

Working Together to Achieve Healthier Lifestyles in Yukon and Northwest Territories Communities

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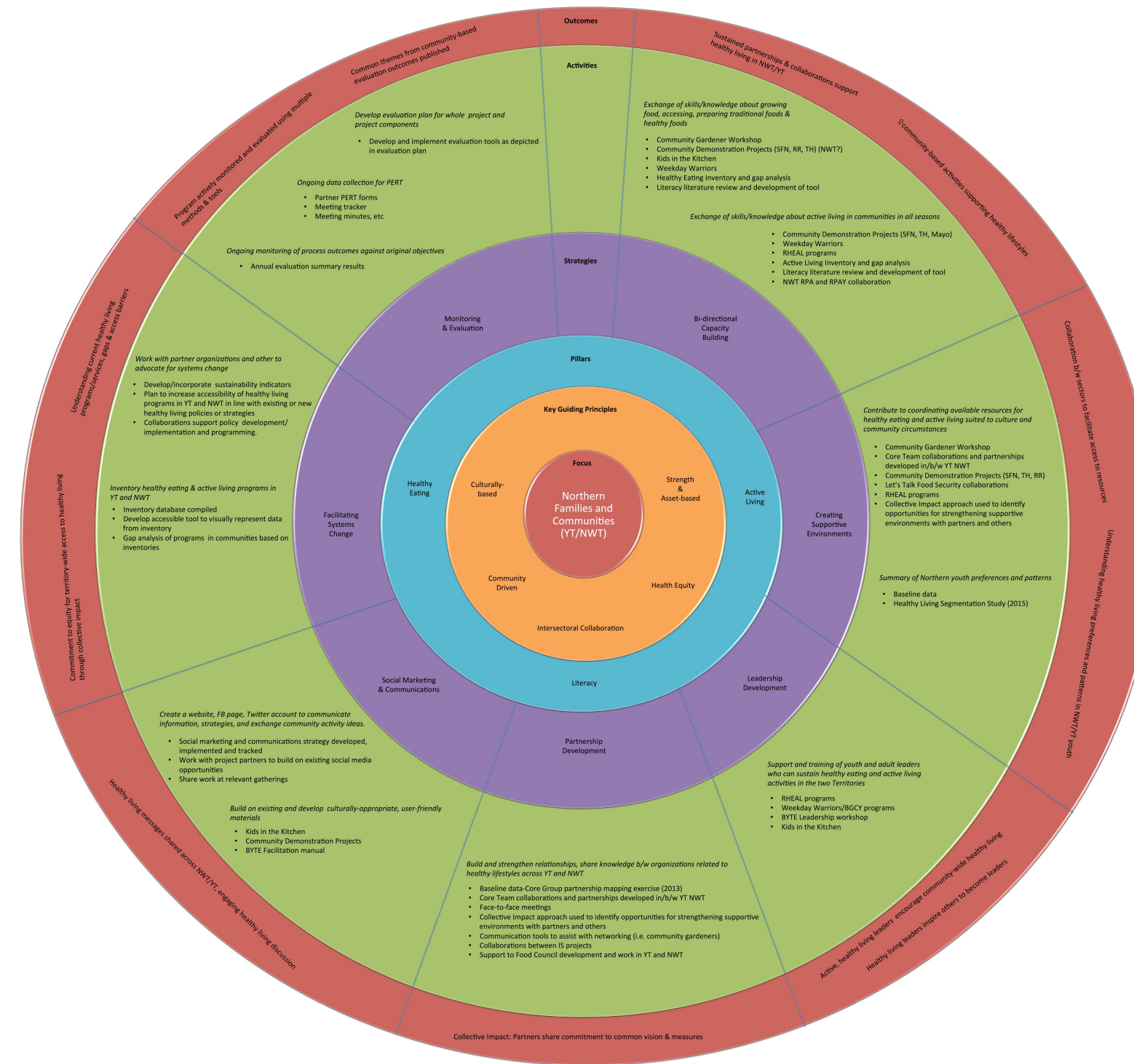
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www.aicbr.ca

