

Land-Based Youth Wellness Camps In the North



Literature Review and Community Consultations

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This report was prepared as part of a larger project entitled “Child and Youth Mental Health and Wellness Research, Intervention and Community Advocacy in Nunavut, funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada from 2009-2015.

This report can be cited as:

“Noah, J.L. & Healey, G.K. (2010) *Land-based youth wellness camps in the north: Literature review and community consultations*. Iqaluit, NU: Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre.”

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PART 1: REVIEW OF LAND PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH IN NUNAVUT

Section 1: Programs offered in the past

Qikiqtani Health Science Camp 2007

Coordinator: Angela Rintoul, Nunavut Arctic College Nursing Program

This camp was offered in the summer of 2007 as a one-time project by the Aboriginal Health Human Resources Initiative (AHHRI). Although no specific model was used for this camp, Angela reported that it was developed in partnership with the Dalhousie Nursing Program and was originally designed to increase enrollment in nursing programs in Nova Scotia. This Nunavut-based project was geared toward children and youth. The underlying philosophy was “to increase the interest of young Inuit to consider a health career upon graduation from high school” (1). The camp facilitators did not require any formal training to be camp counsellors. Angela wrote the proposal and constructed the initial ideas for the curriculum, and two nursing students were provided with the opportunity to expand on the proposed activities and the content of the camp.

Inuit-specific cultural components included: throat singing, drum dancing, arctic sports, and a day on the land at Sylvia Grinnell River with elders. Elders shared stories about traditional practices in health. A local Inuk nurse spoke with the campers about her job, the purpose of which was to provide a role model for the youth to see and imagine for themselves the possibility of pursuing a health career.

The camp was held at Nunavut Arctic College Nunatta campus in Iqaluit in the nursing lab and adjoining class room. Three different camps were offered to three separate age groups. The first camp did not actually attract any registration and was geared to the youngest group.

Upon reflection, it was thought that promotional material was not circulated early enough. The second camp targeted ages 8-11 years and the third camp ages 11-14 years. The facilitator-camper ratio was 1:5. The program had been funded for three facilitators, however only ten children enrolled for each session so only two were needed. The camp ran from 8:30 am-5:00 pm during the regular work week and ran for 5 days at a time.

Although no official evaluation was conducted, the facilitators reported that campers expressed positive feedback about taking tours of the medical departments of the hospital and College, and enjoyed all of the cultural activities. After doing a 'survey of hands' at the end of both camps several campers indicated a desire to pursue a career in health sciences.

Angela, the camp coordinator felt that improvements to the camp would include: conducting the preliminary planning and advertising earlier to maximize enrollment in the camps; a nutritious lunch provided by the camp; and the possibility of sending home fliers with teachers in the schools and hanging posters earlier. The curriculum used in the camps was adapted to the age groups and all felt that it was excellent and flexible to suit the needs of the campers attending. They felt it was a very beneficial program and enjoyed watching the youth begin to see a possibility of a career in health. ACTUA (2) intends to offer similar camps throughout Nunavut and is exploring this camp in particular to develop a fitting health science program. The final comments that Angela had to add were that the brown bag lunches kids brought to camp could have been changed. A unique and creative aspect of the camp was that parents/caretakers were invited to a power point presentation at the conclusion of camp that showcased the week's activities with photos, music and narratives. The campers were involved in the entire process which also helped to impart a useful skill for future academic projects.

The Budget for Qikiqtani Health Science Camp:

\$46, 582.40 was the total cost for a five week program.

Salaries: \$19, 753 (rounded to the nearest dollar)

Equipment: \$2000 (video & tapes)

Supplies: \$4200

Healthy snacks: \$5000

Honorariums for Cultural Activities: \$7200

CPR First Aid Training: \$2500

Transportation Costs: \$1500

Space Rentals: \$8825

(Total in kind contributions subtracted \$9625)

The Hiukitak School of Tuktu: Collecting Inuit ecological knowledge of caribou and calving areas through an elder-youth camp.

