

VICCIY REPORT: PROVINCIAL YOUTH WELLNESS SUMMIT 2026



Photo above was taken during the breakout session tipi teachings.

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Youth writing on each other's t-shirts for the I AM t-shirt exercise

ABOUT VICCIY

The VICCIY Initiative takes a holistic approach to promoting the well-being of Indigenous youth. Everything we do is carried out in collaboration with community partners and co-created with Indigenous youth. Our focus is on enhancing access to culturally responsive care, preserving Indigenous languages and traditions, and developing tailored resources using virtual reality (VR) technology to meet the unique needs of youth in rural, remote, and northern communities.



Youth sharing their perspectives through dot-voting exercise

BACKGROUND

The Provincial Youth Wellness Summit is part of an overarching research project titled the Virtual Interventions and Community Connections for Indigenous Youth (VICCIY) Initiative.

The VICCIY Initiative is exploring ways to support Indigenous youth in embracing healthy lifestyles by combining modern technology with cultural practices to strengthen the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being. By working closely with communities, VICCIY helps provide youth with tools and opportunities that honour their traditions and support their well-being into the future.

BACKGROUND CONTINUED



The VICCIY Initiative uses a community-based participatory action research (CBPAR) approach, meaning project goals are shaped together with Indigenous youth and communities. This ensures the work is meaningful, relevant, and supported by those it is meant to serve. Through these partnerships, we have learned that youth wellness is best supported through a mix of in-person and virtual approaches.

Our research is guided by four main pillars: safety, identity, belonging, and community. We focus on supporting physical, emotional, psychological, and cultural safety through Indigenous-designed wellness workshops, resiliency training, role model connections, and support services. Virtual tools combined with face-to-face activities help youth explore and reconnect with their Indigenous identity. By engaging in safe, collective spaces that encourage relationship-building and self-determination, youth can develop a stronger sense of belonging and community.



*Scan or click QR codes for
short video overviews of the
VICCIY Initiative.*



<https://tinyurl.com/yfwkse4t>

<https://tinyurl.com/bdzkzbw3>



View of Wanuskewin building from the walking trail.

SUMMIT BACKGROUND

The idea to host a Provincial Youth Wellness Summit was shaped by the voices of Indigenous youth, together with Saskatchewan Polytechnic researchers and community partners who shared a vision for supporting youth well-being. Early research and conversations with youth, Elders, educators, and community leaders highlighted a strong need for wellness supports that bring together both in-person and virtual opportunities. Face-to-face gatherings were recognized as essential for building trust, fostering cultural connection, and creating safe spaces for sharing, while virtual resources offered the flexibility to maintain and foster those supports across rural and remote communities.

Our annual summit was designed to offer a unique space where youth could meet and build friendships across communities, celebrate and strengthen their cultural identities, and be inspired by Indigenous role models. A variety of wellness strategies were introduced—from traditional practices to modern approaches—encouraging youth to discover tools that resonated with their own experiences.



Photos from Joey Generaux's session, a youth playing in VR, and the Play therapy breakout session.

ABOUT THE 2026 SUMMIT

As part of their registration process, youth completed an activity selection form to rank their interest in the breakout sessions being offered, ensuring their summit experience was tailored to their interests and needs. Each youth attended three of the nine sessions offered. Breakout sessions were also provided for chaperones, some alongside youth and others designed exclusively for their own learning.

Alongside breakout sessions, group activities helped create shared memories: youth participated in icebreaker activities, signed each other's t-shirts, and created vision boards to take home as reminders of their experience. Youth also participated in a dot voting exercise where their perspectives and voices will be combined with research data to shape the next phase of the VICCIY initiative.

Videographers also captured 360-degree footage to create VR segments that will be uploaded to VR headsets, allowing youth to revisit the experience. The summit closed with a raffle draw, where youth won prizes to take home, including a VR headset grand prize.

