

Aulaqatigiikta, Ilumun Ikayuqatigiikluta

Moving Forward, Healing Together

INUVIALUIT SETTLEMENT REGION SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGY



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Aulaqatigiikta, Ilmun Ikayuqatigiikluta

Moving Forward, Healing Together



A Letter from Duane Smith



Inuvialuit of all ages and from all walks of life hold that deep connection to family, the land & environment and share a history of strength and resiliency while continuing to demonstrate courage. The source of strength for Inuvialuit includes the language; Inuvialuktun, our culture, Inuvialuit traditional practices, and continued resiliency by individuals, families, and communities.

Despite this, mental health concerns and suicide are issues that have deeply impacted our families and communities. Suicide rates in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR), like many other communities across Inuit Nunangat, are high when compared to non-Indigenous population in Canada.

To address these concerns and inequities and through collaboration and input from regional leaders, community members, front-line staff, youth, Elders, and other organizations, IRC produced a regional suicide prevention strategy titled: *Aulaqatigiikta, Ilumun Ikayuqatigiikluta (Moving Forward, Healing Together)*. The Strategy uses Inuvialuit traditional knowledge and principles to compose a plan to help prevent suicide in the region and provide all Inuvialuit with programs and services to improve access to mental health services and improved overall wellbeing.

The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) is committed to developing, implementing, and evaluating, *Aulaqatigiikta, Ilumun Ikayuqatigiikluta (Moving Forward, Healing Together)* with focused outcomes for the IRC, its communities, and partners.

Aulaqatigiikta, Ilumun Ikayuqatigiikluta (Moving Forward, Healing Together) aims to address suicide prevention in an Inuvialuit-specific way that speaks to our regional and community priorities. The strategy can be used to guide communities and partners as we work towards improving the overall wellbeing of Inuvialuit. The Strategy is meant to build and strengthen our partnerships and help us advocate for Inuvialuit-specific health and supports.

IRC is committed to finding solutions to social, health and wellness challenges. The continuation of Health and Wellness programs, including on-the-land wellness programs, will allow for a combination of culture, connections, and guidance from Elders to provide healing and aftercare supports to our people.

Respectfully,

Duane Ningaqsiq Smith
Atanruŋuq Katimafuanun
Chair & Chief Executive Officer

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Part I: Introduction

6 Inuvialuit communities and families are a source of strength for us and so is our culture and language. Despite this, our people face considerable stress from mental health and other socio-economic issues that have increased our risk of suicide.

The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) has committed to developing a Regional Suicide Prevention Strategy (Strategy) with focused outcomes for the IRC, its communities, and partners. *Aulaqatigiikta, Ilumun Ikayuqatigiikluta (Moving Forward, Healing Together)* aims to address suicide prevention in an Inuvialuit-specific way that speaks to our regional and community priorities. The Strategy aligns with the IRC's Strategic Plan and its commitment to "work in coordination with ITK to implement the National Suicide Prevention Strategy".



Aulaqatigiikta, Ilumun Ikayuqatigiikluta (Moving Forward, Healing Together) is an important milestone in our ongoing work to bring together what we know now, what we are doing, and highlighting the gaps where work still needs to be done by incorporating feedback from IRC departments, communities, and other partners.

Aulaqatigiikta, Ilumun Ikayuqatigiikluta (Moving Forward, Healing Together) is intended to guide the IRC, communities, and our partners as we work towards improving the overall wellbeing of Inuvialuit. We hope that our partners will include all organizations and levels of government who are working to support the health and wellbeing of Inuvialuit and our communities. The Strategy is meant to build and strengthen our partnerships and help us advocate for coordinated, reliable, and Inuvialuit-specific health and wellbeing supports.

This Strategy is also meant as a tool to facilitate monitoring, evaluation, and learning and is meant to be a living document which will change to reflect new information, changing needs, and changing priorities over time.

About *Aulaqatigiikta, Ilumun Ikayuqatigiikluta (Moving Forward, Healing Together)*

This Strategy is called *Aulaqatigiikta, Ilumun Ikayuqatigiikluta (Moving Forward, Healing Together)*. This name was developed through discussions with our community members and partners and represents our Inuvialuit culture and strength as we work together to prevent suicide.

Background and Context

Elevated rates of suicide among Inuit in Canada have resulted from a complicated myriad of factors stemming from historical trauma, colonialism, and socio-economic inequities. These rates tend to be higher than in non-Indigenous Canadians, even for those living within the same geographic regions. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), along with the four Inuit regions has been leading collaborative efforts to take a holistic approach to health, recognizing that early interventions, health promotion, a strong connection to culture and other factors can make positive contributions to suicide prevention among Inuit. ITK and the four Inuit regions developed the National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy (NISPS) which seeks to provide

SUICIDE RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR INUIT IN CANADA

RISK FACTORS



Historical Trauma

Impacts of colonialism, residential schools, relocations, dog slaughter



Community Distress

Social inequities including crowded housing, food insecurity, lack of access to services



Wounded Family

Intergenerational trauma, family violence, family history of suicide



Traumatic Stress and Early Adversity

Experiencing acute or toxic stress in the womb, witnessing or experiencing physical or sexual abuse



Mental Distress

Depression, substance misuse, mental health disorder, self-harm



Acute Stress or Loss

Recent loss, intoxication, access to means, hopelessness, isolation

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Cultural Continuity

Strongly grounded in Inuit language, culture and history



Social Equity

Adequate economic, educational, health and other resources support and foster resilience



Family Strength

Safe, supportive and nurturing homes



Healthy Development

Providing children with safe environments that nurture social and emotional development



Mental Wellness

Access to Inuit-specific mental health services and supports



Coping with Acute Stress

Ability to regulate and cope with distress, access to social supports and resources



← Figure 1: Suicide Risk and Protective Factors for Inuit in Canada.

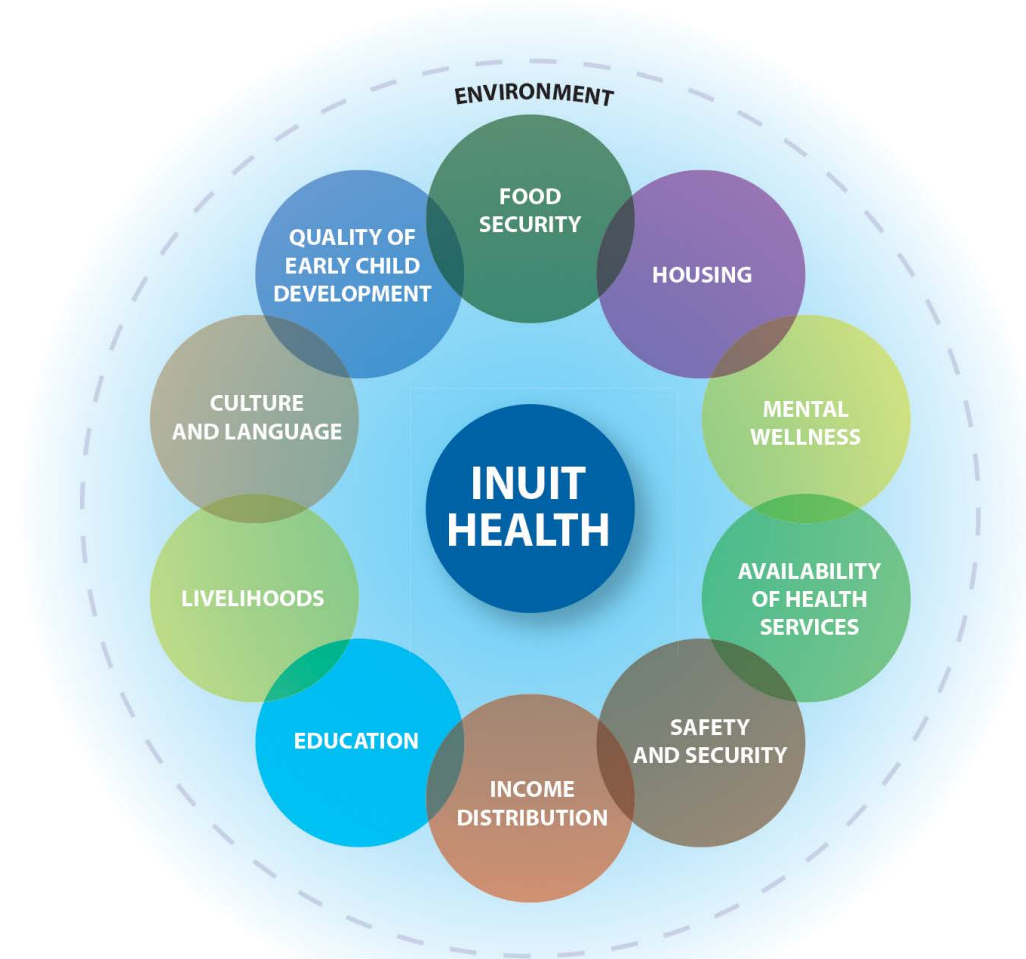
a shared understanding of the risk and preventative factors that affect suicide as well as refers to best practices and a whole of Inuit health approach.

