YOUTH AND FAMILY WELLNESS CAMP

STRATEGIC PLAN

2026 - 2031





OUR PURPOSE

The Youth & Family Wellness Camp creates safe, joyful, and culturally grounded land-based experiences where Indigenous children, youth, and families connect to culture, the land, and one another – building confidence, belonging, skills, leadership, and lifelong wellness for generations to come.

OUR VISION

Indigenous children, youth, and families in Treaty #3 have a safe, joyful, and culturally grounded place to belong, heal, learn, lead, and grow – rooted in culture, connected to the land, strengthened by community, and living mino-bimaadiziwin – the good life.

OUR MISSION

To create and deliver safe, welcoming, and culturally grounded camp experiences that support belonging, healing, wellness, leadership, recreation, and lifelong learning for Indigenous children, youth, and families across Treaty #3 and beyond.

OUR PRINCIPLES

Culture First
Culture is at the heart of the Camp, guiding our relationships, decisions, programs, and experiences.

Joy and Belonging
We create a safe, welcoming place where children, youth, and families feel included, celebrated, supported, and proud of who they are.

Youth Voice Matters
Youth are valued leaders, learners, and partners whose voices help shape the future of the Camp.

Rooted in Relationships
Strong, trusting relationships create the foundation for belonging, healing, growth, and leadership.

Land as Teacher
The land is a source of knowledge, healing, culture, and connection that guides learning and wellbeing.

Strength in Community
Strong families, communities, and support networks create the conditions for children and youth to thrive.

Growth with Integrity
We will grow thoughtfully and responsibly, remaining grounded in our values, culture, and purpose.

GUIDED BY COMMUNITY VOICES: FROM VISION TO REALITY

The Youth & Family Wellness Camp Strategic Plan 2026–2031 is grounded in the voices of those who know the Camp best: youth, families, communities, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, staff, and partners. Over the course of the strategic planning process, participants consistently shared a vision of the Camp as more than a place. They described it as a gathering place, a safe space, a cultural hub, a source of healing, a place to belong, and a place where future leaders are nurtured.

The Youth & Family Wellness Camp was established through the vision and leadership of Ogimaawabiitong – Kenora Chiefs Advisory (KCA) and its member First Nations. In 2020, KCA acquired the 327-acre property on Black Sturgeon Lake within Treaty #3 Territory to create a culturally grounded, land-based space where children, youth, and families could access recreation, culture, wellness, leadership, and healing opportunities.

What began as a vision has grown into a vibrant gathering place where culture, land, relationships, and community come together. Through the leadership of First Nations, Elders, staff, partners, and supporters, the Camp has become a year-round hub for wellness, recreation, learning, leadership, and connection.

Today, the Camp serves thousands of participants annually through:



Cultural & land-based programming



Summer Camp



Sports & Recreation



Equine wellness programs



Leadership development



School partnerships



Community events & gatherings



Employment pathways & training

As the Camp continues to grow, it is entering a new chapter. What began as a vision is becoming a stand-alone organization dedicated to helping children, youth, families, and communities thrive for generations to come.

This Strategic Plan provides a roadmap for that future, guiding the Camp's growth as a culturally grounded, community-driven organization where children, youth, and families strengthen their connection to culture, land, and community; build confidence, skills, and leadership; and live mino-bimaadiziwin — the good life.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

This plan was developed through a comphrensive community engagement and assessment process conducted between January and June 2026. Interviews, surveys, facilitated discussions, and participatory activities helped identify strengths, understand emerging needs, uncover opportunities for growth, and inform future priorities.

- **Staff Strategic Planning Session**

Focused on reflection, needs assessment, future priorities

- **Community Surveys**

Gathered community perspectives, feedback & priorities

- **Community Fun Nights**

Interactive engagement & participatory feedback activities

- **Youth Leadership (Gikinoo'maaditaa)**

Youth-led discussions, interviews, and visioning exercises

- **Elder and Knowledge Keeper Conversations**

Sharing teachings, strengths, & community priorities

- **Leadership Team Planning Sessions**

Exploring organizational strengths, challenges, & future direction

- **Review of Organizational Learning**

Evaluations, reports, participation data & community feedback

Together, these engagement activities provided an understanding of community needs, aspirations, strengths, and opportunities, forming the foundation of this strategic plan.