ATTENDANCE OVERVIEW

Saskatchewan Polytechnic hosted the 3rd Provincial Youth Wellness Summit, held at Wanuskewin on April 29th and 30th 2026.

A total of 54 grade 9 to 12 students and 21 chaperones from across 9 rural, remote, and northern Saskatchewan communities attended. Six of the schools were part of the Phase 2 trial and there were three additional schools who joined.



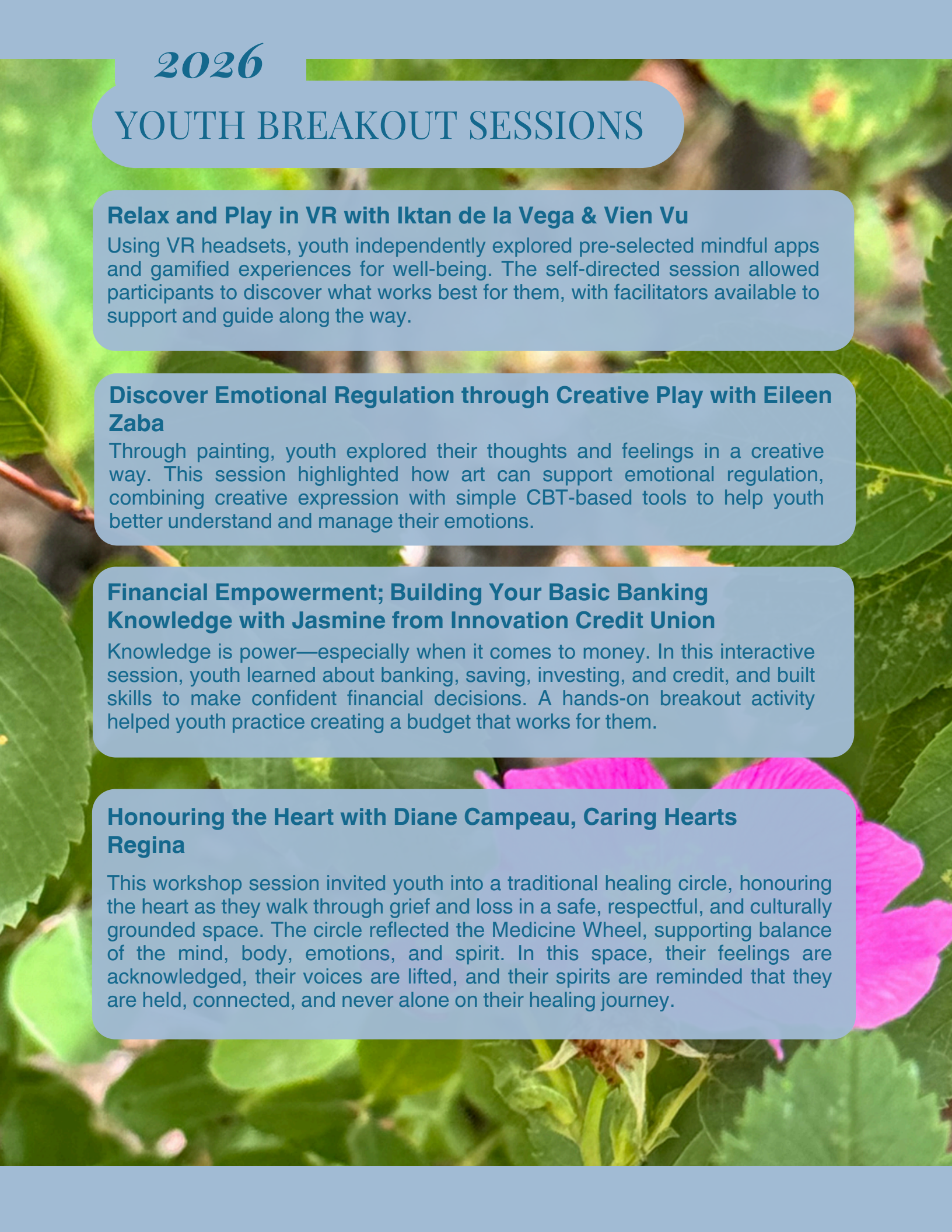
Photos seen above are captured during the Knowledge Keeper's welcoming message and Building Strength: Fitness session.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Youth had nine breakout sessions to choose from, ranging from cultural, creative, physical, and technology-based, including both Traditional and Western-based approaches. Building on feedback from the previous summits, sessions were also offered to support chaperones' wellness and learning. Details about the specific breakout sessions can be found in the following pages.



