





October 31, 2003, 2003

The Honourable Edward Picco  
Minister of Health and Social Services  
P.O. Box 2410  
Legislative Assembly of Nunavut  
Iqaluit, NU X0A 0H0

**"Our Words Must Come Back to us" Report**


As co-chairs of the Inungni Sapujijjiit, the Task Force on Suicide Prevention and Community Healing, we are pleased to submit the Report entitled "Our words must come back to us".

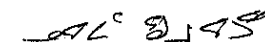
The Legislative Assembly of Nunavut gave us a very challenging task. We were asked to examine the issue of suicide and make recommendations for real action. This report does just that. We had meetings with 17 communities and received over 140 responses to our questionnaire. We heard communities say there is a need for change, for ownership and the need for action.

Our report shows we are ready to make our own decisions, it shows our children must learn with a proper foundation based on an integrated culture. Our children must learn from their ancestors, as they also learn to live in a modern society filled with global issues. It also shows that the government must change. If we are to be served properly, government operations and decision making must reflect Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit.

Please send our great thank you to Mary Akpalialuk, Ainiak Korgak, Ernie Bernhardt, Sarah Flynn and Lori Idlout, for the enormous support they provided the Inungni Sapujijjiit. We couldn't have completed our work without them.

We look forward to receiving a well thought out response from the Department of Health and Social Services and the Government of Nunavut.

  
Bryan Simonee  
Co-chair

  
Norman Komoartok  
Co-chair

**Inungni Sapujijjiit**

Teresa Kakianiun  
Meeka Arnakak

Adrienne Tagoona  
Bernadette Saunik

Bob Konona  
Amie Ahegona

Kautaq Joseph

---

**Message from the Minister of Health and Social Services  
The Honourable Edward Picco**



*Our words must come back to us. Our knowledge that we shared needs to benefit our society.*

The words in this report are not my words. They are not the words of government. They are the words of individual Nunavummiut, spoken together for the first time through one unified voice.

The formation of the *Inungni Sapujjijit Task Force on Suicide Prevention and Community Healing* was in response from a motion in the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut to address the escalating suicide rates in our territory. A team of Nunavummiut were tasked with the most difficult and emotionally driven question in Nunavut: Why are Nunavummiut killing ourselves? For the answers they went to Nunavummiut who opened their wounds, shared their pain, and told their stories.

In preparation of this report, all communities were consulted to give individuals the opportunity to express opinions and offer suggestions through community meetings, radiophone in forums, and written submissions. The Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit Coordinator with the Department of Health and Social Services, Andrew Tagak Sr., also consulted special interest groups, including community-based organisations and students.

This report examines the presence of pain and suffering in our communities. In response to generations of cultural losses, abuses, and addictions are words of hurt, words of frustration, and words of hopelessness. In recognition of the community's power to regain control over its future are words of kindness, words of encouragement, and words of hope.

The inanimate numbers of statistics have painted a face on suicide in Nunavut. The statistics reveal that suicide rates are highest among male Inuit between the ages of 18 and 35 who have been in long-term relationships that have ended, but statistics do not tell the human story.

This Task Force will be the genesis of a holistic and a community based suicide prevention framework. The need for more Inuit-based counsellors, mental health workers and resources for families in crisis is the overarching theme of the report. Increased local and community capacity is the first step to erasing the suicide pandemic. Support at the family, local, hamlet, and territorial level respectively is clearly articulated throughout the report.

The Task Force's recommendations emphasise the need for support structures to be in place at the community level to ensure that community based prevention, action, and healing can take place. The notion of community involvement at the prevention, counselling, and healing stages is a message of empowerment and capacity building.

### **1. Community Capacity Building**

The report calls for more training at the community level. Drawing upon resources already in the communities (i.e. elders), opportunity exists to develop life skills training at the community level. Parenting skills and coping skills enable communities to become self-sufficient. Empowering community members with the skills to recognise the possible warning signs of suicide and equipping them with the tools to access resources at the community level builds community capacity.

### **2. Raising Healthy Families**

Raising children in a healthy home environment strengthens a sense of identity and raises self-esteem. A healthy home environment provides children with the life skills needed to develop healthy relationships. The need for communication between elders and youth is vital in the sharing and teaching of Inuit values and skills. The cultural identity gap between these two important groups, and how this affects an individual's self-identity, needs to be recognised. The knowledge of elders and the experiences of today's youth need to be given equal importance in strengthening communication and respect between the generations.

### **3. Inuit Qaujimaqatigiit**

The call to reconnect with Inuit Qaujimaqatigiit as it pertains to healthy relationships is a recognition of the strength of Inuit culture and recognises the impacts of modern society. The Bathurst Mandate envisions Nunavut as a place where *we respect the accumulated wisdom of our elders, examining and evaluating our actions based on the best of both modern knowledge and traditional ways.*

### **4. Community Based Solutions**

The appeal to customize solutions for Inuit instead of relying on adaptations of programs developed for southern communities or other aboriginal groups is a plea for cultural recognition. This recognition identifies the unique challenges faced by Inuit today in terms of their connection with their culture, language, and self-identity.

### **5. Taking Ownership**

The report compiled by the Inungni Sapujjijit Task Force on Suicide Prevention and Community Healing continually refers to the need to address the issue of suicide at the community level. This concept of taking ownership is one of the principles of Healthy Communities highlighted in *The Bathurst Mandate.*

In the Bathurst Mandate it states: *In 2020, Nunavut is a place where: The raising and teaching of children and care of those in need, 'llagiinniq' (kinship) and 'Inuuqatigiinniq' (community kinship), are a collective community process.* This report identifies the need for that collective community process to start now. The urgency to regain control over our community's future is clear, and the call for community level action is immediate.

The title of the report *Our Words Need to Come Back to Us* emphasises the importance and credibility of the knowledge and resources that exist at the community level. The principle is that the community's words need to stay in the community, be shared by the community, be nurtured by the community, and implemented by the community.

In recognition of the challenges of providing health care services in Nunavut, the Department of Health and Social Services has committed to bringing care closer to home. This is an umbrella concept that involves focusing on preventative care at the family level, accessing all resources

available at the community level, and developing as many services as fiscally possible in Nunavut for Nunavummiut. The concept of care closer to home is one that is echoed through the Task Force's call for community action on the fight against suicide.

The roles and responsibilities of the Government of Nunavut in response to this report are far reaching, and involve many departments and agencies in addition to the Department of Health and Social Services.

I have received commitments from my Cabinet colleagues for our departments to work together to address any responsibilities and pro-active planning. This commitment has resulted in meetings at the highest level of our public service with all Deputy Ministers assessing their departments' possible involvement in support of community empowerment and resource building.

In closing, I would like to thank the members of the Inungni Sapujjijit Task Force on Suicide Prevention and Community Healing for their dedication to developing healthy communities and arresting the spiralling numbers of suicides in Nunavut. I offer my commitment that the words they shared in this report will return to Nunavummiut in the form of support and resources.

The Honourable Edward Picco  
Minister of Health and Social Services

**Inungni Sapujjiit  
Task Force on Suicide Prevention and Community Healing**

**Table of Contents**

<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>SECTION 2</b>	<b>THE FIRST MEETING.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SECTION 3</b>	<b>THE COMMUNITY MEETINGS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Theme 1</b>	<b>Lets Speak Out.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Theme 2</b>	<b>Pride in Ourselves.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Theme 3</b>	<b>Finding our Foundation.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Theme 4</b>	<b>Changing the term “Imminiirniq”.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Theme 5</b>	<b>Our Youth.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Theme 6</b>	<b>Retrieving our Skills.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Theme 7</b>	<b>Programs, Services and Facilities.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Theme 8</b>	<b>Taking Ownership.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>SECTION 4</b>	<b>INUNGNI SAPUJJIIT - THE FINAL MEETING.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>SECTION 5</b>	<b>QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FROM COMMUNITIES.....</b>	<b>25</b>
1.	What are your thoughts on suicide prevention?.....	25
2.	What would you like to see happen from the Government of Nunavut? Why?.....	27
3.	Does your community provide mediation services?.....	29
4.	What do you think will help Nunavut youth to help prevent suicide?.....	30
5.	How can we as a Task Force assist in the area of suicide prevention and community healing? 32	
6.	How would you change the term “imminiqtailittiniq”?.....	33
7.	How would you change the term “imminiqniq”?.....	34
8.	Are there enough human resources to deal with suicide prevention and community healing in your community? If not what is missing?.....	34
9.	What can communities do to help prevent suicides?.....	35
<b>SECTION 6</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>SECTION 7</b>	<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>SECTION 8</b>	<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>38</b>



## **Section 1 Introduction and Background**

Prior to April 1, 1999, Nunavummiut have experienced suicide and suicide attempts in numbers more than we wish to mention. Our communities have talked about finding their own solutions for some time. Nunavummiut have said change is required, it has been acknowledged at the highest level of our Territory. A memorable meeting during the Members 6<sup>th</sup> sitting of Nunavut's Legislative Assembly in March 2003 resulted in a motion by Amittuq MLA Enoki Iqittuq to establish a Task Force on Suicide Prevention and Community Healing. The Minister of Health and Social Services was directed to ensure that the establishment occurred.

The Department of Health and Social Services was directed to provide administrative and financial support for the Task Force on Suicide Prevention and Community Healing. It must be recognised that the Inungni Sapujjijit is a task force separate from the Government of Nunavut. We are writing this report for the Government of Nunavut to respond to what we have heard from the communities.

A Nunavut wide Inuuqatigiisiarniq Forum was sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Services in May. Having recognised the Forum as a remarkable event, the Minister of Health and Social Services selected us from this delegation. Once we were chosen, we were called requesting our attendance for the first ever task force meeting. We all accepted this enormous responsibility to represent Nunavummiut. We are, Aime Ahegona, from Kugluktuk, Bob Konona from Gjoa Haven, Bryan Simonee from Pond Inlet, Adrienne Tagoona from Baker Lake, Theresa Kakkianiun from Kuugaruk, Bernadette Saumik from Rankin Inlet, Kautaq Joseph from Arctic Bay, Norman Komoartok from Pangnirtung and Meeka Arnakak from Pangnirtung.

We struggled with whether to keep repeating what we heard. We are voicing what we heard from the community visits and what we received from the questionnaires. We have heard there is a strong need for change.

We would like to thank all the communities that we visited and to thank all those that submitted the questionnaires. The input we heard is invaluable. We'd especially like to

Inungni Sapujjijit

thank the people that helped with the arrangements of meeting rooms, ensuring there were refreshments and ensuring there was interpretations.