Authors: Natasha L. Thorpe, 1998.

“Continuity of Inuit culture is possible only when elders teach the young people the traditional Inuit ways of living. An elder-youth camp can be a powerful method of documenting and communicating Inuit Ecological Knowledge. In an outdoor classroom, older generations of men and women can share their respective expertise with Inuit youth through storytelling and by demonstration. This ultimately fosters community empowerment and education. These two attributes will guide young men and women as they prepare to make challenging resource management decisions in the new Canadian Inuit territory of Nunavut” (3: pp. 407).

Natasha Thorpe, the lead researcher on the Tuktu & Nogak Project (1998) worked with an advisory board comprised of elders from Cambridge Bay, Umingmaktuuq, Qingauk and Qurluqtug to form the research methods, camp location and the research team to be hired. Sandra Eyegetok was hired as Thorpe’s full-time research partner in Cambridge Bay with part-time researchers hired in the other three communities as selected by the board. The advisory board of elders felt it was imperative to involve youth in this camp. Eight youth were hired as assistants, nine elders and five project staff formed the week-long camp. The Inuit elders shared traditional knowledge about caribou hunting and migratory patterns as well as sharing stories, drum dancing and other culturally relevant activities and knowledge. Natasha Thorpe primarily focused on data collection regarding caribou; not about the dynamics between the elders and youth or curriculum for a youth camp (3).

Current Programs Happening in Nunavut

City of Iqaluit Summer Day Camp Programs

The City of Iqaluit delivers a one week sports camp each year in February during a winter school break running from Monday-Friday, 8:30 am-5:00 pm. The outlined objectives of the camp program are to improve skill development in sports and to increase physical activity level. The City also offers eight subsequent weeks of a summer day camp from June-August each year that operate from 8:30 am-5:00 pm. The camps run for children and youth aged 6-12 years of age. The day camps require paid enrollment in advance of the camp’s start dates (4 & 7).

The summer day camps offer a ‘well rounded’ camp experience and involve many activities including sports, swimming, arts & crafts, cooking, music, drama and more. The summer camps promote a safe and healthy environment that aim for campers to get the most out of their camping experience by keeping activities light and fun. The campers are grouped by ages 6-7, 8-9 and 10-12 in separate age-appropriate groups. The ratio of staff:campers is roughly 100 campers over the various age categories to 13 trained facilitators as well as administrative staff including the program coordinator, seasonal camp coordinator and the assistant camp coordinator (4).

The camp facilitators are trained in a week long session by the City of Iqaluit. They are prepared to deal with behavioural challenges, teach the proposed activities, engage in the cooking program and practice making the craft projects. First aid and CPR training is mandatory and provided to staff during the training (4).

The staff are encouraged to include aspects of Inuit culture in the camp by promoting activities involving animals, story time with elders and providing many opportunities to be outside in nature. The camp setting itself is based out of one of the designated City buildings where all campers meet with their facilitators and co-campers at the start of the day to check in, sing songs and learn of the day's schedule. It is also the meeting place at the end of the day and drop-off/pick-up location for parents/guardians (4).

Feedback from campers and parents has been positive especially from younger campers. Suggestions have been to include more Inuit traditional activities and lessons into the curriculum, which the coordinators are in the process of adding. The City of Iqaluit's Dept. of Recreation team feels that there is a missing component that captures the interest of older youth. It may involve a component on mentoring and a type of leaders-in-training program in the future. The team report that skill development and increased physical activity all help to promote wellness and put a smile on the campers' faces (4).

The City of Iqaluit also facilitates the Iqaluit Skate Boarding Park. They hold skate boarding camps on occasion that are well attended. As well, they have developed a volunteer leadership program through the Skate Park where pre-teens and young teens assist with the program and provide demos for younger kids as well as working on a schedule. This process has led to recruiting Skate Park staff and has been a positive experience for campers and youth volunteers.