NISPS was developed to promote an evidence-based, Inuit-specific approach to suicide prevention by identifying priority areas for intervention that would be most impactful in preventing suicide. NISPS also demonstrates the need for a strategy to bring together principles, ideas, and actions in an organized way to have real and positive effects in relation to suicide prevention.

NISPS takes an inclusive approach to suicide prevention that focuses on early interventions and healthy children so that individuals are less at risk of suicide in the future. To achieve

this, NISPS incorporates the needs of individuals, families, and communities. NISPS focuses on several causal factors for Inuit in Canada that affect wellbeing and health and ultimately, rates of suicide (Figure 1). These factors affect Inuit differently, but overall can contribute to increased or decreased risk of suicide.

Foundational to NISPS is a holistic view of Inuit health, and the socio-economic inequities that can increase stress for families and individuals, create barriers in access to health care services, and increase risk of suicide. Similarly, strength in the social determinants of health can help Inuit become more resilient and decrease risk of suicide. These social determinants of health are shown in Figure 2.



↑ Figure 2: Social Determinants of Inuit Health



NISPS includes several key priority areas to encourage action and planning for suicide prevention in Inuit communities. These include:

- » Create understanding and foster communication and cooperation among stakeholders;
- » Provide overarching guidance and support to existing regional suicide prevention initiatives and strategies; and
- » Inform the development of new Inuit-led initiatives.

Suicide prevention should address risk throughout Inuvialuit society and for all ages. In Figure 3, NISPS demonstrates how risk can multiply in Inuit society, and how activities and interventions are needed to address continued adversity in society.

The IRC has assisted in the development of NISPS through our role on the National Inuit Committee on Health and the NISPS Working Group. This Strategy seeks to take the recommendations and approach from NISPS and develop a Strategy that meets regional, and community needs and priorities.

The Purpose of the ISR Suicide Prevention Strategy

The ISR Suicide Prevention Strategy is meant to be a guide for the IRC, ISR communities, and our partners in health and wellness. The IRC has committed to using this Strategy to guide our Health and Wellness Division, but also other divisions and departments that directly and indirectly influence Inuvialuit social determinants of health.

The Strategy can also help us build and strengthen our partnerships. For example, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and its Health and Social Services Department, seeks to promote, protect, and provide for the health and wellbeing of the people in the Northwest Territories. We hope that this Strategy can help inform the GNWT about our priorities and strengthen our ongoing cooperation. On a community level, the Strategy could be used to guide and inform programs and services for youth centres, schools, and other organizations.

What We Learned From Other Suicide Prevention Strategies

The ISR Suicide Prevention Strategy was developed using NISPS as a foundation for a holistic approach to suicide prevention, considering the various social determinants of Inuvialuit health as well as the range of causal factors. In developing this, we learned from similar strategies so that we could build on relevant experience and findings. We focused on plans from northern regions and Indigenous communities that would be most relevant to the ISR. These plans included:

- » ITK National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy
- » Nunavut Suicide Prevention Strategy
- » Nunavik Suicide Prevention Strategy
- » Greenland National Strategy for Suicide Prevention 2013-2019
- » State of Alaska Suicide Prevention Plan 2018-2022
- » Plan for Suicide Prevention among the Sámi People in Norway, Sweden, and Finland

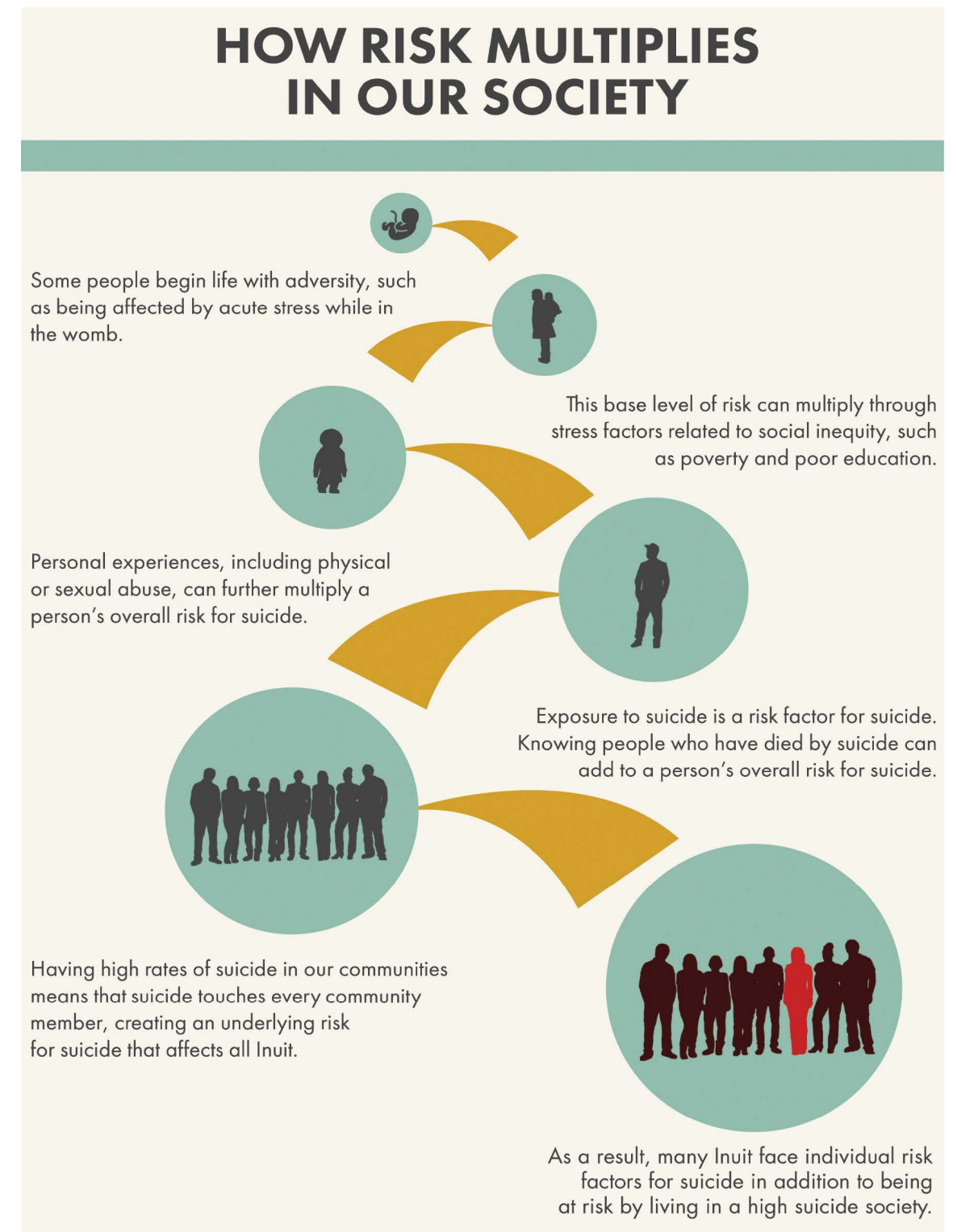
We reviewed these documents from the lens of the NISPS causal factors, to help us identify key elements and commonalities. We learned that each took their own approach, provided some key lessons learned and promising practices, and included different strategic priorities.

We did not critique any plan or approach, but our review gave us a useful context and background for development of the ISR-specific Strategy.

Some of the key things we learned and tried to incorporate into this Strategy were:

- » To have vision of the long-term goal, which may include a description of what a healthy community would look like.
- » To have clear leadership for strategy development; the group responsible for plan development is identified, which may include an individual department, committee or working group.
- » To include input from multiple stakeholders, which may include partners, departmental staff, leadership of relevant organizations, and community consultation.

→ Figure 3. How Risk Multiplies in our Society





- » To build on existing knowledge and work from other regions.
- » To build on existing programs and services that are currently operating or have been successful in past implementation.
- » To commit to developing detailed action plans that include actionable and focused tasks.

Our Approach To Developing The Suicide Prevention Strategy

We also drew from our experience and knowledge working with other Inuit regions on NISPS to inform the Inuvialuit approach to developing this Suicide Prevention Strategy. We are committed to developing a Strategy that is grounded in feedback and input from IRC departments, our communities, and partners. Table 1 summarizes IRC’s approach to the development of the Strategy for the ISR.

It is our goal that the Strategy will not only guide us, but also our communities and partners. It will be a living document that is informed by ongoing feedback, and will change over time as new information, priorities, and opportunities arise.

