

Strategic Planning Process – Final Report

June, 2023

Introduction

This report is a summary of Board, management, staff and community partner inputs from multiple sessions and examines the current context and operating environment for the Ne-Chee Friendship Centre (NFC). A preliminary report was submitted on April 24, 2023, which provided the focus for a final planning retreat on April 27, 2023. From that retreat, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee developed four strategic directions and produced a high level implementation plan.

Defining Successful Strategic Planning

On January 18, 2023, Board members and the Executive Director were asked to identify factors that would contribute to the success of the agency's strategic planning process. The following were identified:

1. Developing a new vision and mission statement;
2. Stakeholder engagement, both on-line and in person;
3. Examining the current climate and how NFC fits in. Discovering what changes can be anticipated (environmental scanning);
4. Reviewing the purpose and mandate of the Friendship Centre;
5. Identifying potential partnerships;
6. Developing metrics;
7. Agreement to establish a Steering Committee; and,
8. Celebrating the strategic plan with a feast during the AGM – the third week in June.

Methodology

A Strategic Planning Steering Committee was formed and consisted of Ramona Sawatzky, Board Chair, Marlene Elder, Board Member, Patti Fairfield, Executive Director, Sunny Copenace, Senior Staff and Crystal Page, Administration. The process was facilitated by Betty-Anne Johnson, Northern Lights Coaching and Consulting. Virtual meetings were held March 1, 7, 14 and April 5, 2023; with a final virtual meeting held with the Committee on May 29, 2023, to discuss this report and plan on a page. The primary purpose of the initial virtual meetings were to develop a new vision and mission statement and confirm NFC's values. In addition, the following items were addressed during the virtual meetings:

- A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis was started.
- Draft outcome measures were identified.
- On-line and hard copy stakeholder surveys were developed, ratified by the Committee, released and analyzed.
- A communication and change management strategy was developed.
- In-person focus groups and Steering Committee retreat were planned for April.

An in-person planning week was held from April 24 to 27, 2023. Very tragically, the death of two siblings from the Kenora area the previous weekend meant that the community was in a state of mourning. As NFC staff and community members rallied to support the family, adjustments to the planning were made, and the Steering Committee moved forward to the best degree possible considering the tragic circumstances. The follow is a review of the process that was maintained:

- April 24 – Review of stakeholder consultations to date; confirm vision & mission; confirm questions for focus groups, SWOT analysis and priority identification; and retreat planning agenda (see Appendix A).
- April 25 – Staff focus group; Board, Management and Administration focus group.
- April 26 – Community Partner focus group. The service user focus group was rescheduled due to the funeral procession and was unattended (however, hard copy feedback survey results were analyzed and reviewed).
- April 27 – Steering Committee retreat (Agenda - Appendix B).

Ne-Chee Friendship Centre Vision, Mission and Values

NFC's new vision and mission were developed as part of the strategic planning process and are the foundational elements of the agency's strategic plan. As per the on-line survey results, there was strong support for the new vision (88% strongly agreed/agreed it was inspiring) and mission (82% strongly agreed/agreed that the mission statement clearly defines NFC's purpose). The statements were thus confirmed at the April 24 and 27 meetings by the Steering Committee.

Vision: To strengthen and support the lives of Indigenous People living in Kenora.

Mission: Ne-Chee Friendship Centre will provide a safe, caring and culturally respectful approach to wholistic health while inspiring a sense of community for all Indigenous People of Kenora.

Values: The seven Grandfather teachings: Love, Respect, Bravery, Truth, Honesty, Humility & Wisdom.

Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

A separate report detailing stakeholder feedback was provided. However, a summary of the lines of inquiry and a strategic assessment of the feedback are provided below:

1. Online survey – 43 staff, management & Board members were surveyed with 31 surveys completed – 61% rate of return. 55 community partners with 44 completed – 80% rate of return.
2. Hard copy service user feedback survey – 21 completed surveys.
3. Focus groups - one staff (7 participants); one Board, Management and Administration staff (5 participants); one community partners (19 participants); and one service user focus group was planned and rescheduled (no participants).