## **Section 2 The First Meeting**

The first meeting of the Task Force on Suicide Prevention and Community Healing occurred in July 2003. At this meeting we achieved many things. Of these, includes the selection of our co-chairs, Bryan Simonee and Norman Komoartok. We selected the number of communities we would visit; we discussed the initial terms of reference. We chose to be known as the Inungni Sapujjijit, meaning roughly the protectors of Inuit or the supporters of Inuit, also meaning that we are here to ensure the Inuit voice is being heard.

The Inungni Sapujjijit, in our first face-to-face meeting agreed on the tight timeline given to us by the Legislative Assembly. Although there was much discussion on the importance of this issue and the requirement to ensure an in depth coverage, we are also aware of the need for action. The Inungni Sapujjijit also developed a short questionnaire that we would bring to the communities for their input.

The communities were selected very carefully based on statistics provided on suicides by communities. We wanted to visit those communities most affected by suicide in their communities. The discussion in the selection was a difficult task, however, the communities of Qikirtaqjuaq, Hall Beach, Iqaluit, Coral Harbour, Rankin Inlet, Kugluktuk and Taloyoak were ultimately selected. To attempt to reduce the costs of travel the Inungni Sapujjijit broke into 3 groups of 3. Out of the 9 members of the Task Force, 3 were youth, so each group consisted of 1 youth and 2 elders.

During our first meeting the Inungni Sapujjijit heard from interest groups. These consisted of representatives from the Departments of Health and Social Services, Justice, Education, EIA, CLEY, the RCMP and a consultant who had gathered some existing research that had occurred in the area of suicide prevention. Each representative provided a very helpful overview of the activities they have done in the area of suicide prevention.

Inungni Sapujjiit

We heard from

- ❖ Andrew Tagak Sr. Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit coordinator for the Department of Health and Social Services;
- ❖ Jack Hicks, Director, of the Evaluations Division of EIA,
- ❖ Ailsa Henderson a research consultant who provided a summary of work she was asked to do by the Department of Health and Social Services in preparation for the Task Force on Suicide Prevention and Community Healing.
- ❖ Minister and Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services.
- ❖ Ron McCormick, Director of Corrections and Community Justice, Department of Justice.
- ❖ Gillian Corless – Director, Policy and Planning, Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth
- ❖ Bob Imrie, Senior Health Analyst, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc
- ❖ John Henderson, Superintendent, RCMP
- ❖ Shirley Tagalik, Manager, Early Education and School Services
- ❖ Wende Halonen, EIA communications

We went on to choose the three groups that would be traveling with each other. It was decided that the individuals would be grouped according to the table below:

<u>Baffin</u>	<u>Kivalliq</u>	<u>Kitikmeot</u>
Theresa Kakkianiun	Adrienne Tagoona	Bryan Simonee
Bob Konona	Norman Komoartok	Meeka Arnakak
Bernadette Saumik	Aime Ahegona	Kautaq Joseph

The communities chosen were:

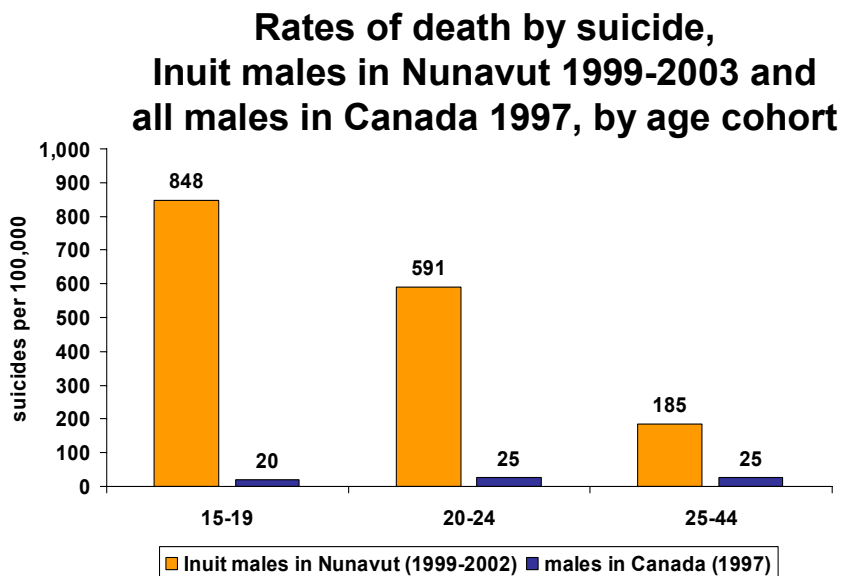
Qikirtaqjuaq	Coral Harbour	Taloyoak
Hall Beach	Rankin Inlet	Kugluktuk
Iqaluit		

### **Section 3 The Community Meetings**

As mentioned before, a total of 7 communities were visited by the members. In addition, we held meetings within our own communities. We also received reports from Andrew Tagak Sr. on his 5 visits. In total there were 17 community meetings. We held two types of

## Inungni Sapujjiit

meetings in each community. There were meetings of what we're calling interest groups meetings. These meetings were with social workers, nurses, wellness counsellors, RCMP, Health councils, elders committees, justice committees, youth groups GN representatives from HSS Don Ellis, Sandy MacDonald, Physician, JF Beauchamp, EIA, Myna Ishulutak, Iqaluit Restorative Justice, Michael Salamonie, RCMP, Alexiina Kublu, Justice of the Peace, Jackie Shelfield, Psychiatric Nurse and the Iqaluit Youth Group funded by the Qikirtani Inuit Association. Public meetings were held, where individual people voiced their issues. Some communities also had radio phone in shows with the task force members. In the summaries of the various note takers for each meeting, as well as recordings from the meetings, a set of themes emerged. Andrew Tagak Sr. also had meetings with some of the schools in his community visits. The summary of the community visits will be described according to these themes. It is important to recognise that each theme is not more important than the other; these themes are not written according to priority, each theme is important. These themes are just as important as the recommendations. Before we begin our reporting, below is a diagram to show the critical state we are in.



source: Nunavummit Kiglisiniartiit and Statistics Canada

## Theme 1 Lets Speak Out

We have categorised what we heard into 8 groups.

### People should start speaking out

We heard many individuals talking about youth needing to learn to speak out. Most can't express their feelings, they end up reaching a final decision, where it could have been resolved, if they had known to speak of their feelings. It was noted that sometimes our youth might be confused because they hear their parents arguing or disagreeing too much, parents need to be taught not to point out the partners' faults to the children. We heard that our elders should have a stronger role as they used to. Our elders need to voice their traditional upbringing, our elders are dieing off and so will our culture if were not careful. Men were also targeted as needing to speak out. Inuit are talking about body and soul and that soul we can't end it even if we try to commit suicide. Talk about drugs and alcohol, why it clouds some ones mind and that it makes you do things that you would not do in the first place. They need to be taught to relieve their stress, to understand their feelings and to be able to speak about them. We need to start talking from our homes with our families. Once we begin addressing things within our families we'll better contribute to the overall community.

#### **Recommendation 1**

- ❖ 1 a) Preschool and school programs should help children to learn to speak about their feelings.
- ❖ 1 b) Parents should be helped to understand the importance of these skills and to learn to help their children build the skills.

### Let's show our children a positive lifestyle

Our children are being raised in environments without parents because they are out gambling or out drinking all night. Our children are only showing symptoms of generations of pain and dysfunction and of how this needs to be stopped. We need to show our children a positive lifestyle, whether it's teaching them mens' / womens' roles or having them spend more time with elders. All too often our youth tend to feel alone. Our youth need to learn they are never alone; they should be able to find someone to talk to.

**Recommendation 2**

- ❖ Families and communities must try to influence and help parents who are not there for their children, and to ensure no youth feels there is no one they can talk to.

People must speak without fear of intimidation

Youth said they don't go to their parents because the parents get angry. We heard about women unable to speak out because they are afraid of their partners. We heard of elders being afraid at times because the youth or their children may abuse them. It was strongly recommended that individuals must be able to speak about their issues without being afraid. The families, communities and governments must work to improving this situation. Talking is a powerful way of moving on with issues, to not dwell in the past.

**Recommendation 3**

- ❖ Everyone needs environments where they can feel free to speak about their feelings. Having safe and suitable places in every community, where talking about life and relationships is encouraged, is a critical part of the solution. Governments and communities need to get creative around this need.

When people speak our government needs to understand us

The communities all talked about how they have been consulted many times and how they never hear from them again. Communities wonder if what they've voiced has been understood because in the end nothing has changed. In this way, we talk of the government not understanding us when we speak. We have provided many voices to our government; we now want our government to help our communities. Another underlying issue is that most government employees don't understand our language, which makes it difficult for us to voice ourselves. When we go to use government programs or services, we need to see more Inuit employed within government.

**Recommendation 4**

- ❖ 4 a) Two-way communications have to be better than they are, to encourage better understanding and creativity. Even when Government is unable to act on a recommendation from consultations, respect requires an explanation that communities can understand.
- ❖ 4 b) Improve the quality of communications by hiring more Inuit in responsible government positions.

Inungni Sapujjiit

Sharing good news stories amongst our communities

There is not enough sharing of good news amongst communities. We have to learn from other communities. We need to travel to other communities to show successes. When we have wellness promotion type individuals, we listen to them for some time at first. As time passes we stop listening to that person; we end up with an attitude of “here they go again”. This person is still a good person with good skills; it would be beneficial to hear from other communities and to have that person shared with another community.

**Recommendation 5**

- ❖ Government should take greater advantage of skilled, experienced wellness promotion people by supporting exchanges between communities.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit needs to be used

Youth and elders tend to be targeted. We must also target the generation in between. A main reason for so much hardship is because our husbands and wives have not been taught about healthy relationships. They haven't been taught the mens'/womens' roles. The Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit way of these teachings need to be taught and used again.

**Recommendation 6**

- ❖ 6 a) (Link to recommendation 3) Every community needs a place where people can talk, in a relaxed and suitable space, about life, about being Inuit, about relationships.
- ❖ 6 b) Programs that help people to explore and understand Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit are needed.

Our foundation needs to be taught and shown

One person said, “I don't feel that physical, mental, spiritual and emotional makes a person whole, it is if we were to take back our culture that a person could be whole again. We didn't categorise to become a whole person.” This person has very accurately reflected how a person's health is not determined by the four categories mentioned above in Nunavut. Taking back what is meant to be a healthy person needs to be taught and shown.

Existing programs and services need to be communicated at the community level.

Inungni Sapujjiit

Many communities talked about how there are so many different kinds of Health and Social Services type employees that they get confused as to who does what. It was mentioned that government employees at the community level need to announce what their role is and what programs they deliver. This would eliminate a lot of confusion.

**Recommendation 7**

Service providers need to find effective ways to help residents understand where they can go for what kind of service.

## Theme 2 Pride in Ourselves

These are as important as the recommendations. These could help the government and the community to take pride in being Nunavummiut.

We must train our own people at the community level.