The funding for the camps is provided through the City of Iqaluit. Some components have received funding through "Brighter Futures" such as the Healthy Snack Program at the the Abe Opik Hall camp in Apex (4 & 5).

Abe Opik Hall Camp in Apex (Iqaluit)

This camp was developed in response to the need for children and youth in Apex to participate in summer activities. It is free and accessible for families who do not live directly in Iqaluit. This camp is unique because it is a drop-in style, the campers enroll themselves and the parents sign a permission form. The camp operates from 1:00 - 5:00 pm based on previous attendance. Snacks are provided, physical activity is promoted and activities are a daily event, primarily taking place outdoors. This program has incorporated more aspects of Inuit culture including berry picking, language games, drum making, elders shar-

ing, Inuit games, sewing crafts, etc. One of the stipulations around the drop-in style of attendance is that campers must arrive at camp prior to 1:30 or they are not permitted to take part in the day's activities so that there are minimal interruptions and often camp is taken out on the land and with a shortened day time is of the essence (5 & 6).

This program does not group children and youth separately as the children in this satellite community of Iqaluit play together regardless of age. The camp is limited to 20 campers with two facilitators. The older campers rotate as staff assistants to help facilitators and promote leadership amongst the older participants (5 & 6). Youth look forward to taking part in this role and it bolsters their self-esteem (5).

The budget for the Abe Opik Hall Apex Camp to run concurrently for a seven week period is as follows (5):

Staffing- 2 staff @ \$30/hr for 20 hrs per week x 7 weeks \$8400.00

Healthy Snack Program -\$300/week x 7 = \$2100

Program Supplies: \$100/week x 7 = \$700

Total Estimated Budget \$ 11, 200

The camp location did not cost the City as it is owned by the City of Iqaluit.

Nunavut Youth Centres

Across the territory there are several community youth centres open to pre-teens and teens offering a safe environment where youth can gather and engage in activities, skill building and recreation. The City of Iqaluit Youth Centre recently conducted a survey to youth attending the centre inquiring about their specific requests for programming. Youth requested workshops on safe sex, increased outdoor activities, clubs for boys and girls, and to learn about other cultures and practices around the globe. The City of Iqaluit's Dept. of Recreation department is working on developing these resources at this time (6).

The Inuusivut Project

Kitikmeot Elder and Youth Cultural Camp, Youth Leadership & Multimedia Training Rankin Inlet 2008. Embrace Life Council & Health Canada were involved in the formation of this project (8). This project provides an opportunity for Inuit youth to explore and express themselves through different mediums including multimedia. They explore different themes such as the perception of mental health across Canada (8). The Inuusivut Project has supported an elders and youth camp that hosted in in Umingmaktok as described in the following excerpt:

“Elders and Youth from each of the 7 communities across the Kitikmeot region participated in a Language and Culture Camp in Umingmaktok (Bay Chimo) and Hiraarvik from August 10-16.

Youth learned traditional skills such as sewing, tool making, hunting and meat/skin preparation. Participants from across the region flew into Cambridge Bay, where a charter transported them to Bay Chimo. Following a one day delay due to weather, the campers moved by boat from Bay Chimo to a camping site called Hiraarvik, a short distance away from Hiukaktak, a proposed conservation area in the Kitikmeot region. Youth and Elders toured the proposed conservation area by helicopter and discussed traditional uses of the land. Drum dances and singing was done on a few nights and campers took responsibilities in all areas of camp duty. An elderly woman demonstrated the lighting of a qulliq to the group, using only traditional materials and methods, and despite light winds outdoors, was successful in lighting the lamp. Youth also received instruction in photography and video camera operation and assisted in documenting the whole camp experience through photography and film. A camp slideshow, accompanied by drum songs, was completed and a video project is being edited using the footage obtained during the week.” (8)

The Inuusivut Project has supported youth ages 6-16 in an anti-sniffing/substance abuse campaign by providing the camera equipment and support to explore the topic through artistic means. The Inuusivut Project has been operating for over three years and wraps up in March 2010. It has been a voice for Inuit youth to share their stories, to be creative and to showcase what is going on throughout Nunavut.

At the end of the camp, several pieces of equipment are given to the community for the youth to continue to explore and create more photography and video projects. The empowering aspects of this program include giving youth a chance to express themselves and to learn new skills while working with high-tech equipment. Trusting the kids with the equipment for the week helps to build the campers’ self-esteem and feelings of empowerment aside from completing a video or photo collage that they can be proud of (9).

Nunavut Stars Hockey Camp

This week long program for all Nunavut children and youth ages 4-19 has been running for 8 years. It is located in Iqaluit, NU with ice time taking place at the City of Iqaluit arena and off-ice time taking place at Inukshuk High School, Atti Fitness Centre and other outdoor locations. The camp’s objectives are to improve the campers hockey knowledge, skills and to encourage risk taking in the sport. There are 120 children & youth enrolled each year across the territory with 15 camp counsellors and 20 coaches from the south, many of which are NHL coaches who all donate their time for the campers. The counsellors are provided with a two-day orientation. The camp evolved from a two day clinic provided by two brothers from the south who played hockey one of whom was the NY Rangers assistant coach. It has grown from a few 1/2 days of ice time to a full-time 5 day program involving not only ice time and skill development but also off-ice activities and culturally relevant activities. There are four age groups that range from 4-19 years. The camp is offered from 8:00 am-4:00 pm with breakfast and lunch provided by the Royal Purple Elks Lodge

of Iqaluit. The campers travelling from other communities are flown by First Air, however their families pre-arrange billets for the week (9).

The Inuit specific content of the hockey camp involves Inuit games, team building, eating and talking about country food, and lessons about culture. As well, the professional and non NHL coaches are involved in a cultural day at the end of the camp involving feeding a dog team and learning about Inuit culture. The feedback from campers and parents has been overwhelmingly positive. According to Jesse Mike, camp coordinator, staff and campers alike get 'excited and look forward to this camp all year long'. On the second last night of camp, the older campers are invited to a youth dinner hosted by Embrace Life Council where they talk about issues pertaining to Nunavut youth, goals for the future and what they have learned about themselves in the camp. Campers share their experiences and give positive feedback to each other. There has been no evaluation of the efficacy of the program meeting the objectives of the camp, however the funding for the project continues to be supportive and the communities promote attendance by youth. At the end of the camp a closing ceremony involving video footage and photography of the activities and events throughout the week is shown which celebrates the campers' accomplishments and personal growth (9).

This project is funded by several sources including: First Air, The City of Iqaluit, fundraising in communities, Northwest Tel, Embrace Life Council, Brighter Futures, Iqaluit Minor Hockey League, and the Frobisher Inn. All staff participation is voluntary (9).

Blue Print For Life Hip Hop Through Social Work Programs

This program is offered by a consulting firm called Blue Print For Life. This fee-for service program based out of Ottawa, ON has taken place in various communities in Nunavut and across the Canadian Arctic. The program staff work with youth, particularly at-risk youth populations to enhance self-esteem and empowerment through teaching and learning about hip hop. The founder is a social worker with a Master's degree and a background in Hip Hop culture and its promotion of self-expression. The Hip Hop camps have been extremely popular across Nunavut and a staff position has been created in Clyde River, NU (10).

Sprouts camps - QIA

The Sprouts camp is offered by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association during the summer months. The camp is for Nunavut Land Claim Beneficiaries and is meant to strengthen Inuktitut language skills. It is a day camp program offered in July and August in Iqaluit only.

Health & Social Services Dept. of the Government of Nunavut:

The GN Department of Health and Social Services (DH&SS) works collaboratively with federal funding organizations to promote health and wellness for Inuit youth across the territory. One of the main sources of financial support to the GN for youth programming is the Brighter Futures Program which stems from federal dollars allocated to improving the health of Aboriginal Canadians. The 2009-10 fiscal year, DH&SS financially supported several programs and workshops on the promotion of health, traditional Inuit knowledge and skills, nutrition and other life skills. Up to 130 projects are funded through the DH&SS and Brighter Futures annually. Among the projects taking place across Nunavut is 'Wake Up and Live', a program initiated and facilitated by a teacher in Qikiqtarjuaq to reduce substance abuse in the community where the youth must be free from substances to participate. The participants engage in snowboarding and talk about life stressors and coping skills. Another program, Pirurvik based at Iqaluit's Inuksuk High School offers jewellery and metal working to students, and activities are used as a platform to discuss substance abuse, healthy sexuality, healthy relationships and other pertinent issues for Nunavut youth. There is currently a formalized evaluation process of the DH&SS-funded programs underway which the writer will be including in the final report (14).

Aside from Brighter Futures, the DH&SS also administers funding for many projects and programs that are geared toward improving the health and well-being of Nunavummiut. Some such programs are the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative (ADI), Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) and the National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Program (NAYSP) (14).

Wellness Programs & Projects in other Northern Regions

Katimavik: Canada's Youth Volunteer Service Program

This federally funded Canadian program for youth involves empowering youth by engaging them in intensive volunteering programs to promote community service and personal growth. There are two streams of programs one for 9 months and another for 6 months where participants 'volunteer in three communities across Canada and participate in a stimulating learning process that focuses on developing competencies related to civic engagements, work experience, interpersonal relations, healthy lifestyle, cultural discovery, official languages and environmental stewardship' (15). There are projects ongoing in several communities across Canada including Nunavut and other communities involving predominantly Indigenous peoples of Canada.

Taiga Adventure Camp NWT Pilot Projects

Taiga Adventure Camp was piloted twice for 8 days each in Fort Smith, NWT in July 2009 with 80 girls. It was a camp designed to 'empower' female youth in the NWT with the hope that a similar camp would be offered in 2010 for male youth. Kirsten Carthew is the co-founder of the Taiga Camp with Shannan Schimmelmann. "We want young women to realize that they have options and choices well beyond the scope of their current experience. Taiga camps provide the setting for new and exciting experiences, self-reflection and relationships with others." They hope the camp can help young women tackle common issues faced in the NWT of substance abuse, teen pregnancies, suicide and 'under-achievement' (16)

The TAIGA Camp online brochure states the program is funded by the YWCA and is specifically aimed at supporting young women in the NWT between the ages of 11-17. The camp outlines several goals and targets for the camp's outcome all of which revolve around improving self-esteem and self-concept, developing leadership skills, imparting healthy relationship goals and finding the camper's individual strengths (17).

Saputiit Youth Association & Makivik Corp. Empowerment Camps (Arctic Quebec)

Currently website under construction therefore unable to obtain any further information at this time (18).

The Art of Living: Camps in Native rural communities across Canada

These camps are based on developing routine, life skills, the art of breathing and relaxation. They promote community involvement and empowerment by 'nurturing the spirit'. The Art of Living was developed and founded by 'His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shanker', a spiritual leader. In the YES (Youth Empowerment Seminar) portion of the camp model they focus on mental, physical, emotional and social aspects of improving health and learning skills. This camp has been run throughout Canada and the U.S. and was apparently run in Pangnirtung in 2007. There is a \$500 fee for the 10 day camp for ages 14-18, however, one can 'sponsor' a child's enrollment fee. This camp advertises a 10-day sleep over program with vegetarian only meals (19).

Labradormiut youth camps: Nunatsiavut

Inuit youth in Labrador involved in the Rising Youth Council as well as 14 youth each summer are invited to be involved in language and culture camps accompanied by elders (20).

Ghost River Rediscovery Camps

These programs are primarily based on the land and promote the use of 'nature' or 'wilderness therapy' with the Indigenous youth of Alberta. The programs offered through Ghost River Rediscovery encourage identity development, connection to the land, Native teachings and elders wisdom and lessons. The camp works to promote overall wellness.

Michael Lickers, the cofounder of this program was involved in a program for Inuit youth in Rankin Inlet that took place on the land in 2000 & 2001.

“Ghost River Rediscovery Society is a non-profit organization that offers outdoor and cultural education programs based on Aboriginal traditions and values. We are recognized for our capacity to run quality programs that promote the rediscovery of tradition and the development of healthy, sustainable lifestyles among children and youth” (21).

Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, Whitehorse Yukon

“Skookum Jim Friendship Centre is a non-profit organization committed to a vision of bettering the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical well being of First Nations peoples, fostering the way of Friendship and understanding between people” (22).

This Friendship Centre is part of the National Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centre network that provides accessible community-based, culturally relevant supportive projects, programs, services and counselling (22). This Native Friendship Centre in Whitehorse also offers the Tan Sakwathan Youth Diversion and Family Support program. This particular program provides early interventions and healthier alternatives for First Nation youth and their families who find themselves in conflict with the law (22). It is rooted in traditional teachings and strengthening family relationships.

Action Plans and Guidelines for Youth Camps from Other Jurisdictions

Alainait Mental Wellness Action Plan

This is a specific task force comprised of members from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, First Nations & Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada, land claims organizations, national Inuit organizations and the provincial governments that have Inuit populations. Alainait emphasizes the importance of Inuit specific wellness strategies and aims to promote culturally relevant mental wellness programs and connection to community and culture. Alainait describes mental wellness as consisting of mental health, mental illness, suicide prevention, violence reduction and reducing substance abuse and addictions (28). This Inuit specific mental wellness plan outlines several goals; both long and short term. Alainait’s focus is for Inuit to have agency over program curriculum for future community initiatives. This would ensure that Inuit specific traditional knowledge practices, community member involvement in development and delivery of services, intergenerational learning, Inuit specific data, research, information, tools, resources and supportive learning environments are included (28).

At the core of Alianait's goals, strategies and actions includes "a model of acceptance, positive self-expression, availability of resources, increased employment opportunities and a collaboration between mental health services providers and other agencies within a 10 year plan" (28).

CAMH

The Centre for Addiction & Mental Health based in Toronto, Ontario has published a working tool titled "Engaging and Empowering Aboriginal Youth: A Toolkit for Service Providers". CAMH defines 'aboriginal' as Canadian First Nations, Metis and Inuit groups. This toolkit offers a comprehensive set of principles and guidelines for service providers attempting to initiate programs to empower and engage indigenous youth (27).

There are four guiding principles according to CAMH and their extensive exploration of this topic which involve the following to have a successful program:

- 1) Understanding and integrating cultural identity
- 2) Increasing youth engagement
- 3) Fostering youth empowerment
- 4) Establishing and maintaining effective partnerships (27)

The underlying philosophy behind this best practice tool is strengths-based programming that promotes feelings of self-worth, improved self-esteem and acquiring new skills. Both westernized tools for promoting mental wellness and culturally specific skills are valued.

This tool covers guidelines for different programming including: camp settings, schools, social service facilities and other community agencies. It offers sources of scholarly journals created by and written about Indigenous peoples and related issues. Finally, this tool offers suggestions for evaluating the efficacy of a program developed for 'aboriginal' Canadian youth.

Best Practice Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion Programs - Children and Youth

CAMH

This is another best practice tool developed by the Centre of Addiction & Mental Health. It offers a comprehensive look at what the current research and best practice guidelines in the field of mental health are suggesting for service providers to consider when developing a program. This tool is based on Mental Health Promotion Theory as defined by CAMH:

"In summary, health promotion and mental health promotion have common elements, in that both: focus on the enhancement of well-being rather than on illness, address the population as a whole, including people experiencing risk conditions, in the context of everyday life are oriented toward taking action on the determinants of health, such as in-

come and housing broaden the focus to include protective factors, rather than simply focusing on risk factors and conditions include a wide range of strategies such as communication, education, policy development, organizational change, community development and local activities acknowledge and reinforce the competencies of the population encompass the health and social fields as well as medical services” (38).

The defining features of Mental Health Promotion are the concepts of power and resilience. This writer feels that this theory would be a beneficial underpinning for the model to be developed for Nunavut youth.

What Does the Research Tell Us?

Community involvement in camp

The major theme found in the literature review regarding empowerment and wellness promotion among Indigenous youth strongly advocates for community involvement in a proposed camp/program’s development and delivery (23-28). Several articles, reports and recommendations encouraged the adaptation of existing camp models by involving input from elders in the community to ensure its cultural relevance and continuation of language, traditions and a subsistence lifestyle. Identity development rooted in affiliation with one’s Indigenous heritage was seen as a goal of the camps discussed in the literature. The blending of western science and Indigenous traditional knowledge was a strong recommendation from this review. Secondly to this theme found in the literature was to involve elders in the camps curriculum by teaching traditional activities and story telling to the youth as a means to share culture and traditional skills (29, 25, &3).

Time spent on the land

The theme of physical location of the programs was also identified in the literature. There was overwhelming support for camps to be held in naturalistic settings and on the land (3, 30-31). One camp in particular (3) involved elders teaching youth on the land to learn survival skills by setting up camp, making a fire, hunting, fishing etc. This was a haptic approach of empowering youth with skills for survival and ultimately ancient tradition. Throughout article reviews and exploration of promotional camp material available, the notion of ‘wilderness/nature therapy’ and the experiential aspect of the outdoors was quite apparent as a key component to facilitating programs geared to Indigenous youth(30-32). Upon reflection, one would draw the conclusion that having a youth empowerment camp with strong ties to the land would be very fitting for Nunavummiut participants.

Skill-building

This review identified the emphasis on skill building and learning how to deal with challenging situations in the home, in romantic relationships and academically as central to a mod-

el's content (26 & 33). The importance of covering these topics is valid and connects to the earlier identified theme of blending western science and concepts with Inuit traditional knowledge in the proposed camp model.

There is a paucity of literature that focuses on overall wellness and empowerment for youth in a camp format. There is an over-emphasis on Inuit suicide rather than mental health and wellness promotion. One emerging theme in the literature is the perception of an empowerment camp as a primary prevention strategy. This, however, is not the goal of the program, nor is it responsive to the community-identified need for programs that promote overall health and wellness (34).

Country food

Amongst the Inuit specific literature, the role of country food and a subsistence lifestyle and traditional diet was posed as a very important factor for Inuit mental wellness. The connection to country food was discussed in one article in particular as being something Inuit deem vital to mental functioning. Included in this article Inuit share their insight into the importance of country food restoring one's mental health and sanity (35). In a separate article the argument for decreased overall physical and mental health in Inuit populations was made in part because of decreased consumption of country food and a stronger reliance on store-bought and processed foods (36)

What are the gaps?

There is a paucity of research exploring camp models for youth empowerment and wellness. There is nothing in the literature relevant to Inuit youth, specifically. The literature overwhelmingly points to the glaring problems Inuit youth face but does not engage in scholarly discussion to explore what is working elsewhere and how it may be applied to Inuit youth.

There does not appear to be any camp models published that include the curriculum outline. No formal evaluation of the programs that have been conducted in Nunavut has been made available, if implemented and many of the camps have only run once. Upon meeting with several community organizations who facilitate programs for youth, it became very clear that each program is operating in isolation from the next. As well, this writer had great difficulty uncovering information or making contacts for programs taking place while heavily relying on word of mouth to make connections. This fueled the question for this writer: 'If I can't find these programs in the phone book, on the web or posted around town, how do parents and youth find out about them to attend?'