Strategic Assessment

Clearly, one of NFC's most prominent strengths is advocating for the needs of the Indigenous community (84% rated this as excellent, very good and good). In addition, there was a high level of

awareness that this is a key role for the agency. Survey participants also rated NFC's efforts to address client concerns at 85%. This is followed by:

- Fostering trust and confidence among clients at 79%;
- Responding to emerging issues and change also at 79%;
- Taking efforts to improve services at 77%; and,
- Developing partnerships and collaboration at 74%.

The data with respect to communicating with the community and general public supports the need for more focus in this area (62%). Community partners shared common challenges regarding communications. Survey participants rated NFC's efforts in providing training for staff at 52%, a clear area for growth.

The following comments within the survey are highly reflective of overall sentiments:

"I highly regard NFC because of its willingness to collaborate with community partners, caring heart and amazing ED."

"I think Ne-Chee needs to add a goal of being seen as a valuable partner in Kenora to their strat plan."

"They are known to step up where others are unable to do so."

"If there was an area to highlight for Ne Chee to improve upon it would be to highlight their services available and how to access them."

Service User Feedback

During the period when the on-line survey was active, staff handed out/assisted service users to complete hard copy surveys. 21 completed client feedback surveys were returned. There was a high degree of satisfaction from the respondents. From the comments, it appears that providing transportation is a key factor and there is a desire for more traditional/Indigenous focused programming. Most service users heard about services from friends, family and social media.

SWOT Analysis - Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats

As part of the strategic planning process, a SWOT analysis typically provides insights into the internal and external environments that may impact an organization's operations and future direction and serves as a framework to inform the development of strategic directions and priorities.

The SWOT analysis was started through the virtual meetings of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and was added to with feedback from the on-line stakeholder survey feedback. The feedback was reviewed and refined by the Steering Committee on April 24, 202. The full SWOT analysis is in the separate report "Stakeholder Feedback;" a list of key strengths, weaknesses and threats are listed here, with recommended priorities for the next 1 – 3 years.

Strengths:

- Range of programs covering all different aspects of life.
- Advocating for vulnerable populations.
- Unity among staff.
- Cultural programming.
- Community partnerships and collaboration.

- Provides a welcoming environment.
- Is a community hub.

Weaknesses/Threats:

- Human resources challenges (turnover, hiring, orientation, on-going training, pay).
- Communications with the community.
- Gaps in programming (outreach, addictions, mental health, housing, land based activities).
- Environment (welcoming to all Indigenous, space, land).
- Funding insecurities.
- Socio-economic (drug use, homelessness, racism).

As a final step in the SWOT analysis, stakeholders identified priorities for opportunities for NFC over the next one to three years.

Land, Building, Facilities and Environment

Many respondents identified that providing a safe space for the most vulnerable while building a sense of community was the key. Many comments reflected a desire for a “warm, welcoming space” that was inclusive of everyone. Many of the staff respondents indicated that land or a “green space” would be ideal for land-based programming for all ages of the life cycle. Included was more space to store resources and to provide cultural programming, and provide a warming/cooling space for the most vulnerable.

Strategic Human Resources

A common recommendation was to address the perceived wage gap between NFC and other agencies in town. More training for staff to better execute their duties alongside colleagues from other agencies was also a common theme.

Communications, Partnerships and Community Awareness

Respondents identified that there were many programs in Kenora and there is a need to clarify “who does what.” Clearly, there are many opportunities for partnership and collaboration. Respondents also identified an opportunity for NFC to showcase the various programs and it services it provides. Community partners stated that they shared the struggle to enhance their communications and community awareness, especially post COVID-19. Given that there is some overlap in services provided by other Indigenous organizations, NFC was encouraged to establish direct links with surrounding First Nations communities to meet the needs of community members when residing in Kenora.

Comments from the survey:

“Let’s see an uptake in communication – sending event calendars, increasing follow up with providers, taking time to network and see how partnerships can better support people.”

“More community/public awareness and access of Ne-Chee’s programs and services “so that everyone can see the wonderful services they offer and all the hard work and effort they put in.”

