obtaining the Indigenous Knowledges and Experiences Certificate at X University. Additionally, Kaitlyn is also a teaching assistant at X University for social work-related courses. Kaitlyn employs anti-oppressive, strengths-based, trauma-informed approaches to social work, emphasizing decolonization, Indigenization, and cultural safety.



MINOWAY SINCLAIR

MINOWAY SINCLAIR **Youth Mentor**

Minoway Sinclair is an Anishinaabe community facilitator, decolonial consultant, and educator. She is Rainbow Trout Fish Clan and first-degree Midewiwin. Minoway was born and raised in Toronto on the shores of Niigaanii Gichigami. Her father is from St Peters Indian Settlement, formerly Peguis' settlement in Treaty 1 territory, Manitoba, and her mother is a first-generation Settler and intergenerational Jewish holocaust survivor. Minoway holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Work and a Master of Arts degree in Indigenous Governance. Her focus in both her Master's and doctoral work centers on Indigenous conceptions of strength, wellness and care. She is currently working towards her PhD in Social Work at the University of Victoria.



OUR TEAM

STUDENTS AND VOLUNTEERS

The team here at Finding Our Power Together wants to sincerely thank all of the amazing students and volunteers that have selflessly supported us throughout 2021! It is with our students and volunteers that we are able to thrive as an organization to create meaningful programming and foster connections with Indigenous youth. Chi-miigwetch!

JENNIFER DOWNIE
KELSEY WHISSEL
ANNE CHERIAN
ALINA PROVIDENCE
ANTHONY WARREN
AMANDA PENNER
MEGAN HOLMAN
MELISSA MACINTYRE
AMANDA-LUCIA PUIM
JORDYN VAISENBERG
RENIA REGINOLD
ELMA ARTHURSON
ASHLEE WILLIAMS
JI EUN PARK
LOVISA FUNG
ZEINA AOUN
BRUNILDA DORE
SOPHARA MILLER
SAMANTHA LAM

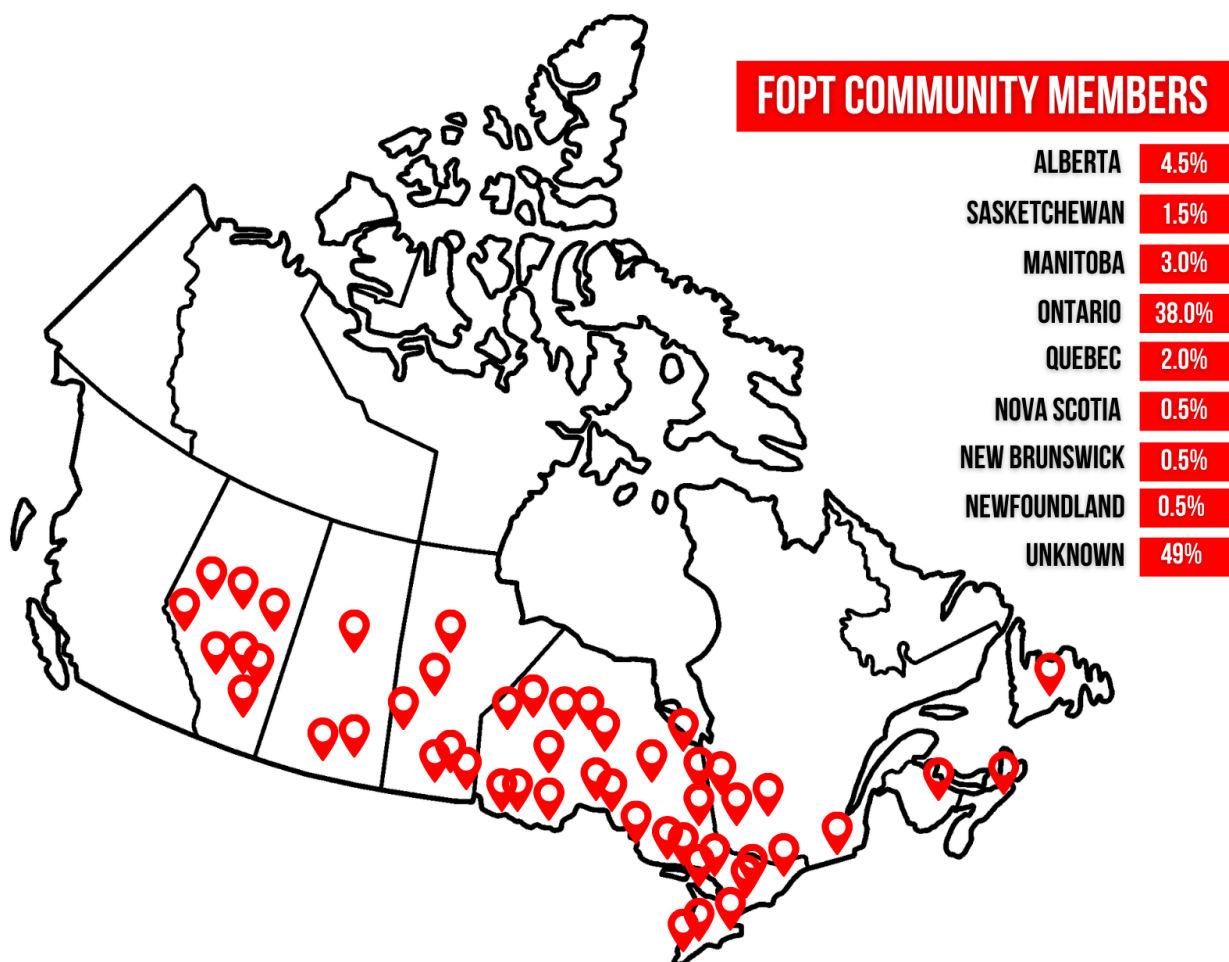
FORMER STAFF

KRUTI PATEL - ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR
JESSICA SHERK - YOUNG LEADERS CIRCLE PROGRAM COORDINATOR
MAGGIE STEIN - MENTOR & TEAM MEMBER
JESSICA BITTON - FUNDRAISING COORDINATOR

OUR GROWING COMMUNITY

In 2021, Finding Our Power Together welcomed new participants to our programs and into our wonderful growing community. They engaged in programs such as Building Our Bundle, Young Leaders Circle, Mentorship, Guiding Our Gifts, and land-based summer programming. Over the last year we have had an increase in engagement and participation from the Indigenous youth in our community. The young people who have joined the Finding Our Power Together community span from all across Turtle Island. Seeing how our programs and supports have reached so many places and so many youth inspires us every day.

Our growing community is composed of Indigenous young people from varying regions and nations.



A map of our community members throughout 2021.

