

# Nunavut Wellness Projects

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## **North Baffin Personal Development (Suicide Prevention) Initiative**

A Proposal of the North Baffin Working Group representing Caregivers from Clyde River, Pond Inlet, Arctic Bay, Grise Fiord, Resolute Bay, Igloolik and Hall Beach, Nunavut

**Submitted by Ilisaqsivik Society, Clyde River, Nunavut, 2001 - 2006**

### **The Problem:**

Recent statistics of Suicide in the North Baffin communities of Clyde River, Pond Inlet, Arctic Bay, Resolute Bay, Grise Fiord, Igloolik and Hall Beach indicate suicide rates of 133.5 per 100,000, which is 15 times the national rate of 20.4 per 100,000. This region has the highest suicide rate in Nunavut, and in all of Canada.

### **The Pattern:**

The pattern across these communities is to blame, addict, depress, abuse and generally shift responsibility for suicide and other self-destructive behaviors.

### **The Purpose:**

It is the purpose of the North Baffin Personal Development (Suicide Prevention) Initiative (NBPD) through the core of people trained in Choice Theory present in those communities to move communities away from blame and facilitate the reconnection of individuals to self, family and others and to put in place programs teach people how to be involved in relationships in a nurturing, safe and appropriate way.

### **The Approach:**

The approach is simple and straightforward and builds on a skill that is intrinsic to all, that of connecting with others. The Initiative is two fold and aims first to promote contact at the individuals, family, community and regional levels and then to facilitate connecting and contact programs that will empower people by teaching them the skills to be involved with other in a nurturing, safe and appropriate way.

Choice Theory is an approach developed by Dr. William Glasser, a certified psychiatrist that has been taught to and implemented by a Core Group of caregivers in the North Baffin Region. Choice Theory is all about helping people understand the importance of connections with self, with family and with others. This theory identifies the things that are destructive to connections and the things that create and maintain those connections in a safe, appropriate and healthy way.

The members of the Core Group already trained in Choice theory have the tools to carry out this work and as individuals have already begin implementing it at home with the

result that their own families are becoming healthier. What remains to be done within the scope of this project is to make programs, administration and travel possible for the Core Group and community participants as they carry out this important work.

**Resources:**

Every one of the seven North Baffin Communities has resources for wellness that can be activated by being identified, supported and maintained, by the people, for the people, in Inuktitut. The Initiative will support those individuals already identified as caregivers, and will put in place intercommunity visits and team work, as well as other connection activities that will allow these people to become enabled to carry out their important work together with Inuit in other communities involved in the same process of healthy involvement with others.

**Clientele:**

The NBPDI puts in place activity and programs that will potentially involve every individual in the seven target communities. It is designed particularly to make contact with and to nurture the relationships of those people who are presently falling between the cracks:

- 'High risk' youths and their families and
- Caregivers themselves, including all parents, who are so overwhelmed by their work load that they lose contact with their support systems.

**Time Frame:**

Activities that promote contact and healthy connections will begin immediately in 2001 and will continue through March 2006.

**General Success Indicators across the Region of NBPDI**

- 1) **Suicide Rates will drop from their current 133.5 per 100,000 at least to the Nunavut average of 75 per 100,000 and preferably to the national average of 20 per 100,000 in each community .**
- 2) **Every member of every community will be reached and will become part of an appropriate program of connection.**
- 3) **People will update their pictures of 'counselling', from a problem and blame orientation to becoming the action of working on improving connections and involvement with self, family and community members.**
- 4) **Health Centres will note a marked drop in deaths and injuries related to the violence of suicide [and its related self destructive behaviors.]**
- 5) **There will be more families living, working and playing in harmony in the streets and in the homes.**
- 6) **Public functions will cease to be marred by fights, drunks and verbal abuse because of improved connections.**
- 7) **Bullying and teasing amongst school children will decrease significantly.**
- 8) **Performance and attendance in schools will increase.**
- 9) **Literacy rates and verbal expression in Inuktitut and English will increase across the region.**
- 10) **Juvenile crime rates and addictions will decrease.**
- 11) **Incidents of family violence and abuse will decrease**
- 12) **Counselling by community members will become a respected profession that is supported by Nunavut's Department of Health**

**and Social Services with core funding and a place of work in each community, with a family resource centre in place in every North Baffin Community.**