"I feel that Ne-Chee provides important and wholistic care related to the overall health and well-being of the community. I'd like Ne-Chee to celebrate and promote their programming to inform both the community partners and community as a whole."

Programming and Services

Respondents wanted to ensure that the services continue to support individuals from birth to end of life. Staff members saw opportunities for joining with breakfast programs to help families and children, as well as attending seniors' homes to bring cultural programming to Elders. There is a need for more youth programming around healthy values as well as creating and offering tools for safer families. With respect to the homeless population, it was suggested that an on-site person be dedicated to assisting walk ins with their needs. It was also recommended that more focus be placed on securing housing for people

Strategic Assessment of Focus Group Sessions

In addition to the on-line surveys and service user feedback surveys, four focus groups were planned to obtain more in-depth feedback on the opportunities identified. As noted above, one focus group was rescheduled and was unattended. The Steering Committee developed the following questions to guide the focus group discussions:

1. What do you see as the core function of a friendship centre?
2. How do you define sense of community? How do we build this?
3. What do you envision for community & cultural events at the new space?
4. What do you see as our role with our street population?
5. Knowing that some human resources issues are being addressed; what are the top three incentives to keep you at NFC? If you were to design the ideal training plan, what would it look like?
6. We noticed that there are opportunities for communications and public awareness. What are the top five things we could do to have more impact?
7. What are the most important community partnerships we could develop?
8. There were some programming gaps (e.g. mental health, addictions, housing) mentioned in the survey. How do we avoid duplication?
9. How do we reconnect after COVID-19?

A clear theme from the three focus groups held on April 25 and 26, 2023 was that the NFC plays a central role in providing services for the urban Indigenous population. The Centre is noted to go "above" and beyond their mandate.

The staff focus group held on April 25, 2023, confirmed the core function of the friendship centre as providing support and services from birth to end of life. Staff reported often going above their "normal" roles to help individuals in need, and as such, many community partners referred individuals to NFC as a place to get needs met when other organizations were unable to assist. Staff voiced concerns that providing a warming centre in the event space has affected regular programming. They noted that extra cleaning is needed and there are concerns about finding needles on site. Overall and in addition to the services currently provided at the NFC, it was recommended that other community

partners and the City of Kenora do more to support the needs of the homeless population so that NFC could continue to focus on providing services “for all the Indigenous People of Kenora.”

As with many of the other municipalities in Northwestern Ontario, the organizations within Kenora are facing challenges with retention and recruitment. The staff at the focus group made the following recommendations:

1. Address wages to be on par with other organizations and to keep pace with inflation.
2. Enhance public/community perception of NFC as serving “all the Indigenous People of Kenora” from birth to end of life.
3. Restore the role of a human resources professional and provide two weeks of “on the job” training at orientation.
4. Provide more opportunities for staff input on “big decisions” at the monthly staff meetings.

The staff at the focus group were keen to establish partnerships post COVID-19. They envisioned a community-wide event (e.g. social services fair) at the harbour front as an opportunity to network with other agencies while providing fun, interactive activities for the community. In addition, they would like to offer swim and skate nights, barbecues at local businesses, and children’s activities at Anicinabe Park. Overall, staff would like to offer more land-based and cultural activities.

Finally, and as top priorities, staff recommended that NFC move forward with the following partnerships:

1. Grand Council Treaty #3
2. Kenora Chiefs Advisory (KCA)
3. Kenora District Social Services Board (KDSB)
4. Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU)
5. City of Kenora

A focus group for Board members, management and administration staff was also held on April 26. In terms of the core function of a friendship centre, participants stated that it was a safe place, a sense of community and belonging, non-judgmental, welcoming, a place to get resources, open to all cultural beliefs with supports and advocacy. This group emphasized the need for all visitors to be welcomed, heard and listened to with an open minded perspective.