→ Table 1. Our Approach to Developing an ISR Suicide Prevention Strategy

Strategy	IRC Approach
Leadership and Partnership	IRC’s Strategic Plan will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be IRC-led and ISR-specific plan. ✓ Be developed from “the bottom-up”, to maximize “buy-in”. ✓ Involve each community and all organizations and institutions involved in suicide prevention in the ISR and across NWT (where relevant).
Health Approach	IRC’s Strategic Plan will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Take a “holistic” view of health and suicide prevention.
Opportunities and Needs	IRC’s Strategic Plan will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Take advantage of existing expertise, but also identifying current gaps and needs.
Level of Focus	IRC’s Strategic Plan will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be grounded in a common set of goals and objectives, and focus on recommendations and actions to achieve desired outcomes (identification of specific budgets and timelines may not be included at this time)
Measuring Success	IRC’s Strategic Plan will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Set key metrics, but also look at evaluating success and effectiveness.

→ Figure 4. Strategy Development and Implementation Timeline

Timeline And Next Steps

The timeline for the development, drafting, review, and implementation of the Strategy is shown in Figure 4.

Aulaqatigiikta, Illumun Ikayuqatigiikluta (Moving Forward, Healing Together) will be revisited periodically, coinciding with the IRC’s own Strategic Plan, and informed by feedback. At minimum, we will work towards updating the Strategy within the next 5 years. As the Strategy is implemented, we will have many opportunities to learn, adjust, and improve.



Who Can Contribute?

Suicide Prevention and Inuvialuit Health is related to many interdependent factors. While there are many important partners working in these areas, the main actors are shown in Figure 5 (next page).

Each of these organizations and partners has a different and complementary role to play in Inuvialuit health and wellness.

ISR Community Members. This Strategy was developed through research and lessons learned, but also through our outreach to community members. We heard about Inuvialuit stories and priorities and their words and ideas are reflected in this document. Moving forward, our community members are going to be key in moving forward in suicide prevention. Their feedback, participation, and leadership are fundamental to our collective success.

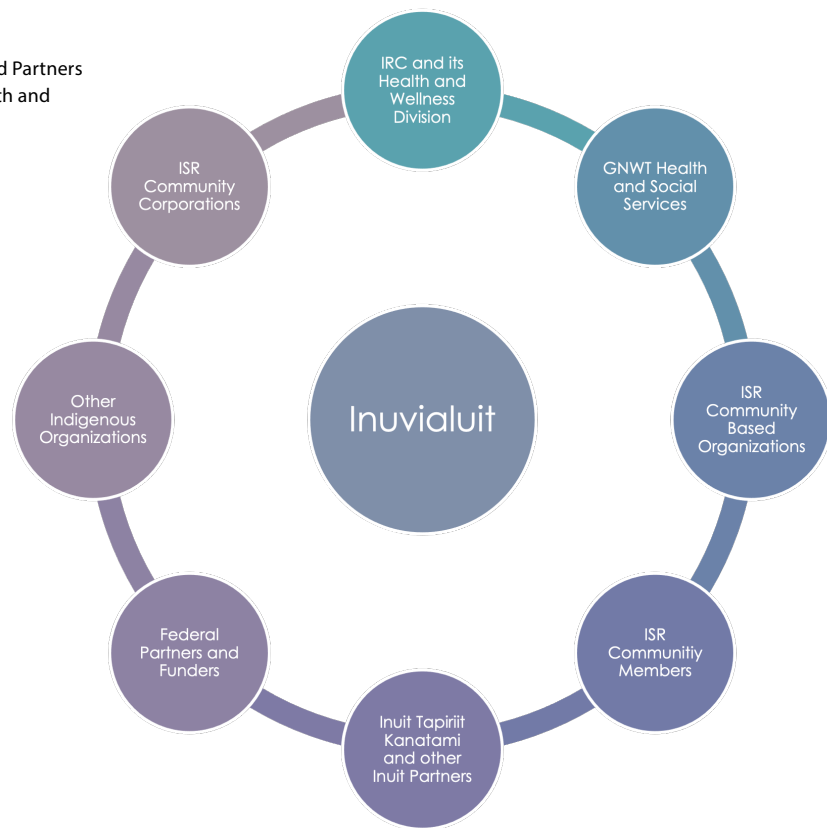
Community Based Organizations. Our community organizations are part of the core foundation in our efforts to advance suicide prevention. The community services, formal and informal groups, volunteer organizations, and community leaders are the main day-to-day points of contact for Inuvialuit. Their participation in the development of this Strategy so far has been invaluable in helping us to understand key priorities and gaps. Their ongoing action in this Strategy will be key to our learning and our community’s wellbeing.

Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and the IRC Health and Wellness Division. The IRC has set strategic goals which include improving the capacity and wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities. Within the IRC is the Health and Wellness Division, which is committed to helping individuals, families, and communities to set goals and develop solutions to social, health, and wellness challenges. The IRC Health and Wellness Division works closely with ITK on NISPS and has taken on the role of developing the IRC’s Suicide Prevention Strategy.

ISR Community Corporations. The Community Corporations directly contribute to the goals and objectives set forth by members. They exercise control over any development



→ Figure 5. Key Organizations and Partners in Inuvialuit Health and Wellness



activity on Inuvialuit land approved by the Inuvialuit Land Administration or IRC. They also regularly communicate matters of local concern to members of the corporation. As key leaders in the community, the Community Corporation can be important partners in improving Inuvialuit wellbeing.

The Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Health and Social Services. The GNWT's Health and Social Services Department promotes, protects, and provides for the health and wellbeing of NWT residents. Their mandate includes health promotion, disease and abuse prevention, mental health supports and treatment, as well as medical care. The GNWT provides funding for various health programs through partnerships with the IRC and other Inuvialuit communities.

Other Indigenous Organizations. Several Indigenous groups live in and near to Inuvialuit communities and the IRC recognizes the

importance of other Indigenous Organizations in advancing suicide prevention efforts in the region.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and other Inuit Partners – The IRC works closely with ITK on many initiatives that seek to bring a unified Inuit voice to socio-economic and environmental policy issues. Our Inuit partners in Canada are all actively working together to advance progress on NISPS as well as share lessons learned and other promising practices among our Inuit Regions.

Federal Partners and Funders. As the Suicide Prevention Strategy is developed, the IRC hopes to build on existing relationships with our Federal partners, in particular with Indigenous Services Canada. These partnerships help to secure sustainable funding agreements and policies that can support the implementation of the strategy in an Inuvialuit-specific way, to build capacity and increase the reliability of our resources.





ATAUTUMEN INUVIUTIT

KIRKLAND
Trail Mix
SNACK PACKS
Mélange du randonneur
COLLATIONS EN SACHETS
1.5 kg

Quality Street

Nestlé Coffee

Original 1.9 kg
Nestlé Coffee

Crystal Light

HP

KIRKLAND
Trail Mix
Mélange du randonneur
SNACK PACKS
COLLATIONS EN SACHETS
1.5 kg

Part II: ISR Snapshot

"In order to know where we're going, we need to know where we come from."

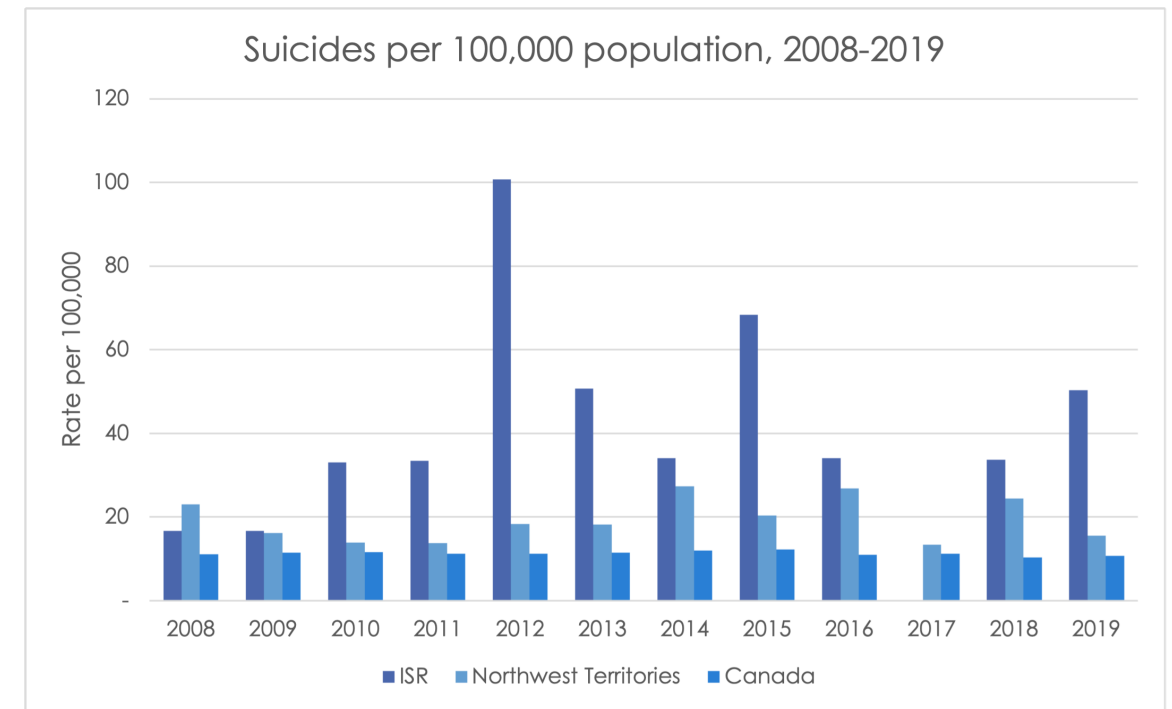
—Respondent quoting Murray Sinclair from the TRC

18 What We Know

Suicide rates in the ISR, like many other Inuit communities, are heightened when compared to non-Indigenous communities in Canada. Our communities have great sources of strength, but also experience many socio-economic inequities that contribute to these issues.