#### **NBPDI Working Group Members**

Laisa Ningeok,	Grise Fiord	867 980 9929
Dora Pudluk	Resolute Bay	Community Rep
David Irngaut	Igloolik	867 934 8163
Pauloosie Mukpa	Igloolik and Arctic Bay	867 934
Percy Pikujak	Hall Beach	867 928 8046
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Thomasie Ootook	Pond Inlet	867 899 8933
Rebecca Iqalukjuak	Clyde River	867 924 6565
Jacopie Iqalukjuak	Clyde River	867 924 6565
Sarah Killiktee	Clyde River	867 924 6565

## **Objectives and Activities**

### **I. North Baffin Working Group Continues to Meet**

The NBWG will continue to meet on a regular basis in order to learn together about community interconnection and to create a working model that will facilitate the process of empowering people in their communities to be involved in a nurturing, safe and appropriate way. The working group will meet once per month by teleconference to evaluate what is happening. The group will weigh the reality and the issues of the present against the criteria of what is supposed to happen and then to make adjustments to the working model as outlined in the following points to reflect the realities and the needs of the communities of North Baffin. They will also attend training and planning workshops in Clyde River at least once per year.

### **II. Initial Community Visits**

Three people who are experienced in community wellness work at who have had previous training in Choice Theory through the Nunavut Counsellors' Course and who have taken an intensive five day training workshop in applying the Reality Therapy model to community work, will travel to each of the other six communities and bring together the recognized caregivers/ counselors in each community. They will conduct one 5-day workshop in each community centering around two objectives: 1) *Creating individual self-care plans for Counsellors* and 2) *Creating a community self care plan* with a four-fold approach:

- What do we want?
- What are we doing?
- What's working and what's not working?
- What's the plan to do more of what is working?

**Success Indicators:**

- The ICT and the participants will feel satisfied that they have made contact and supported the community caregivers to make a self care plan and a plan of involvement with their community.
- Community caregivers will be empowered to carry on with their work and will begin to gather strength.

**III. Connecting Communities Workshops**

These workshops will be designed to last one weekend, to allow all interested people to take part. They will be delivered by The Initial Connection Team who will be joined by two to four other people from the working group who are in neighboring communities. With help from the North Baffin Team of Care Givers (NBTCG) (all people identified in the Initial Community Visits that are already involved in/ want to be involved in this work of Personal Development (Suicide Prevention))

- What do we want?
- What are we doing?
- What's working and what's not working?
- What's the plan to do more of what is working?

**Success Indicators:**

- The ICT and the participants will feel satisfied that they have made better contact with each other than ever before
- The community members will feel empowered to become more involved with other members of their family and community, and region,
- Plans for future programs at the community level will begin to be made
- Specific programs will begin to be put into place that promote contact and involvement

**IV. Annual Community Visits**

Once per year, the ICT will visit each community in order to help the community do an informal evaluation of its progress in its connection programs. Tools to do this will be developed by the NBWG, and will be taught to the community caregivers, in order to help track the progress of this project. Such tracking forms as Counselling Session Report Forms, Meeting Report Forms and other kinds of reporting forms as developed by Iliasaqivik Society for their Family Resource Centre will be adapted for this purpose.

**Success Indicators:**

- Annual evaluation times will be a time of refreshment for the caregivers of each community
- Programs in each community will be adjusted each year to meet the needs of the community
- ICT members and community caregivers/ counsellors will gradually become more empowered to carry out the evaluation and readjustment of programs themselves.
- More and more programs focusing on contact and empowerment to be involved in a healthy way in a variety of relationships will be delivered in communities.
- Suicide rates, crime rates, addictions and family violence will decrease

**V. Nunavut Choice Theory Counselling Course**

The North Baffin Personal Development (Suicide Prevention) Initiative has grown directly out of the first year of the Nunavut Choice Theory Counselling Course. Initiated as a result of mutual concern and collaboration between the Status of Women's Director identifying a need across

Nunavut for formal counselor training, and the Director of Ilisaqsivik Society and Family Resource Centre becoming certified in this approach, the Clyde River Choice Theory, Reality Therapy and Lead Management course focuses on establishing a body of Reality Therapy certified counselors working at the community level across Nunavut.

The course was piloted by Ilisaqsivik Society from October 2000 – March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2001, with the first three of nine training sessions being completed. The training sessions were very successful and have already had direct impact on the participant communities. Four of the North Baffin communities have participants in the course: Clyde River (3), Pond Inlet (1), Arctic Bay (1) and Igloodik (1). It is these six people who form the backbone of the NBPDl working group. With their training to date and their understanding of the importance of connection and involvement with self, family and community in particular, this group of people is particularly well situated to carry out this project.

The final six training sessions of the Choice Theory, Reality Therapy and Lead Management Counselling Course are being offered at Ilisaqsivik from April 1, 2001 through May 2002. It is essential that the course be carried through to the finish. Ten of the original 12 participants continue to attend the course, and two Clyde River people have been added to the class, giving a full complement of participants who will become Reality Therapy Certified counselors at the conclusion of their training. The course as it proceeds further prepares the working group to carry out the work of the North Baffin Personal Development (Suicide Prevention) Initiative.

The Choice Theory model as expressed through Reality Therapy as a counseling model, and through Lead Management as a management/ leadership model, is a very effective counseling and management approach that fits well with North Baffin Communities. Not only is the approach very natural and a –cultural and so lends itself well to cross-cultural situations, but it is also very much in keep with traditional Inuit beliefs and values such as sharing and the importance of involvement with others.

**Success Indicators:**

- All participants will attend each of the remaining 4 training sessions, and will be prepared to be successful in completing Certification Week in May 2002. 12 counsellors were certified.
- The home communities and regions of the participants will become more aware of the importance of contact and involvement towards building healthy communities
- The NBWG and the ICT will gain strength from participation in these training sessions.

**VI. North Baffin Choice Theory Course.**

Two new course participants from each community will be chosen by the NBWG, and will travel 9 times over a two year period to Clyde River or to another community as decided by the NBWG. This new group of Choice Theory trainees will help to support the NBWG in each community. Participants will be chosen for their commitment to their people and to counselling and their desire to become more highly skilled in this profession. Course to start fall 2003.

**Success Indicators:**

- All participants will attend each of the 9 training sessions, and will be prepared to be successful in completing Certification Week in May 2005
- The home communities and families of the participants will become more aware of the importance of contact and involvement towards building healthy communities
- The NBWG and the ICT will gain strength from the participants in these training sessions.
- 12 people will complete all modules of the training, and will become Reality Therapy certified counsellors
- These counsellors will have an impact on the mental health of their communities and on connective behaviors

## **VII. Regionally Based Counselling Circuits**

The NBWG has identified regionally based counselling circuits to be in their view the most important element of this initiative. Caregivers in each community are notoriously over worked and under supported. In addition, caregivers and counsellors must constantly deal with community backlash against the work they are doing. Often blame, fault finding from the past and family politics are thrown against counsellors and caregivers as they attempt to do their wellness work within their own communities. This results in Counsellors often being perceived as being ineffective, both by themselves and by their communities at large although they may have developed excellent counselling skills. This is very disabling to say the least.

The NBWG on the other hand has observed that when a known counsellor from another community arrives in town, local residents flock to that person, requesting counselling that they perceive they are unable to find within their own community. This is often the most effective counselling community members can receive: it is in Inuktitut; the counsellor knows the general issues involved, but is not involved in the local politics of the situation; the counsellor is seen primarily as a resource, and does not have to be faced on a social basis daily as do local counsellors; A visiting counsellor from a neighboring community is perceived to be more accessible for follow up than a southern doctor or mental health specialist.

It is planned, that in conjunction with the Connecting Communities Workshops, counsellors/ caregivers from neighboring communities will be invited to attend and help do the planning with the ICT. Rick Puteran, will give a five-day intensive training course for this kind of itinerant counselling and support work in December 2001 in Clyde River. Once the Connecting Communities Workshops are complete, itinerant counsellors will begin to visit neighboring communities on a regular basis, as prescribed by the needs expressed during the Community Workshops.

### **Success Indicators:**

- At least 10 clients will be seen, and appropriate records kept per circuit counsellor visit to another community.
- Counsellors will develop their skills through active practice
- Contact with other agencies in the community will be so healthy and so empowered that the justice system, the health system and the education system use the services of the counsellors frequently.

### **Public Awareness About Contact and Empowerment for Connection**

Local radio shows are the community way of making connections and disseminating information. Local radio will be used in each community to keep informing the public on personal development issues, and in particular stressing the development of healthy connection. By Feb. 2003, each of the 7 communities had their first community visit. The visits were very successful.

### **Success Indicators:**

- Contact and Involvement with others will become familiar and useful to all community members
- The health system, the education system and the justice system in the North Baffin Region will begin to adjust and form healthy liaisons with caregivers and counsellors, recognizing that problems with the law usually indicate deeper unrest that counsellors' can help with.
- Public knowledge and appreciation of involvement with others will begin to be very common in each community
- Health Centres will see a drop in illness precipitated by family disharmony
- Suicide rates will drop

## **IX. Community based and Community Specific Involvement Activities**

Based on the Connecting Communities Workshops, each individual community will design an activity-based program that will meet the needs of its community members to connect. It is possible that some of the many projects piloted by Iisaaqsvik Society through its Family Resource Centre will be of use.

### **Success Indicators:**

- There will be at least four connection programs in place in each community
- NBCG will be involved in most if not all projects as leaders in building connections
- Family Resource Centres/ Community Support Centres will begin to grow in each community

## **X. Two Annual Large Gatherings, one in Spring and one in Fall**

Traditionally Inuit traveled much more to visit, share and connect with each other. Primarily by dog team and sea ice, but also by water and by walking in the summer, people would keep in touch and take their involvement with other camps seriously, developing relationships across the seasons and the miles. These relationships, both family and non-family were critical to the survival of the people in the past. It is this same basic value that is the critical focus of this Initiative and will promote the survival of the people at risk of suicide. Large gatherings of people occur frequently in Southern Baffin, in Pangnirtung, and Iqaluit on an annual basis and in other communities from time to time. These gatherings are essential to share food and thought, music and culture and to develop new and creative relationships.

At present in North Baffin, much time and energy has gone into the founding and development of the North Baffin Quest, a spring event that brings together dog teams from all North Baffin communities to compete for prestige and hard cash. More important however, is the cultural interchange; it is remarkable that at this dog team race there is very little undercutting and hard competition. What all dog team drivers, their support teams, their families and their communities have remarked on is the sense of empowerment that comes from doing this traditional activity altogether. It is no accident that the Quest has been supported in part for the last three years by Brighter Futures funding; it is the one North Baffin connection event that has been by the people for the people and has been highly successful in terms of connection with self, with family, with community members and with other people in the region. It is important that this event be maintained at its past level of participation, and that the connection aspect of its activities be maintained with support from this project.

Other events that would also promote connections and that have been spoken of over the past five years are myriad. Included in the list of possible main events are the following:

Music Festival  
Cultural Festival  
Sports/ Inuit Games  
Square Dance Festival  
Story Telling and Drama Festival  
Etc.

### **Success Indicators:**

- Good participation and preparation for participation in the events by members of each of the seven communities
- Support in kind from the host communities, freely given and freely accepted.
- Contact and involvement going on in a healthy, safe and appropriate manner

## **XI. Annual Youth Camps**

While this project recognizes that youths should be integrated and not disassociated from members of their families and communities, it is clear that it is appropriate to bring youths from all communities together annually in a series of 3, 2-week youth camps. The purpose of these camps would be 1) to give youth opportunity to develop healthy contacts with young people from other communities with a view to building strong relationships between communities in the future and 2) to help youths develop the tools to develop healthy, safe and nurturing relationships with themselves, with their families, with friends, with members of the opposite sex, with their instructors and people in authority and with other people in their communities.

The annual youth camps would be established by the NBWG and would be directed by a separate body to be appointed and supported by the NBWG.

### **Success Indicators:**

- The camp will leave a deep impression on the lives of 12 youths, four for each of three two week camps each summer
- The group of elders, facilitators and camp counsellors each year will be empowered to become very involved with the young people while they are at the camp and in doing follow up by telephone or by mail or by radio in the following year
- Young people who attend the camps will have a negligible rate of crime and addictions as a result of participating in the camp, and will be more successful in school and in obtaining meaningful employment
- The families of the young people who take part in the camp will be strengthened by becoming more involved and connected with each other in a holistic and healthy manner