



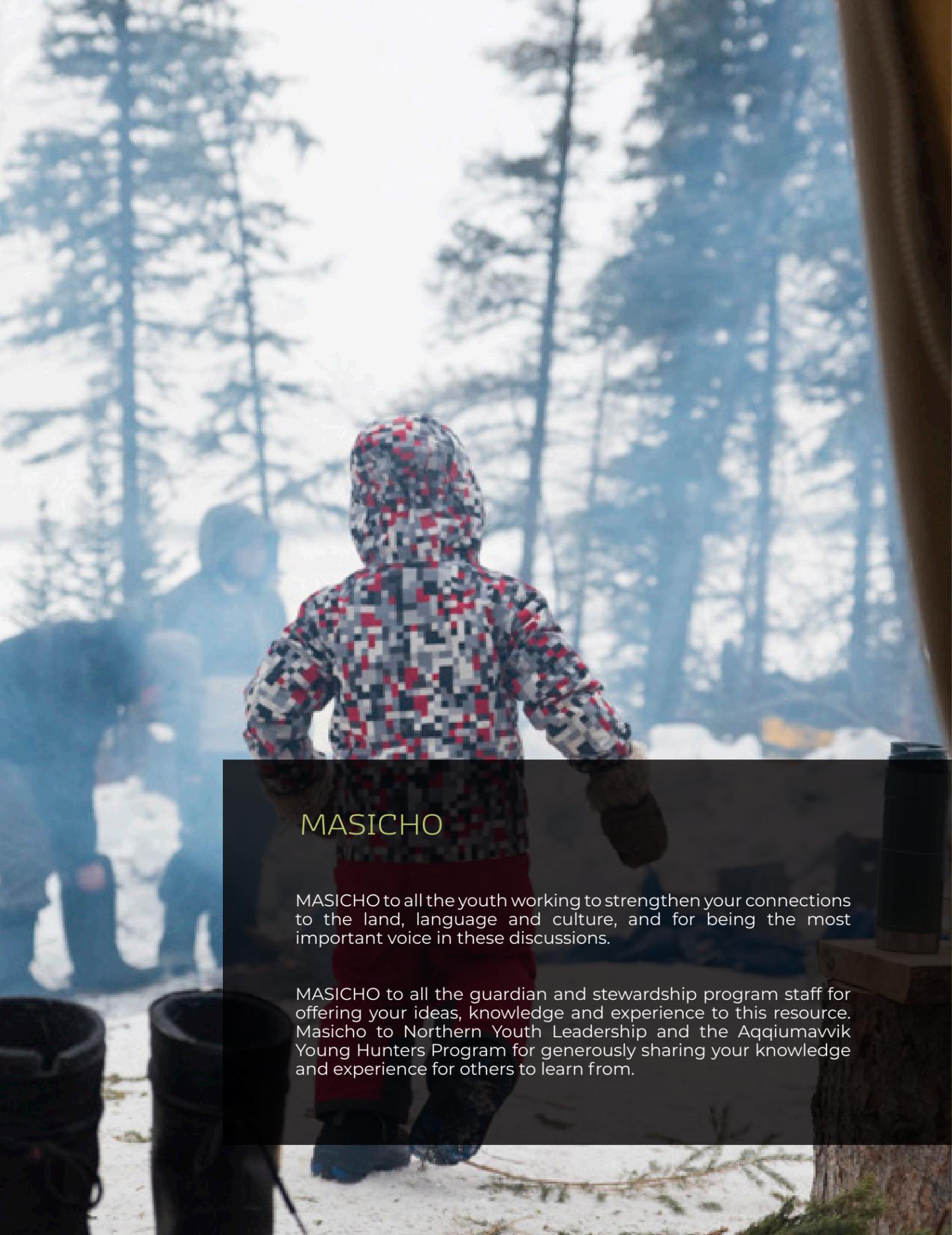
YOUTH
ENGAGEMENT

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Photo: Pat Kane Photography

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A Practical Guide for Indigenous
Guardian & Stewardship Programs



MASICHO

MASICHO to all the youth working to strengthen your connections to the land, language and culture, and for being the most important voice in these discussions.

