



Stollery Awasisak News

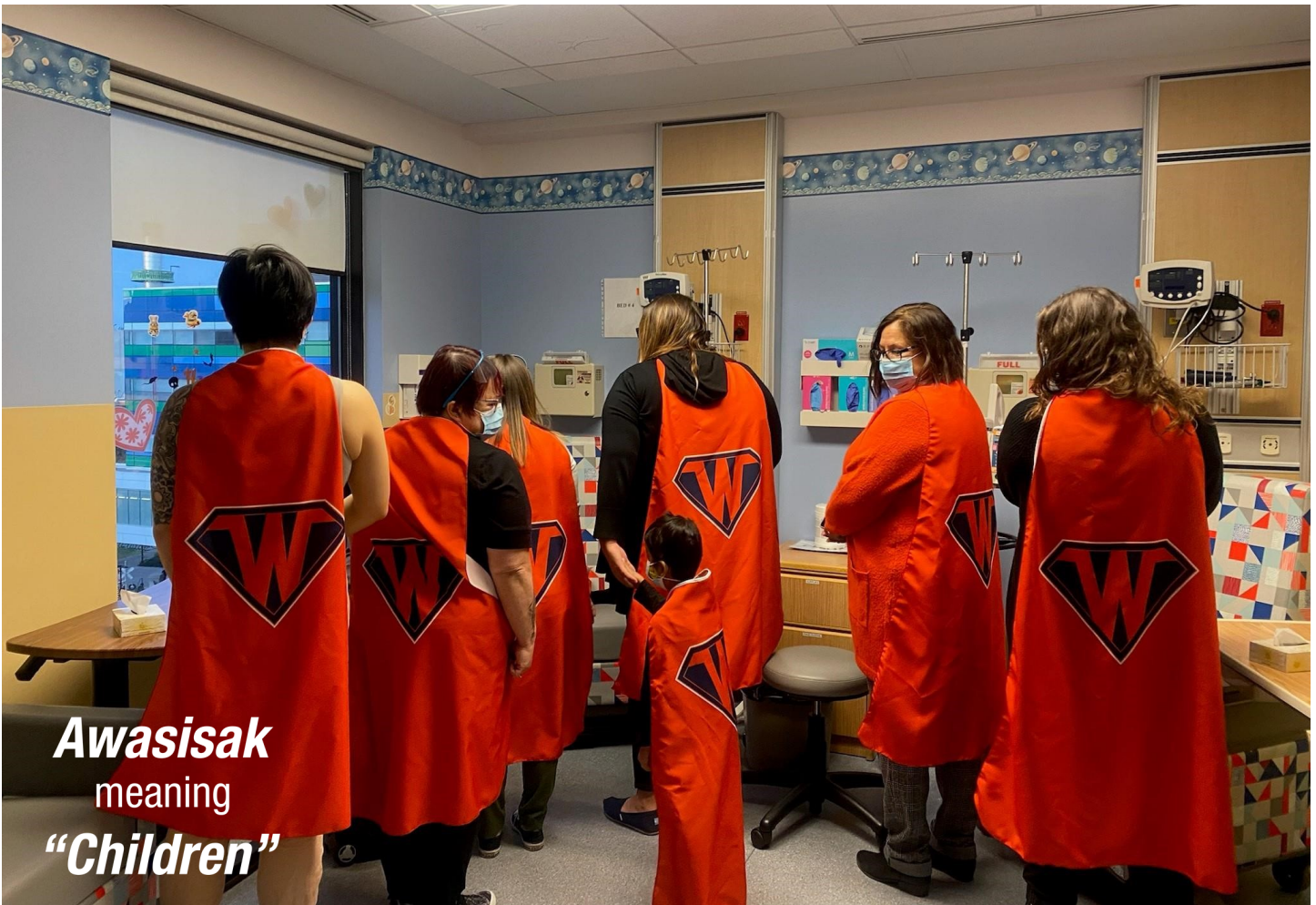
A'cimowin, "the Process of Storytelling" in Cree.

VOL.2




2021-2022 Annual Report

June 2022 | Free

“Super Willie” & His Super Fans



Awasisak
meaning
“Children”

Learning	Our Work	Impact	Teaching
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Q & A with The Awasisak Research and Evaluation Coordinator Page 12	The Power of Indigenous Food and Art Page 10	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">    </div> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">Presented by the Stollery Awasisak Indigenous Health Program Editor: Shang Dong</p>	

Stollery Children’s Hospital Awasisak Indigenous Health Program

“Once an Awasisak kid, always an Awasisak kid.”

Responding to and aligning with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, the Stollery provides the one and only Indigenous-specific pediatric healthcare program in Canada, the Awasisak Indigenous Health Program (Awasisak). Awasisak”, meaning “children” in Cree, was the name gifted to our program by an Elder. The program was developed and created out of ceremony, embracing both Indigenous worldviews and western medical views to best support Indigenous children, families and communities.

Being the first-of-its-kind in Canada, the Awasisak walks between both Indigenous and western worlds, providing a unique ap-

proach for supporting Indigenous children and families in a

healthcare setting.

Guided by its intention, “Indigenous voices providing Indigenous solutions”, the Awasisak team conducted Talking Circles with various Indigenous communities and other populations, such as service providers, throughout Al-

berta to better understand Indigenous children and families’ needs and wants, as well as the barriers they face. Based on the identified priorities from the Talking Circles, the team took immediate actions to improve their services, for example, the position of Child and Family Engagement Coordinator was designed to be the host for Indigenous families.