To achieve pride, we must train our own people in our own communities. We must stop training outside all the time. There are elders and people who can provide training at the community level. We also heard about youth and elders needing to be trained counselling skills. This is particular as we recognise that our youth are most at risk.

**Recommendation 8**

- ❖ 8 a) Training in counselling should happen in the communities where people will counsel.
- ❖ 8 b) Training needs to combine the professional and cultural knowledge required to really help.

Those that have been incarcerated and their family should not be looked down upon.

It is hard to be proud of when a person is being judged for their misgivings. It was mentioned many times that the family of the incarcerated is also looked down upon, as well the person who was incarcerated. It was pointed out that this must stop. People need to be treated with respect. They need to be shown that they are cared for. People always need to be treated fairly and equally no matter what state they are in. We heard many times that not respecting people is a strong reason we are unable to lead healthy lives. We were told it is difficult enough to be accused and having to go to court is bad enough, but to have the case adjourned to a later date is kind of last straw for young.



**Recommendation 9**

- ❖ 9 a) Ensure court cases are heard in a reasonable timeframe – hire more legal aid lawyers if necessary.
- ❖ 9 b) Ensure that families and caregivers know when youth are facing court appearances and that ways are worked out to ensure their safety while waiting.

Within the community we have to find our own solutions

Many programs in our communities are imported from the south or other aboriginal groups. We must seek our own solutions to improve our situation. Our ability to make our own decisions was taken away from us; we must now take it back. We must take back our ways of healing. Although healing wasn't part of our vocabulary, we had means of ensuring we lead healthy lives. Men and women had roles, there were certain ages those teachings were taught. We had ways of resolving issues. Mr. Tagak visited Cape Dorset, they had a very good plan of how and when counselling could happen. Cape Dorset's Suicide Prevention core group provides in three ways. These were mentioned as prevention/intervention/postvention. These counselling services are provided according to when it is needed by individuals. One issue they are faced with is having a lack of a "place" to hold these sessions.

Parents should take children out on the land to be taught survival skills

Many of our youth are confused about their identity. They have two very different ways of living. One-way to ground our children's' identities and take pride in who they are, is for them to be taken out on the land more. It reinforces parent/child relationship; it also teaches the children survival skills they may otherwise not have learned.

Youth need self-respect

This theme will be flowing throughout the whole report. It was the most talked about. One common theme is that youth need to learn self-respect. This will help them in their behaviour towards others, it will affect their ability to make better choices and it will help them to not be subject to peer pressure or the negative lifestyle choices. Our youth need to realise life is important; to seek options is a part of life. Many talked about our youth not being taught coping skills or not being taught relationship skills. They need to understand there will be challenges, however, they need to learn to problem solve in their daily lives.

Inuit need to be recognised for their abilities.

Inuit measurement of skills attained are quite different from what government recognises as abilities acquired. Skills such as sewing, hunting, building igloos, sleds or tents and parkas are a level of maturity and level of abilities recognised by Inuit. However, these don't mean anything when the same individuals try to get jobs with the government.

**Recommendation 10**

- ❖ 10 Youth need “modern” skills, but they also need reinforcement in their identity as Inuit and respect for their family and community.
- ❖ 10 a) Parents and children need opportunities to be on the land together. Where parents are, for whatever reason, not able to arrange this on their own, they should be helped if they want to go.
- ❖ 10 b) The meaning and value of healthy relationships (with oneself, with friends, between men and women, with the world) and our ability to overcome troubles – these need to be reinforced right from the start, with home supports, preschool programs, school curriculum, and child and youth opportunities for joyful experiences.
- ❖ 10 c) Communities and governments need to find more ways to recognize and celebrate excellence in traditional Inuit skills.

Community wellness is a high priority; we need to have long-term goals

Many of our communities these days are forced to contend with people attempting to be elected, or with people that only work for a short time. The community needs to begin looking at long-term solutions. Although our leaders such as our mayors are important we can't be taken over by 2-year promises anymore. We need to find ways of ensuring that our leaders are committed to longer-term solutions and that the community has to play a strong role in ensuring we are implementing them. Our leaders and community people need to work together to resolve social issues. Working together was always an important means survival; this needs to be taught again.

**Recommendation 11**

- ❖ Government leaders and community residents must commit to longer term solutions and ensuring that the community has a strong role in ensuring we are implementing them.

Our committees need a stronger role

Inungni Sapujjiit

We have committees that only follow a mandate that was given to them. They need to be recognised as important people in the community. They should have a stronger role; they need to have stronger decision-making ability than what they have. The communities need to work together to stop thinking we are just Inuit. Too often, communities talk about being “just Inuit”. We heard many times to stop talking this way that we need to work together to regain our pride. We have to be proud that we have persevered for thousands of years and we are still here.

**Recommendation 12**

(Link to recommendation 11) Community residents need ways to identify what is most important to them and then they will need help to organize around what they consider the most important

### **Theme 3 Finding our Foundation**

We need to relearn our ability to maintain and take care of people and things we care for.

As part of a mechanism to survive it was inherent to value the people and the material we had. Today, there is such an abundance of services and things we don't share the same value as we used to. Valuing people and materials spirals into larger respect for life. People's behaviors and choices made can change significantly if these same values were to be taught again. We have to emphasize caring and respect again.

**Recommendation 13**

The values around caring for each other must be promoted more effectively. This is central to every other recommendation.

#### Staff Burn Out

We have realized that our social or wellness employees burn out because there is no support system for them. There may be health councils or justice committees however there is no connect. The employees and the committees need to better work together to maintain the staff we do have at the community level.



## **Theme 5     Our Youth**

Discussion about the youth was by far the most area covered. They were discussed by adults and youth alike. There is a strong willingness to support youth; the momentum must be taken advantage of. Our youth are the highest population representing Nunavut; they are also the most at risk. There was a strong recognition that youth are under a lot of pressure. The youth are our future, we must recognize and we must also invest in them. It is also important to ensure that funds are available for the communities. Mr. Tagaks visit identified that Inuit of Grise Fiord know that there is no money for youth, they are not even asking for extra funds for youth, because GN will just say there is no money for this and that. But if there was money for youth they certainly put it to a good use. There coping with what they have up to now. It was also identified that there should be more money for student hires, because kids look forward to going to work for the summer, which is good for the kids.

It was also identified in several communities about messages youth may be hearing from heavy metal and rap music being a possible factor. Within the theme of messages to our youth, it was suggested to us that we send messages like "Suicide will NEVER solve your Problem(s)", "When you commit suicide you take your problems with you. Killing yourself will not end your problems". Concurrent with the above message we require positive messages, messages of hope, strength and encouragement such as: "Never give up", "Never give in", "Where there is life there is always hope, and " Suicide is NOT an option - period.

### Need to have a facility where they can go to heal and to learn

The requirement for a facility specifically targeted for youth healing and learning was significant. It was acknowledged how there are community halls or school gyms; however, these are not adequate for youth to go to when they need to talk about their issues or if they want to learn new skills. Within this spectrum was also the need identified for a youth drop in centre or a resource centre. The GN has core programs which it offers to all Nunavummiut, wherever they live. However there are also many programs which require a proposal, a building, and stable administrators - and communities cannot access these unless they are lucky enough to have the right combination of people and resources.

**Recommendation 15**

- ❖ 15 a) There should be a review of what programs are required in every community, which governments make sure are in place.
- ❖ 15 b) These programs must include a **place** specially for youth, where they can go to have fun, but also to access information, counselling and support from other youth.

Our youth must be taught

Many youth haven't been taught the kind of respect that Inuit were traditionally taught. This was seen as a contributing to our youth choosing to end their lives. Having self-respect determines a person's ability to problem solve, to cope and to behave properly. Our youth have lost their identity because they have two lifestyles, one that is close to traditional, and one which is more modern which still doesn't proper with their lifestyles. Once they are taught self-respect it will be easier to teach them problem solving and coping skills. We need to be sensitive to their ability to learn when we teach them about self-respect, problem solving and developing their coping skills. A program must be developed to promote positive living. We need to teach youth about achieving goals. Our youth aren't given the same experiences to develop skills they need to live as adults. Youth need to be prepared for adulthood. Having goals and following through with them is a positive way to ensure they become healthy adults as well as maintaining their youth.

Many of our youth start relationships at a really young age. Youth need to be taught on how to have a healthy relationship. They need to be taught the different roles that men and women had. They need to be taught, when it is appropriate to start having children, when to start living on their own, and how to make decisions as couples, how to raise children as a couple. It was mentioned that some kids don't seem to know the difference between "asking them not to do bad things and telling kids not to do bad things", most kids take that as telling and treated as negative. Bullying needs to be discouraged more strongly in schools and start earlier. It was identified as a contributing factor for youth's low self-esteem. It needs to be discouraged and it needs to start in the earliest of when a child begins attending school.

Youth want to teach each other skills by traveling to each other's communities

Inungni Sapujjijit

An example of this is the Iqaluit Youth group funded by the Qikirtani Inuit Association. We were very impressed with their activities to prevent suicide. The youth developed a video on what life means to them, included was the establishment of their own band. Having completed the video with the music, the group traveled to Pangnirtung where they delivered a workshop on making videos. This event was a strong learning for both sets of youth. The Iqaluit youth group mentioned a strong desire to continue to travel to other communities on showing positive activities that could be undertaken by other youth.

#### Youth are closer to youth their own age

Many youth spoke about how they are more comfortable to speak with people their own age. We felt it important to acknowledge this. We remember when youth told us they tend to be intimidated by their parents when they want to talk to them because they tend to get angry or frustrated with their children. This must change; youth should not have to be afraid to speak about their problems whether it's with parents, teachers or elders.

#### **Recommendation 16**

- ❖ Governments, Inuit organizations and others can play important roles in supporting youth exchanges and opportunities for youth from across Nunavut to learn from each other, to visit each other's communities, and to work together.
- ❖ Youth peer counselling should be encouraged through continuous support and effective, competent training.

#### Ensure they are represented in committees to ensure their voice is being heard.

A strong message we must convey is the emphasis placed on ensuring youth has a voice. Youth know their issues, they know what would make a difference, and they need to be allowed to have a voice in committees that make decisions. There must always be a youth representative where committees are established. In a similar manner we must listen when they want to speak about their issues. Most often youth will turn to alcohol and drug abuse when they haven't had an opportunity to talk about their problems. In this way we must also listen to them, to avoid them choosing negative lifestyle choices.

#### **Recommendation 17**

- ❖ Wherever issues that have significant impact on youth are being considered, youth should be engaged. It is very important that it be in youth-friendly ways.

Inungni Sapujjiit

When they are returned to communities they must be closely monitored and supported.