In partnership with: Indigenous Governments, Territorial Governments, Non-Governmental Organizations, Academic Institutions, and Communities

Who We Are

- Independent, non-profit research organization established in 2007.
- Our **mission** is to facilitate, promote and conduct community-based, Northern-led research aimed at improving the lives of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Northerners and the health of Northern environments.
- Our **vision** is the meaningful engagement of Northerners in health, natural and social science research focused on Northern priorities, with results contributing to all Northerners living healthy lives.
- We work with Northern Indigenous communities, NGOs, governments (Indigenous, Territorial, Federal), academics, graduate students, research organizations and the private sector.
- Our **research approach** prioritizes:
 - Principles of Community-Based Research
 - Youth Engagement
 - Community Capacity-Building
 - Knowledge Sharing
 - Evaluation
 - Partnership Development
 - Inter-sectoral Collaboration
- Our **research priorities** include:
 - Food Security
 - Chronic Disease Prevention
 - Healthy Lifestyles
 - Injury Prevention
 - Climate Change Adaptation



Project Background

- Funded by Public Health Agency of Canada's Innovation Strategy.
- Chronic disease prevention, particularly obesity, is a complex problem influenced by many different factors.
- Higher rates of obesity in the North: Yukon 64%, Northwest Territories 57%, Canada 54%.
- Aboriginal children and youth are at particular risk for obesity.
- Rural, remote settings may influence obesity rates due to reduced access to opportunities to participate in an active lifestyle.
- Phase 1 (2011), AICBR worked to create Yukon-wide community-based research partnerships devoted to identifying, planning, implementing, and evaluating short and long-term initiatives that focused on healthy lifestyles including healthy weights for Yukon families and communities.
- Phase 2 (2013-2017) builds on Phase 1 initiatives and is also working with NWT to strengthen partnerships between healthy living initiatives with families and communities across both Territories.
- The target populations include children, youth, and families in YT and NWT, including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations.

Objectives

- Northerners in Yukon and Northwest Territories' communities follow healthier lifestyles.
- Organizations, government departments and businesses in Yukon and NWT work in partnership together with communities to foster healthier lifestyles through active living and healthy eating in communities.

Project Approach

The project seeks to promote healthier lifestyles through strengthening cultural practices and programs, including those that incorporate food security.

The project's **Guiding Principles** include:

- Health Equity
- Strength and Asset-Based
- Inter-sectoral Collaboration
- Community Driven
- Culturally-Relevant

The project's **Foundational Pillars** are:

- Healthy Eating
- Active Living
- Literacy

Using a strengths-based approach, over the four years, the project will identify, support, and evaluate selected community-based activities aimed at reducing health inequalities, with a particular focus on overweight/obesity.

The project works to enhance and strengthen collaboration and networking between and within non-government and government agencies, local businesses, and communities in both YT and NWT, with a focus on fostering healthy lifestyles in communities.

As lead and support for the project, AICBR is working with a 'Collective Impact' approach. 'Collective Impact' is intended to facilitate many organizations who are working on related components of healthy living (i.e. active living, healthy eating, literacy) to come together to work towards a common goal-Northerners in Yukon and Northwest Territories' communities lead healthier lifestyles.

Collective Impact is different from collaboration in that the group of partners work together over the long term and are committed to long-term outcomes (not specific programs); it is a continual learning process that builds and improves on an ongoing basis; it is cross-sector (not single-sector).

References

- Statistics Canada. 2014. Body mass index, overweight or obese, self-reported, adult, by sex, provinces and territories. [Online 04/09/2014]; <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l1cst01/cst01/health/31b-eng.htm>
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- Program Sustainability Assessment Tool. Centre for Public Health Systems Science, Washington University. www.sustainool.org

Project Activities

The project supports multiple initiatives at the community-level. These activities focus on reducing obesity and supporting healthier lifestyles in Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and youth.

