

Healing with Horses: Healing Fund and UCW Partnership Spring 2025

Healing Initiative Name: Healing with Horses: Healing Grief and Families Impacted by Substance Abuse

Organization: Reflections Nanaandwejgejig Bezhigoogizhiik

Location: Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, Manitoulin Island, Ontario

Requested Amount Approved: \$15,000.00

About Reflections Nanaandwejgejig Bezhigoogizhiik (Healing Horses)

[Reflections Nanaandwejgejig Bezhigoogizhiik \(Healing Horses\)](#) offers a unique, horse-assisted approach to helping individuals overcome mental health challenges like trauma, depression, and anxiety. Our program fosters personal growth, communication, and confidence while addressing intergenerational trauma. We provide individual and group therapy sessions, along with welcoming visitors to meet our Ojibwe Spirit Horses.

Reflections Nanaandwejgejig Bezhigoogizhiik (Healing Horses), offers an experiential and unique approach to teaching life skills to individuals who are struggling with mental health. Our program allows the individual to understand themselves and start addressing the impacts of intergenerational trauma, as well as working toward overcoming issues of trauma, depression, anxiety, aggression, and addictions. One of the ways we do this is with horses.

Horses, by nature, develop coping strategies with confidence and are capable of reading or becoming aware of how a person is feeling before the individual even understands it themselves. The horses in our program will help explore positive and personal development through a powerful journey of learning and understanding, analyzing and developing strengths in communication, building leadership and teamwork skills, constructing confidence and self-esteem, building trust, aspiring for self-worth, and exploring conflict resolutions.

Reflections Nanaandwejgejig Bezhigoogizhiik offers individual equine therapy sessions and wholistic groups sessions addressing all aspects of healing and self-reflection, ensuring we are in balance spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, and physically. We have also opened up to tourism with the welcoming of our Ojibwe Spirit Horses which on June 4, 2024. We are members of Indigenous Tourism of Ontario and accredited through Indigenous Tourism of Canada.

Summary of Program

Grief and substance abuse are common impacts of residential schools and have affected our community through intergenerational trauma. These projects are open to adults and youth.

Project 1 will host a Grief Wellness Retreat, a three-day immersive healing experience designed to support individuals navigating grief through the power of equine assisted therapy, Indigenous teachings, and creative expression. The retreat will provide participants with a safe space to process emotions, reconnect with self and nature, and find solace in a supportive community.

Project 2 addresses substance abuse, which has deeply affected Indigenous families and communities, often leaving lasting emotional, mental, and spiritual wounds. These four workshops are designed to support individuals who have experienced the impact of a loved one's addiction, helping them navigate grief, trauma, and healing through the wisdom of the horse. The Ojibwe Spirit Horses, an ancestral relative and guide, will assist participants in reconnecting with traditional healing practices, self-reflection and emotional resilience.

Project Goals

Participants will begin to heal from grief and identify healthy coping strategies.

- Acknowledging and understanding the impact, recognizing the emotional toll of a loved one's addiction and how it affects family dynamics, balance, and healing.
- Reconnecting with spirit and self, using equine-assisted activities to promote emotional regulation, boundary setting, and creating healthier relationships.
- Honouring traditional knowledge, integrating Indigenous teachings, ceremonies, and storytelling in the healing journey.

Project Objectives

1. **Healing from Grief and Loss:** Provide participants with therapeutic tools and Indigenous teachings to support their grief journey.
2. **Building Emotional Resilience:** Help individuals develop emotional regulation and healthy coping strategies through equine-assisted therapy.
3. **Understanding the Impact of Addiction:** Support families in recognizing the emotional, mental, and spiritual effects of substance abuse.
4. **Strengthening Cultural Connections:** Integrate traditional knowledge, ceremonies, and storytelling to foster identity, healing, and balance.
5. **Creating a Supportive Community:** Build a network of individuals who share similar experiences, encouraging long-term healing and connection.