

Wellbeing Waterloo Region

Winter 2021 Update

Hello Friends of Wellbeing Waterloo Region!

We hope that everyone is doing well. This update provides some highlights of Wellbeing Waterloo Region (WWR) activities that have taken place over the winter.

WWR Community Resiliency Video

To celebrate our community's resiliency and collaboration throughout the past year, Kathilee Porter, The Blend Media Group, created a [WWR Community Resilience video](#). We really would love to have the message shared widely in the community, so please share it with your networks. Thank you to everyone for all that you do to support the community and one-another. This outstanding network is ensuring that Wellbeing Waterloo Region's vision of a "community where everyone thrives and no one is left behind" is realized.

Connecting the Community through Hope – Winter Event Series

A WWR Winter Wellbeing Events Planning Group was formed to provide insights, resources and advice to inform the planning of a series of virtual events designed to connect our community through resilience and hope. The following events were held from January to March 2021:

Connecting the Community through Resilience and Hope Virtual Event (March 12)

On March 12, 2021, Wellbeing Waterloo Region hosted a special virtual event to mark the one-year anniversary since the pandemic was declared. The event connected the community through resilience and hope and included a mix of personal sharing, reflection and music.

Event highlights included a special welcome message and song from Kitchener MPP Laura Mae Lindo, a live musical performance by talented local artist, Juneyt, a candle-lighting ceremony, break-out room community conversations, and a presentation by Dr. Jill Stoddart, Family and Children's Services on key learnings from [The Resilience Project](#), as related to boosting our community's capacity for enhancing community resilience.

Some event feedback highlights included:

- "Happy to be part of it - it was an incredible event! Perfect mix of sharing, reflection, and music."
- "You guys are amazing" and "I really appreciate your organization and what you stand for".



Participants noted they specifically enjoyed the following about the event:

- *“the positive tone, inclusive voices, focus on resilience”*
- *“the sharing from different perspectives”*
- *“the video, the music, the breakout rooms, the humor”*
- *“connecting and reflecting”*

From Behind the Mask- Quilting Workshop (March 17)

[From Behind the Mask](#) is a local community art project creating a collective quilt from our individual COVID-19 stories. WWR members joined Brenda Reid, the project coordinator for a hands-on workshop, learning about quilts, how to make a quilt block, and story-telling through textiles.



Mindfulness with Dr. Mitchell Abrams (March 24)



On March 24, WWR network members joined Dr. Mitchell Abrams, radiologist, educator, musician, CEO and founder of NexGen Health, a social enterprise with a mission of creating healthy minds and thriving communities, as he explained an innovative approach to health and wellness, and social divide.

Using the power of music, art and narrative, Dr. Abrams educates, heals and inspires communities. He incorporates the science of the West with the wisdom of the East and teaches us how caring for one-another, sharing hope, and building thriving social structures, leads to greater resilience and better health outcomes for everyone. At the session, Dr. Abrams explored emerging medical science and provided context to help us understand what nature has been trying to teach us all along. He empowered participants with new perspectives of who and what we are as individuals and as a community.

The following is a poem created by Dr. Abrams' Elective Medical Student based on the phrases and key terms identified by participants at the March 24th session. Dr. Abrams noted that the medical students really enjoyed the process and felt empowered that they were participating in a community health opportunity that extends beyond the typical educational approach.