The Awasisak program serves and supports Indigenous patients and families throughout different stages of their hospital stay and beyond discharge. Standing by its philosophy, “once an Awasisak kid, always an Awasisak kid”, enables the team to maintain strong community bonds and continue to build much needed trust within the healthcare setting.



Land Acknowledgement

The Awasisak program’s home is in Amiskwaciwâskahikan on Treaty 6 territory.

We acknowledge Treaty 6 territory; the ancestral and traditional territory of the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, as well as the Métis.

We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples whose footsteps have marked these lands for generations.

We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers, Medicine Peoples and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us.

Our recognition of this land is an act of reconciliation and an expression of our gratitude to those whose territory we reside on, or are visiting.



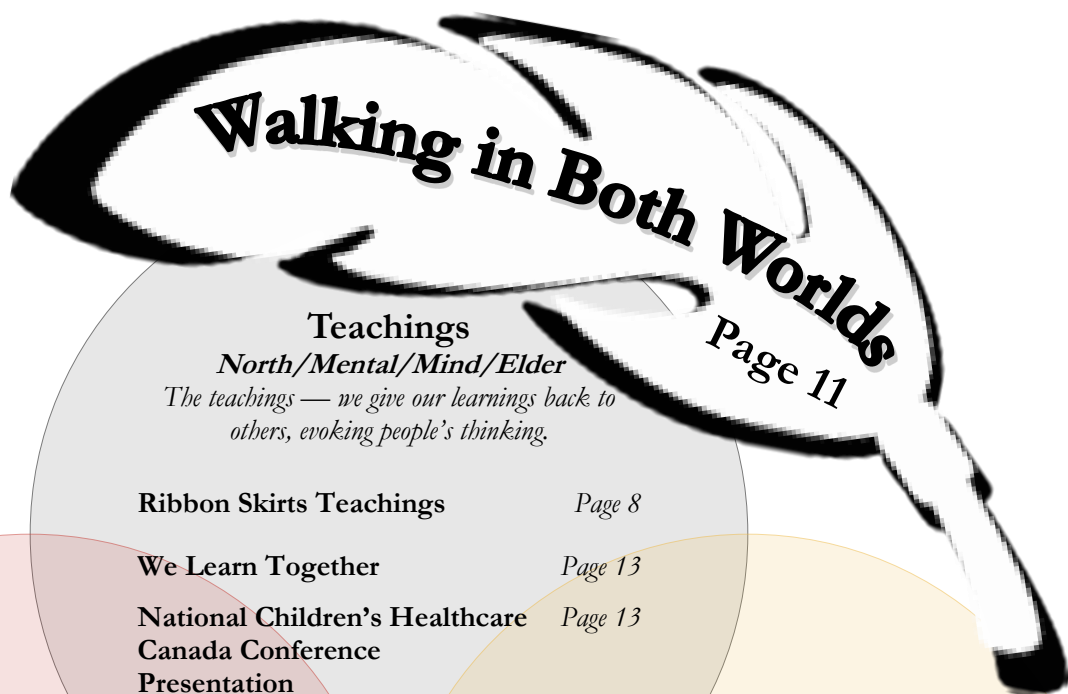


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IMPACT

From April 2021 to March 2022,
The Awasisak Program served **359** families, of which
337 are new families, from **108** Indigenous
communities in **8** provinces and territories

*(Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Northwest Territories,
Nunavut, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Yukon).*

