

De Victiming

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One important key that we found to all of our work at Ilisaqsivik, we call “de-victiming”. Early in the operations of Ilisaqsivik we realized that we needed healing at personal, family, and community levels and we quickly began to explore the pain of the past. The result of these inquiries was quickly apparent in all of the angering and blaming that threatened to tear apart whole families, the already fragile lives of individuals, and indeed the whole community.

At first our counselors were at a loss of how to deal with this great outpouring of emotion. Gradually, however, through the introduction of the philosophy of Choice Theory we learned as a staff to help each other and our clients to meet our Four Basic Needs in healthy and appropriate ways.

Choice Theory is a theory developed by Dr. William Glasser that says that people choose their behavior in order to meet their needs. The basic needs of each person are Empowerment, Love and Belonging, Freedom of Choice and Play. Problems arise for individuals when they are unable to identify appropriate choices or have little or no understanding of the needs driving them, and make choices that are destructive to their core relationships.

Time and time again, we at Ilisaqsivik noted that as we used a Reality Therapy approach to helping individuals identify their own needs and to gain strength by identifying their own Quality World experiences, that they were able to move ahead quickly and thoroughly from the painful traumas of the past, and to begin to take control of their lives. When a person identifies the strength they have in the present, which is an accumulation of all the positive and pleasant and helpful experiences they have had in their lives, he or she is able to move into the Reality of today, and perceive him or herself to be in control of his or her world, and not merely a pawn in the divine game of numbers and cultures.

In essence, this is what ‘De Victiming’ is all about. In the north in particular, ‘victiming’ has been a way of life: food is very expensive; air freight costs \$14.75 per kilo; we don’t have access to good recreation facilities; our teachers are transient and sometimes terrible; the government put Clyde at the bottom of the list again and again; we don’t have access to banks; our phone lines are slow and faulty; the mail is even worse; and on top of it all, in Clyde River we have more storms per year than any other Nunavut community . . . the list goes on and on. At another layer of our existence, the victim stance goes deeper. All of our dog teams were shot in the 1960’s. Over 85% of the people of Clyde have been sexually assaulted or raped. Every family had members who were kept at the sanatorium in Southern Canada for years at a time, without explanation or follow up. Clyde River families were some of the hardest hit in the measles epidemic of the early 60’s. If any people were rightly able to claim victim-ship it was the people of Clyde River. And some people are still there.

However, as individuals learn through Choice Theory and Reality Therapy to move away from the victim stance and to move into appropriate activities and thinking that allow their needs of today for Empowerment, Love and Belonging, Freedom of Choice and Play to be met, they are able to move ahead in their lives, and as a result choose less and less often to participate in self destructive behaviors, such as addicting, angering, abusing others either emotionally or physically, choosing suicide, or taking extreme risks .

We say at Ilisaqsivik that when we support victims, we get more victiming; and as we support families, we get stronger families and community, and when we support responsible behavior

dealing with reality today, we get active, thinking behavior that results in a collective drive towards wholeness and health in our community. If you read our program profile, for example for the past fiscal year, you will find that we offer no 'victim' support services per se. Instead we support personal development and family activities that allow people to move ahead in their healing journey.