We know that our communities experience rates of suicide that are, on average, higher than those experienced in non-Indigenous communities in Canada. Figure 6 shows rates of suicide per 100,000 from 2008 to 2019, for communities in the ISR, NWT, and across Canada. While these rates have varied over time, they show that the relatively higher rates in ISR communities persists.

→ Figure 6.
Suicides per 100,000 population, ISR, NWT and Canada for 2008-2019



It is extremely important to remember that these figures show only one aspect of this Strategy. Suicide prevention is linked to many causal factors. These figures cannot adequately demonstrate the importance of each person, each family, and each community that is affected by these issues. Nevertheless, the trend is clear, rates of suicide and suicidal ideation are heightened in ISR communities when compared to Canadian population.

There are also large gaps in data that could help us understand more about the links between risk and protective factors and Inuvialuit health. The National Inuit Strategy on Research highlights the need for more data. Qanuipitaa? the National Inuit Health Survey will help to fill some of these gaps and add to our knowledge about Inuit wellbeing and ways to support our communities. Despite these gaps, we are committed to moving forward based on what we know about the factors that contribute to Inuvialuit health and what we know about causal factors in suicide prevention.

What We're Doing Right Now

Our departments at IRC, our communities, and partners implement programs and services that help to improve Inuit access to mental health services and improved overall wellbeing. There are over 75 of these programs and services relevant to ISR communities that focus on children and families, cultural continuity, food security, help lines, mental health services, physical health services, rehabilitation, and training. Some of these programs are ongoing while others may be intermittent or short term.

At IRC's Health and Wellness Division, three example programs include Project Jewel, Summer Literacy Camps and Brighter Futures. Project Jewel is IRC's on-the-land wellness program that is grounded in Inuvialuit culture, connections to the land, guidance from Elders, and clinical support to provide healing and aftercare supports to its participants.

The Summer Literacy Camps maintain connections with children in Inuvialuit communities



throughout the summer months, providing consistent and stable supports during the school break with literacy-embedded activities. In the summer of 2020, the program provided take home resources for children considering COVID-19 restrictions on large gatherings.

Brighter Futures is a community-based promotion and prevention program developed by Health Canada with input from First Nations and Inuit communities. Brighter Futures provides funding towards community-based programs on five topics including:

- » Mental health,
- » Child development,
- » Parenting,
- » Healthy babies, and
- » Injury prevention.

Participants engage in learning-related activities that strive to increase awareness, change attitudes, build knowledge, and enhance skills, and ultimately to improve the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of Indigenous children, their families, and communities.

These three programs are examples of activities that can contribute to suicide prevention by strengthening cultural continuity, connections to the community, child development, education, and healing.

There are many other formal and informal programs that help to contribute to communi-

ty wellness and improve Inuvialuit health. We heard from community members and our partners that some other exemplary programs include those that help provide food security for our families, ongoing training, and knowledge transfer opportunities, bring community members together, take a holistic view of health, and are targeted to youth. The initiatives that are the most effective foster inter-generational learning and coming together, are grounded in Inuvialuit culture, and have long-term funding.

What We Need To Do

The work ahead is significant. Through our partners, ongoing research, and experiences from similar jurisdictions, we know that suicide prevention is complex. However, foundational to that is strong community and connection, cooperative partnerships, and community-driven action. We need to continue to learn from socio-economic data, trends, and community programs to help and review the Strategy to remain current. In addition, more evaluation and monitoring of programs and services is required to measure the impact on suicide prevention.

Aulaqatigiikta, Ilumun Ikayuqatigiikluta (Moving Forward, Healing Together) sets out our plan to start our important work and encourage our communities and partners to contribute and collaborate.



Part III: Outreach & Engagement

Alongside the background research, data collection, and discussions with other Inuit and Indigenous partners, we took on the challenging task of getting feedback from partners and community members in the fall and winter of 2020. As a result of COVID-19, we conducted telephone and video conferencing interviews with our internal IRC departments and other community partners. In accordance with Regional health guidelines, IRC staff also travelled to ISR communities to meet with organizations and members to help develop the Strategy.

This Strategy was developed based on both lessons learned and feedback. The outreach and interviews sought to understand more about:

- » What's currently happening in the ISR?
- » Which suicide prevention activities are working and what could be better?
- » How has COVID-19 affected our communities and service delivery?
- » What opportunities are there to improve suicide prevention activities in the ISR?
- » What is your advice on how to develop the Strategy?

The organizations and departments that participated in the interviews are summarized in Table 3.

→ Table 3. Organizations and Departments who Participated in Interviews to Help Inform Strategic Plan Development

ISR Communities

- ✓ Aklavik
- ✓ Inuvik
- ✓ Paulatuk
- ✓ Sachs Harbour
- ✓ Tuktoyaktuk
- ✓ Ulukhaktok
(Community Corporations, Hamlets, Town Offices)

IRC and Government Staff

- ✓ IRC Health and Wellness Division
- ✓ Other IRC Staff and Departments
- ✓ Department of Health & Social Services (GNWT)
- ✓ Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority

Community Services Staff

- ✓ Community Counsellors
- ✓ Wellness Workers
- ✓ Youth Centres & Coordinators
- ✓ Student and Family Support Workers
- ✓ Social Workers
- ✓ Child, Youth and Family Counsellors
- ✓ RCMP
- ✓ District Education Authority
- ✓ School Representatives
- ✓ Recreation Coordinators
- ✓ Community Health Representatives

Other Partners and Organizations

- ✓ Gwich'in Tribal Council
- ✓ Native/Indian Bands
- ✓ Mayor's Office
- ✓ ACCESS Open Minds
- ✓ Western Arctic Youth Collective
- ✓ Arctic Youth Development Agency



Through these interviews we heard about amazing resilience and strength in our communities and learned about what needed to be included in this Strategy. We sought to ensure that what we heard aligned with this Strategy and that the needs and priorities of our communities have informed each step of this work.

While more details on the interviews and outreach can be found in Appendix B, Figure 7 below summarizes what we need to keep in mind while developing the Strategy.



← Figure 7. What we need to remember as we develop the Suicide Prevention Strategy





Part IV: Vision For This Strategy

We hope that this Strategy will guide government, community groups and organizations in the design and delivery of Inuvialuit-specific programs, aimed at reducing suicide risk factors and strengthening protective factors.

By implementing the Strategy, government, community groups and organizations will work better together, deliver programs and services that are community based and led, be more effective at improving wellness, and be aligned with community culture, values, needs and priorities.





Part V: Guiding Principles For The Suicide Prevention Strategy

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A *ulaqatigiikta, Ilumun Ikayuqatigiikluta* (Moving Forward, Healing Together) is grounded in the following principles, that guided the development and will continue to serve as reminders as we advance implementation. It is important to us that our work be:



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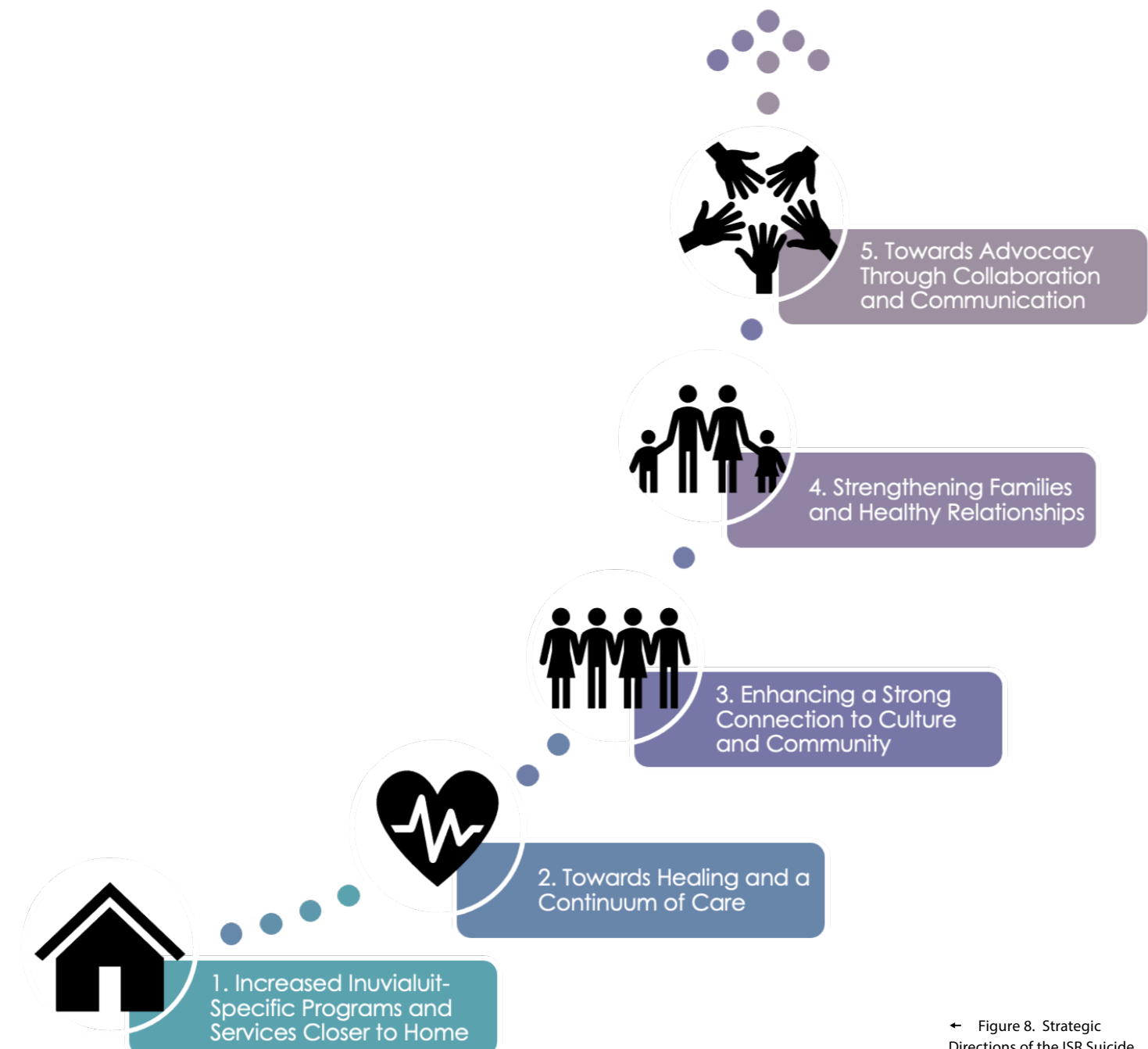
- » **Inuvialuit-focused and led** – Prioritize the needs of Inuvialuit as expressed through open and ongoing communication and feedback. Inuvialuit will take leadership in the development of the Strategy and its multi-year and annual plans, their implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
- » **Fair and Equitable** – Recognize and meet the unique needs of all Inuvialuit including Elders, youth, women, men, members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, and members from other high-risk groups.
- » **Collaborative** – Bring IRC, GNWT, community and other Inuit partners together in the design and delivery of suicide prevention programs.
- » **Evidence Based** – Programs delivered will be designed based on best available evidence and lessons learned.
- » **Transparent** – IRC will facilitate knowledge mobilization and transfer with partners and communities regarding progress in implementing the Strategy and the effectiveness of programs delivered.
- » **Flexible and adaptive** – As new information and needs are identified, the Strategy will be changed and adapted to new circumstances.



Part VI: Strategic Directions

Building from our work with NISPS, our review of other plans from similar jurisdictions, our research, and our outreach and engagement, we have focused *Aulaqatigiikta, Ilumun Ikayuqatigiikluta (Moving Forward, Healing Together)* along the following 5 Strategic Directions.

Each Strategic Direction is a reminder of what we are working towards (Figure 8). Within each Strategic Direction are Major Areas of Work which help to focus efforts and activities in continued progress. These Major Areas of Work include suggestions on Ways to Contribute, which will expand and change as our outreach continues. Our goal is that we, our communities, and our partners will continually find new ways to contribute that will help us all move forward in our shared vision for suicide prevention.



← Figure 8. Strategic Directions of the ISR Suicide Prevention Strategy



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

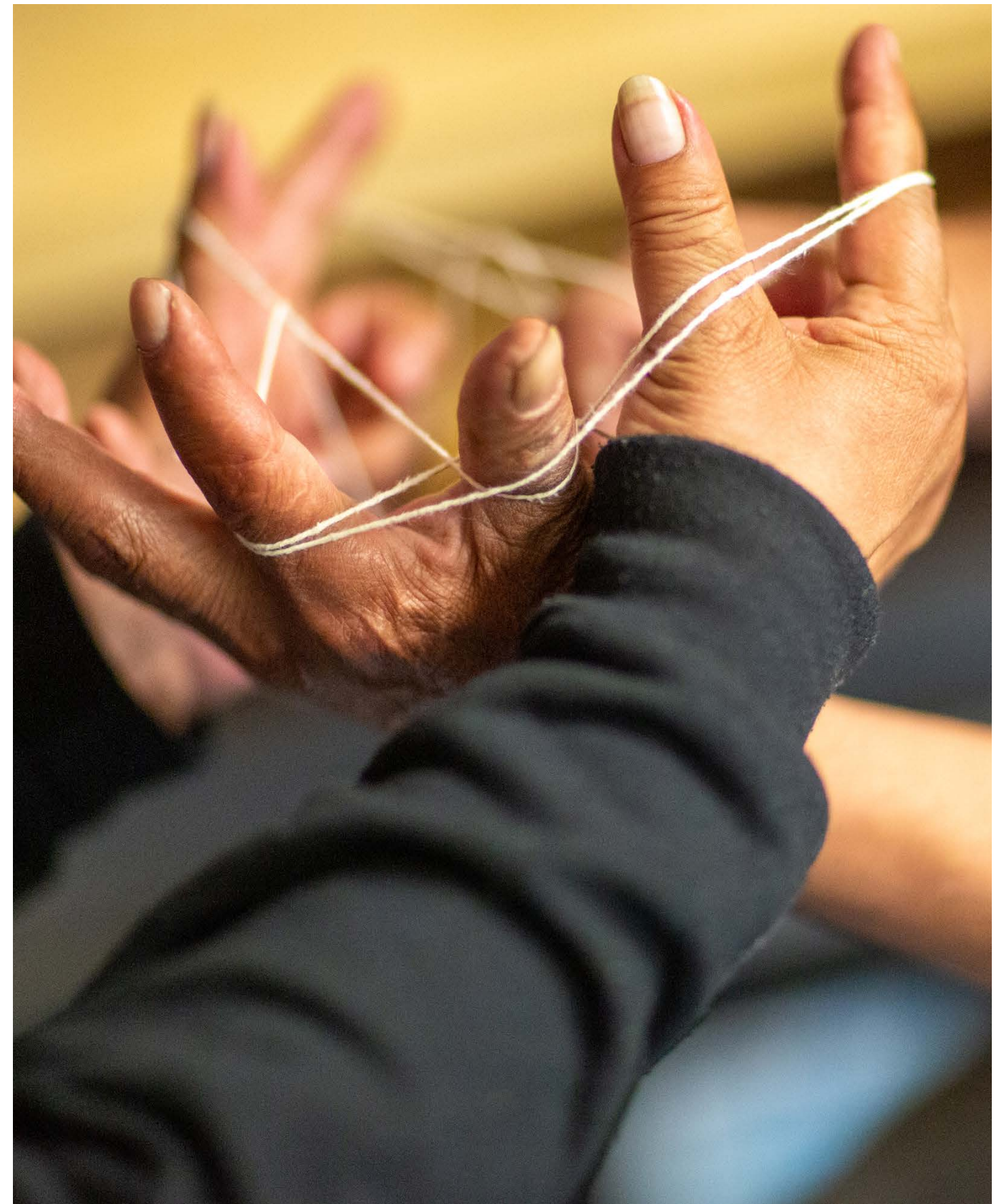
Increase Inuvialuit-Specific Programs And Services Closer To Home

We heard that a major barrier to accessing mental health and wellness programs was having them located outside of Inuvialuit communities. When individuals need to travel elsewhere for programs and services due to a crisis or for longer term mental health supports, they are taken away from the people and language they know and are treated by professionals who may not fully understand their culture or community. Having services closer to home will increase the likelihood that Inuvialuit may access these services and reduce the additional trauma of seeking care in a different community away from friends and family. This gap in local health care services is a major barrier for Inuit across Canada and likely contributes to poorer health outcomes.

There are very few such places in Inuvialuit communities where individuals can seek Inuvialuit-led mental health supports including

counselling, psychiatric services, or medical treatment following a traumatic event or suicide attempt. Building new spaces and finding places within existing spaces will help to overcome these obstacles. While it may not be realistic to have all these services in each ISR community, it is important to highlight the need and work towards creating in-house services for Inuvialuit.