This group generated a long list of partners that would be highly beneficial to collaborate with (listed in the Stakeholder Feedback Report); however, the following were recommended as being the focus:

1. Kenora District Services Board (top priority to address housing crisis)
2. Waasegiizhig Nanaandawe’iyewigamig (WNHAC)
3. Ontario Native Women’s Association
4. St. Joseph’s Community Counselling (for mental health supports)

This group identified some possible approaches to strengthening partnerships: attend the Chiefs’ Assembly, meet with surrounding First Nations, organize and/or attend an ED/CEO forum, plan a “post COVID-19 reconnection” retreat, gather partners around a common project (e.g. Youth Hub), attend City Council committee meetings regarding safety (join forces with NWHU and WNHAC), and attend

the Substance Abuse Task Force. Networking was also seen as a way to address some of the perceived duplication of services in the community.

This group acknowledged from the on-line survey that more focus on communications and public relations would be beneficial in creating more awareness of the variety of programs and services offered at NFC. It was noted that many do not know that NFC programs are available to non-Indigenous community members and it would be helpful to describe eligibility for programs. The group brainstormed some ideas:

1. Create a one page visual similar to an organizational chart with people and programs for sharing with the community.
2. Finish creating the promotional video.
3. Build on the digital resources in place - the website, Facebook (noting that many service users communicate through Messenger) and the newsletter (adding much more in the way of photos and success stories).
4. Taking photos (with consent) on a weekly basis and sharing.
5. Meet with the Makwa Van program and provide information to distribute.
6. Executive Director/designated staff provide targeted presentations to organizations (e.g. school Professional Development days, Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) shift briefings re: youth justice, Ontario Works staff meetings).
7. Create flyers for grocery stores regarding food security.
8. Attend the Farmer's Market and sell "Taco in the Bag" and provide give aways and brochures.

A community partner focus group was held on April 26, 2023, with 19 participants, noting again the tragic circumstances in the community most likely impacted participation. Participants included Grand Council Treaty #3, the Canadian Mental Health Association with Emergency Shelter and Clinical Services representation, Kenora Moving Forward, the Sexual Assault Centre, the OPP, Direct Accountability, Morning Star Detox, Makwa Patrol, Sunset Country Family Health, the Fellowship Centre, the Kenora Association for Community Living, the Northwestern Health Unit and WNHAC.

A summary of the responses:

- The partners saw a key role of NFC as navigating the services.
- They found the NFC responsive to the needs of the community, partners and service users.
- They appreciated the full range of services, recognizing NFC as a place of safety and a community hub.
- Clear strengths were identified as a willingness to partner, the wholistic approach and the central location. "Reaching Home" was identified as a model to be replicated.

A concern regarding duplication of services had been brought forward from the Board, staff and management focus groups. However, the community partners voiced very definitively that service users may access different sites for different supports at different times during the day. They

appreciated when the NFC Executive Director developed a calendar that identified where service users were going to access services and supports.

The community partners identified the following as opportunities/priorities for NFC over the next 1 – 3 years:

1. Address staffing issues (fill vacancies; address salary inequity), noting that most of the community organizations and businesses were also dealing with this.
2. Maintain proactiveness on communications and collaboration – provide any programming updates and changes by multiple means as appropriate (email, text, updates on the website, Facebook) and consider identifying a staff member as a “systems navigator.”
3. Attend the All Nations Health Partner meetings. This was identified as being the most impactful table to “move the markers” on the social determinants of health.
4. Keep the focus of NFC as “the door is always open” and the grass roots approach.

The community partners in attendance noted that they had a responsibility to keep the NFC updated regarding their own programs and that, post-pandemic, all organizations are re-establishing connections.

Operating Context (Environmental Scan)

While a SWOT analysis identifies internal environmental conditions, an external scan identifies political, economic, social, technical, environmental and legal factors and trends that will also affect NFC’s operations for the next three years. During the Steering Committee retreat, members identified that funding, housing and programming issues are dominating the landscape.

Economic

In terms of funding, there is a notable shift with the Indigenous population moving to urban centres. As a result, more Indigenous organizations are moving into “urban territory.” This has created competition for funding. For example, non-Indigenous organizations serving Indigenous populations can apply for funding sources that typically only Indigenous organizations would apply to. Different organizations are now offering programs that they traditionally would not have been offering, creating a unique delivery system. Furthermore, the “evergreen” funding model has changed, necessitating regular proposal writing. This takes valuable time away from planning and offering programming.