Photos from Breakout sessions: Traditional Hunting practices, Building Strength: Fitness, Mindset, and Resilience; Play therapy; Traditional Games.

The background of the entire page is a close-up photograph of green foliage. In the lower right corner, there are bright pink flowers, likely hibiscus, which are partially visible behind the text boxes. The overall tone is natural and vibrant.

2026

YOUTH BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Relax and Play in VR with Iktan de la Vega & Vien Vu

Using VR headsets, youth independently explored pre-selected mindful apps and gamified experiences for well-being. The self-directed session allowed participants to discover what works best for them, with facilitators available to support and guide along the way.

Discover Emotional Regulation through Creative Play with Eileen Zaba

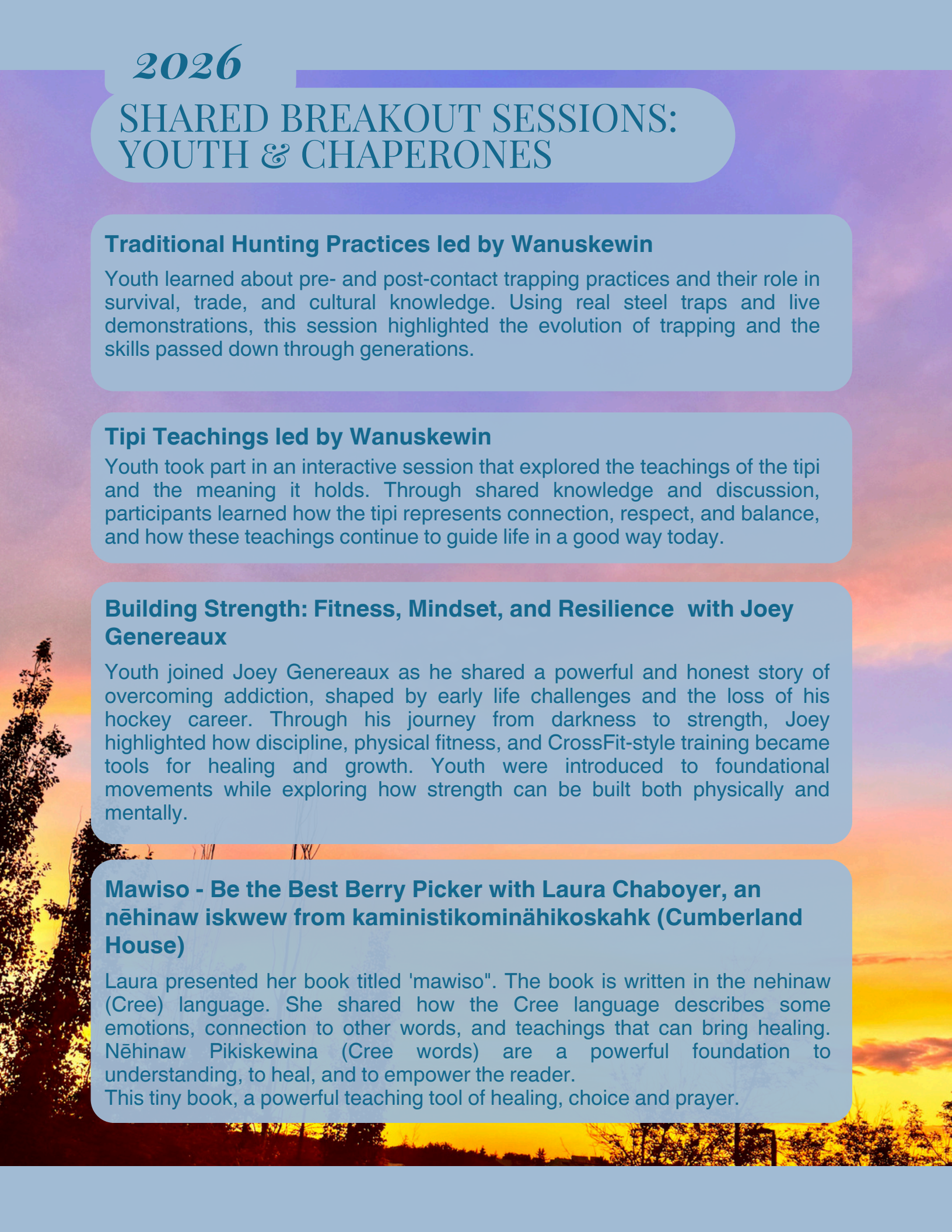
Through painting, youth explored their thoughts and feelings in a creative way. This session highlighted how art can support emotional regulation, combining creative expression with simple CBT-based tools to help youth better understand and manage their emotions.