We heard that Inuvialuit want to be supported by professionals who understand their culture, speak their language, and understand their communities. We also heard from our own front-line workers that Inuvialuit staff are better suited to build trust and long-term stability in our communities. Staffing professional services with qualified Inuvialuit staff will help to build a bridge between those needing care and the health care services.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

Increase Inuvialuit-Specific Programs And Services Closer To Home

Inuvialuit need mental health and wellness programs and services that are closer to home. These programs and services also need to be provided by Inuvialuit staff who will be consistent in the community and who best understand Inuvialuit culture and families. Traveling out of the community can be traumatic and can be a barrier to people accessing the help they need. There need to be physical spaces for these programs and services in Inuvialuit communities so that people can have better access, feel safer, feel more comfortable, and access supports in their own language and that are culturally appropriate.

MAJOR AREAS OF WORK

WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

Secure and establish spaces for healing and delivery of health programs and services in Inuvialuit Communities

- ✓ Work with partners to use existing spaces for Inuvialuit-specific service delivery
- ✓ Secure funding to build new spaces for healing and health program delivery

Expand and strengthen a regional hub for services and programs within the Inuvialuit Settlement Region

- ✓ Work with partners to facilitate funding and service agreements
- ✓ Develop a plan to expand and strengthen a regional hub over time

Build qualified Inuvialuit capacity to lead, develop, and deliver mental health and wellness programs and services (e.g., intervenors, counsellors, psychologists, support workers, other community leaders)

- ✓ Provide mentorship and training opportunities for Inuvialuit health promotion and suicide prevention leaders
- ✓ Develop plan to address policy issues that are challenges to Inuvialuit employment in mental health and wellness sectors
- ✓ Work with employers to increase Inuvialuit employment in health and wellness sectors

Towards Healing and a Continuum Of Care

In addition to having health and wellness services offered in Inuvialuit communities, developing programs and services that promote healing along continuum of care will help to address causal factors at various stages. For example, services that address historical trauma, managing crisis and acute stress, aftercare supports, and other care services.

Overcoming historical trauma and grief is a fundamental first step in the journey to healing for Inuvialuit. Residential schools, colonialism, and other historical trauma has had long lasting and ripple effects on our communities. Understanding how to better help those affected by historical trauma will include learning from and sharing with other Inuit and Indigenous communities.

Having the spaces to deliver wellness services closer to home needs to work alongside having Inuvialuit-specific staff to help with acute care and crisis intervention such as addictions treatment. Our outreach and intervention programs need to be aligned with Inuvialuit culture with a deep understanding of our communities. First responders, counsellors and others will be stronger if they are paired with members from our local communities who have built trust and relationships with community members.

Inuvialuit-specific programs and services are needed to help our community members deal with addictions and substance abuse. Substance abuse and addictions are a major suicide

We need more spaces for people to feel safe to talk about and promote community acceptance of non-binary groups.

—Interview Respondent

risk factor. We need to have the programs and places in our communities to help people find the help they need. Upon their return, aftercare services are needed for those who required interventions outside of their home community.

Aftercare services are needed for those who have experienced a traumatic event, crisis, or who have left medical care because of trauma or a suicide attempt. These services can help ensure that people who are returning to their communities receive the care and follow up they need, especially after traumatic events such as a suicide attempt and make sure that their needs continue to be met.

Finally, a continuum of care needs to target those members of our community that can be harder to reach and that tend to have lower rates of access to services. This includes men, members of our 2SLGBTQI+ community, homeless, and other higher-risk groups who face elevated levels of stress and fear.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

Towards Healing and a Continuum Of Care

Healing and care programs and services need to be available and accessed at many points in people's lives and by many different people. More Inuvialuit-specific programs and services are needed so that care and healing is culturally appropriate and can reach everyone who is in need. Gaps in service provision or services that do not align with Inuvialuit communities and culture will not meet all the needs in the Region. Culturally-specific programs and services will better meet the needs of all Inuvialuit and targeted programs will ensure that no one is left behind.



MAJOR AREAS OF WORK

WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

Transform existing ways and provide new ways in which Inuvialuit can heal from historical trauma

- ✓ Transform existing and provide new programs and services that help Inuvialuit heal from the trauma stemming for Residential Schools
- ✓ Collaborate with other Inuit and Indigenous partners to learn, share, and better understand ways in which healing from trauma can occur

Broaden and increase Inuvialuit participation in healing and care programs and services, particularly among high-risk populations or those that are harder to reach

- ✓ Identify high-risk groups and those with historically lower levels of participation and levels of access to mental health and wellbeing supports
- ✓ Reach out, engage, and monitor access, usage, and satisfaction among high-risk and other groups
- ✓ Encourage uptake of services through knowledge mobilization, transfer, and communication around mental health and wellness

Develop and implement Inuvialuit-specific acute care and crisis intervention supports

- ✓ Encourage service providers to partner with Inuvialuit support staff in acute care and crisis interventions
- ✓ Develop and strengthen Inuvialuit help lines, in-community support networks, and safe spaces
- ✓ Develop Inuvialuit-specific communication materials and other tools to help those in need

Support Inuvialuit in preventing substance abuse and recovering from addiction

- ✓ Provide in-community resources for those in need of support and treatment
- ✓ Research promising practices to identify new strategies to reduce substance abuse in Inuvialuit communities

Improve coordination between service providers to provide ongoing follow up and care after a crisis

- ✓ Provide in-community aftercare support and other follow up supports following a crisis
- ✓ Partner with health authorities and service providers to follow up and follow through with individuals requiring medical care and services

Help members of the Inuvialuit 2SLGBTQI+ community access programs and services and improve their overall wellbeing

- ✓ Strengthen and grow programs and services that help Inuvialuit become stronger allies to those in the Inuvialuit 2SLGBTQI+ community
- ✓ Strengthen and grow programs and services to encourage members of the Inuvialuit 2SLGBTQI+ community to access and use healthy and healing activities
- ✓ Increase access, use and satisfaction supports for members of the Inuvialuit 2SLGBTQI+ community who are in crisis

Enhancing A Strong Connection To Culture And Community

We know that our culture and our communities are great sources of strength and healing. Areas of work are needed to strengthen these connections so that our youth are better connected to our Elders and their history, and that as a community we can come together to improve our overall wellbeing and health.

We need all our programs and services to align with our culture and language, and we need to transform ways for Inuvialuit to gather, share, and connect. We heard from our community members that formal programs with rigid schedules have their place but informal gatherings and opportunities for community members to gather, for Elders to share their insights, and for youth to have a safe space to talk are equally important.

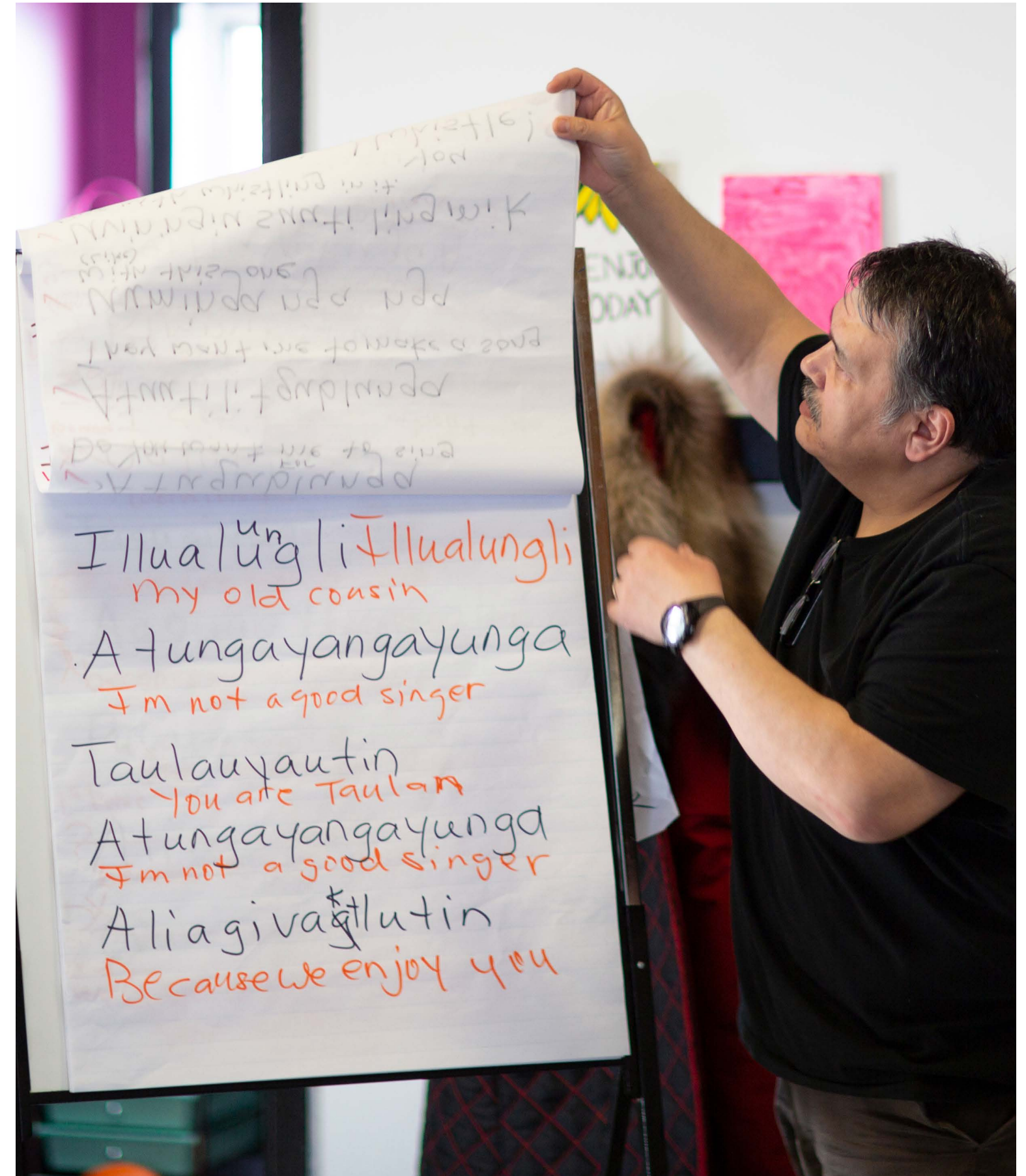
Our Elders are a great source of knowledge and experience, and they can not only teach