MASICHO to all the guardian and stewardship program staff for offering your ideas, knowledge and experience to this resource. Masicho to Northern Youth Leadership and the Aqqiumavik Young Hunters Program for generously sharing your knowledge and experience for others to learn from.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Sharing knowledge across the North about Indigenous guardian and environmental stewardship programs.

This knowledge resource was developed by Iḁaà Strategies for MakeWay to facilitate knowledge sharing amongst Northern Indigenous environmental stewardship and guardian programs on the topic of Youth Engagement. It is intended to be a gathering place for the knowledge and expertise of guardian and environmental stewardship program managers and coordinators from across Northern Canada.

There are many ways in which guardian and stewardship programs are engaging youth in stewardship activities, including:

- On the land camps and programs
- Activities in or with schools
- Junior guardian programs
- Internships and leadership programs

This resource shares the practice and lived experience of established youth programs, as well as the perspectives of young leaders working in stewardship roles. This resource includes:

- Case studies of established youth and stewardship programs
- Ideas and discussions from Indigenous youth, and youth-program leaders on best practices for engaging youth and supporting and supporting them to become stewards of the land
- Existing resources that can be used to support mental wellness training for program staff

LEARNING FROM THE EXPERTS RESEARCH APPROACH

The objective of this resource is to share useful information about how youth can be engaged in stewardship initiatives and guardian programs based on the perspectives of youth and established youth-focused programs.

In May 2020, a virtual group discussion was hosted with a number of Northern stewardship and guardian personnel to provide an opportunity to share about best practices and challenges related to youth engagement in Indigenous stewardship. Key areas that the stewardship and guardian programs identified wanting to learn more about included:

- Outreach and communications: taking youth-tailored and multi-faceted approaches to connect with youth
- Education, employment & training: creating stewardship-focused learning opportunities in schools and post-secondary programs to recruit youth as stewards
- Well-being: supporting the well-being of youth on the land and in the community

RESEARCH METHODS

- Conversations with guardian/stewardship and youth program staff
- Group discussions with guardian/stewardship program staff
- Online survey targeting Indigenous youth from across the North
- Online research of programs and resources

GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A group discussion was hosted on May 6, 2020 with 25 representatives from various Indigenous guardian and stewardship programs to help identify the questions, interests, and lived experiences around youth engagement. The following guiding questions were drawn from the discussions and themes shared on that call:

1. What are the effective ways that Indigenous governments and organizations are taking youth-tailored and multi-faceted approaches to connecting with and doing outreach with you?
2. How are stewardship-focused learning opportunities being integrated in school curriculums?
3. What can Indigenous governments and organizations do to recruit young leadership into stewardship roles and employment?
4. How can youth be engaged to co-create opportunities in stewardship initiatives?
5. How can youth engagement opportunities in guardian or stewardship programs be designed to support the well-being of youth?

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAID YOUTH VOICES

The real experts on youth engagement are the youth themselves. A facebook survey was conducted in May/June 2020, open to youth ages 12-26 to share their thoughts and ideas about how youth should be engaged in stewardship. There were 63 participants from Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunatsiavut, and Nunavik. Here is what they said:

"I would like more activities for us youth to get us up and doing stuff besides justing sitting around. I would love to learn my language and culture because I know it important for myself."

"Have our own representatives in each community to do these programs throughout the year... that would be awesome, not all youth are the same. Some of us want to learn our culture, language & traditional knowledge. Bring opportunities across the north."

"Learning our Indigenous languages is key in helping youth connect to the land. I've been able to find connections to the land, to my family, and to myself that I never knew existed through learning my own language with my grandmother."

"We do want to be involved, we do love our culture. We just need more opportunities. There is a camp what every 1 year to go on the land? It should be every month."

"Hire guides for us young ones. To teach us about knowledge and location of the land. Especially ones without dads in our lives."