Financial Empowerment; Building Your Basic Banking Knowledge with Jasmine from Innovation Credit Union

Knowledge is power—especially when it comes to money. In this interactive session, youth learned about banking, saving, investing, and credit, and built skills to make confident financial decisions. A hands-on breakout activity helped youth practice creating a budget that works for them.

Honouring the Heart with Diane Campeau, Caring Hearts Regina

This workshop session invited youth into a traditional healing circle, honouring the heart as they walk through grief and loss in a safe, respectful, and culturally grounded space. The circle reflected the Medicine Wheel, supporting balance of the mind, body, emotions, and spirit. In this space, their feelings are acknowledged, their voices are lifted, and their spirits are reminded that they are held, connected, and never alone on their healing journey.



2026

SHARED BREAKOUT SESSIONS: YOUTH & CHAPERONES

Traditional Hunting Practices led by Wanuskewin

Youth learned about pre- and post-contact trapping practices and their role in survival, trade, and cultural knowledge. Using real steel traps and live demonstrations, this session highlighted the evolution of trapping and the skills passed down through generations.

Tipi Teachings led by Wanuskewin

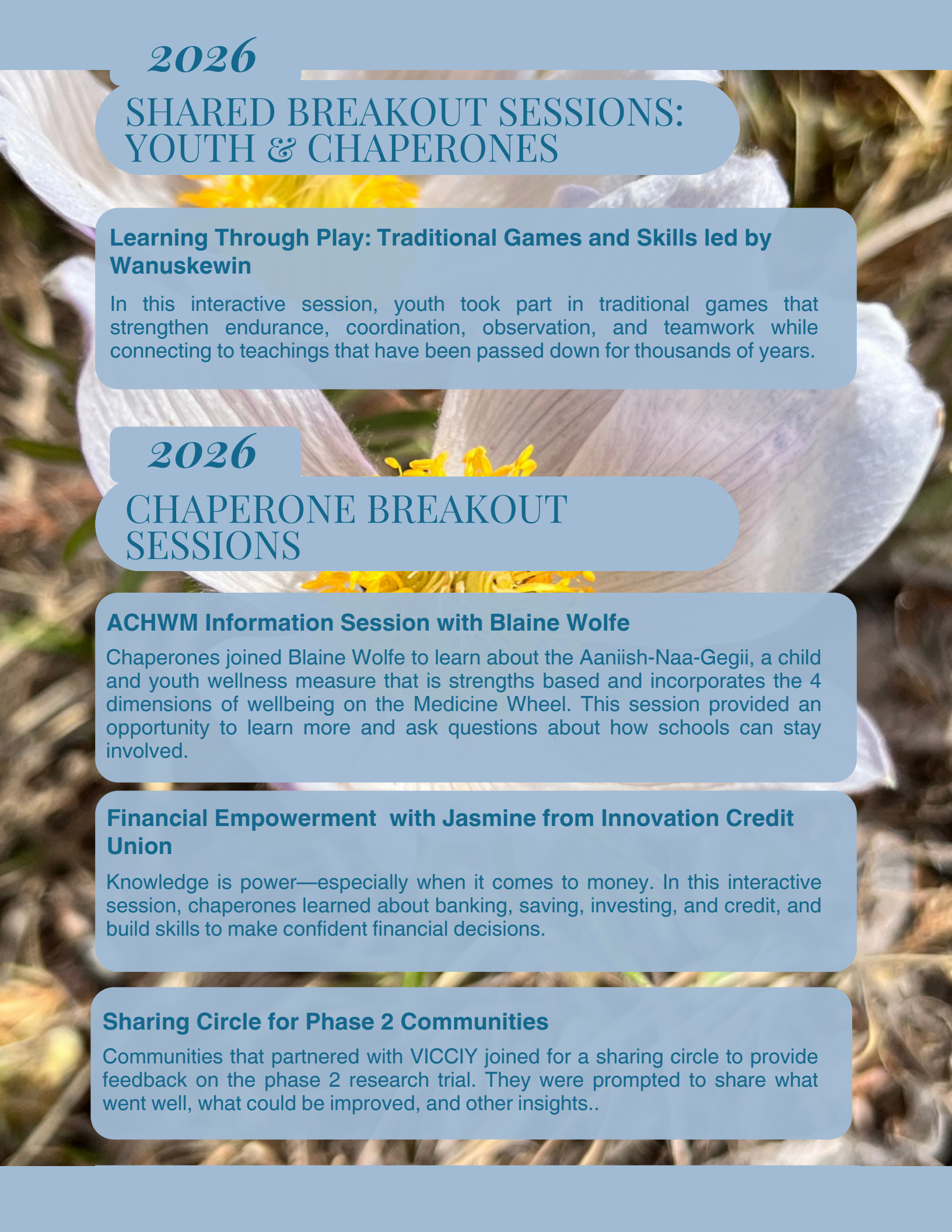
Youth took part in an interactive session that explored the teachings of the tipi and the meaning it holds. Through shared knowledge and discussion, participants learned how the tipi represents connection, respect, and balance, and how these teachings continue to guide life in a good way today.

Building Strength: Fitness, Mindset, and Resilience with Joey Genereaux