Many of our youth have had to be sent away either for treatment or to a controlled environment. Many times they are ignored or treated differently when they return home. A monitoring mechanism must be established to ensure they are supported and to ensure their wellbeing. Much of the time, they return to misbehaving because the support is not there for them to apply what they learned from outside their communities.

**Recommendation 18**

- ❖ Every community needs effective monitoring mechanisms to ensure youth returning from treatment or a controlled environment are welcomed back, supported and that their wellbeing is ensured

Youth need to start eating traditional food

It was felt that the uneasiness that youth go through might be caused by the nutrition they now have. There is so much “junk” food, so much processed food; it may be impacting on how heavy youth may be feeling. Youth need to be encouraged to eat traditional food, which is less heavy and allows people to be more productive.

**Recommendation 19**

- ❖ Much more needs to be done make traditional foods accessible (including affordable) and appealing to youth and their families. This is a fundamental part of healthy life as Inuit and has been largely ignored.

Youth have lost their identity because they have 2 very different lifestyles to live.

Our youth have been forced to live in a modern society where social ills are rampant, where traditions and culture conflict with the society. Youth have been raised by parents who were abused by a system foreign to theirs; they have been raised by parents who have not healed in their own ways. Youth are forced to learn to speak with elders when they might not understand each other. We must help them to gain their identity. They are our future. We can teach them by integrating our cultures. We can help them to ensure they choose properly by giving them a strong foundation.

**Theme 6     Retrieving our Skills**

Our existing services need to be improved



Inungni Sapujjijit

Many of our services are not reflective of the way we serve ourselves. We need a better-integrated system. Most times, we aren't aware of what program exists because most programs are short term and we become confused as to what is a short term program and what is a long term service. There are times when there are several employees; we sometimes don't know which one to go to because they have specific roles. Services need to be better communicated at the community level.

**Recommendation 20**

See also Recommendation 16.

- ❖ The stability of programs, their ability to recruit, train, and retain good staff, to find and use good materials and ways of reaching people – these are critical, yet many basic social programs that address parenting, early childhood and youth services are vulnerable to instability in exactly these areas. Governments and their partners need to find ways to overcome this problem.

We must ensure we are healthy before we begin helping other people

Most times if people have chosen to be in the helping field they do so because they went through their own hard times. In order to ensure they don't burn out or are actually able to assist people, it must be assured that they have gone through their own healing. They must have dealt with their issues before they are accepted into the wellness field.

**Recommendation 21**

- ❖ When helpers are hired, the employer must make certain they are qualified, the community must be involved to ensure they are suitable, and the individual must be honest in assessing their own readiness to help others.
- ❖ This also links to recommendation 14 (burn out)

Those that were incarcerated must return home feeling welcomed

Most inmates return home, feeling lost and rejected. They may not have been taught how to deal with their anger or have not been given an opportunity to put closure to their misbehaviors. They must feel welcomed and supported when they return home. This will help ensure they return home with a stronger ability to integrate back into their community and stronger sense of contributing back to society.

**Recommendation 22**

- ❖ When people are returning from incarceration, their families, people they may have hurt, their children's schools, and helping agencies must be prepared and ready to make their re-integration successful. The right communications must be in place for this to happen.

We can't return to traditional living, we must remember to support each other.

Inuit have recognized that we can't go back to our traditional way of living. However, we recognize that we can still use our principles and values to move forward. One such value is the practice of working together, survival is based on working together. This must be passed on and implemented.

**Recommendation 23**

- ❖ Government, programs, communities, schools must find ways to organize work study and play so that the Inuit ability and value in working together, working in teams, is respected and reinforced.

We must raise our youth with discipline

Youth are not raised the same way that youth were raised generations ago. One weakness that has occurred is raising our youth to be spoiled and raising them while we are afraid to hurt their feelings. Parents need to learn to discipline their children and youth. Our youth have experienced too much freedom without chores or limitations. Parents need to realize that disciplining them only helps them to be stronger adults later in life.

**Recommendation 24**

- ❖ Discipline is an important part of loving children and youth. It requires on-going discussion in every community around the meaning and value of "discipline," so that parents, teachers and others provide an environment where children and youth will succeed, but understand clearly what values families and communities want to support.

Youth have to understand they don't need to rush into adulthood.

This generation of youth has been forced to grow up very quickly, not only have they dealt with their parent's issues; they've also had to take care of their sisters and brothers. They have also gotten into serious relationships much too young. They have to be assisted to

Inungni Sapujjiit

realize that adulthood doesn't immediately occur. Most times they don't realize they have the problem solving skills to become adults.

## **Theme 7      Programs, Services and Facilities**

In addition to the themes below there was many discussions on lack of employment.

### Frontline workers must have a stronger role than what they do

The government must start utilizing its frontline workers as program designers. They know and deal with the issues. The additional role of developing programs must be added to their job description. We need to involve them in longer term planning. Those that were trained in suicide prevention by the GNWT must be reviewed. They are volunteers with no resources. The GN has not properly utilized them. They are not provided with facilities to hold sessions. There is no support. In addition, it was felt salaries may be a small factor. Low salaries contribute to a lower standard of living, which than contributes to many other things. It was felt that salaries must be reviewed.

#### **Recommendation 25**

- ❖ The government must help its frontline workers and those with special training to be program developers, to become the great resource they are capable of being.

### A program must be established to ensure youth are motivated to stay in school

Parents can only do so much to motivate their children to stay in school. The whole community and the government need to work together to ensure youth complete their education. We recognize that the youth attitude towards education place a strong role. A program must be established to ensure youth are motivated to stay in school and complete their education. One such suggestion has been to allow student exchanges to occur between Nunavut communities. This will allow youth to share each other's experiences and it will help them to broaden their minds.

#### **Recommendation 26 (stay in school)**

- ❖ Whole communities, families and the government need to work together to ensure youth complete their education.

When a suicide attempt occurs in Iqaluit, if the RCMP are involved they are sent to the hospital for treatment.

Inungni Sapujjiit

While in Iqaluit, we heard from one of the RCMP members. He described how, they deal with those that have attempted suicide. It was particularly noted that the members were not satisfied with the RCMP sending individuals to the hospital to be seen by a physician. The members felt that the RCMP should seek community counselors for these individuals as strongly as they refer to the physicians at the hospital. It was also mentioned in Cape Dorset that the RCMP should answer their phones locally in the evenings.

**Recommendation 27**

- ❖ 27 a) A list of Inuit counsellors, competent in suicide issues, should be available so the RCMP can make appropriate referrals instead of always taking suicidal people to the hospital.
- ❖ 27 b) The practice of off-site answering services for the RCMP should be discontinued. At the least it should be evaluated with the involvement of community members.

A monitoring mechanism must be established

We've heard from research and we have heard from the communities, a major factor of our youth committing suicide is when they have entered the justice system. Whether they are waiting for a court date, or sentencing, these individuals are most at risk. Intervention in this venue will help to reduce suicides significantly. The different agencies in the justice system must work together to establish a mechanism to monitor those most at risk. Many times we lose our youth because there is no way to identify those at risk. There is no way to monitor or identify youth at risk.

There needs to be more suicide prevention training at the community level.

One way to improve skills at the community level is to provide more training opportunities. We were very pleased to hear our communities requesting training. Inuit and individuals at the community level want to take ownership of services. They want to solve their own problems. A strong request we heard often was more training. We heard requests to have training at the community level, for training to occur for Inuit by Inuit. We also heard very strongly that training must be developed at the community level. We must stop adopting training from the south or from First Nations.

**Recommendation 28**

- ❖ Training in suicide prevention, involving teams of people, needs to be made available in every community – and the training should be by Inuit, for Inuit.

There needs to be more activities to choose healthier lifestyles.

We agree that there are too many opportunities to choose alcohol and drug abuse. We need to have other avenues, to be allowed to choose healthier lifestyles. That parents need to be educated to properly raise their children. We also heard of how new positions need to be developed, new staff like youth coordinators, or new programs that teaches about life skills throughout the year. These types of things will help to move away from alcohol and drug or gambling abuse.

From Mr. Tagaks visit in Arviat it was mention some houses have 3 generations of family in one house, it contributes to relation difficulties, they have more of a tendency to fight between themselves, that it makes it difficult to cope with things around the house.

**Recommendation 29**

- ❖ 29 a) There must be an effort to provide more opportunities for healthy, joyful activities for youth and their families. This means some parents will need help to provide those opportunities, and no youth should grow up without learning life skills that include overcoming troubles.
- ❖ 29 b) We also recommend that youth coordinators should be available to every community

**Theme 8 Taking Ownership**

Confidentiality issues

Communities expressed a concern of confidentiality in the way that committees who are community members must also be allowed to participate in the wellbeing of their fellow community members. RCMP and nurses are usually from outside the community and don't usually have the history to properly assist a person in their challenge of achieving wellness. Communities felt that committees must be privy to files that are considered "confidential" so they can support and improve the wellbeing of those individuals.

**Recommendation 30**

- ❖ 30 a) Confidentiality of personal information is vitally important. All caregivers with access to personal information need to be trained to respect it.
- ❖ 30 b) Having stated this, there needs to be discussion amongst Inuit about confidentiality – when and how it is a good thing, and when other, more important values should over-ride. Following this discussion, legal requirements should be reviewed to ensure they are consistent with the values of Nunavummiut.

Our communities can't change unless Government, especially social services changes their operations.

In order for our communities to take ownership, they must not be limited by government restrictions such as policies and procedures. Much of the time, a community can't improve because they must adhere to government policies, guidelines or criteria. In this way the government must also change to meet our needs.

The way social workers "protect" children must change.

We heard a community express much concern over the way a social service operates. We feel it necessary for the protective services to be reviewed to ensure that our ways of protecting children are also integrated into the government's ways of protecting children.

Restraining orders don't help our communities; in fact they hurt our children

One community felt that restraining orders only serve to hurt the children. We feel that a stronger communication needs to occur as to why restraining orders are given. The communities need to understand they are to protect people. A mechanism must be established to ensure the child understands their rights are being protected.

**Recommendation 31**

- ❖ 31 a) There should be a review of social work practice, to ensure it is consistent with Inuit values.
- ❖ 31 b) In particular, there should be a review of child protection practice and options.
- ❖ 31 c) Communications around restrictions – such as restraining orders – need to be better (e.g., children need to be better informed)

Input back from representatives sent for training, workshops or conferences

Inungni Sapujjiit

Many communities were frustrated that when their community people are sent out for workshops or conferences they never hear from them once they've returned home. It was felt that to change this; the community must be involved in selecting those that will go to workshops or conferences. Criteria may need to be developed for those that are selected to always have to report back to the community.

Employees from the south don't understand our culture, traditions and don't respect our ways of dealing with issues.