Wavelength

Every night
I watch the waves
Each wave a unit of movement
Moved with the wind
Moved by the moon
Moving towards the shore
Moving around other
Wave after wave
Continuous, single

Apart and yet one

Beauty is when the waves synchronize
Merging their colours, shifting and shimmer
Connected in rhythm
Dancing to the beat of an internal tune
I dance with the waves
Imitating their flow
Imagining I am a wave

As a wave I am connected to the tune
It resonates in my bones
Vibrates my skull
Breath matches beat
I am aware of the energy of the universe

The waves and I dance, and I feel their presence
Radiating
I receive
I radiate
We synchronize and synergize and achieve
Harmony, peace, unity
I harmonize with their playful moves

It is in these times I truly feel love and loved
Connected to the rhythm of life
I forget my fears and embrace the blessing
Blessed by the universal energy in me

When I leave the waves, I do not truly leave
I bring them with me
I find them in others
Dancing and moving in everyone and everything
I focus on their vibration and tune into the dance

We synchronize our waves
Share our energies
They receive
They radiate
A ripple of light flowing from their hearts to others
And we move and dance seamlessly, united as the waves do
United by our own sea

And I feel the love of the waves
I share that love
We shine and shimmer strong together



In these moments I feel fully awake
I access the universal language of energy
And imagine better worlds and better people

And that is the power of the waves
That is coherence

Will you join this dance with me?

Ryan Stevenson
Energy Elective
McMaster MD Program

Hope 101: A Community-Building Workshop (March 30)



This workshop on March 30 from 1pm to 3pm offered an introduction to hope from various perspectives (e.g. philosophical, spiritual, political, and medical) and explored hope as a way of building community in the face of difficulty. Facilitated by Matthew Bailey-Dick, the session was dynamic and sparked insights about hope seen through different lenses. Participants learned together from a variety of sources, and exercised “hope muscles” through activities and discussions about agency and creating pathways to hope in Waterloo Region.

Journey to Reconciliation Awareness and Training

Wellbeing Waterloo Region is committed to developing meaningful relationships and actions with First Nations, Metis and Inuit Communities in Waterloo Region. In support of this work, Wellbeing Waterloo Region continues to offer learning and awareness opportunities to acknowledge the impacts of colonization, improve understanding, and work towards reconciliation and healing. Recent training sessions offered to the WWR network have included:

Reconciliation: Discussions and Implications for Settler Peoples

This 8-week non-credit and online course facilitated by Kelly Laurila took place from January 13 to March 8 and provided a journey of sharing and discussing how Indigenous and Settler peoples know each other through the stories that have been told of each other in the past, and which continue in the present. The format of this course was primarily taught using Indigenous pedagogy that centres Indigenous knowledge and themes of wholism and interconnectedness to convey and understand course topics.

Journey to Reconciliation Awareness and Training - Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action

In this session held on February 24, facilitator Kelly Fran Davis provided a historical context of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and discussed the Calls to Action of the final report. Participants had an opportunity to discuss their experiences with Indigenous organizations, community members, and Indigenous content.

Niindawemginiduk Series: Turtle Island 101- Roads that Lead To UNDRIP

On March 4 and 5, WWR held interactive virtual sessions to connect participants with history and legislation and provide opportunities to discuss why this matters now and in the future. Participants were asked to relate to what they learned personally and professionally, coming to understand how they can act responsibly from their particular unique and collective social location to further the goals of compliance with, and support for, The TRC Calls to Action that offer a pathway toward better relationships between us all. The sessions were well-attended and made for great discussions!

Two-Eyed Organizational Assessment Toolkit

First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples have endured centuries of colonizing and genocidal practices. It is important to keep in mind the history, to learn more wherever we can, and to work towards positive change within ourselves. Waterloo Region is home to a diverse Indigenous population and the more that services are offered in a way that is welcoming to all, the more helpful and beneficial they are.

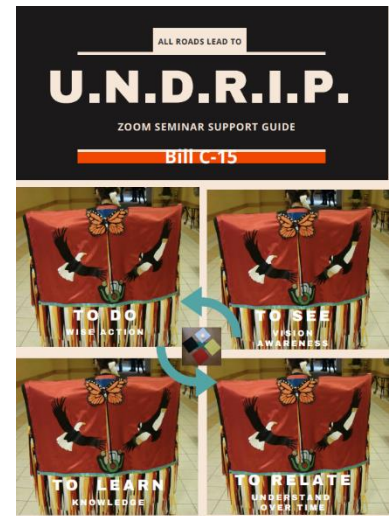
The Two-Eyed Organizational Assessment Toolkit has been developed to be a guide, a starting point. It is not designed to shame or intimidate. We, as human beings, are all on different parts on our learning journey. This toolkit is designed to help you understand where your organization is at on its learning journey.