Activities to date include:

- Strengthening of partnerships
- Exploring Collective Impact
- Supporting Food Network Yukon- in partnership with Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition
- Community Gardener and Economic Development Workshop 2014, 2015
- BYTE University-Facilitation and Youth Leadership Development -in partnership with Bringing Youth Towards Equality
- Healthy Eating and Active Living Program Inventory in Yukon and Northwest Territories' Communities -in partnership with Northern Nutrition Association, NWT-Recreation & Parks Association, Recreation & Parks Association of the Yukon
- Youth engagement and capacity building related to food security
- Understanding factors of sustainability and scalability in a rural, remote, northern context
 - Weekday Warriors® program- in partnership with Boys & Girls Club of Yukon
 - Kids in the Kitchen program- in partnership with Yukon Government Health & Social Services
 - Yellowknife Food Charter, in partnership with Yellowknife Farmers Market
- Community Demonstration Projects: Family cooking classes, Father-child hunting program, Seed starting and gardening workshops and mentorship, Inspired Living sessions, Walking challenge, Summer community greenhouse project.

Understanding Sustainability & Scalability

- With a greater awareness of the complexity of community health issues, there is increased focus on the importance of innovation for the sustainability of successful health interventions².
- Program benefits may not become apparent for years after a program has been in place, and developing a framework or plan to measure long term sustainability is difficult.
- There is a need for a better understanding of what factors influence the sustainability of successful programming in rural, remote and northern contexts.
- Scalability is commonly tied into sustainability with the intent that improved coverage of successful interventions will support program sustainability, increase reach and have widespread positive outcomes.
- Few tools are available that facilitate community-based organizations planning for and assessing the successes of sustainable health interventions. Need for a tool that allows community-based programs to construct sustainability goals/objectives, guide the development and implementation of sustainability strategies, and have a continual monitoring and evaluation processes^{3, 4, 5}.
- We are working with two separate critically evaluated, successful programs to try to gain a better understanding of factors, which influence program sustainability and scalability.

Program Sustainability Assessment Tool

The PSAT⁶ provides insight into the sustainability potential of a program, based on a variety of specific organizational and contextual factors. It helps to provide a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in program structures, in order to better position programming to ensure the long-term success in communities.

- Condition 1: Environmental Supports: Community Champions, Leadership Support, Community Support and Engagement
- Condition 2: Funding Stability
- Condition 3: Partnerships: Governments (Indigenous, Municipal, Regional, Territorial, Federal), Community Organizations, Businesses
- Condition 4: Organizational Capacity: Integrated into existing programs and structures, Leadership support
- Condition 5: Program Evaluation: Developmental and other reflexive evaluation processes which inform planning and implementation, Strong evidence of impacts and outcomes
- Condition 6: Program Adaptation: Proactive adaptation, Community context
- Condition 7: Communication: Strategic communication processes, Builds community awareness
- Condition 8: Strategic Planning: Long-term planning (resources, funding needs), Sustainability plan

Concluding Remarks

- By improving the understanding of factors that influence the sustainability of programs and the initiative as a whole, we will be better positioned to identify how community-based partnerships can enhance facilitators and reduce barriers which may influence the success or failure of programs within a rural, remote, northern context. This will be beneficial when looking at scalability of programs to other communities in Yukon or Northwest Territories and for supporting the sustainability of successful programs for the long term.
- Individual-focused interventions for reducing obesity are most often not sustainable, but a collective approach in the context of social and environmental influences at the community level have greater potential for sustained change. It is our intent that we will be able to develop sustainable outcomes within this project that will continue well beyond the life of this project for supporting healthier lifestyles in northern communities.
- Anticipated outcomes include community members, and particularly youth, being more knowledgeable, having more opportunity, and being more likely to engage in healthy eating and active living activities across the two Territories. This will in turn lead to reduced prevalence of unhealthy weights over the course of the project and beyond.
- Inter-sectoral collaboration and taking a 'Collective Impact' approach will support existing strategies as well as lead to the development of policies for sustaining healthy living practices in Yukon and Northwest Territories' communities.