"Teach youth more about our history and culture, show them how to hunt and trap, and help create bonds between yourself, youth and the land."

"Education is key. Educate on all aspects. From how to why it's important. Spiritual, mental, physical, emotional well-being."

"Youths don't want to just get woods or start fire or make traps, we want to learn how to fish, how to make medicine, what to do if there's an emergency, how to survive if we got lost, how to navigate our way. We want to hear everything about how it was for our elders when they were our ages, we want to hear everything from the biggest information to know to the littlest. Show us how important our land and people is to you as a person."

NORTHERN INDIGENOUS
YOUTH RESPONDENTS (Age 12-26):

63

75%

Of youth have thought about a job/career that takes care of the land and waters

TOP 10 outdoor activities youth wish they could do more of:



HUNTING - 33

LEARNING MY LANGUAGE- 29



FISHING- 23

HEARING STORIES - 20



CANOEING/
KAYAKING/
BOATING - 20

HIDE/SKIN TANNING - 19



SNOWMOBILING - 19

CUTTING FISH/MEAT - 18



HARVESTING
MEDICINES + PLANTS - 18

MAKING TRADITIONAL TOOLS
FROM THE LAND - 16



What gets youth MOST EXCITED
about being on the land:



LEARNING ABOUT MY CULTURE
SPENDING TIME WITH FAMILY
LEARNING NEW SKILLS
HOW IT MAKES ME FEEL

What will help youth spend more
time on the land:

MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO DO IT
WITH OTHER YOUTH - 30



SOMEONE TO BRING ME/TEACH
ME - 26

MAKE IT A BIGGER PART OF MY
SCHOOLING - 25

HAVING MY OWN OUTDOOR
EQUIPMENT - 23

ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION
(SNOWMOBILE/BOAT/ETC.) - 20

MORE TIME - 2

CAMPS - 1

FUNDING FOR
ELDERS/CULTURAL PEOPLE - 1

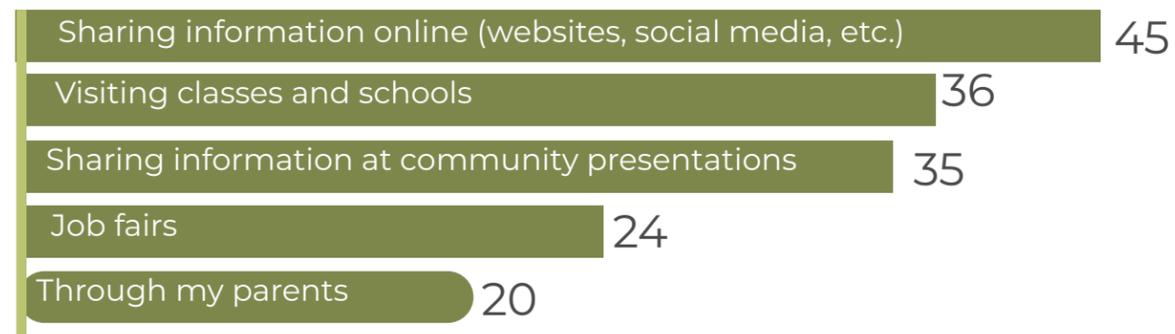
"Teach the youth gun safety and how to be safe on the land and where you can hunt and fish."

- youth survey respondent

ENGAGING YOUTH COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

WHAT THE YOUTH SAID

BEST WAYS TO GET YOUTH INFORMATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES TO PURSUE JOBS/CAREERS TAKING CARE OF THE LAND:



BEST WAYS FOR YOUTH TO LEARN ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES TO GET ON THE LAND:



“Engage in this knowing that there's these other challenges that they're faced with and that some of them are shy and you know participating in this type of thing is a big deal for them. Talk to them one-on-one first before so they can get comfortable with that.”