OUR GROWING COMMUNITY

BY THE NUMBERS

BY PROGRAM AREA

TOTAL: 503

BUILDING OUR BUNDLE	MENTORSHIP	YOUNG LEADERS CIRCLE	GUIDING OUR GIFTS	OTHER
64	33	32	339 VIEWS	35

BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

Province	Number of Participants
Alberta	9
Saskatchewan	3
Manitoba	6
Ontario	77
Quebec	4

Province	Number of Participants
Nova Scotia	1
New Brunswick	1
Newfoundland and Labrador	1
Unknown	100
Total	202

WHAT PARTICIPANTS HAVE TO SAY

Name: Field

Age: 24

Community or Nation: Urban Toronto/Six Nations

Program: BOB, GOG, Mentorship!

TESTIMONIAL:

“

Finding Our Power Together guided me towards the experiences and mindset that increased my calmness and ability to regulate my emotions and be accountable to my actions while in the middle of a lot of chaos, uncertainty and change. BOB reintroduced concepts that were previously helpful but suspicious to me as they came from a psychiatrist initially. In BOB, the concepts and practices were culturally grounded and presented in ways that made way more sense to apply with the values we share. In GOG, I found myself with the permission to paint and have fun on a large scale that was celebrated and supported for the first time since I was a kid. Every day of the GOG week, I found myself popping awake right before sunrise just excited to get out there and create again, and felt soothed by the time spent with the mentors and painting while honouring the Spirits of my friends who have been lost, knowing the piece will brighten the day of all the kin who still walk through the site daily.

The Mentorship with Niki has made my Spirit feel tangible and actualized in this complicated world, and able to accept the painful decisions and realities that aren't mine to do anything about, such as the healing journey of my loved ones and enemies like the government. I feel connected with my community and able to show up without taking on what isn't mine to pick up, so I can you know help out without the burden creating burn out. I find myself a year later being able to stand tall, speak clearly and respect my own needs, offer a hand without the fear of consequences cause I know I'm able to walk away when my body says it's time to care for my own energy, and feel supported in taking that space being a good move. The other participants of the program I met are valued members of my little social circle, and it's cool to meet other Indigenous Youth who create and live with similar and vibrant values.

”

WHAT PARTICIPANTS HAVE TO SAY...

Name: Diana

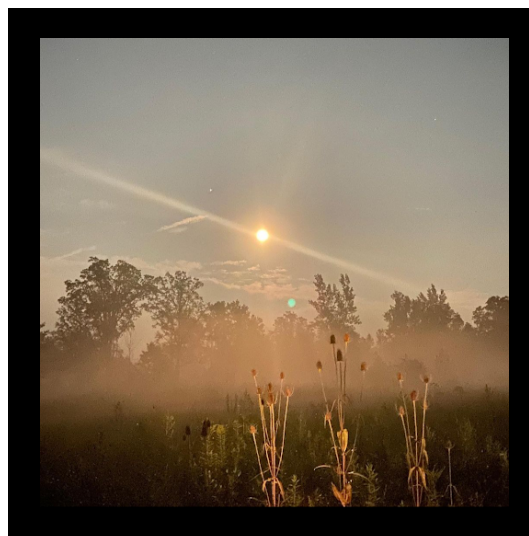
Community or Nation: Painted Feather Woodlans Métis

Program: Full Moon Lodge

“

TESTIMONIAL:

In August 2021, we had the opportunity to attend a Full Moon Ceremony with Finding Our Power together in Six Nations with Elder Cecile. It was incredibly impactful to learn ceremony and teachings; with many reflections and lessons absorbed during, after, and still today. The team was incredibly supportive and well prepared to communicate protocols prior to arrival so that we understood what was expected of us.



Upon arrival we helped to prepare for the ceremony by sitting as a community to make tobacco tie offerings. We had the opportunity to learn teachings from Aunty's with all ages present to receive. In the evening, we worked together to build a sweat lodge. Throughout Elder Cecile continued to share about moon cycles, the shape of our skirts, and the symbolism of strawberries. During this, time felt like it was on pause as we all were present while we contributed to the structure assembly under the moonlight. Nia:wen to the efforts and time spent to organize as it left a meaningful impact cemented by the memories and journal reflections.

”

PROGRAMS

FOPT IS EXCITED TO BE IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING PROGRAMS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN THE CURRENT REALITY. OUR TEAM HAS BEEN COMMITTED TO INCREASING ACCESS FOR INDIGENOUS YOUNG PEOPLE TO HAVE MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH SUPPORT DURING THIS UNPRECEDENTED TIME. TAKE A LOOK AT THE PROGRAMS THAT WE DEVELOPED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.



BUILDING OUR BUNDLE



ONE-ON-ONE MENTORSHIP



OSKAATIS NIGAANIIWEMOWIN



The Building Our Bundle Program (BOB) is a mental and spiritual health program to support Indigenous youth (aged 14-29) in developing mental health skills through a cultural framework. Modeled after the teachings of a traditional ceremonial bundle, the program seeks to uncover and build upon the inherent gifts and skills that all individuals can access to support their wellness journeys. The program was designed through the integration of Indigenous healing methods, mainstream mental health modalities (notably Dialectic Behaviour Therapy), and youth care therapeutic relationships.

Objectives	Activities to meet the objective	Outcome
Increase social connection for Indigenous youth	Indigenous youth building interpersonal skills	Participants learn interpersonal behavioral skills
Enhance access to Indigenous cultural learning	Co-facilitation with cultural teachers	Participants engage in cultural teachings
Psychoeducation to support mental health	Support in group and individual sessions	Participants manage mental health concerns with support network

Through weekly online sessions, Indigenous youth connect with one another, youth workers, mental health professionals, and cultural teachers to explore various mental health skills and cultural practices. Each season is slightly different, with different mental health modalities employed and different teachings, reflecting the seasonal teachings appropriate for that time of year. Participants may choose to participate in synchronous online sessions in a group setting or engage with activities individually on their own time, with the support of a mentor. All participants are also encouraged to participate in weekly one-on-one mental health mentoring support from the FOPT team who work directly with young people on their self-determined goals.



We feel the Building Our Bundle program was very successful in raising awareness of mental health challenges that have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic and providing tangible interventions to be used to help combat these challenges. In particular, our online videos were widely circulated, averaging around 3000 views a week across our major social media platforms (i.e Instagram, Youtube, Facebook). This meant that even if young people were not registered in the program, they might have been able to still access the content and potentially learn strategies to support their wellbeing.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Season of BOB	Date	# of Total Participants	# One-On-One Sessions	Total # of Viewers Reached
Season 2: Winter 2021	February 2–March 9, 2021	23	18	614
Season 3: Spring 2021	April 6–May 11, 2021	12	24	500
Season 4: Six Nations	June 8– July 6, 2021	16	24	719
Season 5: Summer 2021	July 19–August 23, 2021	2	12	1182
Season 6: Fall 2021	November 1–December 6, 2021	11	24	354
TOTALS:	5 SEASONS	64	102	3369

SEASON 2

BOB: Season 2 focused on learning to connect with the various aspects of the self in order to build skills and tools to engage in healing. This 6-week online program engaged Indigenous youth participants through live, synchronous weekly sessions in the winter of 2021. Each week, participants engaged in the program by attending online gatherings with the FOPT team to learn how to connect with our bundle items, learn new skills, and to share with one another.