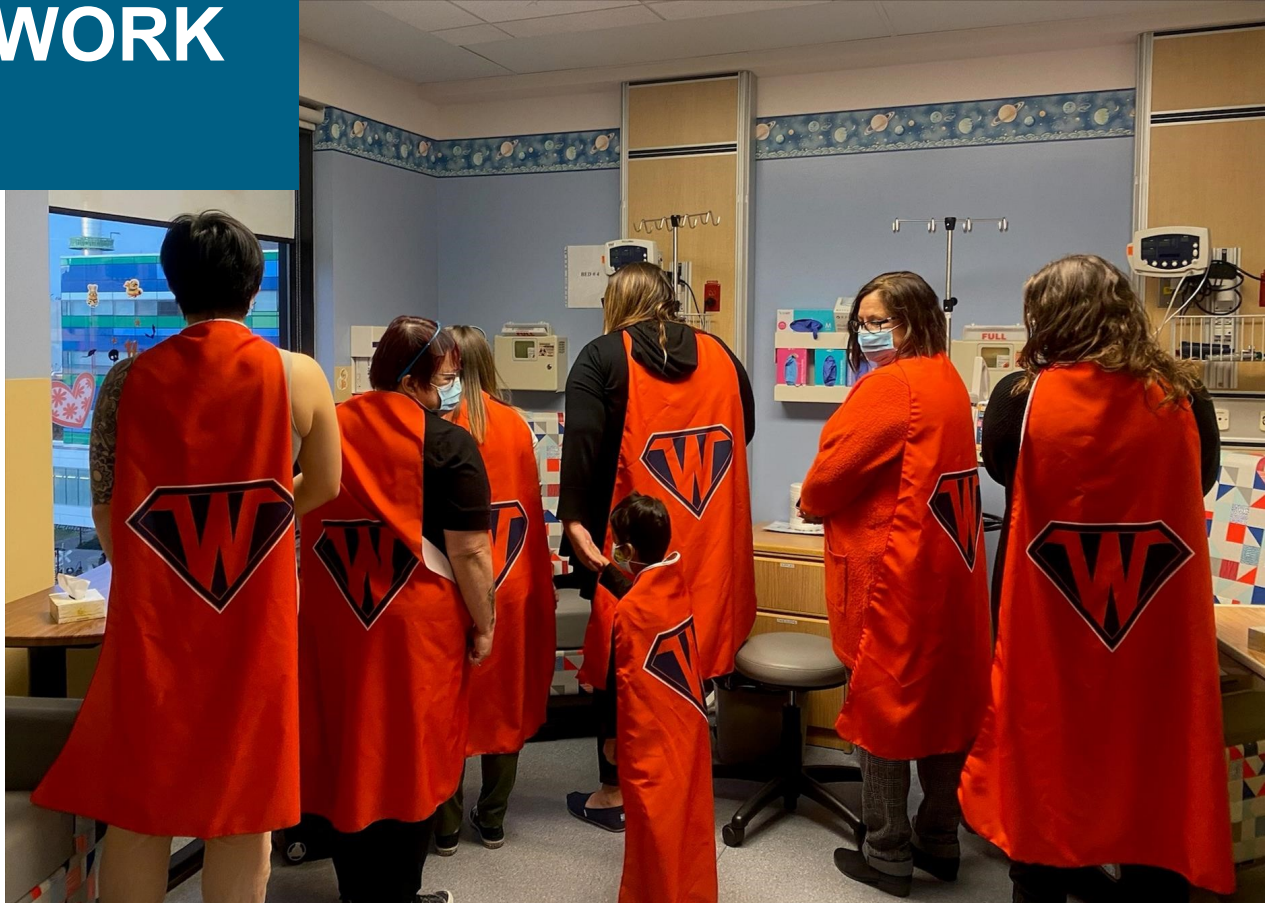


The Awasisak team provided **1852** in-person visits,
1474 telephone calls, and **454** visit attempts to Indigenous families;
as well as **2205** consultations to service providers.

Awasisak kid, “Super Willie”

OUR WORK

We work from the heart and strive to support Indigenous children and families in their times of need.



Awasisak kid Willie and the Awasisak team wearing “Super Willie” capes

“Super Willie” & His Super Fans

Five-year-old Awasisak kid Willie is better known as “Super Willie” thanks to his love of wearing super hero capes. This Fox Lake boy has been a Stollery patient for more than two years. During that time, Willie and his family have received support from the Awasisak team at the Stollery Children’s Hospital.

Willie is a fluent Cree speaker, lover of super heroes, zombies, and local Indigenous celebrity “Super fan Magoo”. When the Awasisak team learned that Willie is a big fan of Magoo they decided to reach out to Ma-

Awasisak team creates special memories and moments for patients

goo, so the two “super” people can connect and share some moments together. When Magoo learned about his young fan from the Awasisak team, he immediately wanted to support him. He recorded a video message, arranged a visit, and even took Willie’s dad to an Oilers game; what’s more, Magoo also gave a shout out to Willie during the Hockey Fights Cancer event in November 2021.

The Awasisak team strives to support Stollery Indigenous patients and families during their healthcare journeys, helping them to strengthen their relationships with care teams and feeling more comfortable during their hospital stays. The team also provides culturally responsive services, including assisting families to access available resources, providing a safe space for Indigenous patients and families, and offering cultural teachings to different communities. In this case, the team went above and beyond to create a special connection between two “super” people, making the smile on Willie’s face, even brighter.

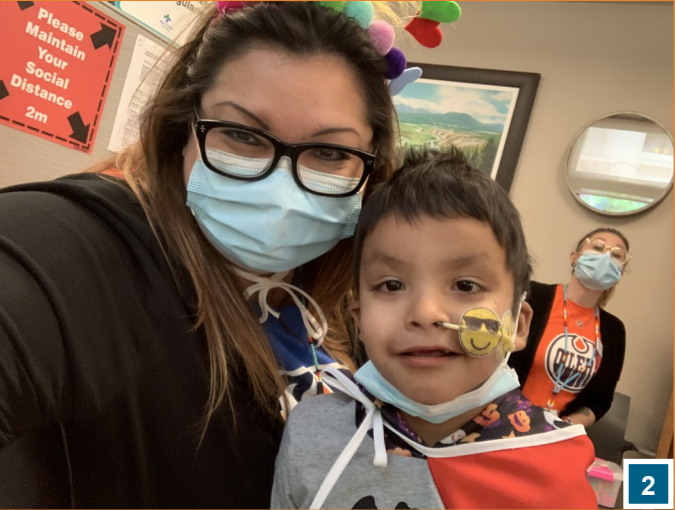


Picture 1: “Super fan Magoo” and the dad of “Super Willie”

Picture 2: “Super Willie” and the former Awasisak Indigenous Child and Family Engagement Coordinator

Picture 3: “Super Willie” and “Super fan Magoo”

Picture 4: “Super fan Magoo” holding the “I fight for ‘Super Willie’” sign during the Hockey Fights Cancer event in November, 2021



“Willie carries his community of Fox Lake in his heart. When we help Willie, we are actually helping the entire Fox Lake community as a whole.”

— *Chrystal Plante*
Former Awasisak Indigenous Child and Family Engagement Coordinator

“Willie is so full of life and always sparks the joy inside everyone. We can’t help but want to continue feeding that spark.”