The only way that you can understand the people, is if you understand their culture, their heart and their language.

—Interview Respondent

our younger generations, but also those from outside the community who come to provide medical and health services.

We also need to assist our communities to talk about suicide and suicide prevention in a meaningful way. This requires understanding suicide from a past and present Inuvialuit perspective.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

Enhancing A Strong Connection To Culture And Community



Strong connections to culture and language will help to build the protective factors that can reduce risk of suicide. Community and cultural connections are a source of strength and will contribute to community wellness. Integrating culture and language with suicide prevention and healthy activities should improve access to, usage of, and satisfaction with these services.

MAJOR AREAS OF WORK

WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

Celebrate culture as a source of strength and connection

- ✓ Hold community gatherings to celebrate strength and normalize suicide prevention
- ✓ Help Inuvialuit learn about their culture and history

Transform existing and develop new Inuvialuit cultural training for all health and wellness workers and service providers

- ✓ Transform and develop new cultural competency resources for out of region staff and workers to partner with Inuvialuit Elders to learn about Inuvialuit culture, which may include mentorship programs
- ✓ Transform and develop new Inuvialuit-specific resources, tools, and materials

Design and deliver mentorship programs, cultural and other on-the-land activities that strengthen Inuvialuit connections to culture and intergenerational learning

- ✓ Increase access and usage of programs, with increased participant satisfaction and share those lessons learned through knowledge mobilization and transfer
- ✓ Develop programs targeted to all Inuvialuit and look for ways to increase access and usage

Build and strengthen community programs that provide safe places for Inuvialuit to connect and share.

- ✓ Transform existing and establish new spaces in Inuvialuit communities where people can come together to share, connect, and tell stories
- ✓ Fund and support community programs and services that provide recreation, arts, crafts, and other outlets for Inuvialuit

Foster knowledge mobilization, open dialogue and discussion about suicide and suicide prevention

- ✓ Provide opportunities for Elders, youth, and other community members to talk about suicide to reduce stigma
- ✓ Use Inuvialuktun in communication materials and learning resources to strengthen cultural connection

Strengthening Families And Healthy Relationships

Our families and our relationships are a source of strength and healing. We know that personal relationships can sometimes be a source of tension, fighting, and violence. From NISPS, our research, and from what we heard from community members, we know that personal relationships and families have a strong influence on Inuvialuit mental health and well-being. Within the ISR, we need to draw on strengths and help to grow strong families and healthy relationships.

As we know from how risk multiplies in our society, early interventions and supports to children are needed to help ensure healthier adults and healthier societies. We heard from our community members that Inuvialuit children need more opportunities to learn about mental health and wellness, and that youth-Elder relationships need to be fostered. We also know that early interventions to prevent child abuse and child sexual abuse are priorities across many Inuit communities and the same is true in the ISR. We need to focus on growing strong families and giving caregivers the supports needed so they can be healthy, caring, and confident parents. Some families have experienced separation due to adoption, medical, rehabilitative, or other reasons. When appropriate, we should foster family reunions to help heal these families and individuals.

Sometimes relationships can cause stress in our communities. Couples, even as young as teenagers, can experience emotional abuse and physical violence, exacerbating stress and increasing risk of mental health issues and suicide. We heard from our interviews that relationships can be one of the most significant causes of suicidal ideation and that unhealthy relationships have severe impacts on self-esteem. We will work towards helping Inuvialuit improve their communication, understand healthy relationships, and seek help and counselling when they need it.

We also heard that some members of our community are less likely to seek help and find the mental health and wellness supports they need. We need to encourage all Inuvialuit to seek help and we need to better support them in doing so. We heard that some Inuvialuit men are under extreme stress from their changing roles in society and historical trauma. We also know that our adult men tend not to participate in health and wellness activities or reach out for counselling and support. We will work together develop programs and services for all Inuvialuit, especially those who are at high-risk.



Strengthening Families And Healthy Relationships



Healthy Inuvialuit should be supported at all stages of a person's life. Healthy children, strong families, and happy individuals will be at less risk for suicide and will have overall improved health and wellbeing. Families and relationships can be a great source of healing and support. Without these, people can feel alone, scared, and act in unhealthy ways. Supports are needed to help Inuvialuit grow and develop together as people and families.

MAJOR AREAS OF WORK

WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

Support the healthy development of children

- ✓ Implement Inuvialuit-specific strategies, interventions, and programs aimed at preventing child abuse
- ✓ Help children and youth learn about suicide prevention and how to reach out for help
- ✓ Support Elder-youth mentorship and connection opportunities

Help grow and develop strong and healthy families

- ✓ Support parents in providing nurturing and healthy environments for their children
- ✓ Support family reconnections, reunions, and healing
- ✓ Support family networks as a source of strength and healing

Help grow and develop healthy and strong relationships

- ✓ Implement programs and services aimed at preventing physical, sexual, and verbal violence
- ✓ Promote healthy actions, feelings, and communication in relationships
- ✓ Provide supports and safe refuge for those in need

Help Inuvialuit men to access and use programs and services and improve their overall wellbeing

- ✓ Transform existing and develop new programs and services that help young Inuvialuit men communicate about mental health and wellbeing
- ✓ Transform existing and develop new programs and services to encourage Inuvialuit men to participate in healthy and healing activities
- ✓ Provide supports to Inuvialuit men who are in crisis