THE SESSIONS:

1. The Self as a Bundle Item: Introducing the self as an essential first bundle item.
2. The Land as a Bundle Item: sharing our approaches for connecting with the land.
3. The Body as a Bundle Item: talking about one of our first bundle items we receive in this life, our sacred vessel that enables us to interact with the world.
4. The Heart as a Bundle Item: connecting with our hearts, which give us the ability to feel, to connect to others, and to access knowledge held within our blood memory.
5. The Mind as a Bundle Item: focusing on the mind, which requires us to build balance between our heart, mind, and body.
6. The Spirit as a Bundle Item: focusing on our spiritual energy and the power within us.

SEASON 3

BOB: Season 3 was a 6-week synchronous online program for Indigenous youth (aged 14-29) to learn mental health skills and cultural teachings to add to their wellness bundles. This season was focused on behavior skills that are meant to help with intense emotions (informed by DBT).

THEMES:

- BabiskiYaang:** Looking back to look forward, which focused on exploring self-narrative and creation stories.
- Mikwendaagwad:** Connecting with Our Good Mind, which focused on exploring mindfulness.
- Zoongitoon:** Making Ourselves Strong, which focused on exploring distress tolerance.
- Debwewin:** Hearing my Heart's Sound, which focused on exploring emotional regulation.
- Inawendiwag:** Being a Good Relative, which focused on exploring relational effectiveness.
- Naakgonige:** Deciding my path with my bundle, which focused on exploring wise mind decision-making.

SEASON 4

BOB: Season 4 was called Filling Our Baskets; a Haudenosaunee take on Building Our Bundle, led by Indigenous youth workers and community members from Six Nations. This season included 5 weekly sessions focused on cultural teachings, mental health skills, mindfulness practices, and activities to support individuals in their wellness journey. This season was focused on Haudenosaunee teachings and practices as a way to fill up our baskets.

THEMES:

Week 1: focused on gratitude and the creation story.

Week 2: focused on creating healthy relationships and the clan systems.

Week 3: focused on self-care practices and the Haudenosaunee thanksgiving address.

Week 4: Focused on creating peace within your life through the teachings of the peace maker.

Week 5: was an opportunity for all young people to gather and celebrate their time together, to share and learn from each other.

SEASON 5

BOB: Season 5 was a program designed to get young people out on the land and connect with the first family. This season included weekly videos to follow along on all social media platforms to learn mindfulness practices, cultural teaching and engage in a practice “weekly challenge”.

THEMES:

1. Connecting With Your First Family
2. Listening With Shorelines
3. Being With Land
4. Visiting With Plants and Animals
5. Observing Through Constellations
6. Presencing Community

SEASON 6

BOB: Season 6 was a 6-week synchronous online program for Indigenous youth (aged 14-29) to come together to learn mental health skills and cultural teachings to add to their wellness bundles. Season 6, was focused on emotional regulation and distress tolerance from Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT skills) and incorporated FOPT's Braided Approach. This season was supported by Knowledge Keeper Robert Smith. Season 6 consisted of the following skill-based sessions; Emotional Regulation which was broken into modules over a 2-week period that focused on the PLEASED and ABC skills. Distress tolerance which was broken into modules over a 2-week period that focused on the REST and ACCEPTS skill.

FINDING OUR POWER TOGETHER

BUILDING

OUR BUNDLE

Upcoming BOB Sessions

In 2023, the Building Our Bundle program has big expansion plans; the program has four more seasons planned for the new year. This new year will bring programs that are delivered both synchronously and asynchronously online to support the diverse needs of our population. The upcoming seasons will be hosted both in communities and opened nationwide to any young Indigeous people looking to learn, grow and connect with others.

Following the advice of our young people, we look forward to continuing offering Building Our Bundle sessions that reflect the needs and desires of our communities. In particular, we hope to offer both in-person and online iterations of the program in local and national contexts.

Session	Date	Method	Location
BOB Season 7	Feb - March 2022	Synchronous	In-person, GTA
BOB Season 8	April - May 2022	Synchronous	Hybrid, nationwide
BOB Season 9	July 2022	Synchronous	In-person camp, Six Nations FN
BOB Season 10	July-August 2022	Asynchronous	In-person camp, Six Nations FN
BOB Season 11	October-November 2022	Synchronous	Hybrid, GTA

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

As Finding Our Power Together created and launched Building Our Bundle this year, our team realized the need for one-to-one support for the young people participating in BOB as well as those that were following along on their own. This mentorship program was inspired by the mentoring that was taking place between our BOB program coordinator and our Oskatis Nigaaniwe (youth leader) in Nibinamik First Nation. During the first season of BOB, we had 21 mentorship sessions between the community leader and the BOB Coordinator. As young people continued to reach out and bring to light more need for individualized support, mentorship was created.

Mentorship was designed to support Indigenous youth who were looking for more individualized support with one of our mental health mentors. It was an opportunity for young people to connect with a mentor to learn and build new skills, work on goals or tasks, and have someone that they could regularly connect with. Our mentors come from a variety of backgrounds; child and youth care, social work, early childhood studies, traditional knowledge holders and more which created a diverse team to support diverse needs.

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Objectives	Activities to meet the objective	Outcome
Develop therapeutic and supportive relationships	Mentors-mentees matched based on needs and identities Participants develop skills and practice relational effectiveness	Participants develop long-standing relationships with caring adults and youth
Increase access to mental health support and interventions	Participants meet regularly with a trained mental health worker to work on their self-determined wellness goals Participants can access various mental health supports	Participants increase efficacy in their mental health care through increased access and exposure to mental health treatment modalities
Enhance understandings of mental health skills in real world contexts	Participants individualize mental health skills to their contexts	Participants develop new coping strategies, habits, and skills

MENTORSHIP UPTAKE

After the end of the sixth season of Building Our Bundle, the Finding Our Power Together team supported approximately 34 Indigenous young people on a regular basis, this included one weekly session for approximately 12-weeks. Finding Our Power Together created a mental health team that would meet bi-weekly to discuss mentorship, access supervision from Dr. Judy Finlay, debrief and plan for best practices. Our mental health team met approximately 25 times after the end of our second BOB season to continue to develop our mentorship program.

MENTORSHIP UPTAKE IN 2021

BOB Season	# of Registered Participants	# of Participants enrolled in Mentorship
BOB Season 3 (Winter 2021)	23	5
BOB Season 4 (Spring 2021)	10	3
BOB Season 5 (6 Nations 2021)	16	5
BOB Season 6 (Summer 2021)	41	3
BOB Season 7 (Fall 2021)	11	4
Independent Mentorship	-	13
TOTAL	101	33

MOVING FORWARD

As FOPT continues to grow and more young people seek one-to-one support the more mentorship grows and develops. FOPT strives to support as many young people as possible, and to increase the number of young people accessing mentorship. Our plan is when young people register for Building Our Bundle sessions, they will automatically be paired with a mentor. This allows for us to streamline the process and to normalize individualized support. Young people will be paired with a mentor based on their interests, goals and type of support needed. For example a young person that is graduating high school, and looking for support around applying to post-secondary may be paired with a mentor that specialized in academic support.