MONTH 1	MONTH 2	MONTH 3	MONTH 4	MONTH 5	MONTH 6
Preparation & Internal Grounding	Community Engagement & Relationship Building	Establish Youth & Family Advisory Council	Youth-led Visioning & Identity Building	Drafting the Strategic Foundation	Validation, Approval, & Next Steps

The remarkable consistency of feedback across youth, families, communities and staff confirms a shared vision for the Camp's future. Across all engagement activities, five consistent themes emerged:

FAMILIES MATTER

CULTURE AND LAND MUST REMAIN CENTRAL

ACCESS REMAINS A BARRIER

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IS REQUIRED

RELATIONSHIPS CREATE IMPACT



CURRENT STATE ASSESSMENT

Before planting for the future, we took stock of the conditions around us—recognizing our strengths, understanding our challenges, and identifying opportunities for growth.

STRENGTHS



The Camp is recognized for:

- Strong community trust & relationships
- Unique land-based environment
- Growing infrastructure & year-round capacity
- Strong cultural foundation
- Diverse programming opportunities
- Dedicated staff team
- Strong partnerships
- Increasing regional reputation

OPPORTUNITIES



The Camp is uniquely positioned to:

- Expand year-round programming
- Strengthen family wellness & intergenerational learning
- Grow youth leadership, mentorship, & life skills development
- Increase earned revenue & sustainability
- Develop regional partnerships
- Expand cultural, language & land-based learning
- Become a leading Indigenous wellness, learning, & leadership centre

CHALLENGES



The Camp must address:

- Transportation & access barriers
- Staffing capacity
- Infrastructure limitations
- Increasing demand
- Long-term operational sustainability
- Communication & awareness
- Governance evolution
- Supporting youth with diverse needs

THEORY OF CHANGE

What grows over time for young people



Emotional well-being
Improved resilience, emotional regulation & overall well-being.



Cultural continuity & land stewardship
Stronger connection to culture, language, land & teachings across generations.



Confidence & identity
Stronger self-esteem, cultural pride, belonging & sense of self.



School & community engagement
Greater participation in school, community life, cultural activities & positive relationships.



Leadership & purpose
Youth stepping into leadership roles & developing a stronger sense of direction, responsibility & possibility.



Stronger families & communities
Deeper relationships, stronger support networks & greater community connection across generations.



Trusted relationships
Consistent support from caring adults, mentors, elders, knowledge keepers, staff & peers.



Mentorship & leadership
Opportunities to build confidence, responsibility, leadership & life skills through participation & mentorship.



Cultural connection
Opportunities to experience Indigenous culture, teachings, language & ceremony as living parts of everyday life.

At camp, every experience plants a seed



Time on the land
Regular connection to the land through outdoor learning, recreation, environmental stewardship & land-based experiences.



Belonging & safety
Welcoming, inclusive & culturally grounded spaces where children and youth feel valued, supported & free to be themselves.



Challenge & accomplishment
Opportunities to try new things, build confidence & experience success in a supportive environment.

OUR VISION: Indigenous children, youth, and families in Treaty #3 have a safe, joyful, and culturally grounded place to belong, heal, learn, lead, and grow — rooted in culture, connected to the land, strengthened by community, and living mino-bimaadiziwin, the good life.