This is also a huge factor in our communities feeling powerless to change their situations. The only services they can receive or provide input to are to those from the south. Most times they can't even communicate because they don't speak the same language. They determine a lot whether our communities will change. Our people must offer our services to us. Our ownership can only happen if people who understand us provide our services.

**Recommendation 32**

- ❖ Inuit employment, and the ability of Inuit to step into service provider roles, must proceed as quickly as possible. It is not going fast enough.

Consultations and researchers must give us back our information

We are tired of being poked and prodded. Researchers, organizations and governments come to understand from us so often. Yet we never hear back from them. We don't hear back if what we voiced was the right thing to say. We don't hear if a program has been established or we don't hear back on what was used with the words we gave. Our words must come back to us. We must be told if the information we gave helped people or if it will help our society. Our knowledge that we shared needs to benefit our society.

**Recommendation 33**

- ❖ (see also Recommendation 4) Consultations and research need to be circular – the information gathered needs to return to the source. Those consulting and researching must be accountable for respecting communities and those they get information from. We need to know if we were heard – and heard correctly.

We must stop sending our youth out for treatment. They must stay in our communities.

## Inungni Sapujjijit

Most times our youth lose their identity because they have been sent away to a foreign place during times of confusion. When a youth is going through difficult times they have to stay in our communities with our families. It doesn't help to send them away for treatment, they only get more confused. To ensure our youth have a proper foundation, we must ensure they heal with their families and within their communities.

### **Recommendation 34**

- ❖ Everyone – families, communities, government departments, businesses – needs to put the highest priority on building local capacity to help youth in times of trouble. In particular, when youth are in a time of confusion, the practice of sending them out of Nunavut must stop.

## **Section 4 Inungni Sapujjijit – The Final Meeting**

The purpose of our final meeting was to share our ideas, begin finalising our report and recommendations. The main themes from the community visits were identified which are in section 3, whereas the recommendations are in section 6. It was agreed that once an analysis of the responses to questionnaires has been completed that they would be discussed in a teleconference call later in October.

## **Section 5 Questionnaire Responses from Communities**

Most responses were from Chesterfield Inlet, Sanikiluaq, Gjoa Haven and Qikiqtarjuaq, among several from other communities. In total there were about 140 responses from many communities. We were taken aback by the similarities found between the responses and the communities we visited. There was such a strong correlation responses to question 1 will have the same themes as the community visits.

### **1. What are your thoughts on suicide prevention?**

#### *Let's Speak Out*

Most of the responses we received included comments like "Lots of talk but no action". There was quite a bit too about youth needing opportunities to speak out, our youth must be our priority there needs to be more activities and recreation for youth, they should be taught by elders. Our youth need to be taught to value life.



## Inungni Sapujjiit

There was an apparent desire to stop the silence both about suicide and needing to learn to speak out. Many responded requesting counselling services without fear of gossip. There were about how each community should have a committee that meets every month to get people involved. To consolidate the many separate groups or employees and have them work together to form one core group.

### *Pride in Ourselves*

Families need to work together, there needs to be more community involvement. Prevention should focus on building the strength of individuals and the bonds of relationships, family and community. Suicide prevention comes from a sense of worth and belonging and from having resources to deal with life's problems. People need to regain pride, to release the pain that happened generations ago, not to just cover it up any more.

### *Finding our Foundation*

Part of gaining our pride is to implement Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit. Traditional parenting skills need to be taught to parents. Our way of teaching our children always involved an aspect of prevention. Too many of the programs are treatment oriented. We need more prevention programs; there is too much crisis management. It was felt that prevention should focus on life-skills and personal strengths building.

### *Our Youth*

Youth need opportunities to speak out, our youth must be our priority there needs to be more activities and recreation for youth, and elders should teach them. Our youth need to be taught to value life. Children need to be taught about the life God gave us. One response summed it up really well. "Suicide Prevention is critical, sometimes difficult or impossible to achieve. It works best when it is done by immediate family and close friends, all community members need to be diligent and involved. It works best when it begins before anyone is suicidal – i.e. by building strong families and communities."

### *Programs, Services and Facilities*

This was responded to in the form of the GN needing to provide more dollars specifically towards suicide prevention. There was one response where it was mentioned resources

Inungni Sapujjiit

should be refocused to human resources and less on travel. We also heard that prevention would be well served by helping families understand the changing world around them. Programs to help young parent nurture their children and programs that make people aware of how sexual assault affect their self image. More jobs are required, current employees are overworked. There needs to be more Inuit workers.

## **2. What would you like to see happen from the Government of Nunavut? Why?**

These are in 3 categories: Government/Community/Individual .Those that didn't fit into were suggestions on providing skills education at an earlier age. One that stuck out was a suggestion to teach more virtues in our classrooms. One other that didn't fit is to legalise marijuana, it was felt that crime would significantly decrease if it were to be legalised.

### What the Government should do

#### Staffing/training

Government should hire elders as advisors. There needs to be more mental health workers, psychiatric nurses and social workers. While it is recognised more professionals are needed it was also seen that integration of Inuit Qaujimagatugangnit needs to be included when developing training material and when training is being delivered. Lay councillors must also be supported. Many people go through a lot of stress that stress therapy should be made available. A recommendation was made to have a territorial training team that travels to each community on being taught symptoms, having healing circles and stress management. The Government officials need to be more apparent to the communities.

#### Programming

Use Inuit wisdom as part of evaluation. Implement Inuit traditional activities. There needs to be equal education for Inuit. In addition, real Inuit history must be taught in schools, including residential school history, dog slayings, churches, HBC, etc. from the Inuit perspective. It was recommended that programs must be developed to increase self-esteem. It was acknowledged that Nunavut has many dropouts. All too often this group of people are forgotten. Most of them become young parents and can't do much else for themselves. We must ensure programming for our dropout group too.

## Inungni Sapujjiit

### Services

Included were more facilities for youth to go to, those that are open 24/7, 7 days a week  
On the land programs with elders for youth need to be established, cabins need to be set up close to the community where they could be used to teach survival skills for youth.

Anger management programs, relationship counselling and anti suicide messages in schools need to be provided more at the community level. Free space needs to be offered for these sessions to occur.

The Government needs to investigate more residential treatment facilities in which client and support person would get counselling together; such as health centres and social services staff.

It was felt that showing commercials on T.V is an effective way to reach the youth. The government is suggested to ensure adequate staffing, support services, provide frequent and accessible education. Most programs are usually not well known.

One recommendation was to develop crisis lines to be made available for each region. It was felt that a survival school for those at risk would be beneficial. Communities are dissatisfied about sending youth south for treatment. Programs like Big Brothers and Big Sisters were felt to be essential in preventing and intervening youth that are at high risk.

### Funding

These responses are individual responses being combined to strengthen the responses.

- ❖ Identify more money for healing.
- ❖ More jobs for youth
- ❖ Turn suicide prevention over to the church.
- ❖ Direct funding to organizations to do the suicide prevention healing programs.
- ❖ Funds to be available for parenting skills to be taught to young parents; and
- ❖ Give funds to communities for them to raise awareness

Inungni Sapujjiit

Inuit practice of working together was identified. It was recommended that the Government and Inuit organizations should work together. That Inuit must handle the social issues, they must have ownership and budgets to handle their own issues.

#### What the Community should do

It was identified that communities need to be more proactive. To provide more recreational activities for youth as they are our future. To keep children and youth busy by teaching them the importance of helping and giving them chores. Teach them Inuit strategies. In addition, to hold suicide prevention workshops in every school and encourage wellness workers to get involved with dysfunctional families. Further, lay counsellors must be supported.

#### What the Individual should do

These are what can help to create a healthy community. Individuals must be available to hear their friends and family. They need to counsel when they are approached. Individuals need to address self-esteem, bridging the gap between elders and youth. It was also mentioned that Prayer is a priority for some individuals.

### **3. Does your community provide mediation services?**

We received very useful insight in terms of how services could be improved. Governments need to ensure, communities are involved right from the beginning and that they are lead in designing programs. The responses include:

- ❖ No - it would be ideal to have a support worker for the wellness coordinator and community counsellors.
- ❖ Provided by Social worker Women's auxiliary, elders committee, government services- psychiatric nurse, social worker, nurses, etc.
- ❖ Many didn't now, most said there was a lack of promotion by frontline workers, they only hear by word of mouth if certain services are provided.
- ❖ There is none but there needs to be one.
- ❖ Even if there is one, couples will not stick to their agreements because they aren't mature enough.
- ❖ Elders want to help but they don't know where to start.
- ❖ It is used only in crisis.

## Inungni Sapujjiit

- ❖ Yes but we want a school guidance counsellor.
- ❖ The elders committee provides it but they understand the youth issues.
- ❖ The services available are overworked and have little support. Even social workers have a case load 3 or 4 times higher & no staff support. Local counsellors are poorly paid and given little training.
- ❖ Crisis Intervention Team newly formed, Elder, RCMP/Nurses, Counsellor (Inuit)
- ❖ Yes but not intensive and follow-ups are very rare.
- ❖ Schools need proper religion classes.
- ❖ Yes, they need support in money and resources to keep it going in regular basis

### **4. What do you think will help Nunavut youth to help prevent suicide?**

#### Youth identity

Youth need direction, guidance, rules and consequences of actions. Self worth, supportive respectful friends; family bonds; pride in culture and place; education; loving supportive family and community. They need to be taught coping skills. It would be beneficial if they were taught hunting skills and to enjoy life. They need to be taught to treat people equally. One approach suggested was to have mid adults speak to the youth. Many more basic emotions youth need to learn to identify included what resentments and negativities are to express compassion. Have the courage to heal and break the silence. Youth need to learn to “Work on “trust”. They need interest in school, community involvements, role models, knowledge and awareness of actions.

#### Community Action

It was mentioned that there needs to be more interaction, between the youth and families, and, more talk about suicide. Parents at work will bring happier homes. This will bring down the barrier that has existed for so long. Facing the problem, not just by the victim but by the families of the victim as well.

Respecting young people in the school. School is such a foreign process, with always receiving new teachers with no experiences and culturally inappropriate expectations. Plan big events such as concerts, talent shows, youth gathering and refer individuals to mental health facilities. In addition, it was suggested that dry dances should occur more because

## Inungni Sapujjiit

they help to discourage drinking. More spiritual counselling from elders, church, etc. should be made available.

## Nunavut Attitude

We need a strong community wellness and development program that will involve all people to make a personal and active contribution that give the youths the message “I” care, we care, our bureaucrats care, our politicians care! Everybody needs to make a little contribution from their own heart. Only then can we change the perception and the experience of youths that often leaves them with the view: Nobody cares!