In addition to streamlining the process of Mentorship, FOPT plans to gain support from elders, and traditional knowledge keepers. The purpose is for our Indigenous young people enrolled in mentorship to have access to cultural knowledge, ceremonies and teachings. We plan to have two Indingeous knowledge keepers on the Mentorship roaster in 2022.



OSKATIS NIGAANIWEMOWIN



Oskatis Nigaaniwemowin, which translates to the "The Way of the Young Leader" is the Anishnaabewmowin name for FOPT's Young Leaders Circle. The Young Leaders Circle is a group of Indigenous young people between the ages of 14-29 from across Turtle Island who share a common interest in supporting youth in their communities. Through reciprocal sharing and teaching, the Circle supports one another to develop skills, explore challenges, and celebrate successes in youth life promotion work, as well as advising on FOPT's organizational decisions and program design. The Young Leaders Circle meets seasonally engaging in networking, training and cultural teachings.

We feel the Young Leaders Circle was very successful in creating an accessible network for our young leaders that allows space for individual and spiritual growth, knowledge building, skill building and life promotion work.

Objectives	Activities to meet the objective	Outcome
To connect youth and youth serving adults across Canada	Participants gather seasonally to meet one another, share successes and challenges, and learn from one another how best to support Indigenous youth in their communities	Participants return to their local communities with increased social and professional networks, have a new outlook on possibilities for their work, and avoid burnout through ongoing emotional support
To support professional development opportunities to increase capacity in Indigenous communities	Participants engage in various trainings that enhance their capacity to offer support to youth	Participants gain tangible skills to support Indigenous youth and develop pathways to enhances educational and professional outcomes
To empower youth to guide the work of FOPT and other youth organizations	Participants advise on programs, trainings, and supports that FOPT offers as well as needs of their communities through dialogue and surveys	Participants gain a sense of agency in their lives and are invested in the work of FOPT. FOPT gains valuable insight on the experiences of Indigenous youth across Canada and how best to support them

PROMOTING LIFE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

WINTER GATHERING

Our Winter 2021 gathering in February created a space for young leaders to gather in good spirit and meaningful dialogue. Our Young leaders heard from Nyle Johnston about the importance of Winter as a time for healing and restoration. Together, we spoke about how FOPT could better support young people through the pandemic. Young Leaders also participated in a workshop through Feather Carriers about the importance of Life Promotion through Storytelling.



Dates	Theme	Training Focus	Participants
February 18, 2021	Promoting Life	Life Promotion Workshop Provided by Feather Carriers	8

PLANTING SEEDS OF INTENTION

SPRING GATHERING

Our Spring 2021 Gathering in May brought together a group of passionate Indigenous youth leaders from across Turtle Island. The theme for the spring gathering was “Planting Seeds of Intention”. Our focus for this gathering included setting collective intentions and sharing teachings, increasing capacity for young leaders in organizational governance, brainstorming how the YLC should be positioned within the governance model at FOPT, and informing new possibilities for the future. This season, our Young Leaders had the opportunity to complete a virtual Mental Health First Aid Training which allowed them to build their bundle as community leaders and helpers.



Dates	Theme	Training Focus	Participants
February 18, 2021	Setting Intentions	Mental Health First Aid	9

BLACK AND INDIGENOUS SOLIDARITY

SUMMER GATHERING

The theme for the summer 2021 gathering was “Black and Indigenous Solidarity”. We were excited to share virtual space with Shanese Indoowaaboo Steele, Afro-Indigenous Kwe. One of the key outcomes from the Summer gathering was collectively developing a better understanding of the historical and current impacts of colonialism on Black and Indigenous Peoples. Shanese facilitated generative discussions on the nuances of identity, parallels, and continued solidarity between Black and Indigenous folks.



Dates	Theme	Training Focus	Participants
August 12, 2021	Black and Indigenous Solidarity	How to Be a Good Relative with Shaneese Steele	10

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF AND LOSS

FALL GATHERING

The theme for the Fall 2021 gathering was “Understanding Grief and Loss”. We were honoured to share the virtual space with Brenda Reynolds who is Saulteaux from Fishing Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan. During this session, our young leaders had the opportunity to learn and develop skills around managing grief and promoting resilience.

OSKAATIS NIGAANIWEMOWIN
YOUNG LEADERS CIRCLE
MAAWANJIDIWAG DAGWAAGIN-ATEG
FALL GATHERING

THIS SEASON'S THEME:
**EXPLORING
GRIEF
THROUGH THE
LIFEPATH**



THE YLC IS OPEN
TO ALL
INDIGENOUS
YOUTH (14-29) TO
CONNECT, LEARN,
AND SHARE

FEATURING:
**BRENDA
REYNOLDS**

THIS SESSION:
• NETWORK WITH INDIGENOUS YOUTH
ACROSS CANADA
• DEVELOP SKILLS AROUND MANAGING
GRIEF AND PROMOTING RESILIENCE
• GET INVOLVED WITH FORT
PROGRAMMING & INITIATIVES

REGISTER NOW
WWW.FINDINGOURPOWERTOGETHER.COM

Dates	Theme	Training Focus	Participants
November 25, 2021	Understanding Grief and Loss	Grief and Loss Workshop by Brenda Reynolds	5

MOVING FORWARD

As Finding Our Power Together grows and continues to reach different communities on Turtle Island, more Indigenous young people join the Young Leaders Circle. Moving forward, we are committed to building a strong community within the YLC and empowering our young people to channel their inner leader and foster change in their communities. We will continue to offer seasonal gatherings that support our young leaders to build on their strengths and gain relevant knowledge regarding leadership and community building and support. We at FOPT believe that our young people have so much power, and we will continue to find our power together.



WORKSHOPS AND TRAININGS

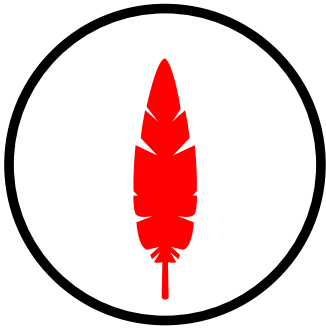
BRAIDED APPROACH

Nicole Ineese-Nash and Maggie Stein hosted an online interactive webinar designed to offer evidence-based and culturally safe approaches for supporting Indigenous youth. This 2-hour webinar was intended for parents, caregivers, mental health providers, youth workers, educators, and community members who are interested in developing strategies to support the young people in their lives. The webinar presented findings from a knowledge synthesis project braiding together key principles of Indigenous mental health models (IK), Child and Youth Care (CYC) approaches, and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) practices.