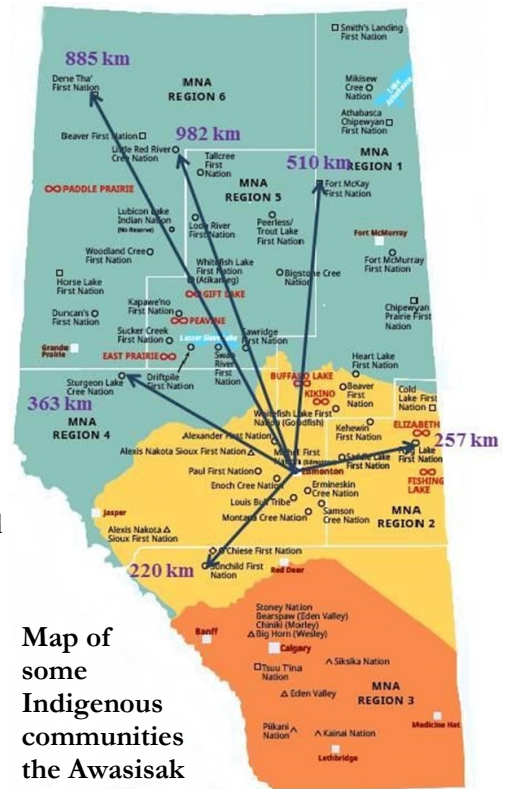
— *Tyler Morin*
Former Awasisak Registered Nurse Case Manager

A Thousand Kilometres Away

Imagine growing up and living in a remote community, that is nearly 1,000 kilometres away from Edmonton, where there are no buildings taller than three storeys, they do not have elevators, and there is no form of public transportation. Your child has to be transferred to Edmonton as soon as possible to access the care they need which is not being provided in your own community. You travel all the way to that city,

staying with your child in their room without leaving or eating anything, because you do not know anyone living in that city or where you can go to sleep or eat. What is worse is you do not completely understand your child's situation, because of the medical terms the healthcare team uses and you do not know how to communicate with them.

This is not an uncommon encounter for the Awasisak team. Recognizing the barriers many Indigenous families face and their needs and wants, the program provides Indigenous children and families with tailored, holistic and continuous care. Awasisak services and support begins even before the patient and families set their foot in the hospital and does not simply end after the discharge. Awasisak care is not limited within the hospital's physical borders; instead, the team continues to provide care and supports to the children and families even from a thousand kilometres away.



Map of some Indigenous communities the Awasisak program serves



Road to Fox Lake

Services, Support And Resources Are Provided to Indigenous Children, Families And Communities

The Awasisak program provides Stollery Indigenous patients and families with various kinds of services and support, including: daily contact with patients and families, helping families to better navigate the Stollery and other facilities, building and maintaining a culturally safe space for families to relax, providing families with available resources, delivering medical teachings to families, and engaging families in the discharge planning process.

Indigenous language reading and colouring books provided to the Stollery Indigenous patient and families are shown in the pictures below.



Ribbon Skirt Teachings

The Awasisak team recognizes that different Indigenous communities have different teachings around ribbon skirts, and we cannot represent all Indigenous communities. The ribbon skirt teachings shared here are what we, the Awasisak team, have learned from our communities.

Seeing ribbon skirts, people will have that visible and tangible connection to the culture and we can help guide them because we have received the guidance and teachings to understand this now. We can apply these teachings to our spiritual and cultural selves every day, to help make the program stronger from within.

We have learned that our ribbon skirts connect us to Mother Earth and our ancestors, that the essence of the ribbon skirt provides healing, not only for us as a wearer, but to the people who see it, and know and understand what it stands for. The parents we work with will see us wearing our skirts and they will take that strength to their own families.

The spiritual, emotional, and mental healings that come from these teachings are the basis of what Awasisak stands for, providing culturally sensitive services to Indigenous families. These teachings will help to give us the strength to continue assisting our families to the best of our abilities and to avoid emotional/spiritual fatigue and burnout.



Ribbon skirts of the Awasisak team members

Building The Bridge

The Awasisak program connects their partners and Stollery Indigenous families to help families access services and resources.

The Awasisak team has built and maintained partnerships with different organizations and communities to provide Stollery Indigenous children and families with more holistic services and care. The team also has been engaging professionals from various disciplines and backgrounds through Talking Circles, workshops, and other events, leading to better care for Indigenous children and families in healthcare facilities as well as in their local communities.

The Awasisak team connects their families with available resources and services, including providing assistance with housing and transportation.

Captured in the picture on the right, an Awasisak mom received a brand-new tablet from the Treaty 8 Urban Office with the assistance and support from the Awasisak team.



An Awasisak mom with her new tablet

Let's Get Vaccinated to Protect Others!

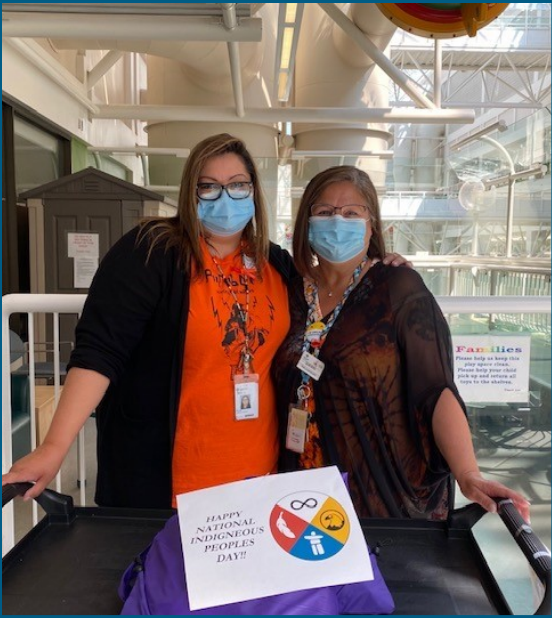
The Awasisak team helped Indigenous patients and families to get COVID-19 vaccines.



Chrystal Plante, the Awasisak Indigenous Child and Family Engagement Coordinator with an Awasisak family

Recognizing the importance of being COVID-vaccinated, the Awasisak team was committed to helping Awasisak children and families to get their vaccines. With the support and assistance from the Awasisak, many Indigenous families felt comfortable and safe to stay in western healthcare facilities and were willing to get vaccinated. One Awasisak mom even became a strong advocate for COVID vaccination and voluntarily assisted the Awasisak team to help other Indigenous families to get vaccinated, because she believed getting vaccinated can keep the communities safe.