1 CULTURE, IDENTITY & BELONGING	2 YOUTH, FAMILY & STAFF WELLBEING	3 ACCESS & COMMUNITY CONNECTION	4 INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENT	5 ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY & LEADERSHIP
WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE				
Culture, language, land, and community remain at the heart of every experience.	Youth, families, & staff thrive through connection, wellbeing, leadership, & learning.	Every child, youth, and family can access programs and feel connected to community.	Facilities, infrastructure, and natural spaces support year-round learning, wellness, and connection.	A resilient organization capable of serving future generations.
OUR FOCUS				
• Embed culture throughout programs & operations • Strengthen Elder & Knowledge Keeper leadership • Expand land-based learning opportunities • Advance language & cultural learning	• Strengthen family & inter-generational connections • Create pathways for youth leadership • Support holistic wellbeing • Invest in staff growth & development	• Reduce transportation & participation barriers • Strengthen community relationships • Increase awareness of opportunities • Foster inclusion & accessibility	• Expand program & cultural infrastructure • Increase four-season capacity • Strengthen operational systems • Steward the land responsibly	• Strengthen financial sustainability • Build strategic partnerships • Foster strong governance & leadership • Measure impact & support continuous learning
SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE				
• Participants report stronger cultural identity & belonging • Greater access to Elders & cultural teachings • Culture & language are visible throughout camp • Increased participation in cultural & land-based programming	• Increased family engagement • Youth taking on leadership roles • Improved staff wellbeing and retention • Increased resilience, life skills, and connection	• Increased participation across communities • Reduced barriers to participation • Greater awareness of programs and services • Stronger community partnerships	• Increased year-round programming • Enhanced participant experience • Improved operational effectiveness • Protected natural and cultural spaces	• Sustainable and diversified funding • Strong collaborative partnerships • Effective governance and leadership • Organizational resilience

Strategic Priority 1: Culture, Identity & Belonging

Why This Matters: Culture, language, land, and community are at the heart of who we are. They help young people, families, staff, and community members develop a strong sense of identity, belonging, and connection.

Goal: Ensure culture, language, land, and community are at the heart of everything we offer.



1.1 Embed Culture Throughout Camp Life

- Develop a shared cultural framework to guide programs, spaces, and experiences.
- Integrate cultural teachings across all departments.
- Increase the visibility and use of Anishinaabemowin throughout the camp.

1.2 Strengthen Elder and Knowledge Keeper Leadership

- Create meaningful year-round opportunities for Elders and Knowledge Keepers to guide our work.
- Involve Elders in program design, planning, and decision-making.
- Create opportunities for cultural mentorship and knowledge sharing

1.3 Expand Land-Based Learning

- Offer seasonal culture camps and land-based experiences.
- Increase opportunities to learn traditional harvesting, medicines, and food systems.
- Strengthen environmental stewardship and connections to the land.

1.4 Grow Language and Cultural Learning

- Increase opportunities to learn and hear Anishinaabemowin.
- Support intergenerational learning experiences.
- Create pathways for cultural mentorship.

Success Looks Like:

- Participants report stronger cultural identity and belonging.
- Elders and Knowledge Keepers are visible throughout camp life.
- Language and cultural teachings are integrated into everyday experiences.
- More youth and families participate in cultural and land-based programming.

Strategic Priority 2: Youth, Family & Staff Wellbeing

Why This Matters: Strong relationships, healthy families, empowered youth, and supported staff create the conditions for lifelong wellbeing.

Goal: Create opportunities for youth, families, and staff to thrive through connection, wellbeing, leadership, and lifelong learning.



2.1 Strengthen Family and Intergenerational Connections

- Expand family retreats and wellness opportunities.
- Create spaces for families and generations to learn together.
- Support parents and caregivers through learning and community-building opportunities.

2.2 Create a Youth Leadership Journey

- Build pathways that help youth develop leadership skills over time.
- Expand mentorship, volunteer, employment, and leadership opportunities.
- Create opportunities for youth voice and decision-making.

2.3 Support Holistic Wellness

- Increase access to Elders, Knowledge Keepers, mentors, and wellness supports.
- Expand recreation, cultural, land-based, and equine-assisted programming.
- Strengthen mental health partnerships and culturally grounded approaches to healing.
- Ensure supports are responsive to diverse abilities and needs.

2.4 Invest in Staff Growth and Wellbeing

- Support professional and leadership development.
- Create mentorship and succession planning opportunities.
- Strengthen recruitment, retention, and staff wellness initiatives.

Success Looks Like:

- Families feel more connected to one another and their communities.
- Youth increasingly take on leadership roles.
- Staff feel supported, valued, and equipped to succeed.
- Participants demonstrate increased wellbeing, confidence, and resilience.