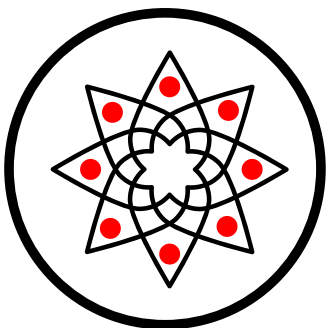
BRENDA REYNOLDS: UNDERSTANDING GRIEF AND LOSS THROUGH INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES & EXPERIENCES

In November 2021, we hosted a public webinar facilitated by Brenda Reynolds. Brenda shared Indigenous perspectives on grief and loss through stories and Indigenous knowledges. This event was designed to take a youth-oriented approach, supporting all members of the community to participate in healing from loss.

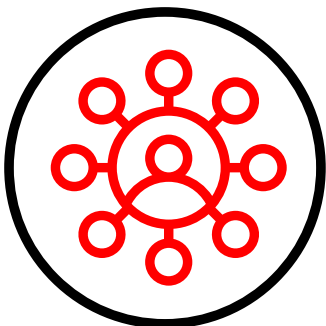
Principles of a Braided Approach



We promote **culture** by incorporating Indigenous teachings, values and language into our mental health practice, where appropriate.



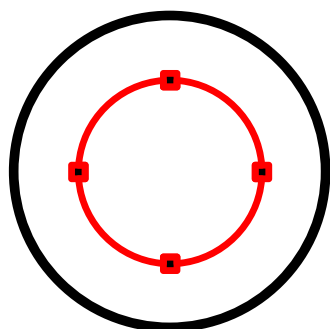
We encourage **interconnection** by welcoming relationships with the land, ancestors and spirit in our mental health practice.



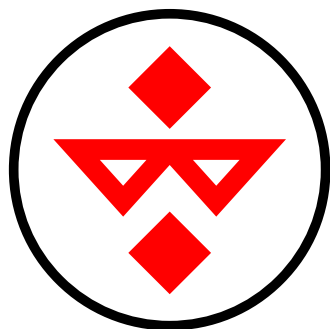
Relationality is fostering caring, reciprocal and respectful relationships with the self, individual and communities in order to nurture the connection we have with all things in creation.



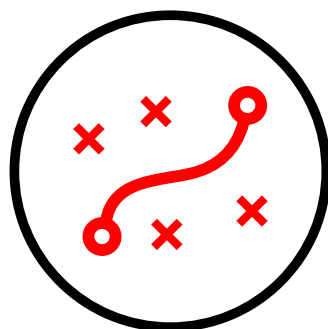
Self Discovery and Determination is supporting the youth to better understand themselves and their emotions and their reactions in order to provide appropriate options for their health



We support wholism though honoring individuals in all facets of the self and promoting self-acceptance.



We encourage the exploration of balanced living through reflection and practice of care within all aspects of the self to achieve balance restoration.



Context Specificity; we actively acknowledge environmental and historical factors that have and continue to impact each individual and their lived-reality and adapt to suit the specific needs of the individuals and communities.

Our Braided Approach encompasses and requires a flexible relational approach that is trauma-informed and culturally safe. When approaching mental health service provision with Indigenous youth, here are some additional things our team values: accessibility, respecting and following community lead, involvement of family (chosen or biological), teaching and development of skills and tools, and understanding and empathy to build meaningful relationships.



Moving Forward

As we move forward, the FOPT team continues to strive to improve, revamp, and explore new approaches to delivering an online mental health program to support the well-being of young Indigenous people. As we head into 2021, FOPT will be hosting Building Our Bundle Season 2, which will be a 6-week, synchronous program, in which we will be exploring new teachings, skills and sharing of experiences. FOPT is developing future BOB seasons that have been informed not only by participants' feedback, but by research. The Building Our Bundle program has been informed by research conducted by Nicole Ineese-Nash and Maggie Stein called The Braided Approach. This approach has a focus on Indigenous ways of knowing, Child and Youth Care practices and Dialectical Behavioural Therapy.

A braided approach to mental health support is an integrative model that recognizes the individual strengths and limitations to any one approach alone. A braid is woven with intention, in order to acknowledge and honour identity, culture, and spirituality. The braided approach is formed by the principles described below. While each strand of the approach is important on its own, it is through the interrelationship they hold with one another that a strong braid is built. It is integral to consider each part as related to the whole.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS

WINTER DONATION DRIVE

Throughout the month of February 2021, our team and amazing volunteers collected an incredible amount of donations for our community partners in northern Ontario. Thanks to these gracious contributions, we have been able to send 255 boxes (5000 lbs) containing: winter clothing, educational materials and art supplies, miscellaneous cleaning supplies, non-perishable food items, accessories, and various electronic devices!



MURAL JAM

In the June session of Guiding Our Gifts, Indigenous youth artists connected and collaborated with our artist mentors Nyle Miigizi Johnston and Monica Wickeler to make their mark on Tkaronto's landscape! Participants learned how to design and paint their very own mural in downtown Tkaronto!

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS

NEYAASHIINIGMIING CULTURE CAMP

During the summer of 2021, the Finding Our Power Together Team visited Neyaashiinigmiing for our Nawash Culture Camp in July and August. During our time there, our team members worked alongside several youth to take part in cultural activities such as ceremonies and harvesting medicines to work on a path of reconnecting with traditional ways of knowing, being, and doing.



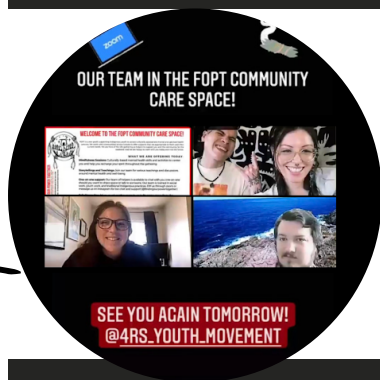
MOON LODGE

During the full Moon of August 2021, the Finding Our Power Together team took a group of Indigenous youth to Six Nations to participate in a full moon lodge ceremony. During our time there, our team members worked alongside several youth and knowledge keeper to take part in cultural teachings and activities such as building a sweat lodge, singing traditional songs, and participating in ceremonies. FOPT plans to continue full moon teachings and ceremonies monthly in 2022.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS

CONSTANCE LAKE FIRST NATION

In October 2021, three members of our team attended the ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ Ah-chee-kah-mee(k) Language and Culture Camp that took place at Constance Lake First Nation. We facilitated two workshops with 20 youth. The first workshop was a Building Our Bundle workshop that explored various mental health skills and cultural teachings. The second workshop focused on our Young Leaders Circle which fosters mutual sharing and supports one another to develop skills, explore challenges, and celebrate successes in youth life promotion work. We explored mental health skills, leadership skills, and skill-building!