– Elizabeth Tuglavina, Nunatsiavut Government

BEST PRACTICES AND EFFECTIVE OUTREACH METHODS

- Build a relationship and build trust
- Talk to youth one-on-one
- Use word of mouth
- Communicate with and through other youth workers and organizations in the community
- Contact parents
- Connect with schools
- Tailor communications to youth (use language you would put in a text)
- Use social media
- Use lots of photos and posters
- Videos are very effective
- Host meetings just for youth to come learn about opportunities
- Help youth to complete application forms
- Ensure queer and non-binary youth are included and respected
- Give youth equipment to take their own photos and videos during the programming, they can be used for reports and evaluations

“ When communicating with certain age groups, think about how they want to be communicated with and how can we change.”

– Kristen Tanche, Dehcho First Nations

SUPPORTING YOUTH WELL-BEING TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES

“Be flexible because sometimes I go to sign up kids, but something comes up or it’s not a good day for them. So maybe you’ll have to try again tomorrow. You never know what’s going on at home for them, but I think it’s important they don’t miss out on their chance just because something out of their control might be happening. So be flexible and just keep checking up and checking in with them so they know they’re still part of the program and are not just forgotten about.”

– Tyanna Steinwand, Tlcho Government.”

BEST PRACTICES IN SUPPORTING YOUTH WELL-BEING THROUGH TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICES

- Trauma-informed training for staff
- Include mental health supports in program, some programs bring counsellors on the land to support youth
- Ask youth how they want/need to be supported on application forms and treat it like medical information
- Call parents to follow-up on health information in case they were not comfortable listing it on the form out of fear their kid won’t get selected to participate
- Build connections between youth and local support systems and service providers
- Remember that there might be something going on with the youth that you don’t know about
- Some youth are not used to being in a structured environment all day, give them as much information about what to expect beforehand
- Being with kids 24 hours/day can be exhausting for staff, create a culture and establish systems that promote self-care for staff that encourage them to identify when they are not in the best head space to manage a situation or need time to themselves. Example: Northern Youth Leadership uses a “tag-out” system, where staff and “tag-out” if they need a break and one of the other staff will step in
- Prioritize ability to work with youth when hiring staff

WELLNESS TRAINING OPTIONS FOR STAFF

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST):

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) is a two-day interactive workshop in suicide first aid. ASIST teaches participants to recognize when someone may have thoughts of suicide and work with them to create a plan that will support their immediate safety. Although ASIST is widely used by healthcare providers, participants don’t need any formal training to attend the workshop—anyone 16 or older can learn and use the ASIST model.

Link: <https://www.suicideinfo.ca/workshop/asist/>

Safe Talk:

This 3.5 hour workshop alerts one to warning signs indicating risk of suicide. The workshop emphasizes the importance of recognizing the signs, communicating with the person at risk and getting help or resources for the person at risk.

Link: <https://www.suicideinfo.ca/workshop/safe-talk/>

Mental Health First Aid:

Mental Health First Aid is the help provided to a person developing a mental health problem, experiencing a mental health crisis, or a worsening of their mental health. Some courses of particular interest: Mental Health First Aid - Adults who Interact with Youth, Mental Health First Aid Inuit, Mental Health First Aid Northern Peoples, and Mental Health First Aid First Nations.

Link: <https://mhfa.ca/>

“I will prioritize ability to work with youth over certifications such as Wilderness First Aid and Paddle Canada Instructor levels, because I can give staff those [trainings] no problem. If a staff member doesn’t know how to work with youth, that’s hard to train”

– Ali McConnell, Northern Youth Leadership

CASE STUDY

NORTHERN YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (LDP)

An employment program for youth aged 14 – 25 that builds capacity in the communities by developing a skilled workforce. The LDP prepares youth for employment in high-demand careers including tourism, environmental stewardship, and youth programming.

How the Program Works:

Youth who participated in a camp can apply the next year to become a Leader-In-Training. After they gain that experience, they can apply to become a Junior Leader, before eventually progressing into a Field Instructor.