The toolkit development was lead by Justine Kennedy and the First Nation, Metis, Inuit Advisory and Advocacy Circle provided insights on what should be included in the toolkit. The toolkit is still in draft and over the next couple of months WWR will be looking for a few organizations to help pilot the toolkit before full implementation.

Finding Hope Movement

Finding Hope is a movement sparked by Wellbeing Waterloo Region that encourages our community to share and celebrate what has gone well and given us hope during this stressful and uncertain season. In a time when our newsfeeds are populated with content that makes us feel fearful and anxious, the Finding Hope movement encourages you to change the algorithm by posting and interacting with positive stories from across our community. By amplifying some of the fantastic ways our region has responded to this crisis, we can tap into lasting hope that will help us to be resilient in the months to come.

In the first three months of 2021, WWR has promoted the Finding Hope movement on and offline with initiatives like the “60 Ways for 60 Days” posts, supporting events in the community, and spreading messages of positivity with the #FindingHopeMovement hashtag.



Day 52: Take time to reflect on what behaviours improve your mood- and which do the opposite.
[#FindingHopeMovement](#) 🧡



Join the #FindingHopeMovement by posting something to social media using the hashtag. It doesn't need to be high-production; snap a photo or share a song that makes you feel hopeful!

Additionally, if you have events or programming in the community that you would like to promote, let us help! Use the hashtag in a post sharing your content, and we will amplify it to our social media network!

Improv for Winter Wellbeing



The WWR network identified that many in our community were feeling they could use some fun and connection during the Winter months. As part of the Finding Hope Movement, WWR held two sessions of Improv for Winter Wellbeing on December 22 and February 11. Improv is a great way to connect with others and share creativity, laughter, and hope. The sessions were super fun for all involved and served as a way to be connected as a community for a light and creative activity. Many laughs and positive energy were shared. Thank you to YesUnlimited for facilitating the sessions!

Hallmark eCards

As part of the Finding Hope Movement, Wellbeing Waterloo Region has created a Hallmark eCard account for members to

use. Greeting cards are a simple and fun way to show your gratitude and appreciation for the people you care about, and to spark hope in tough times.

WWR members have been making use of the Hallmark eCards account to send e-greetings to friends, family, and coworkers. To-date, over 320 cards have been sent to community members! We hope you take the opportunity to share some hope and have fun with the eCard designs. **The Hallmark eCard service is ending on April 17, 2021. Until then, please enjoy!**

Leadership Waterloo Region Virtual Café on Affordable Housing

Leadership Waterloo Region's Core Program Class of 2021 has, through the teaching and facilitation from WISIR, collectively taken on one issue as identified by Wellbeing Waterloo Region: Affordable Housing. This work is a continuation of the focus from their class last year, who developed four amazing prototype solutions. You can read more about these solutions [here](#).





In October 2020, LWR hosted their first world café supporting the Class of 2021, where the class captured information and feedback from community partners and those with lived experience relating to affordable housing. Since then, they have been conducting individual interviews to determine specific leverage points that impact the affordable housing continuum, and have been working in groups to develop prototype solutions in partnership with those working and living in the affordable housing space.

During this second virtual café, that took place on April 6, participants had an opportunity to hear class members present their solutions, to ask questions, and to dive deeper into their learnings.

WWR Communications

WWR Newsletter

Wellbeing Waterloo Region has been continuing to circulate newsletters biweekly to share updates and promote programs, events, and opportunities from our community partners. If you or your organization have material we can promote in a future newsletter, please reach out by sending an email to wellbeingwr@regionofwaterloo.ca.