## Resources required

- ❖ On-line services, home town video tapes, CDs
- ❖ More guidance counsellors available at schools.
- ❖ More youth centers in each community.
- ❖ Government of Nunavut should have a budget for youth specifically
- ❖ Promotion of healthy life styles from celebrities – Susan Aglukark, Jordon Tootoo and more prominent role models.
- ❖ School visits by a mental health nurse and someone who survived an attempt.
- ❖ Male counselors for boys and men, there are none.

## Government of Nunavut

Integrate best practices of both Inuit and qallunaat. Develop a less biased education system, preparing Inuit for higher grades. This will help youth to have more respect in the education system and encourage youth to attend school. Exchange programs, need to target parenting so that the values of education are instilled. Parents, community and school need to teach values, healthy relationships and especially coping skills. The health and social services system needs to improve. Youth doing community services should be made to spend time with elders. Put an end to the abuse by:

1. Creating programs closer to home to help survivors of abuse grow past it. Give them tools to heal.
2. Review social services system. Get counsellors, social workers out there to protect the children first then help the family to heal if possible.

## 5. How can we as a Task Force assist in the area of suicide prevention and community healing?

Responses are grouped into these 3: Encourage/Lobby/Specific Recommendations.

### Encourage

We were asked to encourage communities to be proactive and to visit each community, do more workshops, to provide community information through public meetings, posters, information sheets and offer support. We did these; however, it wasn't to the extent requested. Once data is collected and completed, inform each community in Nunavut.

We were asked to encourage communities to gather religious ministers and elders to talk to youth to talk about life/death, heaven/hell. To mention that bullying and discriminating be addressed at the community level. We would encourage that at least a couple of young people are identified in each community to be "helpers" for youth. Most importantly we were asked to encourage community to take action.

### Lobbying

We were asked to lobby on a number of issues. These include:

- ❖ Implement proven practices, support community based initiatives such as peer support groups, church groups, sports and recreation programs, parenting programs and relationship counselling.
- ❖ To make volunteerism and parental involvement a norm.
- ❖ Lobby the government and Inuit organizations deal with the issue of child protection.
- ❖ Suicide prevention committee that were taught by the government become a recognise body and that are an expert resource
- ❖ Support services to "helpers" in community (training & Info). Provide core funding to community wellness groups; make these jobs better paying and more permanent. Make it easy for the community groups to get federal support.

### Specific recommendations

- ❖ Establishment of healing centre.





**7. How would you change the term “imminiiqniq”?**

As with the previous question, many responses didn’t want the term changed, it is already considered understood by Nunavummiut

ΔΓσ <sup>b</sup> Δο<η <sup>b</sup> σ <sup>b</sup> one should not take their own life should not kill themselves	ΔΓσ <sup>b</sup> Δο<η <sup>b</sup> σ <sup>b</sup>	Δο<η <sup>b</sup> σ <sup>b</sup>	Δο<η <sup>b</sup> σ <sup>b</sup>	Δο<η <sup>b</sup> σ <sup>b</sup>
Δο<η <sup>b</sup> σ <sup>b</sup>	Δο<η <sup>b</sup> σ <sup>b</sup>	Δο<η <sup>b</sup> σ <sup>b</sup>	Δο<η <sup>b</sup> σ <sup>b</sup>	Δο<η <sup>b</sup> σ <sup>b</sup>
Loneliness or helplessness	Δο<η <sup>b</sup> σ <sup>b</sup>	Value of life	Δο<η <sup>b</sup> σ <sup>b</sup>	Keep awake and be strong
Δο<η <sup>b</sup> σ <sup>b</sup>				

**8. Are there enough human resources to deal with suicide prevention and community healing in your community? If not what is missing?**

There were three levels of responses in terms of human resources. The first was “no there isn’t enough and that they are urgently needed”, the second was “there is some but there needs to be more” and the third was “even if there is any there isn’t enough coordination or promotion of what human resources exists.”

It was mentioned not to have enough; outreach workers, social workers, local trainees needed, not enough counsellors, healers, teachers, psychiatrist, mental health workers; need a child psychologist in Nunavut; more Inuktitut teachers, cancer patient counsellors and recreation coordinators. It must be remembered that these came from several different communities with different numbers and types of services. What should be realised is that a human resource pool must be established and distributed within each community. The GN departments must work together to determine what is provided and ensure that gaps are filled to ensure these human resources are available in each community.

Other issues brought forwarded included, no vehicle for transportation for healing sessions, lack of use of radio – there is no means of communication. There should be more emphasis on periodic visits to schools, workshops, public awareness and education on human rights, services available, coping and relationship skills, additions, treatment. We are also concerned that there is no place to go after work hours and that many of the resources are the same people that wear many hats. We were told that there is never enough, people

Inungni Sapujjiit

reinforcement, meaning people that care should travel to other communities to talk. Finally it was mentioned to us that there are no guidelines to follow of what to do or what to say, you don't know to turn to at a time like this there is no healing for relatives or supporters that they can turn to.

Media campaigns, political and other leaders who will show commitment and participate in Nunavut wide: "Life-Skills" and "I care about YOU" participation programs will be necessary to animate, activate and organize the knowledge and care that is already in the communities. GN should not pour thousands of dollars into abstract research by University Professors from the South (even the United States) who tells us what we already know, that young people have difficulties dealing with problematic relationships.

#### **9. What can communities do to help prevent suicides?**

All that was responded to in this section are all mentioned in the community visits and mentioned in previous responses to the questionnaire. The main themes that were more specific are to encourage families to raise their children in a healthy environment; for the communities to take ownership and seek their own solutions, to work together as a community to ensure wellness. The other things included was to develop a spot for youth to have their own phone in shows on the radio, have positive activities like developing drama theatre groups and to develop peer groups.

#### **Section 6 Recommendations**

The recommendations below are based on the final discussions that we had in Rankin Inlet. These emerged based on the themes that we've created from our community consultations. These recommendations must not be looked as the only recommendations. There are many recommendations and suggestions in the themes and responses to the questionnaires. In addition, these recommendations may appear general in nature; there are specific activities that are suggested in the themes that relate to the implementation of these recommendations.

- All communities must have youth centres to go to.
- All youth must be taught skills that help them to realise that even if there are challenges or pains that life is still important.

## Inungni Sapujjiit

- All youth must be taught to be careful in their opinions to others, even if they are angry or unhappy.
- They have to be taught that their opinions may be hurtful to others.
- Budgets must reflect and ensure that staff is established targeting suicide prevention.
- All communities must have staff trained to be counsellors.
- All community level youth, middle aged and elders must be trained to provide counselling.
- All shelter operations must be reviewed. There must be staff available to counsel or hear the clients and ensure they are provided new skills while at the shelter.
- A Nunavut wide organization must be established who will be a watchdog, who will ensure that community priorities are being heard and will ensure that Inuit ways are being reflected in government operations and planning.
- Communities must work together to ensure that youth aren't just entering the justice system that there is a stronger mechanism to play a prevention role at the community level.
- Elders roles must be increased in the areas of
  - Justice;
  - Counselling services;
  - Providing learning skills.
- Elders must be supported.
- There must be targeted funding for more on the land programs.
- The income support program run by the Department of Education must be reviewed to ensure it is meeting the needs at the community level.
- The education system must reintroduce classes that teach about religions.

## Section 7 Conclusion

We have heard many wonderful ways of reducing the number of suicides that can occur. We have heard communities urging the government to hear them in wanting to take ownership. To say that communities desire to be the decision makers is an understatement. If the GN is to serve its residents, it must realise that communities must take the leadership in how services and programs will be offered to them. The government must make a stronger effort to understand the people it serves, to ensure there are a larger number of Inuit decision makers, Inuit services providers and Inuit program designers.

Inungni Sapujjijit

We heard many recommendations and made many recommendations. It is our hope that Government of Nunavut will make every effort to find ways to implement these recommendations.

Our youth are our priority, they are our future, and we must ensure they have the resources they need to choose healthier lifestyle choices. We must ensure they have resources to realise their identity as Nunavummiut. A recurring recommendation was to ensure a specific budget for our youth and their wellbeing.

We also would like to emphasis the Government of Nunavut needing to communicate what services and programs they have at the community level. All too often we heard our communities say there is so much confusion, that it becomes difficult to know where to go to. The frontline workers need to make a stronger effort in working with the schools to help prevent loss and anger, further; we heard that they need to go to the schools to provide direction for our children and youth to achieve a strong foundation, to ensure they achieve an identity as Nunavummiut.

We heard the communities requesting programming in the areas of life-skills, developing parenting skills, learning about healthy relationships, learning stress management, and learning about coping skills. Further to this, these programs must be developed by Inuit for Inuit. We need continuity; we can't see this initiative as a one time event. We must ensure that our efforts don't stop once this report is received.

Finally, and very importantly we heard of the need for change in attitudes. We need to focus our attitude in positive lifestyles and to promote and communicate this widely. We need to remember that life is important, life is precious and that we should enjoy it. Live Well!

**Section 8 Appendices**

Appendix 1 Terms of Reference

Appendix 2 Presenters from First Meeting

Appendix 3 Suicide Statistics as of October 2003

Appendix 4 Reports from Andrew Tagak Sr. Tukisiaqtut Reports

Appendix 5 Questionnaires for Communities

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank all those that made formal presentations to us:

Andrew Tagak Sr. Department of Health and Social Services

Don Ellis, Department of Health and Social Services

Shirley Tagalik, Department of Education

Gillian Coreless, Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth

Jack Hicks, Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs

Robert Imrie, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

Dr. William MacDonald, Department of Health and Social Services

Jean-Frederic Beauchesne, Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs

Superintendent John Henderson, RCMP and all RCMP members in the communities who presented to the Inungni Sapujjijit

Alexiina Kublu, Justice of the Peace

Ailsa Henderson, PhD

Myna Ishulutak, Iqaluit Restorative Justice

Ron McCormick, Department of Justice

Dr. William MacDonald, Department of Health and Social Services

And to all the community committees and employees that we met with in all the communities we held meetings with.

Minutes of Meetings and presentation material are available upon request;

Report on Suicide and Community Wellness in Nunavut, By Ailsa Henderson, PhD

is also available upon request

## **DRAFT**

Inungni Sapujijiit  
Task Force on Suicide Prevention and Community Healing  
Terms of Reference

### **Co-chairs:**

Bryan Simonee, Pond Inlet and Norman Komoartok, Pangnirtung

### **Members:**

Amie Ahegona, Kugluktuk; Bob Konona, Gjoa Haven; Theresa Kakkianiun, Kugaaruk; Bernadette Saumik, Rankin Inlet; Adrienne Tagoona, Baker Lake; Meeka Arnakak, Pangnirtung; Kautaq Joseph, Arctic Bay.

### **Frequency of Meetings:**

2 face to face meetings.