The picture on the left shows an Awasisak family receiving their COVID-19 vaccines with the company of a former Awasisak staff.

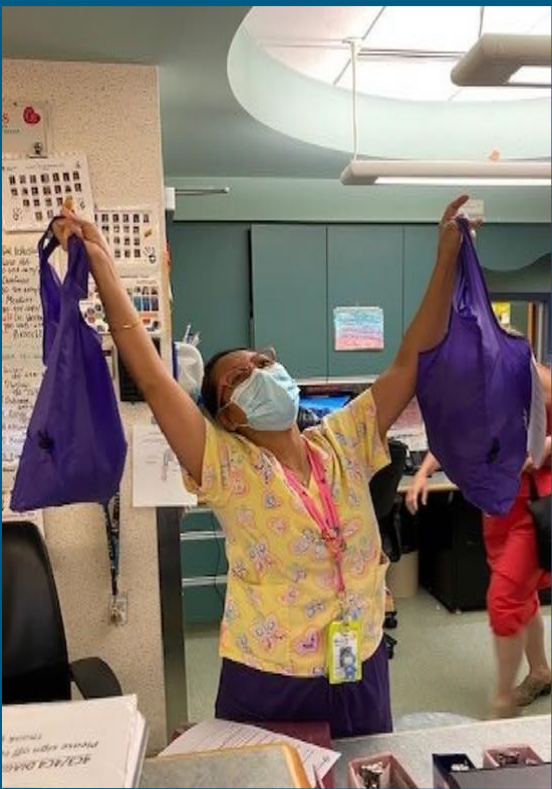


The Power of Indigenous Food And Art

Raising the awareness of Indigenous history and culture

The Awasisak team utilized innovative approaches to help people understand the Indigenous history and culture. On National Indigenous Day, the Awasisak program hosted an art contest and gifted individually wrapped bannock to Stollery patient care units.

Many unit staff expressed their appreciation for the events and the Indigenous “treats”. They said, they had never had bannock before, and being able to enjoy some traditional Indigenous food would definitely help them to understand Indigenous cultures in a unique way. They also said, “food connects people and trying traditional Indigenous food makes me want to know more about the people and the culture.” Despite the pandemic and other limitations, the Awasisak team successfully delivered those events and received positive feedback from various hospital teams, stating they gained some knowledge and understanding about the Indigenous culture and traditions. The Awasisak team will continue organizing similar events and is optimistic about the positive outcomes of those future events.

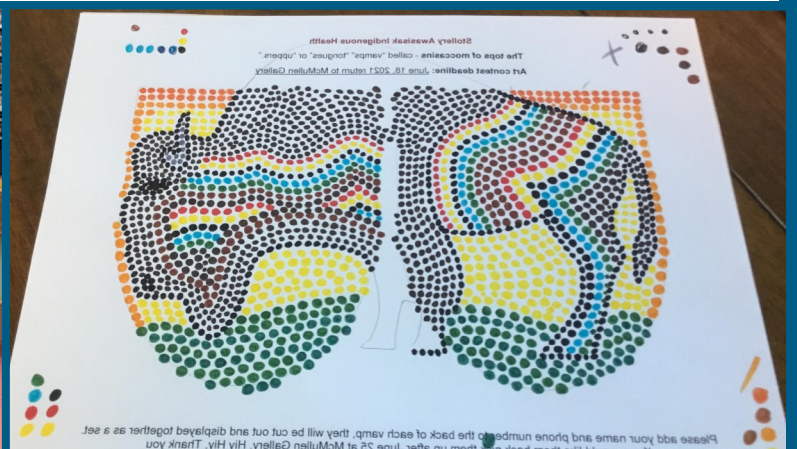
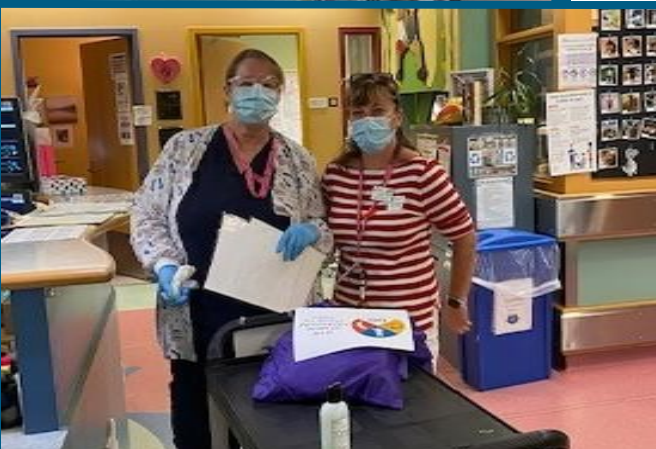


Top left: Former Awasisak team members and bannock care packages
Top right: A former Awasisak team member handing bannock to unit staff

Left: A member of unit staff excited for the bannock

Bottom left: Unit staff with bannock care packages

Bottom right: Artwork submitted for the Indigenous Day Art Contest



LEARNING

The Awasisak team learns from people with different backgrounds. The first of its kind, the Awasisak Program also strives to build the evidence base for others to learn.

Walking in Both Worlds

How does the Awasisak program embrace both Indigenous worldviews and western worldviews?



compassion

We show kindness and empathy for all in our care, and for each other.

accountability

We are honest, principled and transparent.

respect

We treat others with respect and dignity.

excellence

We strive to be our best and give our best.