4RS CONFERENCE

On the weekend of April 30th, 2021, the Finding Our Power Together team participated and facilitated at the 4Rs Youth Movement which focused on CELEBRATE & REMEMBER; Celebrating and remembering the people, labour, and ancestors that have carried the 4Rs Movement through the last 5 years. MOBILIZING KNOWLEDGE Mobilizing what the community has learned about movement building, transformation and collective care. DEFINING & DREAMING Vocalizing and defining our dreams for the future of 4Rs and the decolonization movements we are a part of. Finding Our Power Together facilitated a community care space for participants to come and engage in mindfulness, self-care and a safe space to access support.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

Throughout the year we had various social media campaigns to raise awareness and educate our community about events, days of commemoration, and how to stand in solidarity. We had various social media campaigns including, but not limited to, Pink Shirt Day, Black History Month, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit, Pride Month, Indigenous Disability Month, and Trans Awareness month.



MINDFUL MARCH

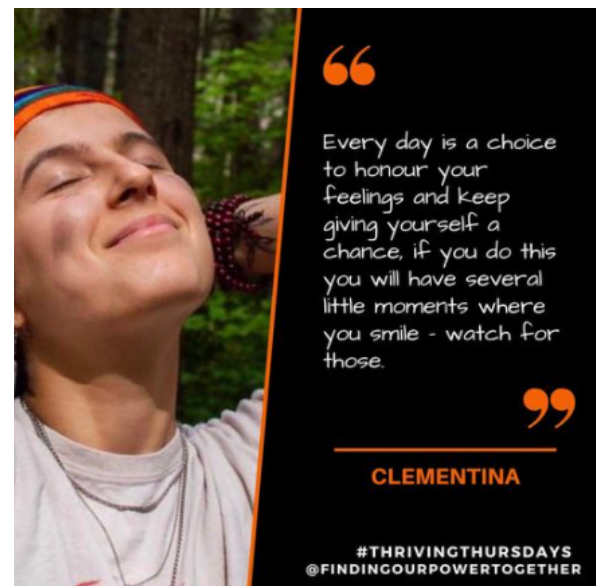
Mindful March is a campaign that includes a 30-day challenge that encourages you to practice 60 seconds of mindfulness in your everyday life. During this challenge, the Finding Our Power Together team uploaded weekly videos on social media that included mindfulness prompts and activities along with a tracking card that helps to motivate and keep track of practicing mindfulness!



CAMPAIGNS

THRIVING THURSDAYS

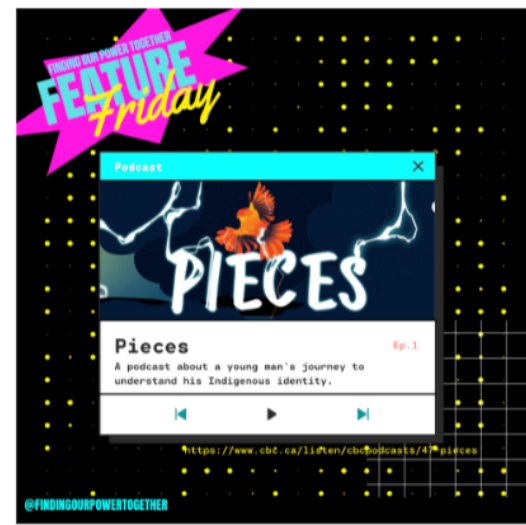
Thriving Thursdays is a social media campaign that Finding Our Power Together started as a way to spotlight Indigenous youth (14-29) and youth-serving individuals/organizations (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) who are supporting their communities. To date, we have featured over 20 individuals and/or organizations on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter platforms.



CAMPAIGNS

FEATURE FRIDAYS

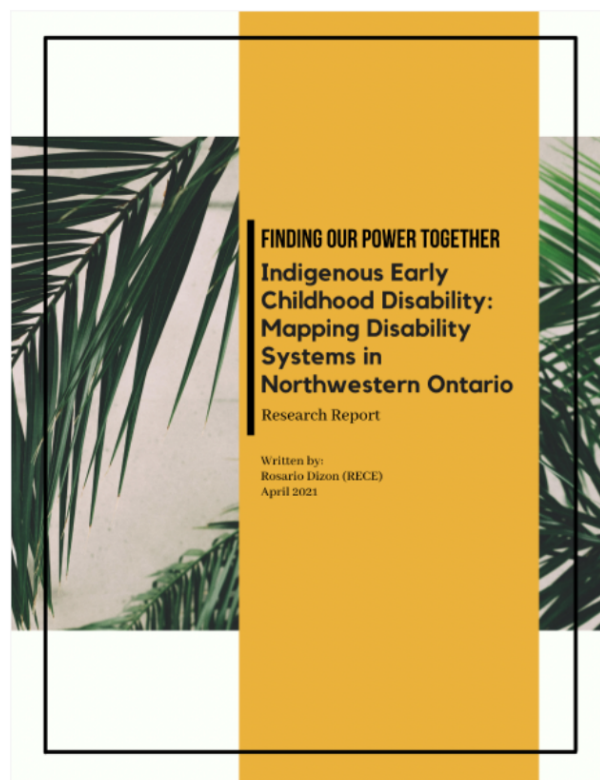
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RESEARCH

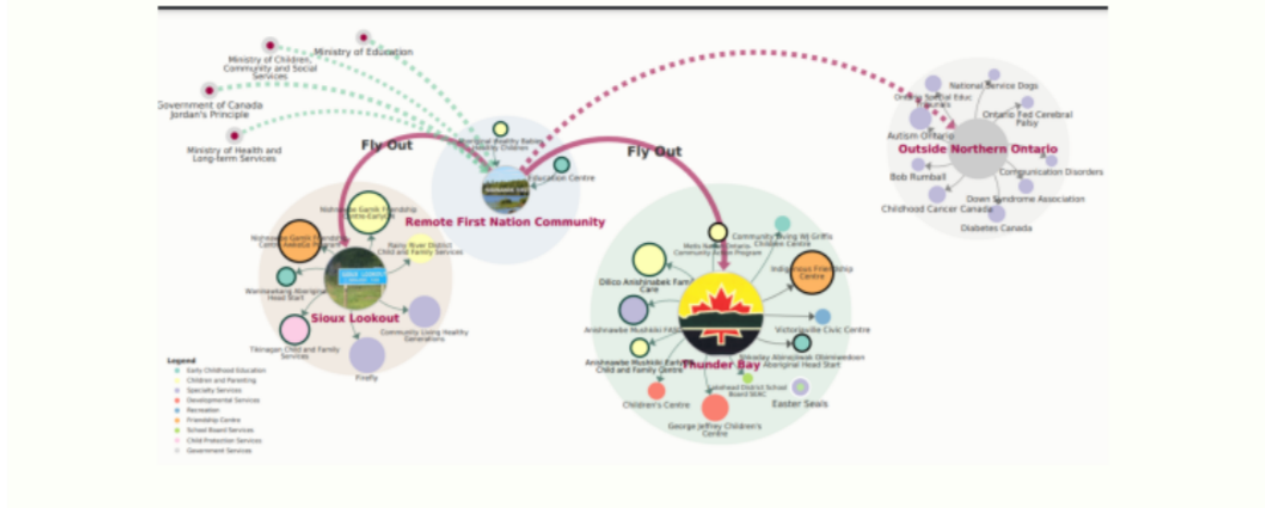
INDIGENOUS EARLY CHILDHOOD DISABILITY: MAPPING DISABILITY SYSTEMS IN NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