The Committee noted that the 0 to 24 years of age Indigenous population is increasing, and this will increase the demand for programming for that age group. They also noted that the Youth Hub is only open until 6 pm, and that there is a lack of programming for youth after that time. In addition, the skate park is only available in clement weather, leaving another gap for youth.

Current Housing Crisis

NFC operated the emergency shelter from 2016 to 2020. The shelter was meant to be a hub of services and supports operating on a “24/7” basis.

A number of fires in recent years decreased the amount of affordable housing in the community. The apartment complex on Matheson burned in April, 2018. Lila’s Block burned in March, 2019. Lila’s block housed approximately 100 people. These fires were in addition to the burning of Adam’s block

in 2006. With no replacement buildings, these fires meant that more people were forced onto the street. From around 2019, “tent cities” started to “pop up” around Kenora. The City of Kenora’s response was to “change the landscape.” There were two community safety meetings in 2019 to address growing concerns by multiple parties.

Due to pressure from the Kenora community, Greg Rickford, MPP, closed the shelter for approximately 45 days on August 12, 2019. The shelter was able to reopen September 26, 2019 with limited hours (from 7 pm to 8 am). With the realization that more supports for mental health and addictions were needed to support the shelter operations, NFC gave up operations of the shelter in June, 2020. The Canadian Mental Health Association resumed the operations in August, 2020; however, new rules are considered a barrier for many homeless people that might use the shelter.

Services and Supports

NFC had operated the street patrol since 1977 to 2019. At the time of Delaine Copenace’s death in 2016, members of the Bear Clan Patrol in Winnipeg came to assist with the search. At the inquest into the death of Gloria Assin in 2017, Patti Fairfield spoke about the need to increase the hours of the street patrol (hours had been decreased due to funding issues). The recommendations from the Office of the Chief Coroner issued in 2017 recommended many local organizations work together to enhance services for those who might be publicly intoxicated, and work towards increasing the funding for the Street Patrol program; however, all funding for the street patrol ceased in 2019. The Makwa Patrol, as a local community patrol similar to the Bear Clan Patrol, came to be in 2020 (consortium between OPP, KCA, KDSB).

Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) – Report and Recommendations on Homelessness in Kenora 2019

The OHRC created a report in 2019 to summarize observations made on the issues of homelessness and drug addiction in Kenora. The OHRC recognized that many positive steps are being taken to address these acute issues; however, noted that “those initiatives are hindered by a lack of effective communication between government agencies and the Indigenous-led organizations that provide services on the ground, as well as systemic issues related to housing and social issues.” The OHRC “urged the Kenora District Services Board (KDSB) and the City of Kenora (City) to develop more robust communications with the Ne-Chee Friendship Centre, First Nations leaders and community members, and other indigenous-led service providers.”

Further, the OHRC urged government to address the financial and technical issues and systemic barriers to address the homelessness crisis. The Chief Commissioner encourage the City to address homelessness in municipal planning and contacted Minister of Indigenous Affairs Greg Rickford, local MPP in an effort to reverse the decision to temporarily close the shelter.

The KDSB responded to the Chief Commissioner with a detailed report on the current housing crisis in the Kenora District (2019). KDSB reported that the waiting list for housing has increased by 186% from

2011 to 2018. KDSB conducted a Homelessness Enumeration Study during 2018 and found that 62% of those surveyed gave addiction or substance abuse as the reason for homelessness.

Kenora Moving Forward (KMF) 2020

In a grassroots effort to support the growing homeless population, KMF was formed in 2020. KMF banded together to defeat the proposed loitering bylaw (defeated in July 2020). KMF started with homelessness and looked at underlying issues. With the crisis in housing, KMF sought to find a location for a warming centre for the approximately 80 to 90 homeless people between 4 pm to 8 pm (between operating hours of the emergency shelter and the Fellowship Centre). This proved to be very challenging with several barriers. In the meantime, the NFC event space (since November 2022) and other locations are on a monthly calendar rotation to provide warming and cooling centres.