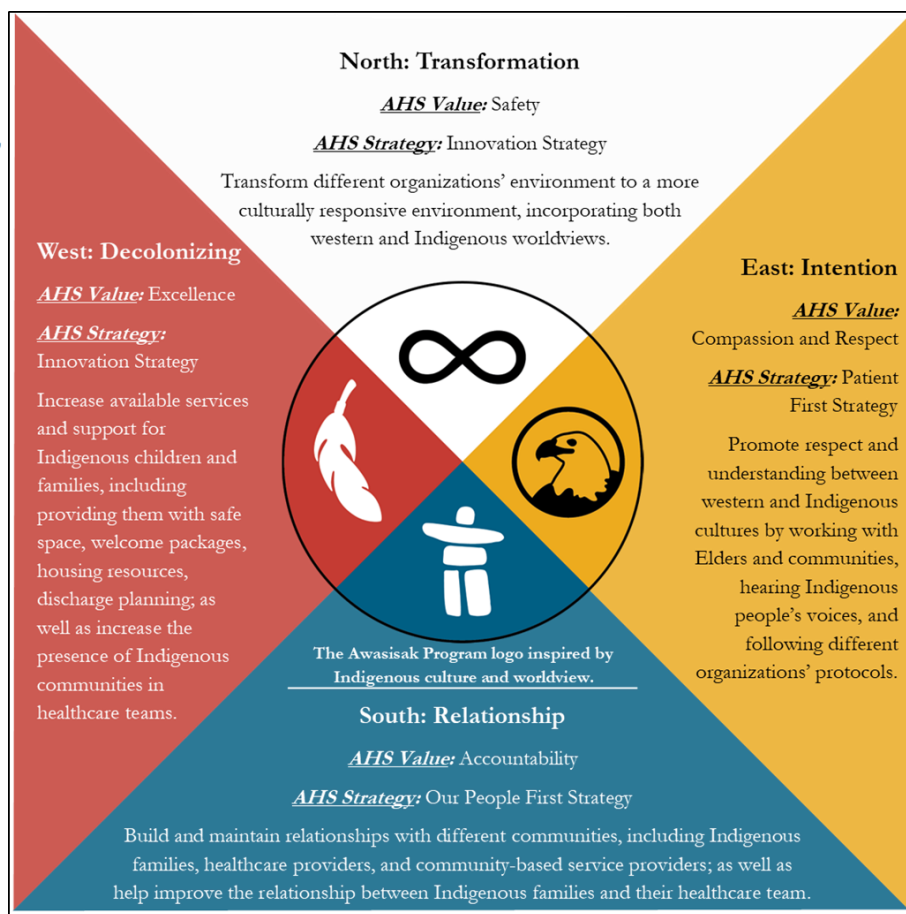
safety

We place safety and quality improvement at the centre of all our decisions.

Alberta Health Services (AHS) Values

Responding and aligning with Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, the Awasisak program was designed and implemented to deliver high-quality care to Indigenous children and families, improving the healthcare access and continuity for this community.

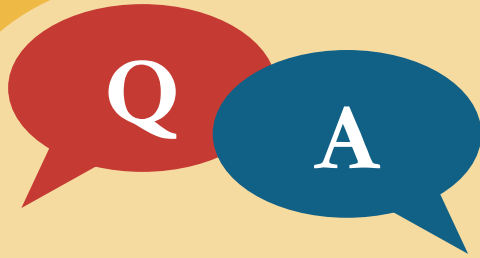
Being an Indigenous pediatric healthcare program residing in a western healthcare facility, the Awasisak team believes it is crucial to embrace both Indigenous and western worldviews in order to better serve and support their patients and families.



Awasisak Indigenous Health Program Strategic Framework

With the learnings from some Indigenous Elders, e.g., Seven Sacred Teachings (can be found on Page 13), and the understanding of AHS values and strategies, a strategic framework was devised by the Awasisak team.

The team identified similarities between the Indigenous and western worldviews. For example, respect is one of the Seven Sacred Teachings as well as an AHS value. Guided by the framework, the Awasisak team is able to deliver culturally responsive care in a western healthcare setting.



with The Awasisak Research and Evaluation Coordinator

In 2019, the Awasisak Program started its evaluation journey, and a Research and Evaluation Coordinator (REC) was hired to provide evaluation support. During the evaluation process, not only did the team gain knowledge on program planning and evaluation, the REC also learned how to better evaluate an Indigenous program and build the team's evaluation capacity.

Q: How has the evaluation been going so far?

A: I would say so far so good. All Awasisak team members have been contributing to the program evaluation. They were engaged and informed throughout the entire evaluation process, so they have a good understanding of the evaluation and are able to utilize the findings very quickly. With their contribution, I was able to develop a logic model, an evaluation plan, and some questionnaires to collect feedback from people we serve and support. For example, we have been getting feedback from different populations, for example, healthcare providers and Stollery families.

Q: What is a logic model? Can you give a brief description of the Awasisak logic model?

A: Logic model is something used to depict program activities and intended outcomes. I see the model as a snap-shot of the real-world situation, like pressing a pause button.

Instead of a traditional, linear western logic model, this model is inspired by the worldview and values of Indigenous communities, a holistic, non-linear approach.