1. July 15 – 17, 2003 Iqaluit, Nunavut
2. September 25-27, place to be determined

2 teleconference calls

1. First call will be held prior to community consultations
2. Second call will be held after the community consultations
3. If more are required they may occur at the call of the Co-chairs<sup>7/17/2003</sup>

### **Goals:**

1. The Nunavut Suicide rate of 2002-2003 will be reduced to half by 2007.
2. The Government of Nunavut will fully understand what the Inuit needs are and how to address them.
3. Inuit employment in the area of community, social and mental health will increase.

Inungni Sapujjiit

Presenters from the First Meeting

From Andrew Tagak SR Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit Coordinator for the Department of Health and Social Services, we heard of how his Minister directed him to undertake a community tour to hear from communities. Andrew agreed to hear from suggestions for which communities we'd like him to visit. Recognizing that we couldn't visit the all communities, we felt it beneficial to distribute the communities to ensure there was no duplication of communities being visited.

From Jack Hicks, Director, of the Evaluations Division of EIA, we heard about some initiatives he and his division are undertaking. Among those are, analysis and dissemination of statistics on death by suicide in Nunavut; workshop on Best Practices in Suicide Prevention and the Evaluation of Suicide Prevention Programs in the Arctic; lead role on an internal GN initiative to determine how well GN programs meet the needs of those Nunavummiut most at risk of suicide and research on the possibility of conducting a "follow-back study" to learn more about the risk and protective factors. We support this idea of a "follow-back study". It was also requested in one of our responses.

The next presenter was Ailsa Henderson a research consultant who provided a summary of work she was asked to do by the Department of Health and Social Services in preparation for the Task Force on Suicide Prevention and Community Healing. Ailsa presented a lot of what is already known. Specifically that it is usually the youth male that commit suicide, that as many or more females attempt suicide, they are just not successful. She mentioned that this might be an indication that females do it as a means to find help, whereas males do it as a final straw. Ailsa provided a report of the research she gathered.

Day 3 began with a welcome from the Minister and Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services. Both of them mentioned the commitment to supporting efforts in any way possible. They both mentioned that how they look forward to reviewing the recommendations that we will be making.



Inungni Sapujjijit

Ron McCormick, Department of Justice.

Within the Department of Justice, programs in the area of suicide prevention include working with staff and offenders, particularly with youth. Last year, the department, led by the community corrections division trained 15 staff in the Living Works Program. It helps with suicide intervention at the community level. We have trained many others including community justice committee members, probation officers, and offenders, some delivered in partnership with the RCMP.

There is a program in the Young Offenders facility called Suicide Talk. Most youth in the facility are affected by suicide, because of that they have frank discussions allowing them to express their feelings.

*"We want the communities to know that we can provide training. We have access to limited funds to deal with problems of suicide; they are involved with national programs. We have access to information on an ongoing basis."*

Following his presentation there was a brief discussion on the requirement for more training at the community level. There was also discussion on the need for more on the land programs for the youth. There was also a discussion on barriers to the justice system. One of them is that Nunavut only has 13 crown attorneys that prosecute right now. We have 4 or 5 legal aid lawyers and recognize that there are offenders that having been waiting a long time.

Gillian Corless - Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth

Before she began her presentation, she noted that none of their programs use the term suicide or suicide prevention?

We have in our Grants & Contributions Program

- \$2.5M annually for O&M
- Another \$2.55M Federal funding for language initiatives
- \$785K annually for minor capital projects

Inungni Sapujjiit

These funds are available to community-based non-profit organizations and individuals. The purpose is to promote and protect traditional culture, language, pride in identity, family connections, and community-based, community-led initiatives.

Bob Imrie – Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated

NTI was involved in a steering committee that established a youth and elders gathering. The summary of that meeting is being drafted and it is also being translated. We also participated in the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention meeting that was held here in Iqaluit. Our President made a presentation in May. I have made presentations to the teachers meeting in Cambridge Bay and North Baffin in Resolute Bay.

NTI received funding from the GN to develop a video. It is NTI's issue that the GN deals with the Health and Social Services issues. We are saying we want to be involved in the design of suicide prevention programs and take it outside of government. Please see appendix xx for more information.

John Henderson – Superintendent RCMP

The RCMP has been doing a lot in the area of suicide prevention. For example we hosted suicide prevention training. One of the things he mentioned he would like to see is a separate governance body to coordinate government and stakeholder groups to ensure standards are the same. In terms of funding – we are working with the NTI and the Department of Health and Social Services to raise about 80-90 thousand dollars to have a dedicated resource to ensure training and coordination for all suicide prevention initiatives.

*"We are recruiting as many Inuit as we can. Last week we recruited 7 or 8 new recruits who will go to Saskatchewan to become constables."*

We've provided our aircraft for meetings; we are hoping to be able to provide the aircraft to send out crisis intervention teams to communities where they are needed. We commended the RCMP in their efforts to increase Inuit employment, they were glad to see the increase in RCMP members being Inuit.

Inungni Sapujjijit

Shirley Tagalik - Department of Education - see attached presentation material

Our focus is on suicide prevention programs is to encourage confidence. The department is part of a mental health task force, where our focus is in the area of suicide prevention. We are also part of a Children's First Secretariat where we want to ensure youth and children's rights are met.

Our final meeting was with Wende Halonen - EIA Communications. She committed to assisting us in any way with our communications needs.

## Suicide Statistics, Nunavut, April 1, 1999 – October 22, 2003

	1999.04.01 1999.12.31	2000	2001	2002	2003 to October 22	Totals	Population Projection (2003)
<b>Iqaluit</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>5278</b>
<b>QIKIQTANI</b>							
<b>Arctic Bay</b>	1	1	0	1	0	3	782
<b>Cape Dorset</b>	0	0	2	2	3	7	1298
<b>Clyde River</b>	1	0	2	3	1	7	830
<b>Grise Fiord</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	146
<b>Hall Beach</b>	0	2	3	0	1	6	696
<b>Igloolik</b>	1	2	1	1	2	7	1495
<b>Kimmirut</b>	0	0	3	1	0	4	485
<b>Pangnirtung</b>	2	0	2	3	4	11	1613
<b>Pond Inlet</b>	1	1	1	2	2	7	1443
<b>Qikiqtarjuaq</b>	0	0	1	2	4	7	566
<b>Resolute Bay</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	249
<b>QIKIQTANI TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>9603</b>
<b>KIVALLIQ</b>							
<b>Arviat</b>	1	2	1	0	2	6	1833
<b>Baker Lake</b>	1	1	1	2	0	5	1563
<b>Coral Harbour</b>	1	0	3	0	2	6	911
<b>Chesterfield Inlet</b>	0	1	0	0	0	1	401
<b>Rankin Inlet</b>	1	2	2	2	1	8	2432
<b>Repulse Bay</b>	0	1	0	1	0	2	664
<b>Sanikiluaq</b>	0	1	0	0	0	1	758
<b>Whale Cove</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	336
<b>KIVALLIQ TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>8898</b>
<b>KITIKMEOT</b>							
<b>Cambridge Bay</b>	0	2	0	0	0	2	1517
<b>Gjoa Haven</b>	0	0	0	0	2	2	1045
<b>Kugaaruk</b>	1	0	0	0	0	1	631
<b>Kugluktuk</b>	3	3	1	0	1	8	1490
<b>Taloyoak</b>	1	1	0	0	1	3	866
<b>KITIKMEOT TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5549</b>
<b>NUNAVUT TOTALS</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>29328</b>

## **Tukisinaqtut**

Reports from Andrew Tagak Sr.

Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit Coordinator

### **Arviat Sept 22 to 26**

**Sept. 23/03 - 10:00 am** I met with Gordy Main, vice chair of Committee of Council (Health committee). He had me booked for Hamlet meeting at 7:00pm. He also told me that I would reach more Inuit through local radio, and said that they would try and fit me in at the appropriate time. Then he took me to the high school to talk to older students. I talk to the student of grade 9, 10, 11 and 12. I told them about having a positive life, and talk about why no one should commit suicide because suicide is not the answer.

### **Hamlet Council Meeting**

The meeting started at 7:00pm. I told the councilors why I was here in town, and that I was here to listen to Inuit of Arviat. I told them that our Minister had ask me to hear what Inuit had to say about how there could be less suicide in this community. I also told the councilors that I told everyone that suicide is not the answer. Some causes they think are:

- In some houses there is 3 generation of family in one house, that lead to relation difficulty, in fighting between themselves, hard to cope with things around the house.
- Lost of freedom when one has to go to courts and incarcerated.
- When there is a death in the family, when there is not very much support from the community. The affected Inuit have hard time coping with life itself and not knowing who to talk to.

### **Local Radio**

At 7:00pm I had a radio show, this show was supposed to be for one hour, because enough people wanted to go on radio my show was extended to 9:00pm

### **The callers say the following are real life downer of feeling are:**

- Having trouble getting help when you need one.
- When you are not respected by someone who is younger than you are.
- Not all young have places they can go for sports and other games after school.
- Closure of pool hall, now all kids have fewer places to go.
- Rap Music and heavy metal, may contain messages in the music.
- Drugs and alcohol also maybe a cause for suicide.
- When Inuit are finger pointing at each other.
- Unemployment, when you just can't find work.
- Too many people in one house.
- When Inuit talk about hurtful things at each other.
- When your kids are removed without being told the reason why.
- When people are hired because of who you are and not what you can do.
- Having no money for the family.
- When your kids don't listen to the parents.

### **Things could be better and may help wellness in people if there are:**

- Male counselors for boys and men, there is no one at this time.
- We should admit that we all make mistakes sometimes.
- If there was drop in centre for all ages, with things like pool table and board games.
- At least once a week to have a "Happy day" where young and old can tell their stories and to support each other in a place, on parenting, sewing, where coffee and tea would be

## Inungni Sapujjiit

- served, maybe to watch TV.
- Kids should be allowed to go on a trip out on land, hunting trips and that whatever they catch be given to elders and to those does not have anyway of getting country food.
- The community should work together to solve community problems and to prevent suicide.
- Inuit should perhaps choose right words to make their point across.
- Admitting today's kids are different and requires different tactics to handle problems.

Some callers were very emotional, but we continued until it was time to go off the air at 9:00pm

### **Tukisivuga:**

The stuff that requires outside support are: Housing, because there are 3 generations of families in one house. Building to be used for drop in centre, where all ages will be able to enter and sometime be used for appropriate happy day's gatherings, also organized school hunting trips.

## **Igloolik September 17, 2003**

### **September 17, 2003**

After school was out I called Moses Kaliraq. He is qualified school counsellor and a chairperson of Committee of Council (Health Committee). We set up a meeting for Sept. 18<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm in the hotel where I was staying..

### **Sept. 18/03**

2:00 pm Moses and I met. First he told me that, I should go on the local radio, that way I would perhaps reach more people. He also said holding a public meeting would result in very low attendance.