The LDP is youth driven. Youth are consulted in all aspects of the program including what training is offered to them. Youth asked to work in pairs because working with a colleague of the same age and skill-level helped increase their confidence in taking on more responsibility. In response NYL has at least two youth staff on every trip so they can work together. Youth wanted room for upward mobility and opportunities to take on more responsibility. In response, NYL expanded the LDP from one youth staff position to three different positions so that youth could be promoted based on skill and experience.

Tailoring Approaches to Youth in all NYL programming:

- Mix up personality types on teams so youth can find someone they connect with
- Create a culture of self-care for staff so they can tag out when they need to
- Prioritize ability to work with youth over wilderness qualifications when recruiting staff
- Remember #kidlogic = kids just do things sometimes that don't make sense, but it's not a big deal
- There are times when youth need the response to come from a specific person - take ego out of it and act in the best interest of the youth
- Trauma-informed practice is remembering that things come from a deeper place, there might be something going on that we don't know about
- High staff to youth ratio (1 staff to 2-4 youth) to allow for more attention for youth and better self-care for staff
- Are very clear on rules and expectations that we have
- Give youth quiet time and unstructured time
- Our camps are structured, but with flexibility and options built in so we can respond to the needs and moods of the group
- We ask kids on our application how we can support them and what they need from us when they are upset - important for youth to learn self-advocacy

Wellness Training for Staff:

Feedback from NYL staff has been that mental health training is extremely useful for them in their roles. NYL runs an annual staff training camp and each year staff have asked for more mental health training because of its relevance to their work with youth. In a week-long program staff use skills gained from mental health trainings more frequently than they use skills gained from Wilderness First Aid; which highlights their importance.

NYL chooses Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) over Mental Health First Aid. The role-playing and hands-on practice asking somebody if they were thinking about suicide was really important to increasing staff confidence and comfort level navigating situations.

They have wellness curriculum and activities that are used in camps.

Education Partnerships:

NYL works closely with schools to do recruitment and also were able to get youth highschool credits for participating in the program (NWT only)

Resource Link: <https://northernyouth.ca/>



“I was helping a PhD student with her fieldwork, she was sampling moss and lichen, so that was really interesting. I really like the outdoorsy part of the field work. So that I think was the catalyst that really sparked my interest.”

– Tyanna Steinwand,
Tłı̨chǫ Government

YOUTH STEWARDSHIP EDUCATION & CURRICULUM

“Make it part of a school curriculum, and that way all youth are able to participate without barriers.”

- youth survey respondent

Youth expressed keen interest in having more land-based learning opportunities, as a part of their schooling and education. Many of the guardian programs expressed interest in learning how others are working to bring stewardship learning opportunities into schools and more formally integrating into education curriculum. While many of the guardian programs have:

- Worked with schools to partner to host on the land camps;
- Brought science and traditional knowledge learning opportunities into schools and on the land; and
- Worked with schools to help kids learn about guardian programs and engage with guardians,

many of the guardian programs did not have experience taking formal steps to incorporate stewardship learning opportunities into education curriculum. Some programs have found ways to work with schools or academic institutions to offer high school education credits for youth participation in on the land programs such as canoe trips or camps. Some programs have also partnered with post-secondary institutions through the Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning so that participants could acquire university credits from Southern institutions such as the University of Alberta or British Columbia.

Lessons Learned:

- Build partnerships with institutions who have authority/capacity
- Identify local and internal institutional champions/advocates like a principal or teacher who can support you and help get additional support
- Make it fun
- Combine in classroom learning and on-the-land learning opportunities

“Give youth time in school to do that; go out on the land. It’s so much more important than school for Indigenous kids.

It’s what keeps us alive.”

-youth survey respondent

CASE STUDY

AQQIUMAVVIK YOUNG HUNTERS PROGRAM

The Young Hunters Program is a community-based project designed to develop sustainable harvesting practices in youth between the ages of 8 - 18 years old.