Our team wanted to assess the early childhood disability services and support systems in remote First Nations communities in Northwestern Ontario. While assessing the system of support and services we found it also important for families to help them understand what is available and accessible, for them to make informed decisions. We researched a database of existing early childhood services and supports that are available and were completed in collaboration with team leaders and members of Finding our Power Together (FOPT). Information from this database was translated to a community map which provided a visual overview of the early childhood disability system of supports and services. Community mapping visually shows the services that are available in a geographic area and can show where gaps in services are.



INDIGENOUS EARLY CHILDHOOD DISABILITY: MAPPING DISABILITY SYSTEMS IN NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

Figure 1: Community Map of Indigenous Early Childhood Disability Supports and Services



Findings from the community systems map indicate that there are limited services available and accessible to Indigenous families living in remote Northern communities. To avail of this range of services and support, families and children need to fly out, distancing them from their community and the support of their community members. This does not align with their cultural values of connectedness and interdependence with their community, which are strong determinants of their health and well-being.

Based on the research, the following recommendations were made for services and service providers:

- Coordinated and seamless referrals and warm transfers from service providers would ensure a smooth transition from one type of service to another.
- Having a single plan of care for the child and family as they access various service providers would ensure that the plan is responsive to the growing needs of the child and family.
- Services should have Indigenous community boards who ensure that culture is embedded throughout all service provision.

RESEARCH

PROMOTING RESILIENCE AND HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT IN INDIGENOUS YOUTH THROUGH MINDFULNESS BASED PRACTICES

The FOPT wanted to explore the benefits of mindfulness-based practices to promote resilience in Indigenous children and youth. Mindfulness is a tool used to recognize, accept and respond to self-destructive thoughts and emotions. Through discussions of intergenerational trauma, resiliency, and mindfulness it was clear that mindfulness practices can be used to support Indigenous mental, emotional, cultural, spiritual, and physical well-being. Therefore, we concluded that it is crucial that accessible and culturally relevant sources of strength and resilience are available for Indigenous youth.

From this research, there were five fundamental recommendations

- More research should be conducted within Indigenous communities to examine the cumulative effects of stressors and traumas, as well as the use of mindfulness-based practices across Indigenous communities, specifically in early childhood development.
- Indigenous youth health perspectives should be incorporated to capture a community's wholistic health perspective.
- Early interventions that support children facing adverse experiences are highly recommended.
- Accessible interventions that align with Indigenous practices (traditional healing, knowledge, and cultural factors) should be made readily available.
- Exploring different mindfulness-based interventions that cater to different populations and different forms of implementation.



RESEARCH

HELP FOR THE HELPER

Helpers in Indigenous communities are the people who take on formal and informal roles to ensure the wellbeing of community members. Helpers include nurses, personal support workers, social workers, harm reduction workers, child and youth workers, paramedics, teachers, security people, and family caregivers. Helpers are people who care about their communities and are dedicated to seeing them thrive. Because of their dedication, community based Helpers, in particular, are key to Indigenous communities recovering from the trauma of colonialism (e.g., reservation systems, Residential Schools, Sixties and Millennium Scoop etc.). In this research report, we focus on Two-Eyed seeing to explore self-awareness, self-care, and the different ways that Helper well-being can be nurtured within the community.

LAND-BASED EDUCATION WITH YOUTH

This research report explores what Indigenous land-based approaches can teach us in non-Indigenous contexts and discusses strategies to implement land-based practices with youth. The purpose of conducting this research is to examine what Indigenous land-based approaches can teach using non-Indigenous contexts and discuss strategies to implement land-based practices with youth. We aim to explore land-based education for the youth of all cultures in educational settings as a mechanism to promote well-being and cultural learning. This research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the importance of a decolonizing framework and prioritize Indigenous culture and land-based education in children and youth's learning environment.

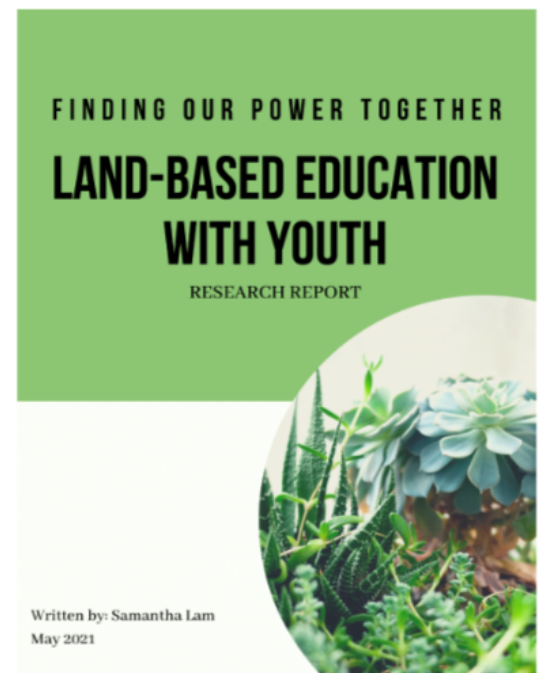


FINDING OUR POWER TOGETHER

HELP FOR THE HELPER

RESEARCH REPORT
JUNE 2021

Written by
Jennifer Luft B.Sc., MHA(cc)



FINDING OUR POWER TOGETHER

LAND-BASED EDUCATION WITH YOUTH

RESEARCH REPORT

Written by: Samantha Lam
May 2021

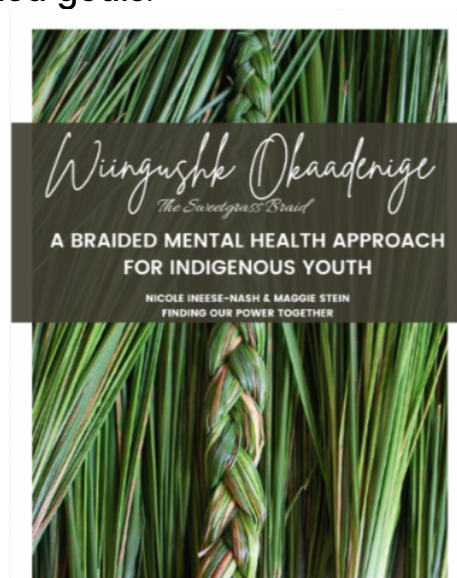
RESEARCH

WIINSUHK OKAADINIGE: A BRAIDED MENTAL HEALTH APPROACH FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH

Wiingushk is the Anishinaabemowin word for Sweetgrass, a traditional medicine that is often referred to as the hair of our mother the earth. Sweetgrass is used for purification and for healing. However, blades of sweetgrass on their own are easily broken. It is when we weave sweetgrass into braids or bundles (Okaadinige) that the medicine can be stronger. The sweetgrass braid reminds us of the strength that comes from working together, of weaving various perspectives together for the purpose of a stronger path.