Youth joined Joey Genereaux as he shared a powerful and honest story of overcoming addiction, shaped by early life challenges and the loss of his hockey career. Through his journey from darkness to strength, Joey highlighted how discipline, physical fitness, and CrossFit-style training became tools for healing and growth. Youth were introduced to foundational movements while exploring how strength can be built both physically and mentally.

Mawiso - Be the Best Berry Picker with Laura Chaboyer, an nēhinaw iskwew from kaministikomināhikoskahn (Cumberland House)

Laura presented her book titled 'mawiso'. The book is written in the nēhinaw (Cree) language. She shared how the Cree language describes some emotions, connection to other words, and teachings that can bring healing. Nēhinaw Pikiskewina (Cree words) are a powerful foundation to understanding, to heal, and to empower the reader. This tiny book, a powerful teaching tool of healing, choice and prayer.

2026

SHARED BREAKOUT SESSIONS: YOUTH & CHAPERONES

Learning Through Play: Traditional Games and Skills led by Wanuskewin

In this interactive session, youth took part in traditional games that strengthen endurance, coordination, observation, and teamwork while connecting to teachings that have been passed down for thousands of years.

2026

CHAPERONE BREAKOUT SESSIONS

ACHWM Information Session with Blaine Wolfe

Chaperones joined Blaine Wolfe to learn about the Aaniish-Naa-Gegii, a child and youth wellness measure that is strengths based and incorporates the 4 dimensions of wellbeing on the Medicine Wheel. This session provided an opportunity to learn more and ask questions about how schools can stay involved.