Strategic Priority 3: Access & Community Connection

Why This Matters: Every child, youth, and family should have the opportunity to participate, belong, and benefit from our programs.

Goal: Reduce barriers to participation while strengthening relationships with communities.



3.1 Improve Access

- Reduce transportation barriers.
- Explore mobile and community-based programming opportunities.
- Develop partnerships that help more participants access programs.

3.2 Strengthen Community Relationships

- Increase outreach and engagement in communities.
- Expand partnerships with schools and community organizations.
- Bring programs and experiences closer to where people live.

3.3 Increase Awareness and Storytelling

- Share stories that celebrate participants and community impact.
- Elevate youth voices.
- Increase awareness of programs and opportunities

3.4 Foster Inclusion and Belonging

- Design welcoming, culturally safe, and accessible experiences.
- Strengthen accommodations and participant supports.
- Remove barriers wherever possible.

Success Looks Like:

- More participants attend from more communities.
- Families experience fewer barriers to participation.
- Communities feel connected to and represented in our work.
- Participants experience camp as welcoming, inclusive, and accessible.

Strategic Priority 4: Infrastructure & Environment

Why This Matters: The places where we gather should reflect the values we teach—safe, welcoming, culturally grounded, accessible, and connected to the land.

Goal: Develop facilities, infrastructure, and natural spaces that support year-round learning, wellness, and community connection.



4.1 Create Spaces for Learning and Culture

- Expand indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- Develop cultural gathering and teaching spaces.
- Improve accessibility throughout camp.

4.2 Support Four-Season Programming

- Increase winter-ready facilities and infrastructure.
- Expand overnight accommodations and gathering spaces.
- Create flexible spaces that support year-round use.

4.3 Strengthen Operational Capacity

- Improve staff workspaces and wellness areas.
- Invest in technology, communications, and operational systems.
- Ensure infrastructure can support future growth.

4.4 Steward The Land

- Protect natural and cultural spaces.
- Strengthen environmental stewardship practices.
- Integrate sustainability into operations and planning.

Success Looks Like:

- More programming opportunities throughout the year.
- Participants experience safe, accessible, and welcoming facilities.
- Staff have the tools and spaces needed to do their work well.
- The land is protected and stewarded for future generations.

Strategic Priority 5: Organizational Sustainability & Leadership

Why This Matters: Future generations deserve an organization that is strong, accountable, community-driven, and built to last.

Goal: Build a resilient organization capable of serving children, youth, and families for generations to come.



5.1 Strengthen Financial Sustainability

- Diversify revenue sources.
- Increase long-term funding stability.
- Grow donor and supporter relationships.
- Explore earned revenue opportunities.

5.2 Build Strong Partnerships

- Strengthen relationships with First Nations, schools, funders, and community organizations.
- Develop partnerships that increase impact and sustainability.

5.3 Grow Leadership and Community Voice

- Establish a Youth and Family Advisory Council.
- Increase community involvement in decision-making.
- Support leadership development across the organization.

5.4 Learn, Measure, and Improve

- Track outcomes and impact.
- Monitor progress toward strategic goals.
- Use learning and evaluation to improve programs and services.

Success Looks Like:

- Financial resources are stable and diversified.
- Community voices help shape organizational decisions.
- Strong partnerships expand our impact.
- The organization remains resilient and positioned for future growth.

THE FUTURE WE ARE BUILDING TOGETHER

Indigenous children, youth, and families in Treaty #3 have a safe, joyful, and culturally grounded place to belong, heal, learn, lead, and grow — rooted in culture, connected to the land, strengthened by community, and living mino-bimaadiziwin, the good life.