This report details a braided mental health approach to youth mental health, designed in response to a synthesis of knowledge from three systematic literature reviews and four informant consultations with mental health providers in various disciplines. The braided approach comprises key principles of Indigenous mental health models (IK). Child and Youth Care (CYC) approaches, and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy practices (DBT). The purpose of this approach is to best serve the mental and spiritual health needs of Indigenous youth across Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report was prepared for Finding Our Power Together, an Indigenous youth organization working to support Indigenous youth to overcome mental health challenges in order for them to reach their self-determined goals.



MIIGWETCH

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MINGWETCH

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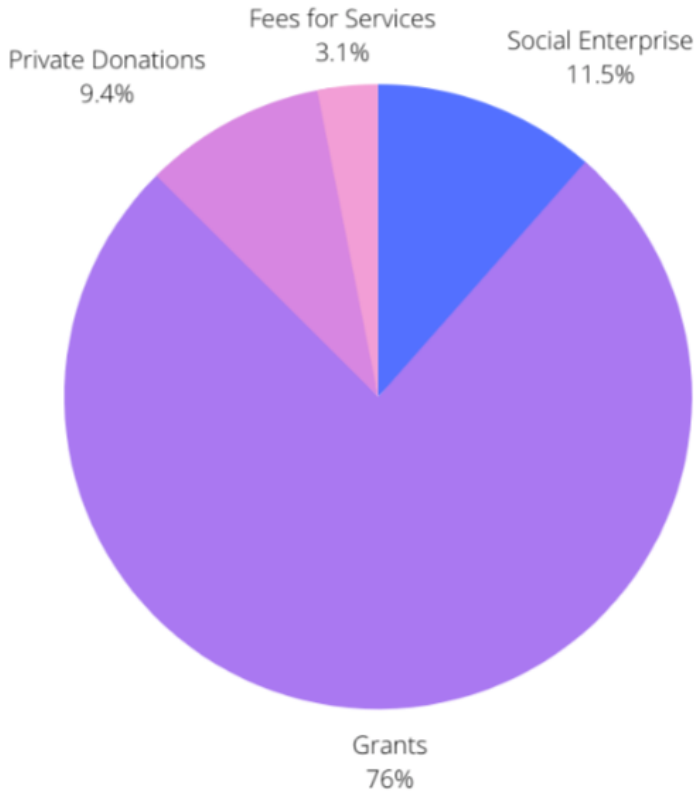
FINANCIAL STATEMENT

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

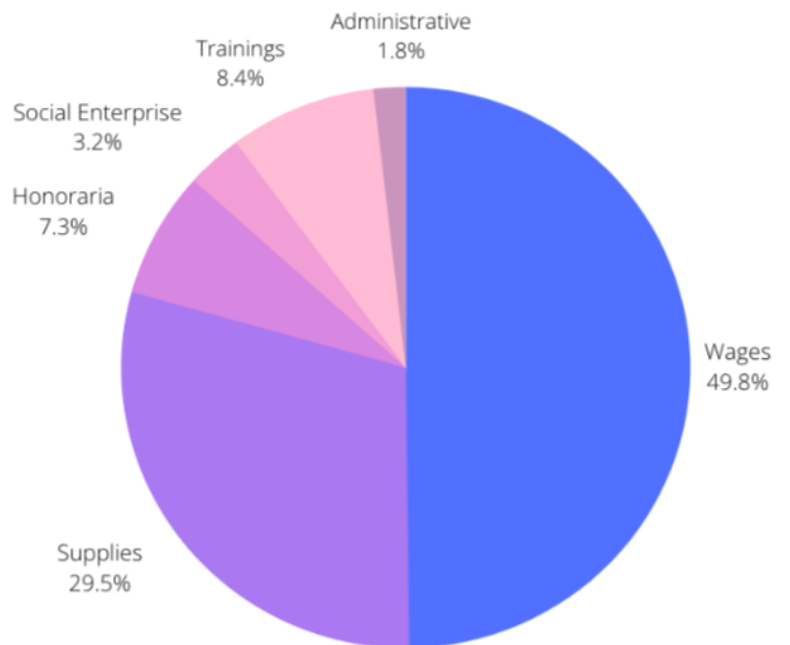
CATEGORIES	INCOME	EXPENSES	TOTALS
Wages	0	47,500.07	-47,500.07
Administrative	0	1,744.50	-1,744.50
Honouraria	0	6,950.00	-6,950.00
Supplies	0	28,159.45	-28,159.45
Social Enterprise	24,077.88	3,055.80	21,022.08
Grant	159,537.50	0	159,537.50
Private Donations	19,697.75	0	19,697.75
Trainings	0	7,975.00	-7,975.00
Fees for Service	6,534.19	0	6,534.19
TOTALS	209,847.32	95,384.82	130,412.50

Categories	Expenses	Totals
Wages	47,500.07	-47,500.07
Administrative	1,744.50	-1,744.50
Honouraria	6,950.00	-6,950.00
Supplies	28,159.45	-28,159.45
Social Enterprise	3,055.80	21,022.08
Grant	0	159,537.50
Private donations	0	19,697.75
Trainings	7,975.00	-7,975.00
Fees for Service	0	6,534.19
Total	95,384.82	130,412.50

FINANCIAL STATEMENT



FOPT REVENUE



FOPT EXPENSES

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

As a growing team that is adapting to the many changes that COVID-19 has posed, we are thinking critically about how to best support Nibinamik and other Indigenous communities across the country.

Here is what we hope to accomplish in 2022:

- Formalized mental health services for Indigenous youth provided by trained youth mental health workers and Indigenous traditional practitioners
- Solicitation of donations for partner communities
- Training for youth on various topics, including Mental Health First Aid
- Development of additional mental health and land-based programming for youth
- Facilitation of additional synchronous virtual sessions of Building Our Bundle with a focus on the body and developing Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) skills
- Increased network building between organizations and communities
- Formalization of organizational governance structure
- Maintain sustainable funding sources

**OUR ROLE AS HELPERS TO INDIGENOUS YOUTH IS TO GUIDE THEM
ALONG THEIR OWN PATH, SO THEY CAN HOLD HOPE AND DESIRE FOR
THE FUTURE.**



FINDING OUR POWER TOGETHER **MIIGWETCH**

FINDING OUR POWER TOGETHER

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS YOUTH TO THRIVE



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