Extensive work has been done with community Elders to document the knowledge and skills required for youth to become masters in sustainable harvesting and environmental monitoring. These are also inherent to becoming capable, confident and contributing community members as according to inunnguiniq (Inuit principles for becoming capable). Elders have stated that a critical skill for Inuit was close observation of the environment. Ujjiqsuinniq is the process that enables one to monitor and observe with confidence and ultimately to be prepared for different outcomes.

Participants in the program gain skills and knowledge through time spent with experienced elders and instructors by engaging in local hunting activities. Through this, the youth also gain confidence and perspective that will aid them long after they leave the program.

How the Program Works:

Location: Arviat, Nunavut

How long does it run? Year-round

How many staff are involved? 5 staff who also manage the research program

How do you identify participants? Put a call out

Lessons Learned:

Organization is important! Putting together the forms and making sure there are proper safety and emergency protocols in place

Resource Link: <https://www.aqqiumavvik.com/young-hunters-program>

“After the hunt, they sparkle. They take the caribou and put it in their homes.”

SUPPORTING YOUTH-LED APPROACHES

Guardians expressed an interest in learning about how best to support youth-led initiatives and efforts to be stewards of the land. There are some youth organizations that were created by youth, for youth, and are led wholly by youth. Examples include the Sahtú Youth Network and the Western Arctic Youth Collective. While their work is not only stewardship focused as they support broader cultural and leadership development, strengthening youth connection to land, language and culture is a foundational part of their work.

While this resource will not address how to support development of youth organizations, it will explore how programs have facilitated youth leadership within programs so that youth have a voice in the design and implementation of programming.

WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN STEWARDSHIP

- Engage youth in discussions about what kind of programming they want and respond to their needs
- Hire youth on staff and in casual positions to help lead programs
- Use a progression leadership model to support leadership development amongst youth to participate then lead programming
- Conduct evaluations and collect feedback from youth after each program so that their ideas can be incorporated into future programming
- Collaborate with youth organizations to deliver programming
- Create supports for youth that go onto study stewardship at post-secondary school

“ASK YOUTH.”

“Give us opportunities to help with planning ideas more often.”

-youth survey respondents

“Youth need to be more involved in the actual planning. That is really key. Engaging with them in a way they want be interacted with.”

– Kristen Tanche, Dehcho First Nations

Photo: Pat Kane Photography



ENGAGING YOUTH REFERENCES

INTERVIEWS

Tyanna Steinwand
Hannah Taneton
Elizabeth Tuglavina
Kristen Tanche
Keenan Nooks Lindell
Alison McConnell
Alice McCulley
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GROUP DISCUSSION PARTICIPANTS

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Hannah Taneton
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Trisha Landry
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Kayla Wyatt
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RESOURCES & LINKS

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Aqqiumavvik Young Hunter Program:
<https://www.aqqiumavvik.com/young-hunters-program>
<https://youtu.be/npCbo-nSkIk>
Dehcho First Nation Yunda Gogha Program: <https://dehcho.org/news/2021-yundaa-gogha-program/>
Ni Hatn'i Dene Junior Rangers Program: <http://www.landoftheancestors.ca/ni-hatni-dene.html>
Northern Youth Leadership: <https://northernyouth.ca/about/>
Sahtú Youth Network: <https://www.sahtuyouthnetwork.ca>
SEAS (Supporting Emerging Aboriginal Stewards): <http://www.emergingstewards.org>
Tlicho Imbe Program: <https://tlicho.ca/government/departments/culture-lands-protection/cultural-practices/tlicho-imbe-program>
Western Arctic Youth Collective: <https://www.facebook.com/waycwaycwayc/>

WELLNESS TRAINING

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST): <https://www.suicideinfo.ca/workshop/asist/>
Safe Talk: <https://www.suicideinfo.ca/workshop/safe-talk/>
Mental Health First Aid: <https://mhfa.ca/>

EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program: <https://www.ansep.net/>
Dechinta Centre for Research & Learning: <https://www.dechinta.ca/>



Photo: Pat Kane Photography

MASICHO!

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