He told me to talk about having positive life to young and older people, and talk about why no one should commit suicide.

He also told me that no one seemed to like talking about suicide. He feels that if Inuit start talking about suicide and after awhile people will know more about suicide and maybe do something about preventing suicides. One reason people don't talk about suicide is that people don't wanted to see finger pointing at each other. But Inuit of Igloolik are now saying "We have to talk about suicide", to know more will prevent suicide after youth and young understand that suicide is not the answer.

### **Local Radio**

I did what I was told to say both to young and older and I tried to comfort parents whose kids had committed suicide, I was told to use the word suicide even though people don't talk about it very much, but I did use the word. I also told local people that I was travelling alone with no questions and no agenda, but to hear people and what they have to say about preventing suicide in their Community. Here are what people had to say about suicide:

**Rap Music** – Kids have known to hear messages in the music.

**Drugs and alcohol** – maybe a cause because it will cloud the minds of people.

**Courts** – To be accused and having to go to court is bad enough, but to have the case adjourned to a later date is kind of last straw for young.

Local people are also saying that they maybe counting on the RCMP and the courts too much, but it would help more if we start to use elders more. The people also have taken into account that having negative thoughts about others is not good and will hurt some one. People also talk about young people breaking up with girl or boy friends and young single parenting will find

Inungni Sapujjiit

themselves having hard time to cope with life itself. Some callers were very emotional at times, but did speak out to tell me what it had been like to have to deal with this kind of thing.

### **Sept. 19/03**

People came in to the hotel and used telephone to speak to me to tell me their story and how they feel about suicide.

### **Sept. 20/03**

I also had morning calls came into my room to tell me their story.

### **Tukisivuga (I understand)**

Inuit of Igloolik would like to start talking about suicide so that both young and older will find out more about it. People are aware the young people and older are capable to understanding the bad side of suicide. Inuit are talking about body and soul and that soul we can't end it even if we try to commit suicide. Inuit say they should talk about this so they can and should start doing something:

Talk about suicide openly with people in the community. Talk about drugs and alcohol, why it clouds some ones mind and that it makes you do things that you would not do in the first place. Talk to young and young parents and support them as much as possible and tell them about positive living. Use all the information about doing things that are good stuff from Inuit and Qalunaaq and to have the community working together. Here is what they would need help:

**Bring back the school on land trips**, because kids always feel better after the trip out on land. Inuit feel that Inuit are outdoor people.

**Not to delay court dates of young or other to a later date**, they feel that to deal with this at the earliest would do less harm.

All have said that Inuit of Igloolik when working together can start to deal with suicide, using all information and people to deal with this.

### **Grise Fiord Oct 01 to 04/03**

**Oct. 02/03** - Called the Nurse, she said that Lisa had asked her to tell me that I should go on the local radio at 10:00 and have people call in. I was also instructed to meet with the nurse and the RCMP before I go back to Iqaluit.

### **10:00am Local Radio**

I told the public why I was here and that I was here to listen to what Inuit had to say on how not to use suicide as it does not solve a problem.

Some causes could be:

- Some kids are saying they are board.
- Young might have the idea that they are not wanted or needed.
- Some kids may feel that they are not loved.
- When kids are hurting mentally, they feel that there is no way out of this feeling.
- Finger pointing hurts any one, maybe a cause for thinking suicide.
- Some kids don't seem to know the difference between "asking them not to do bad things and telling kids not to do bad things", most kids take that as telling and treated as negative.

## Inungni Sapujjiit

When one is in this place mentally where one might think to commit suicide, some will be reminded that committing suicide is bad, and will hurt families. The person might be reminded about a word, one word only that helps them to get out of situation that would start you going towards healing. Plus keep telling oneself that tomorrow will come.

When some one commits suicide who is a member of the family, you started to ask yourself that you should've kept a closer eye on that person and ask yourself why this happen and you begin to feel responsible and feel very bad because it.

In the past one would hear that some one had committed suicide, it was just mentioned and not talked about because it would only happen once in a long while. Inuit feel that information on suicide would perhaps help to prevent suicide, because talking will mean that more information is getting to the public, that way Inuit could tell the young about living a good life, where you will time to solve problems as opposed to were you could not do after committing suicide. Most Inuit see the word suicide and this is associated with negative life.

Some Inuit say that by looking at younger person one could tell that kids have a question or a problem by their actions, and if you don't deal with this feeling would perhaps be a cause for thinking of suicide. Some callers were very emotional, but we continued until it was time to go off the air at 12:00 pm.

**Tukisivuga** - Grise Fiordmiut know for a fact that if community members are talking about a problem that it would help people get more info, so that they can make a better choice on what action to take as opposed to resorting to committing suicide. Inuit of Grise Fiord know that there is no money for youth, they are not even asking for extra funds for youth, because GN will just say there is no money for this and that. But if there was money for youth they certainly put it to a good use. There coping with what they have up to now.

## Cape Dorset September 09, 2003

### **September 09, 2003**

2:00 pm I met with Suicide Core Group chairpersons, all three of them. As this trip was for Inuit of Cape Dorset, they told me what I was going to do while I am in Cape Dorset. First they told me that I would meet with Suicide Core Group and their membership at 7:00 pm. Next day to hold a public meeting and talk about Suicide and talk about what we should do to stop or slow down suicide in the Community. Than do visits of Schools, all classes and talk about suicide and talk about good living. I was to be part of the group visiting to classes.

7:00 pm I met with all Core Group and their members, to tell me what each group was doing. The Suicide Prevention committee has divided themselves into three groups. They are Prevention, Intervention and Postvention. Each group has chairperson and about eight members. Each group do counselling at different time. For example: The prevention group will do visits of schools and try and cover each class and talk on local radio about good living. Intervention will do counselling when there is a suicidal person and try to talk them out of it. The Postvention does counselling of relatives after a person commits suicide. These groups will also do counselling of young parents, when they are not getting along.



## Inungni Sapujjiit

All groups agree that there should be a building to house this group and should be big enough to hold games of cards, scrabble, chess and those kinds of games in this building and some office space for the group. It should also be free to get in so that more kids will use this space.

### **Sept. 10/03**

We had a public meeting at 7:00 pm. Most people that speak at this meeting were looking for cooperation from the community on suicide prevention. Emotional at times as a lot of people have lost relative to suicide. The core group is newly formed and will be used starting this fall as most people come back from their summer outings. The public like the idea of having a suicide prevention group. The public also supported the committee about having a building to house this group for office and to have board games, so that kids would use this when community hall is used by other organizations. One mentioned that it would perhaps be better for the RCMP to answer their phones locally in the evenings.

The public also think that taking school kids on hunting trips should be brought back, because kids really like to go out on land; they always feel better after a hunting trip. They say that that program was cut and it should be brought back. There should be more money for student hires, because kids look forward to going to work for the summer, which is good for the kids.

Long waits for court days are very hard on young people and may cause suicide when young court days are being delayed for a later date. The courts should deal with young people as quickly as possible.

There should also be a cancer patient counsellor, because there is nothing or no one to talk to when one has cancer. When one loses a partner or a spouse to someone in the community, it is very hard to take when they stay in the community. Something should be done to deal with this matter.

The public also think that Religion should be taught in the schools, as it teaches good things and having a good life.

### **Sept. 11/03**

Prevention Core Group and I visited Sam Pudlat School in the morning. Talk about not taking one's life and positive living. We cover all classes.

In the afternoon, we visited Peter Pitseolat High School with the same message to the higher grades and older kids.

### **Tukisivuga (I understand)**

That Inuit of Cape Dorset have a suicide prevention committee that will handle suicide and other problems in their community in the Inuit way and it looks promising to see and hear something like this. The community of Cape Dorset is willing to work together to slow down or try to stop suicide in the community. They are pooling together and are willing to work hard.

### **Resolute Bay Sept 27 to 30/03**

Sept 27 I had a meeting with members of Committee of Council (Health Committee), at 7:00pm at the hotel Conference room. The committee had asked to RCMP, social Services and the Nurse to the meeting. I told them why I was in town. Which to hear what Inuit had to say about how we

Inungni Sapujjiit

could slow down people that may want to commit suicide. A committee member said that we wanted to work with police, social service worker and the nurse to deal with issues.

### **5:30 pm Local Radio**

The things that were mention by the callers.

- Religion as it teaches good values and good living.
- Organized games should be played more, kids look forward to those games.
- Inuit should let our community know that Inuit can do amazing thins if they want to.
- Talk about problem area to know more about it, so that it can be corrected.
- We should talk about positive things in out community.
- In the past suicide was not talked about because there were so few. We also knew it was wrong to commit suicide.

Something we do that may get kids thinking about suicide are:

- Pushing away our kids because parents were talking to some one or busy doing something.
- When parents are drinking and getting mad at each other.
- -Drugs alcohol make you do things that you might not have done when sober.
- When kids feel that they are not loved by parents or relatives.
- When kids' find out that they can't have everything they want, as a child they could before.
- Kids have been told to stand on their own feet. This would give them power to argue with parents, which would result in a fight and getting upset with parents.

One caller said that, when you come across a problem, think about the problem so much that you feel that you are put in a balloon, in this place you do not think of getting help from anyone, you stop caring about anything and everything. There does not seem to be any way out. What helped me was that I feel I needed to pray, so that I could come out from this feeling. I did this because I was told about GOD when I was young and I was also told how almighty he was, that could take anyone out of any situation. "I did" the caller said.

It is hard dealing with kids and young who had attempted suicide. When talking to kids, makes them understand why things are happening the way they do, and that kids are not the reason for parents fighting each other. Kids and young are also told that we all have a soul that we can not kill. There are Inuit counsellors here who will and willing to do counselling in Inuktitut for Inuit. This seemed to work to preventing suicide.

We also have to take into account that there could be some one who may commit suicide without ever say before hand.

Go off the air at 7:30 pm.

**Tukisivuga** – Resolutemiut are looking for support from the RCMP, Social Services and the Nurse, to do counselling in Inuktitut because Inuit youth and others feel more comfortable talking in Inuktitut. All they wanted to do is be able to do this with the help of the Police, Social Services and the Nurse so that it can be a community thing, where Inuit ways of doing things are done.

**Inungni Sapujjiit  
Task Force on Suicide Prevention and Community Healing**

1. What are your thoughts on suicide prevention?
2. What would you like to see happen from the Government of Nunavut? Why?
3. Does your community provide mediation services?
4. What do you think will help Nunavut youth to help prevent suicide?
5. How can we as a Task Force assist in the area of suicide prevention and community healing?
6. How would you change the term “imminiiqtailitittiniq”?
7. How would you change the term “imminiiqniq”?
8. Is there enough human resources to deal with suicide prevention and community healing in your community? If not what is missing?
9. What can communities do to help prevent suicides?