You may have noticed a more colourful look for the newsletters and different headings to clarify sections of content. We hope this format is simple to navigate and adds some colour to your inbox!

WWR Website Resources and Social Media

For more than a year, the website has been a hub of information and resources related to wellbeing. Information is being regularly updated as things in our community change, so we encourage you to check our pages frequently to make sure you have the most up-to-date material.

Zoom

At the beginning of the pandemic, many organizations in our network were struggling to stay connected with clients and staff. The logistics and the cost of tools were both barriers. Many organizations had never hosted online meetings for a group, or even one-to-one meetings! Wellbeing Waterloo Region reached out to learn how best to support our network and heard the need for support for technology tools. In response to our network's needs, Wellbeing Waterloo Region purchased a one year Zoom business license to support twenty organizations so they could connect with and serve clients, staff and volunteers. Over the past year **17,779 people** were connected online for **17,310 hours** of meeting time.

We have finished the one-year license and in the wrap up survey participants who accessed the zoom license said:

"Thanks for providing the licenses in the first place. It was such a relief to have that piece taken care of when all this started."



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"Thank you, Wellbeing Waterloo Region, for your support and generosity in providing us with a zoom license this past year. Without a doubt, it was the most challenging year that any of us has experienced with so many layers of complexity requiring us to pivot and adapt at an unprecedented pace."

"Thank you for offering this, it was helpful during lockdown. "

Measuring Wellbeing

A great deal of information is available on the impacts of COVID-19, and the data is constantly evolving. In order to help keep the network informed on the emerging data and issues related to the impacts of COVID-19, WWR created a [Data Spotlight](#). The Data Spotlight shares timely data, fast facts, and relevant links to national and local data sources.



Equity

Equity remains one of the top priorities for Wellbeing Waterloo Region as our community has changed significantly and rapidly in the past year. We are continuing to amplify emerging issues of equity in our community and connecting the community on these issues. The community has continued to use the [Equity Training Series](#) as well as the [30 Day Challenge](#) as ways to develop understanding and capacity to address issues of equity.

On the WWR website, we have added [a page which lists some additional training and educational materials](#) related to equity. The community is welcome to use these resources for work, or for personal learning. These materials are also being highlighted one-by-one in the "Equity Resources" section of our newsletter. If you know of a resource or of training content related to equity that we could add to our growing library of resources, please connect by sending an email to wellbeingwr@regionofwaterloo.ca

WWR Network Feedback

We value the feedback and contributions of Wellbeing Waterloo Region network members. In a recent feedback survey, participants who attended the March 12 Community Resilience Forum were asked to share their most meaningful connection or experience with Wellbeing Waterloo Region.

- "Touching base with WWR Backbone staff has helped keep my spirits up. The newsletters and Facebook posts has occurred during this difficult year. The course with Kelly Laurila deepened my understanding and resolve for action towards reconciliation".*
- "You did a great job of amplifying information and sharing it in the community. Also, you were immediately responsive to the community in the pandemic and started offering workshops on resilience and then the finding hope campaign".*
- "The consistent support and outreach offered to our community through WWR staff and initiatives were a welcome rest during a difficult time. Connecting staff on this level for check in on whatever topics was like a journey into a community spa. The genuine caring and earnest efforts to navigate uncharted territory was exemplary. With gratitude for all the learning opportunities from equity training to Indigenous Studies at*

UW, Renison College, it was privilege and a life support at times to have this group pull us together. As we were all dispersed to our home offices (or separated in general) we can see the value of this stream of support. My only hope is that we can continue to grow and extend this to others as well. Well done and thank you!"

- *"The gift of connection and learning together. Especially around the settlers and white privilege".*

WWR Annual Report

Thank you to everyone. Some of the recent accomplishments that we can all be proud of are included in the [WWR annual report](#) for 2020.