Financial Empowerment with Jasmine from Innovation Credit Union

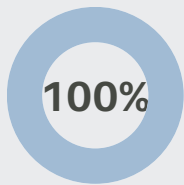
Knowledge is power—especially when it comes to money. In this interactive session, chaperones learned about banking, saving, investing, and credit, and build skills to make confident financial decisions.

Sharing Circle for Phase 2 Communities

Communities that partnered with VICCIY joined for a sharing circle to provide feedback on the phase 2 research trial. They were prompted to share what went well, what could be improved, and other insights..

2026 VICCIY SUMMIT YOUTH SURVEY RESPONSES

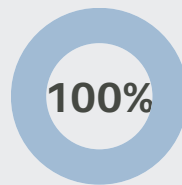
The percentage of youth who...



would like to attend the summit again



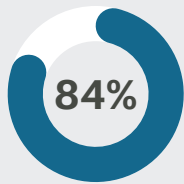
responded positively about their experience



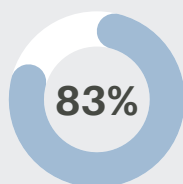
responded positively towards the presenters



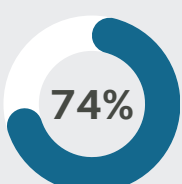
responded positively towards the organization of activities



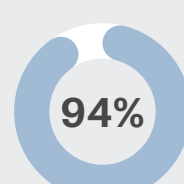
rated the food positively



felt they belonged & were accepted



made friends that they planned to stay in touch with after the summit



felt safe & comfortable throughout the summit

YEAR OVER YEAR COMPARISON

When comparing the findings from past summits, ratings for overall experience, presenters, and organization of activities remained consistent at 100%.



Wanuskewin background and photos of summit attendees using the VR headsets.

OVERARCHING RESEARCH TRIAL UPDATE

The VICCIY initiative recently concluded Phase 2 of its research trial, where youth gathered in live virtual reality sessions biweekly over six months (November 2025–April 2026) to build wellness skills, connect across communities, and explore tools to support their well-being.

VICCIY partnered with six schools in rural, remote, and northern communities across Saskatchewan, with 46 students participating (25 in the VR intervention group and 21 in a control group).

Partnering schools included: Dene High School in La Loche, Kamsack Comprehensive Institute, Miksiw School in Canoe Lake Cree Nation, Ministik Community School in Cumberland House, Ministikwan Lake Cree Nation School, and Twin Lakes Community School in Buffalo Narrows.



Youth on their way to the Traditional Hunting Methods breakout session.

NEXT STEPS FOR VICCIY

The next phase of VICCIY will focus on analyzing data from Phase 2 to better understand the impact of live virtual reality programming on youth well-being, connection, and skill development. Findings will be shared with participating communities and partners to guide collaborative decision-making.

Insights from youth will continue to shape refinements to the VR model, the expansion of wellness resources, and planning for future implementation in rural, remote, and northern communities across Saskatchewan.

As VICCIY continues to grow, we welcome opportunities to connect with communities, organizations, funders, and collaborators who share our commitment to improving youth wellness. **If you have ideas, see opportunities for partnership, or want to learn more about the initiative, we encourage you to reach out.**



Virtual Interventions & Community Connections for Indigenous Youth

STAY TUNED FOR UPDATES

Visit our website to learn more, view visual galleries, and join our newsletter for important updates!

<https://vicciy.ca>



[Click here to watch a video montage of the summit!](#)

Move your cursor in the videos for a full 360° view!

Gratitude to Our Supporters

Empowering Our Journey Through Generous Contributions



Saskatchewan!



**rRemai
mModern**



Mahsi cho; Kinanâskomitin; Pidamaya; Miigwech; Marsee; Thank You to our supporters and funders for making the Provincial Youth Wellness Summit possible.