The Kenora Community Based Sense of Home Research Project (CBSH); Circa 2020

The CBSH research project was a collaboration between the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, NFC and numerous community partners. The researchers engaged community partners and people with lived experience of homelessness. A key finding is that 41% of the homeless surveyed stated that they saw Kenora as their geographic home, followed by “the reserve” at 24%. These findings reinforce the need for more available and affordable housing stock in Kenora. 64% of respondents indicated that a combination of high housing costs, long waiting lists for low-income housing and unemployment contributed to their homelessness. Addictions at 48% and mental health at 34% are the other two major reasons cited.

The report indicated that the top two organizations that the Indigenous homeless use most often are the NFC, and the Fellowship Centre. In addition to increasing affordable and sustainable housing, this report encouraged the increase in resources for these agencies.

Clearly, strong, collaborative partnerships will be the key in addressing the socio-economic factors facing Kenora at this time.

Next Steps

Following all the consultations, the Steering Committee met on April 27, 2023, to complete an environmental scan and consolidate all the consultations into four strategic directions (see Appendix B). Goals, priorities for action and outcomes were identified and formulated into a high level implementation plan (Appendix C) and a “Plan on a Page” (Appendix D). Finalization of this report, implementation plan and the plan on the page occurred on May 29, 2023. The final documents presented to Board of Directors for the June 2023 Annual General meeting.

APPENDIX A:

AGENDA – April 24, 2023 Strategic Planning Steering Committee Agenda

1. Welcome and Introduction

2. Review of Stakeholder Consultations to Date
 - a. Context and Planning Process
 - b. Confirm Vision and Mission
 - c. Confirm Questions for Focus Groups

3. Outcome – Plan on a Page

4. Wrap-up and Next Steps

APPENDIX B:

AGENDA – April 27, 2023
Strategic Planning Steering Committee Retreat
9 am to 4:30 pm

1. Recap of Planning Week (April 24 – 27, 2023)
2. Results of Focus Group
3. Vision and Mission Confirmation
4. Environmental Scan - PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Legal)
5. Four Strategic Directions
6. Goals
7. Priorities
8. Outcomes
9. Plan on a Page and Final Report
10. Next Meeting Date

Appendix C

Strategic Direction	Objective	Activities	Outcome	Lead	Timeframe	Status
Create a Community Gathering Space	Create an atmosphere where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People can come feel welcome, safe & included. • People feel a sense of belonging. • We will see a cross section of people visiting the Centre. "Who sits on the couch" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take photos of more events to use for website, Facebook and wall collages (have standard consent forms readily available). • Take staff to visit neighboring Friendship Centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed guest book; take a monthly tally. • Have 3 collages put together. • Create a slide show for display. 			
	Invite community partners to use meeting space.	Make attractive "cards" for distribution that contain details.	Track number of bookings.			
Workplace of Excellence – Strengthen Internally	Hire qualified staff through enhanced hiring practices.	Implement a written assignment.	_____ % of positions filled.			
	Attract & maintain qualified staff	Address salary issues	Track employee retention numbers.			
	Maintain qualified staff to provide service excellence	Professional development (training) plan	Two week mentoring period at orientation.			
	Staff have regular opportunities for input	Continue and enhance monthly staff meetings for input	Increase employee satisfaction (measured through surveys).			
Strengthening Cultural Programming	Grow and strengthen our programming – what we do well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer more language courses. • Host more Pow Wow's • More community drumming. • Dancing • Drum & ribbon making workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of events. • Increase number of participants. • Increase number of community offerings. 			
Community Collaboration – Strengthen Externally	Seen as a valued, respected community partner organization	More coordination, engagement & collaboration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of community BBQ's & feasts • Increase number of invitations 			
	Participation at meaningful community tables	Get invited to All Nations Health Table, sit on Police Services Board, re-examine Risk Table (SLO model), connect with NWHU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track number of community tables/committees • Annual evaluation of meaningful participation. 			
	Macro approach to volunteers	Approach specific groups; e.g. seniors to make soup	Track number of volunteers at events.			

Appendix D



2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN



