# 2023 Impact Report

Dedicated to providing practical humanitarian support to northern and remote Indigenous communities

www.truenorthaid.ca

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#### A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Over the past year, we have seen the impact that True North Aid continues to make by providing practical support to northern Indigenous communities. As we look back at the many incredible projects that community leaders completed through the funding provided, we remember that you, our generous donors, make this all possible. We served over 100 communities, provided over 50,000 pounds of supplies and impacted more than 12,000 people. Overall, we funded forty-five initiatives in eight provinces and territories, fulfilling critical needs in health, food, housing, education, reconciliation, culture and self-determination.

From outdoor, on-the-land programs, to culture weeks, hockey exchanges, health initiatives, wildfire relief, reconciliation events, and so much more, we couldn't be more proud of the staff, volunteers, and community members who made this all possible.

With little overhead, True North Aid is committed to stewarding your generous donations so funds can be directed toward crucial humanitarian work. Every gift matters! We are grateful to the many monthly donors who consistently give \$5, \$20, \$50, \$100, or more, allowing us to plan for the future. Although the charitable sector in Canada experienced a significant decline in financial contributions this past year, True North Aid did not experience that same trend, and our giving stayed consistent with 2022. Thank you!

You will be inspired as you read our 2023 Impact Report! May it motivate you to continue the journey of coming alongside northern Indigenous communities in helping them fulfill their dreams and desires.

With deep gratitude, Kenneth Smid Executive Director







### **OUR MISSION**

to provide practical humanitarian support to northern and remote Indigenous communities in Canada

#### THE WHY

Many Indigenous peoples living in the most remote regions of the country experience an extreme lack of access to essential and affordable resources. In addition, Indigenous peoples experience ongoing negative impacts of forced assimilation, restrictive policies, and displacement. Examples include residential schools, intergenerational trauma and many other policies under the Indian Act 1876. Consequently, Indigenous peoples in Canada face striking inequities in health and wellness outcomes, education, food, economic sovereignty and housing security, particularly those living in northern and remote communities.

True North Aid believes that Indigenous self-governance and self-determination are key in addressing these inequities and empowering Indigenous peoples to build a brighter future.

Indigenous peoples in Canada experience the highest levels of poverty: A shocking 1 in 4 Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) or 25% are living in poverty, and 4 in 10 or 40% of Indigenous children live in poverty. - The Poverty Institute Canada, 2023

## WHO WE ARE

As a Canadian registered charity, our mandate is to provide practical humanitarian support through initiatives established on eight foundational stones of support. These include self-determination, reconciliation, water, food, health, housing, culture and education.

Our activities are designed to inspire and empower Indigenous peoples to pursue their dreams and, in turn, empower their communities. Through reconciliation and educational activities, we raise awareness and promote a nation-to-nation relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. We acknowledge the past wrongs and find ways to engage in a path forward.

Our team combines years of experience working with nonprofits, industry and humanitarian services. We are committed to lifelong learning to improve relationships, be advocates, and provide space for Indigenous peoples. This includes understanding the importance of relationships, respect, reciprocity and responsibility within our work.

We are guided by the Indigenous Advisory Committee and Elders, who speak into our work and provide us with direction and leadership.

## **EIGHT STONES OF SUPPORT**

Water Food Reconciliation Self-Determination Health Housing Culture Education

## OUR STORY

For more than a decade, True North Aid has been dedicated to providing practical humanitarian support to northern and remote Indigenous communities in Canada.

Established in 2009, True North Aid was founded by Rachael McIntyre (Brown) of Ottawa, ON. Having joined her grandfather on several trips to the north, Rachael witnessed first-hand the inequities faced by many remote Indigenous communities and the lack of access to necessities that many Canadians take for granted.

Inspired by the humanitarian work she had taken part in overseas, Rachael returned to Canada to start a Canadian charity dedicated to supporting northern and remote Indigenous communities. In 2012, True North Aid became a registered charity.

In True North Aid's early days, Attawapiskat, ON, experienced a food emergency and a significant housing crisis. We stepped in to provide emergency food support and furniture for many of the community's residents. This project offered national exposure and highlighted the real need for True North Aid's work.

From 2013 to 2016, George Woodward became the Executive Director of True North Aid. He worked with groups throughout the Greater Toronto Area to provide assistance to communities along the James Bay coast. This included provision of winter gear, heaters, clothes, and other necessities. In partnership with several organizations, True North Aid also provided hundreds of layette bags filled with critical care items for young mothers and infants at the Iqaluit and Igloolik in Nunavut birthing center.

In 2017, True North Aid went through another change in leadership. With little money and no partners, Kenneth Smid ramped up operations as the new Executive Director. Over the next six years, as Canadians have turned their attention to the challenges Indigenous communities face in Canada, hundreds of volunteers and thousands of donors have discovered True North Aid and have come alongside to support our work through volunteerism and financial contributions.

Since then, True North Aid has supported hundreds of community-led projects, and hundreds of thousands of pounds in supplies have reached northern communities in Canada.

True North Aid is inspired by people who want to make a positive change in Canada. We are proud to stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples and their fundamental human right to provide for their families and communities. In all that we do, we recognize the incredible injustices of the past and their great impact on the present. True North Aid continues to commit to truth and reconciliation and to see remote and northern Indigenous communities thrive. FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

**PERCENTAGE OF** 

**DONATION TOTALS** 

#### OPERATIONS VS. HUMANITARIAN SPENDING

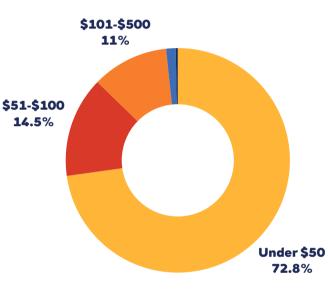
Operations 13%

Humanitarian 87%

> The majority of our donors gave under \$50, demonstrating how every gift matters!

For every dollar donated, 87 cents is spent on Indigenousled initiatives and humanitarian programs.

**ACCESS OUR 2023 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS HERE** 



SPENDING BY STONES OF SUPPORT

Reconciliation

10.6%

Health

37.5%

Housing

9.8%

Culture

13.5%

Education

17.9%

Food 5.1%



#### YOUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE

100+ COMMUNITIES ENGAGED

Monday Tuesday

50,000+ LBS **OF AID** SHIPPED

**12,000+ PEOPLE SUPPORTED** 



14 12

10

 $\cap$ 

Alberta

BC

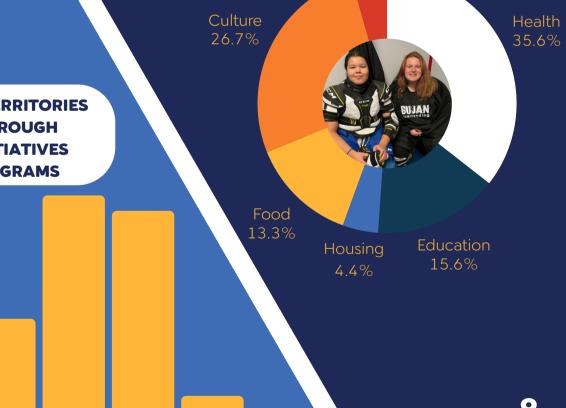
Manitoba NWT

**PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES** SUPPORTED THROUGH **COMMUNITY INITIATIVES & SUPPLIES PROGRAMS** 

Nunavut Ontario

#### **PROGRAMS SUPPORTED BASED ON STONES OF SUPPORT**

Self-Determination 4.4%



Quebec

SK

#### COMMUNITIES **SUPPORTED IN 2023**

True North Aid is proud to have built long-lasting relationships with many communities and looks forward to opportunities that expand our reach across Canada.

#### THROUGH OUR ( COMMUNITY INITIATIVES **AND SUPPLIES** PROGRAMS 39 NEW COMMUNITIES WERE **SUPPORTED IN** 2023.

Air Ronge, SK Animakee Wa Zhing #37, ON Anzac. AB Arctic Bav. NU Arviat. NU Bear Creek. AB Beauval, SK Bella Bella, BC **Big Grassy, ON Big Lakes County AB** Binche Whut'en BC Brabant Lake, SK **Buffalo Narrows**. SK Calling Lake, AB Canoe Lake SK Cat Lake, ON Chipweyan Lake, AB Cole Bav. SK Colville Lake, NT Conklin, AB Constance Lake FN. ON Cormorant Lake, MB Cumberland House, SK Deer Lake, ON Denny Island, BC Driftpile First Nation, SK Fisher River, MB Fort Albany, ON Fort Providence. NT Fort Severn. ON Gameti, NT Garden River, ON God's River, MB Grand Rapids, MB Grande Cache, AB Grandmother's Bay, SK Green Lake. SK Ialoolik. NU Ile A La Crosse, SK Inuvik, NT Igaluit, NU James Smith Cree Nation, SK Jan's Bav. SK Janvier, AB Kangigsujag, QC Kasabonika Lake FN. ON Keewaywin, ON Kinonjeoshtegon, MB Klahoose, BC Klemtu, BC

La Loche. SK Lac Brochet. MB Lac La Ronge, SK Lake Babine Nation. BC Little Grand Rapids. MB Little Saskatchewan, MB Lytton First Nation, BC Masset, BC Misipawistik, MB Mni Thni First Nation. AB Moosonee, ON Nibinamik FN, ON North Spirit Lake, ON Northwest Angle 33, ON Norway House Cree Nation, MB O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation, MB Clearwater River Dene Nation, SK O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation, MB Oaoki Post. ON Onigaming, ON Pauingassi, MB Pelican Narrows, SK Pikangikum, ON Pinehouse Lake, SK Poplar Hill, ON Poplar River, MB Red Earth Creek. AB Red Sucker Lake. MB Sandv Bav. SK Sandy Lake, ON Sanikiluag, NU Shamattawa, MB Sioux Lookout, ON Smithers, BC South Indian Lake, MB St Theresa Point. MB St. George's Hill, SK Stony Rapids, SK Tadoule Lake, MB Tataskweyak, MB Terrace, BC Timber Bay, SK Tootinaowaziibeeng, MB Uranium City, SK Wabasca, AB Wasagamack, MB Weyakwin, SK Yellowknife, NT



Maklak Making Inuvik, NWT

Outdoor Cycling Program Cumberland House, SK



#WeSeeYou Trip Vancouver/Lytton, BC

Wildfire Relief Buffalo Narrows, SK Clearwater River, SK Fort Providence, NWT

Hygiene Supports for Northern Lights School District Saskatchewan

Reconnecting Our

Spirit Culture Week

Wabasca, AB

Baby Supplies Grand Rapids, MB Iqaluit, NU Sioux Lookout, ON

Supporting Food Security Igaluit, Nunavut

Culture Camps GrandMother's Bay, SK Grand Cache, AB Klahoose, BC

## 2023 AT A GLANCE



Wilderness First Aid Course Iglulik, Nunavut



Hockey Cares, Attawapiskat, ON

Diabetes Care for KO Chiefs Communities Northern Ontario

## **COMMUNITY INITIATIVES PROGRAM**

In 2023, the Community Initiatives Program (CIP) supported 35 Indigenous-led projects in northern and remote regions across Canada. True North Aid supports holistic and sustainable projects that empower communities.

Advancing education/training, cultural revitalization, and/or community-building opportunities

Addressing plant/food sovereignty

Addressing housing inequities

Promoting holistic (physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual) well-being

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Providing access to essential resources and reducing barriers to acquiring such resources

> In 2023, \$718,867 was spent on the Community Initiatives Program.

## **2023 CIP HIGHLIGHTS**

#### ALL NATIONS PADDLES UP KLEMTU, BC

For the second year in a row, True North Aid was proud to support a special cultural reclamation program, All Nations Paddles Up. This is their annual tribal journey along the Pacific coasts of British Columbia and Washington State. Youth engaged in ancient nation-to-nation protocol, instilling a sense of pride and purpose throughout their travels. This is what the coordinators Jodi and Michelle had to say, "Following the training day, as the canoes departed for the first community that would welcome us, it was amazing to watch the progress of each participant as they become more selfaware, more connected to the others they were travelling with, and more engaged with everyone. There was a tremendous sense of accomplishment and pride as we were called to shore by the host nation. There is nothing more rewarding than hearing these young pullers recount the day to those standing waiting for our arrival. It was truly amazing!"

#### MOUNTAIN MÉTIS ASSOCIATION CULTURE CAMPS GRAND CACHE, AB

Bringing together Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth from the area, the camp provided various cultural learning opportunities and fitness-based activities. These included archery, swimming, pottery making, Métis Jigging, willowdream catcher making, and much more. Participants ended their days gathered around the comforting glow of the campfire, forming lasting memories and bonds.

#### IYINISIWIN BEAVER CABIN CANOE LAKE, SK

This past fall, the Canoe Lake First Nation community in Saskatchewan came together to build cabins and a camp that would provide a permanent place to share traditional knowledge and culture. Students, Elders, and community staff built the cabins together on their traditional territories.

From Geraldine Delorme-Bouvier, Vice Principal at Canoe Lake Miksiw School: "I have learned that anything is possible... This legacy will last for generations. This traditional land has been used for over 30 years for land-based activities and healing. This will provide year-round access."

#### WILDERNESS FIRST AID IGLULIK, NU

The 20-hour Wilderness First Aid course prepared 20 high school students in Iglulik, Nunavut with the essential first aid skills for land-based activities and beyond. This included being part of hands-on-based practice scenarios like "wound" simulation. The students loved showing their families and friends how realistic it was! All students received their internationally recognized Wilderness First Aid with CPR/AED Level A+ certification.

#### MAKLAK MAKING INUVIK, NWT

Twelve parents and guardians from Inuvik, Northwest Territories gathered at Invuik Hope House and received instruction on cutting and sewing children's maklaks and canvas shoes. They learned to follow instructions, take measurements, and use a sewing machine. At the end of the training, they took home their completed project, the maklak pattern, and now know how to put together maklaks for future use! We are proud to support Indigenous selfdetermination through cultural initiatives.

#### LOOKING TO 2024

- Haida Gwaii Klemtu Cultural Exchange
- Aandanjige Chicken Coop Program
- Year-End Trip for SPSC School, SK
- Cultural Trainings in Grand Cache, AB
- And Many More to Come!

#### WORK2GIVE

In partnership with Movember, True North Aid is proud to support Work 2 Give, an initiative with Correctional Services Canada. This project recruits Indigenous offenders at Collins Bay, Joyceville, Bath and Beaver Creek Institutions to build structures for remote Indigenous communities. Indigenous men garner carpentry skills and knowledge to give back to their communities. This includes crafting shelving units, garden beds and planters, benches, feather boxes, end tables, picnic tables, floating docks, and bunkies. This year included supporting the communities of Apitipi First Nation, Serpent River, Wiikwemkoong and Taykwa Tagmou Nation.

We are happy to work with project lead Robert Rittwage to make this program successful!

#### **PARTICIPANTS IN CIP REPORTED:**

#### **INCREASED CULTURAL COMPETENCY**

#### **INCREASED SELF-ESTEEM AND CONFIDENCE**

#### PROMOTION OF HEALING WITHIN AND IN THE COMMUNITY

"We learned that providing youth with a fun and safe environment to learn and play supports them in not being influenced by peer pressure and helps them stay out of trouble. These types of camps and programs are vital to supporting our youth during these highrisk/vulnerable stages in life." - Alvin, Mountain Metis Youth Camp, Grand Cache, Alberta

"Self-esteem improved. Students are feeling important, acting more respectful. Students are aware that we care. They are seeking help and not giving up on the school work". - Kelsey, Hygiene Supports for Northern Lights School District, Saskatchewan

"The Fiddle Program has opened many doors for our students. All the students who join the Fiddle Program are always excited and ready to learn. As an Indigenous community bringing back the fiddle to the youth has brought back more heritage to the community than there has before. I love that the program offers old and newcomers to join in on the fun." - Zena, Buffalo Narrows Fiddle Program, Saskatchewan.

" Participation in canoe journeys increases cultural competency. Protocols are practiced and in play as the canoes travel from Nation to Nation, standing on the protocol floor with All Nations, as well as being called to the floor from the host nation. Singing and drumming on the canoe, as well as participating in the sacred circle, are all key elements of helping enhance cultural knowledge, competency, and confidence." - Jodi, All Nations Paddles Up Tribal Journey to Muckleshoot

## **SUPPLY PROGRAMS**

Many First Nation communities, hamlets, and towns across northern Canada face significant barriers to accessing essential goods and services. Often situated in remote areas that are only accessible by plane, barge, or are a long drive from major city centres, communities are forced to pay exorbitant prices for food and other goods such as backpacks, beds, and warm clothing.

> At True North Aid, we believe that where you live should not determine the quality of life you are afforded. Through our Supply Programs, we purchase and ship quality goods to northern and remote communities so that families are not forced to choose between purchasing groceries and other necessities such as warm clothing and school supplies for their children.

> > In 2023, True North Aid spent \$320,000 on purchasing supplies and \$75,000 on transportation and shipping costs.

#### **ROLLUP FOR THE NORTH**

A standard wheelchair in Canada costs, on average, \$2,500. This prohibitive cost creates a need for affordable mobility devices, specifically for those refused government funding. In addition to the affordability of these devices, living in remote communities creates a barrier for Indigenous people to access health practitioners who would assess the needs of the individual and help with the required paperwork.

As part of our commitment to practical support to, True North Aid delivered over 60 pallets of refurbished wheelchairs, walkers, and mobility devices to 16 communities in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. We are proud to have partnered with RollUP Solutions and Goodwill Ltd in London, Ontario, since 2020 for this initiative.

#### **BACK TO SCHOOL 2023**

2023's "Back-to-School" program, which prioritized Indigenous students' education, was our biggest yet! True North Aid delivered more backpacks with school supplies than ever before. 2,500 backpacks were delivered to 12 communities across northern Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. School supplies included notebooks, pencils, pencil crayons, pencil cases, rulers, math kits, markers, and more. The demand for this support continues to grow, and we anticipate more applications this year than ever from schools across the remote north.

#### WARM CLOTHES, WARM HEARTS,

True North Aid shipped over 800 winter coats with accessories to remote communities across Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Nunavut and Ontario in October. We also partnered with groups, including the YES Group in Toronto and The Rotary Club of Winnipeg, to collect gently used winter clothing to ship to remote communities. Over 12 pallets of clothing were collected. A huge thank you to these groups, Brador Fabrics and Capital Movers, and community champions who will make this possible!

## HOLIDAY BOOK

This year, we were excited to launch our partnership with Strong Nations, an Indigenous-owned book and resource store in Nanaimo, BC. With their help, we supplied more than 3,230 books to 17 schools in remote communities across Canada. That is a ton of books! From Melek, in Arviat, "You've provided our community with rich, culturally relevant and age-appropriate books to encourage literacy—and all for free."

#### LEGO REPLAY

Since 2021, True North Aid has partnered with LEGO Replay, where people pass forward their much-loved LEGO bricks and share the power of play with kids in need.

This year, LEGO Replay and True North Aid delivered 4494lbs of LEGO to 14 remote communities in British Columbia, Alberta and Manitoba, providing 1500 youth with boxes of LEGO!

## MOON TIME CONNECTIONS

Moon Time Connections is a flagship program of True North Aid and is a national Indigenous-led period equity group supporting Indigenous menstruators across Turtle Island, ensuring they have access to menstrual products, and by providing vital menstrual education.

Founded in Saskatchewan in 2017 as Moon Time Sisters, Moon Time Connections has grown to include 4 chapters in Saskatchewan, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia. They have partnered with over 150 northern Indigenous Communities in all provinces and territories from BC to Labrador, and have shipped over four million period products to high schools, elementary schools, midwifery organizations, health care centres, Friendship Centres, shelters, food banks and community programs in remote areas from coast to coast.

## MTC EDUCATION PROGRAM

- Building resources with Elders and Knowledge Keepers
- Creating a Moon Time Facilitator Training Program
- Educating southern communities on period inequity in the north

1,050,298 Menstrual Products Shipped in 2023!

PARTNERSHIP

#### In 2023, Moon Time Connections launched a partnership with joni and provided 60 menstrual product dispensers to 14 communities across five provinces and territories.



#### **SETTLER DISCUSSION SERIES**

Approximately 175 people from across Canada joined the online Settler Discussion Series, including corporations, schools and faith organizations. This discussion series was created in response to the momentum of non-Indigenous persons seeking a platform to begin their journey of reconciliation. It also provided a forum to engage in meaningful dialogue related to the Truth and Reconciliation's 94 Calls to Action, specifically #54 and #s 62-65. Participants receive an engaging, interactive digital email each week containing information about the next week's topic.

#### **RECONCILIATION INITIATIVES**

True North Aid's Reconciliation Program oversees events that encourage non-Indigenous peoples to understand and commit to their journey of reconciliation.

This is accomplished by hosting key events online and in person throughout Canada and by stewarding True North Aid's Good Ally Program (GAP), which engages volunteers and individuals and organizations who want to help in specific areas like fundraising and awareness campaigns.

#### RECONCILIATION WALK

## Over 360+ Participants in 4 Locations in Ontario!

The Reconciliation Walk allows non-Indigenous individuals to learn about the timeline of Canada's residential school legacy through an interactive, meaningful, self-guided experience. These walks occur on September 30th, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The Reconciliation Walk hopes to instill an urgency for change and action in moving forward together in justice and repairing a relationship that is long due for all of us. In 2023, volunteers in Kingston, Kitchener and Vaughan hosted reconciliation walks in their cities, one school in Kingston.

#### PRESENTATIONS

True North Aid seeks to build relationships with Canadians through reconciliatory education and informing supporters of our organization's humanitarian efforts that support our Stones of Support.

> This year, our reconciliation program coordinator provided online presentations to 8 corporations and made in-person presentations to 4 schools in Ottawa, Kingston, Cambridge, and Woodbridge and 2 churches in Kingston and Blythe.

#### **BECOMING KIN RETREAT**

Based upon Patty Krawec's book, "<u>Becoming Kin: An</u> <u>Indigenous Call to Unforgetting the Past and</u> <u>Reimagining Our Future", this weekend retreat</u> explored the complicated and complicit relationship and responsibilities we have to ourselves, our families, and one another and what it means to be 'good kin'. Three retreats were held in Mono (ON), Maple Ridge (BC) and Tatamagouche (NS).



#### **NORTHERN READS**

Northern Reads is an annual literacy initiative that calls upon Canadians to satisfy the book wish lists of three northern and remote communities. In 2023, we partnered with Goodminds and held an Author Series that featured Indigenous authors such as David Roberston, Patty Krawec, Aimee Craft, and Jessica Outram. Overall, 57 people donated gift cards totalling \$3980, 24 donated towards the shipping costs of the books and 95 people registered for the authors series!

#### **HOCKEY CARES**

It Doesn't Matter If You Win Or-Lose,

The fifth edition of True North Aid's Hockey Cares exchange program took place in November, 2023. Fourteen teenagers travelled from Oakville in southern Ontario to Attawapiskat First Nation. Our hosts in Attawapiskat welcomed us with open arms, sharing their traditions, knowledge and culture. The youth learned how bannock is prepared and tried their hand at filleting goose at a hunting camp by the river. The youth learned the story of Shannen Koostashin when her father told us all about the great lengths she went to in order to get a new school built for her community. And of course, there was lots of hockey! There were smiles and high-fives all around when the youth from both communities took to the ice for a series of games between Team Fire and Team Ice. Their common love of hockey was a great way to forge new friendships and bonds. The Oakville contingent is looking forward to seeing all of our new northern friends in July 2024, when they travel south to see us again for part two of the exchange!



2002

OAKVILL

HOCKEY CARE

RELAX! IT'S JUST A GAME.

## Remembering Norman McCallum

With sadness, True North Aid announces the passing of Elder Advisor Norman McCallum. Since 2017, Norman has opened many doors for True North Aid, particularly in Saskatchewan. Over the years he built relationships with most communities in that province and travelled many miles each year to encourage communities to apply for assistance and follow up on projects and programs. His heart was to do everything he could to support communities in the north. Norman grew up in Buffalo Narrows and was an Elder with the Woodland Cree Nation in Alberta. Over the years, he worked with various levels of government, including the mining and oil industry, and served in the Arctic as an Addictions Counsellor for seven years.

He was invaluable to the True North Aid family and helped guide our work. His friendship, wisdom and support will be deeply missed.

We send our condolences to his wife, family and friends, with whom we know that Norman touched many hearts.

## **Contact Us**



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# **TRUE NORTH AID**

Dedicated to providing practical humanitarian support to northern and remote Indigenous communities True North Aid is a Registered Canadian Charity - 81318 3696 RR0001