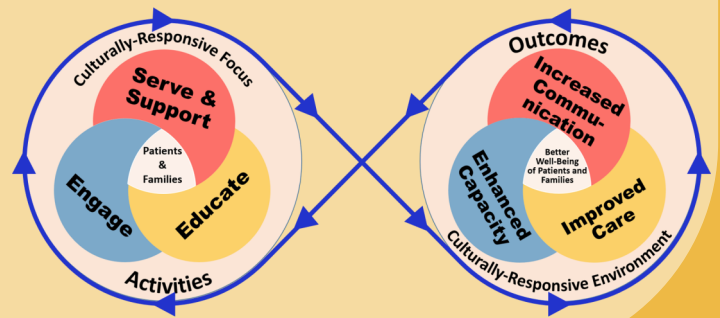
The program itself as well as the evaluation process are not still; instead, they are constantly moving and evolving. The activities and outcomes influence each other; outcomes are achieved by implementing the activities, and activities can be bettered by evaluating the program's effectiveness.

Q: Anything different when evaluating an Indigenous program?

A: Essentially, there's nothing different, because I believe it is crucial to have good intentions, stay non-judgmental, and listen to the people, no matter of the population I work with. I see evaluating as "capturing" the things that already existed, instead of "creating" something new. However, it has been an eye-opening experience for me to learn about Indigenous cultures, values, and traditions. Something unique about this program is I really need to think out of the box, since I was educated in a western academic way. Overall, I've been enjoying the evaluation process for this program, it is challenging but also exciting.


Q: What next?

A: We already have some filled-out questionnaires from our education events. We will continue collecting information and feedback from the different communities we serve. We'll also start to synthesize and analyze the collected information to help us improve our services and activities. Last, we want to share our learnings with other people to help them with their work if applicable.



The Awasisak Program Logic Model

Seven Sacred Teachings

 <p>TRUTH</p> <p>The turtle teaches to acknowledge that racism and prejudice still exists within healthcare.</p>	 <p>WISDOM</p> <p>The beaver teaches to raise awareness to leadership to help Indigenous people.</p>	 <p>LOVE</p> <p>The eagle teaches to invest in children by providing more services and resources.</p>	 <p>RESPECT</p> <p>The buffalo teaches to advocate for holistic care and hostility free environments.</p>	 <p>HUMILITY</p> <p>The wolf teaches to promote Indigenous awareness training to avoid misconceptions.</p>	 <p>HONESTY</p> <p>The sabe teaches to participate in Talking Circles to increase communication.</p>	 <p>COURAGE</p> <p>The bear teaches to build trust by encouraging collaboration and addressing trauma.</p>
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TEACHINGS

The Awasisak program provides cultural teachings to healthcare professionals, non-clinical staff and the general public, as well as teachings to Indigenous children and families for their well-being.

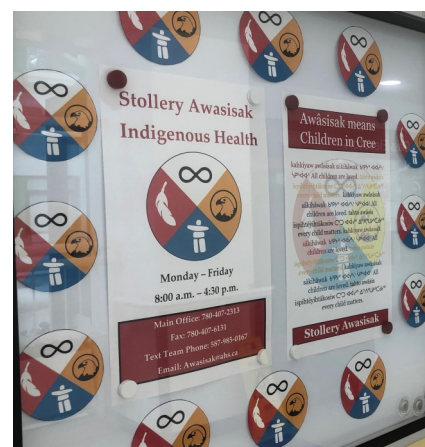
We Learn Together

Awasisak team offers teachings via Indigenous traditional ceremonies and other mediums.

Recognizing different populations have different learning needs and interests, the Awasisak team offers teachings via various approaches. For example, the team sees Indigenous ceremonies as teaching opportunities. After a smudge, a non-Indigenous staff stated they gained a better understanding of Indigenous cultures and traditions, and they even told the team their personal stories. Offering Indigenous ceremonies to not only Indigenous patients and families but also staff and the public provides an opportunity for non-Indigenous community members to

experience the ceremonies themselves, which organically unveils the learnings and the healing power of Indigenous traditional ceremonies. Further, to accommodate different communities' preferences, teachings are also delivered via other mediums, such as workshops, presentations, and publications*.

With the ongoing program evaluation, the Awasisak team believes they can identify the effective components of their practice and the areas for growth. The team is committed to continuously improving the program in order to provide better cultural teaching support to various populations.



Awasisak display boards at the Stollery University of Alberta Hospital site

*Awasisak publication, *Building Bridges for Indigenous Children's Health: Community Needs Assessment Through Talking Circle Methodology*, can be found at: <https://www.dovepress.com/building-bridges-for-indigenous-childrens-health-community-needs-asses-peer-reviewed-fulltext-article-RMHP>

National Children's Healthcare Canada Conference

**Between Both Worlds:
An Evaluation Approach
Embracing Indigenous and
Western Worldviews**

Sherri Di Lallo, Awasisak Team Lead/Manager
Shang Dong, Awasisak Research and Evaluation Coordinator



Cover slide of the conference presentation delivered by the Awasisak team

At Children's Healthcare Canada 2021 Annual Conference, the Awasisak team presented "Between Both Worlds: An evaluation Approach Embracing Indigenous And Western Worldviews". It demonstrated how the Awasisak team embraced both Indigenous and western worldviews and theories when conducting their program evaluation.

With this presentation, the team was hoping the participants would be able to: (1) recognize different Indigenous communities have unique barriers, (2) understand the influences of Indigenous culture on program evaluation, (3) reflect on their engagement strategies with Indigenous populations, and (4) increase their capacity of providing culturally appropriate and respectful practices.

OUR TEAM

Our Team are the people who care, share and dream!

The Awasisak team hopes every Indigenous family who accesses the Stollery can receive excellent care; the main goal of the Awasisak Program is to have happy and healthy families.



“I was introduced to the many warrior families that utilize their personal involvement as a driving force to improve and better the patient and family experience. It is through their love and passion that I am inspired to push forth when confronting barriers to healthcare inequities.”

— **Chrystal Plante**
Former Awasisak Indigenous Child and Family Engagement Coordinator

“I’ve made connections with patients and families that have helped them through some really tough times. I’ve been their safe space and their advocate and their selot’iné (Dene for ‘relative’).”

— **Tyler Morin**
Former Awasisak Registered Nurse Case Manager

“I have enjoyed working here the past two years, it has been an excellent, rewarding and challenging experience to be a part of the pediatric Indigenous health program.”

— **Shawna Marcel**
Awasisak Administrative Assistant

“It will help us to expand and be able to support our Indigenous patients and families in ways we haven’t been able to in the past. Exciting times in Indigenous health!”

— **Sharon Glover**
Awasisak Registered Nurse Case Manager

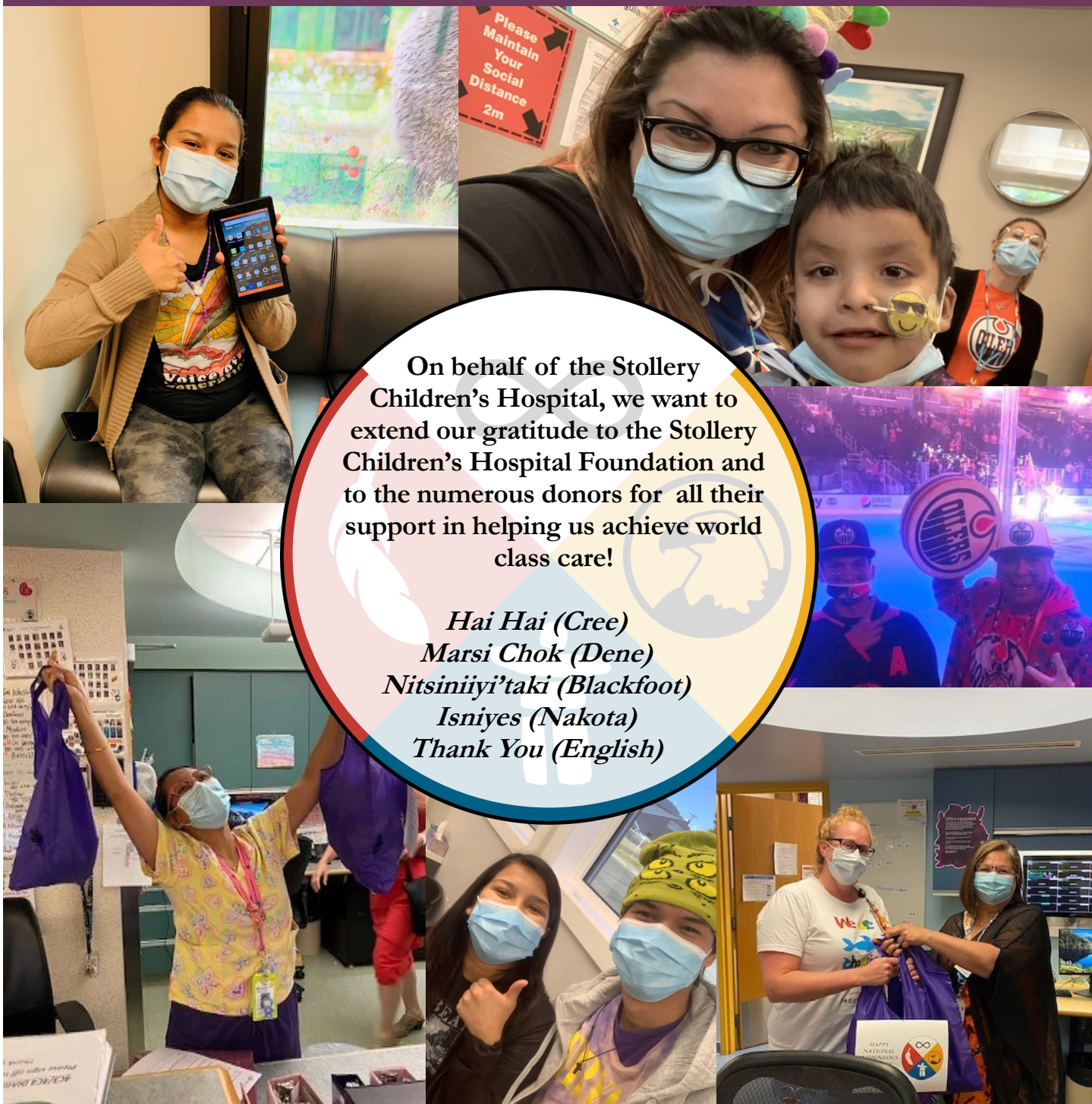


“It breaks my heart to see what some of our families have to go through in order to access the care they need. I’m so, so grateful for the existence of our program, because we do empower them and help them to overcome the barriers.”

— **Shang Dong**
Awasisak Research and Evaluation Coordinator

“The Awasisak Indigenous Health Program is a tremendous step in advancing pediatric Indigenous Health within Canada. It is my greatest honour to be able to support such an innovative and vital initiative. Our youth are our future and it is our responsibility to support them, their families and the care teams throughout their journey with the Stollery Children’s Hospital. In order to ensure we are providing the best possible patient care we need to prioritize meaningful engagement with our Indigenous communities, and with humility, seek their guidance as they are the professionals on caring for their young ones.

— **Mike Sutherland**, Awasisak Team Lead/Manager



On behalf of the Stollery Children's Hospital, we want to extend our gratitude to the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation and to the numerous donors for all their support in helping us achieve world class care!

Hai Hai (Cree)
Marsi Chok (Dene)
Nitsiniyi'taki (Blackfoot)
Isniiyes (Nakota)
Thank You (English)

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