Towards Advocacy Through Collaboration And Communication

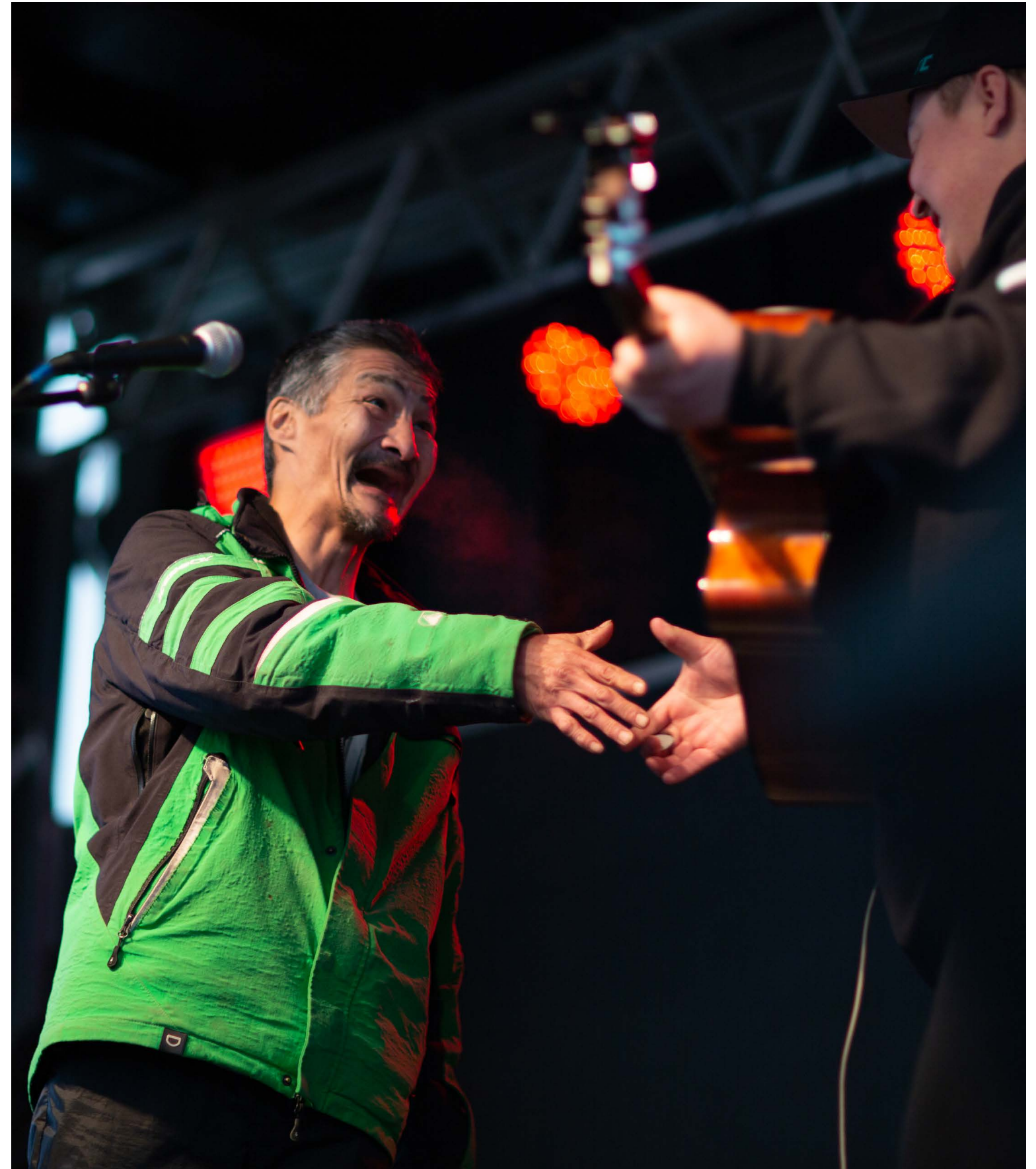
This Strategy needs to move forward with strong collaboration with our funders and other partners so that our communities can have the needed resources for implementation. We heard in our outreach that reliable, ongoing funding, service agreements, and partnerships with other delivery agents will be very important to our success. Without our partners, we can only move so far. The IRC is committing to advocating for Inuvialuit communities to help combat the policy, financial, and jurisdictional barriers that exist.

We will advocate for our communities so that the Strategy can be led and informed by Inuvialuit. We know that our community organizations are ready and passionate about this work, and they are best suited to build and maintain the relationships to service Inuvialuit. We are committed to understanding how to

We are stronger together!
—IRC Staff Member

better support our community organizations so they can continue to take a role in implementing the Strategy.

Progress is also dependent upon ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and learning. We need to be open to feedback. We heard that our strategy needs to be flexible. We also heard about many ways to improve what is already happening. We will continue to learn from our partners, and share our findings with other Inuit, Indigenous, and non-Indigenous organizations. Our families and our relationships are a source of strength and healing.



Towards Advocacy Through Collaboration And Communication

Mobilizing resources and partners towards suicide prevention activities is fundamental to the success of this Strategy. There are community members, community-based service providers, regional/national Inuit organizations, Territorial governments, and National Governments that can all contribute to advancing suicide prevention in the Region. A shared understanding and prioritizing of Inuvialuit need and priorities and genuine collaboration will help to overcome many of the funding, policy, and information barriers to effective suicide prevention.

MAJOR AREAS OF WORK

WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

Grow partnerships between Inuvialuit, Inuit, and other organizations and communities to implement and contribute to The ISR Suicide Prevention Strategy

- ✓ Work with partner organizations to develop and implement suicide prevention programs and services
- ✓ Share resources, capacity, or materials with partner organizations to facilitate suicide prevention activities

Facilitate knowledge mobilization and share learning and progress from implementation with Inuvialuit, Inuit, and other partners, and community members

- ✓ Develop monitoring, evaluation, and learning tools to improve and revise suicide prevention efforts and the overall Strategy for accountability purposes
- ✓ Share information on lessons learned with partners and community members

Support community-based implementation of The ISR Suicide Prevention Strategy

- ✓ Grow capacity and facilitate funding for community organizations to develop and implement suicide prevention programs and services
- ✓ Train and mentor staff in community organizations to be able to understand and talk about suicide prevention activities

Advocate for long term and secure funding to implement the ISR Suicide Prevention Strategy

- ✓ Facilitate securing flexible funding agreements that can support building and investing in health and wellbeing infrastructure
- ✓ Facilitate securing the needed long-term financial resources for Inuvialuit organizations and communities to programs and services



Part VII: Our Approach to Implementation

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The IRC is committed to implementing *Aulaqatigiikta, Ilumun Ikayuqatigiikluta (Moving Forward, Healing Together)*, advocating for improved funding and supporting our partners so that they can use this Strategy as a guide for their activities.



To contribute to the Strategic Directions: the IRC will:

- » Advocate – We will use this strategy to mobilize knowledge of Inuvialuit suicide prevention priorities and advocate for changes in policies, programs, and investments by community, territorial, and national partners.
- » Deliver Inuvialuit-specific programs – We will use our resources and seek additional resources to increase access to, usage of, and satisfaction with targeted, Inuvialuit-specific programs in line with the Strategic Directions.
- » Support community-led initiatives – We will distribute funding to community partners to support local initiatives that are aligned with the Strategic Directions.

Aulaqatigiikta, Ilumun Ikayuqatigiikluta (Moving Forward, Healing Together) meets commitments made in IRC's Corporate Strategic Plan and is a key step in improving overall Inuvialuit health and wellness.

Planning For Evaluation And Monitoring

We will support our implementation efforts with ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL). This will allow us to gather information about our implementation efforts and make informed decisions about next steps to achieve our goals. We will use MEL to help us identify what works well for Inuvialuit communities and to continually improve our programs. MEL will also help us be accountable to ourselves and our partners for results. Although we usually have a sense of the progress we are making, MEL will provide us with the evidence we need to be sure.

For Inuit across Canada and for people around the world, we still have much to learn about suicide prevention. By carefully observing our progress and by making time for critical reflection, we can contribute to our collective understanding of suicide prevention and mobilize Inuvialuit knowledge about how to best support our communities.

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Our approach to MEL will be informed by similar efforts at the National level related to NISPS, and our regional approach will develop as we develop specific implementation plans. In the early years of implementing the strategy, we plan to invest in MEL in the following ways:

✓ **We will track social wellness indicators, including suicide rates and data about risk and protective factors.** Each year, we will compile available data about social wellness that are relevant to suicide prevention and our Strategic Directions. We will gather this information from many sources, such as the NWT Bureau of Statistics, the Indigenous People’s Survey, and other resources from Statistics Canada, and the Qanuippitaa? National Inuit Health Survey. This will help us understand our region’s needs and keep our strategy up to date.

✓ **We will include MEL in all IRC suicide prevention activities and align our work with MEL work being coordinated at the National Level.** We will collect and report on MEL indicators that align with the NISPS MEL framework and that contribute to specific outcomes. These outcomes include:

- ✓ Demonstrated progress on meeting needs and priorities, including at the community-level, in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region;
- ✓ Increased awareness and understanding by Inuit in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region;
- ✓ Increased engagement with higher-risk Inuit groups/demographics (e.g., youth) in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region;
- ✓ Improved programs and services in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region;
- ✓ Increased integration with other programs and services focusing on a range of causal factors in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region; and
- ✓ Stronger system in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region including at the community level (i.e., capacity, expertise, partnerships, collaborations).

✓ **We will invest in additional MEL as part of implementation activities that we lead or fund, taking a results-based management approach.** This means that, for each program, we will develop a clear program theory that describes not only the program’s activities, but also, the results we expect the program to achieve and how those results are linked with the Strategic Directions. For each program, we will make a performance monitoring plan with key metrics (indicators) and tools to measure them. For our community funding programs, we will provide additional funding and practical support to our community partners to help them identify clear goals and track progress.

✓ **We will critically reflect and report on our progress each year.** At the end of each year, we will compile performance data about our programs and engage program teams in critical reflection about challenges, successes, and progress towards our intended results. This will support our program teams and leadership to make informed decisions about any changes needed in our work in the next year and innovate. We will prepare Progress Reports that summarize what we have achieved and what we have learned each year. We will also evaluate our major programs periodically to help us develop evidence of promising practices for Inuvialuit suicide prevention and guide the updating of this Strategy.



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Appendix A – Summary of Interviews and Outreach

See PowerPoint presentation.



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IRC staff spent lots of time in community, listening to very personal, emotional and heartfelt stories during the creation of the strategy. We recognize these are not easy things to talk about.

Our gratitude goes to you, for trusting us enough to open up and share such deeply personal experiences with us. Your strength is what will guide the work as we move forward and heal together.

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