- Cultural continuity
- Stronger wellbeing
- Indigenous leadership & opportunity
- Thriving families & communities
- Meaningful reconciliation

WHAT GROWS OVER TIME

- Identity & belonging
- Connection to culture & land
- Wellbeing & resilience
- Leadership & confidence
- Strong families & communities
- Opportunities & future pathways

WHAT CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES EXPERIENCE

Children & Youth

- Feel safe, welcomed & valued
- Experience joy, belonging & connection
- Build confidence & life skills
- Strengthen cultural identity
- Discover strengths & future possibilities

Families

- Feel welcomed & included
- Build trust & relationships
- Participate in culture & community

Organization

- Learns, adapts & grows
- Strengthens partnerships
- Expands access & opportunity

WHAT WE DO TOGETHER

Land, Culture & Identity

- Land-based learning
- Language, teachings & ceremony
- Arts, culture & traditional knowledge

Programs, Leadership & Learning

- Summer camp
- Youth leadership & mentorship
- Employment, life skills & experiential learning

Health, Wellness & Recreation

- Sports & recreation
- Equine programs
- Healthy living & wellness experiences

Family & Community Connection

- School & community outreach
- Family gatherings & events
- Community partnerships & engagement

WHAT MAKES CAMP POSSIBLE



🌲 Land, facilities & cultural spaces



🤝 Indigenous leadership, staff & volunteers



🔥 Elders, knowledge keepers & cultural teachers



🐴 Animals, equipment & program resources



🚌 Transportation, food & accessibility supports



👫 Community investment & sustainable funding



❤️ Families, communities & strategic partners

The Strategic Plan will be brought to life over five years through thoughtful, phased growth. Each year will build on the last, ensuring the Camp grows in a way that is culturally grounded, community-driven, sustainable, and true to its purpose.

FIVE YEAR IMPLEMENTATION JOURNEY

2026

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

- Launch & share Strategic Plan.
- Establish the Youth & Family Advisory Council.
- Implement measurement framework.
- Strengthen internal planning, reporting, & operations.
- Develop transportation, access & outreach strategies.

2027

STRENGTHENING CONNECTION

- Expand family & intergenerational programs.
- Increase Elder & Knowledge Keeper involvement.
- Strengthen youth leadership, mentorship & employment pathways.
- Advance cultural, language, & land-based learning.
- Support staff development, mentorship & wellbeing.

2028

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

- Increase transportation & accessibility supports.
- Expand community-based & mobile programming.
- Strengthen inclusive supports for diverse needs.
- Grow life skills, employment, recreation & leadership pathways.
- Increase awareness of Camp programs

2029

GROWING TOGETHER

- Expand year-round programming.
- Increase use of Camp facilities for culture, wellness, learning, recreation & gathering.
- Strengthen operational capacity.
- Enhance participant, family, staff & community experiences.
- Grow partnerships & earned revenue opportunities.

2030

SUSTAINING THE FUTURE

- Strengthen governance, leadership & organizational systems.
- Diversify funding & revenue streams.
- Expand regional partnerships
- Demonstrate outcomes, impact & community benefit.
- Embed learning, evaluation & continuous improvement.

2031

LOOKING AHEAD

- Evaluate progress against the Strategic Plan.
- Share stories, outcomes & lessons learned.
- Celebrate the people & communities who shaped the journey.
- Engage communities in planning.
- Develop the 2032–2037 Strategic Plan.

CARRYING THE VISION FORWARD

The Youth & Family Wellness Camp is more than a place. It is a vision brought to life through the leadership of First Nations, the guidance of Elders and Knowledge Keepers, the voices of youth and families, and the commitment of staff, partners, and communities.

This Strategic Plan is our commitment to carry that vision forward with care, purpose, accountability, and integrity. It will guide how we grow, how we make decisions, how we strengthen programs and spaces, and how we remain accountable to the children, youth, families, and communities we serve.

As the Camp continues to grow, culture, language, land, youth voice, family connection, accessibility, sustainability, and community leadership will remain at the centre of our work.

We will continue building a safe, joyful, and culturally grounded place of belonging – where Indigenous children, youth, and families across Treaty #3 can strengthen identity, build confidence, experience wellness, develop leadership, and live mino-bimaadiziwin – the good life.

Grounded in culture. Guided by community. Connected to the land. Built for generations.

For the Land. For the People. For the Future.





MAKATE WAAGAMICHIWANANG GAKINAA'AMAATIWIN

YOUTH & FAMILY WELLNESS CAMP

371 Strecker Road, Kenora, Ontario
www.wellnesscamp.ca
Phone: 807-500-4352
Email: wellness.camp@kenorachiefs.org