



Makimautiksatsat Youth Wellness and Empowerment Camp

Makimautiksatsat is an evidence-based, youth camp, which aims to equip Nunavut youth with critical life skills and knowledge that foster positive mental health and wellness. *Makimautiksatsat* is an Inuktitut word, which can be interpreted as 'building a solid foundation within oneself'. The camp was designed by Nunavummiut for Nunavut youth and was developed to meet the needs of our young people.

To inform the design of the program, Qaujigiartiit developed an evidence-based model called the Eight *Ujarait/Rocks* Model for the camp from community consultations, extensive literature reviews, and input from parents, elders, and child and youth service providers throughout the territory in 2009 and 2010. Between 2011-2013, Qaujigiartiit piloted the Makimautiksatsat camp in Cambridge Bay with Kitikmeot Inuit Association; in Arviat with the Arviat Wellness Centre & Hamlet; in Iqaluit with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and the Government of Nunavut; in Panniqtuuq with Making Connections for Youth on 2 occasions; and in Coral Harbour with the Kaajuuq Youth Centre.

What is unique about this youth camp is that it has incorporated the voices and requests of Nunavummiut into the core components: 1) Culturally responsive and relevant learning modules include Inuit-specific traditional activities and promotion of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Inuit knowledge); 2) Activities fostering physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellness (holistic perspective of wellness); 3) Activities and knowledge sharing which promote team-building, a sense of unity, and connection to the broader community; and 4) Sharing country food whenever possible. Each community that piloted Makimautiksatsat was able to deliver the material and activities based on the needs and strengths of its participants, facilitators and community speakers. The Eight *Ujarait/Rocks* Model includes the following learning *ujarait*:

Ujaraq 1: Strengthening Our Ability to Cope with Difficult Times

Ujaraq 2: *Inuuqatigiittiarniq* - Building Healthy & Harmonious Relationships

Ujaraq 3: *Timiga* - Nurturing Awareness of the Body, Movement & Nutrition

Ujaraq 4: *Sananiq* - Crafting and Exploring Creativity

Ujaraq 5: *Nunalivut* - Fostering Personal & Community Wellness

Ujaraq 6: Encouraging Self Discovery & Future Planning

Ujaraq 7: Understanding Informed Choices and Peer Pressure

Ujaraq 8: *Avatittinik Kamatsiarniq* Celebrating the Land: Connecting Knowledge and Skills (2 day/night land camp)

Nunavummiut requested a Nunavut-specific model, which incorporated strong connections to community, peer teaching, knowledge sharing, skill development, and harvesting/country foods in a program for youth to promote overall wellness. Makimautiksatsat graduates remain connected

through a Facebook group and ongoing follow up with Qaujigiartiit and the Makimautiksat Facilitators who ran the pilot camps in their communities.

Evaluation Findings

Graduates of Makimautiksat have described their time at camp as "the experience of a life time" and "something that will remain with me for the rest of my life". What has struck Makimautiksat facilitators and Qaujigiartiit is the desire youth participants shared for giving back to their communities through volunteer and service work after participating in the camp. The sense of community and group acceptance youth had for each other who came from extremely diverse backgrounds was inspiring.

Evaluations from parents/guardians included personal observations of their child(ren) pre- and post-camp. One parent/guardian described their child has having more confidence after attending camp, another said their child was "more open about their culture". When asked if they would recommend the Makimautiksat camp to another family, a respondent indicated that they would because the camp "helped their child make friends, relaxed their minds, and [encouraged them to] participate in more activities."

The data on wellness outcomes for campers who participated suggest:

- Youth who participated reported feeling less anger, fear, or sadness then they felt before attending the camp.
- Youth reported a greater interest in harvesting, sewing, and other community and land-based activities than before camp.
- In general, youth reported feeling happy and excited both before and after participation in the camp.
- After participating in the camp, youth reported an increased likelihood of reaching out to a parent or a friend when faced with a problem, than before participating in the camp.
- Going on the land and learning about Inuit culture was a highlight for every participant in the camp program.
- Youth were asked what skills they learned at camp, and responses included "problem-solving", "communication", "ability to make friends", "learn to do new things", "healthy relationships" and "having fun".

Feedback from campers, their parents/guardians and facilitators continue to validate the Eight *Ujarait* Model. For more information about Makimautiksat, contact Ceporah Mearns, Youth Research Coordinator at the Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre at caporal.mearns@qhrc.ca or visit the website at www.qhrc.ca.