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PAUKTUUTIT
Inuit Women's Association

**NULUAQ PROJECT:
NATIONAL INUIT STRATEGY FOR ABUSE PREVENTION**

**Research Report:
Applying Inuit Cultural Approaches in the Prevention of
Family Violence and Abuse**

FINAL

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SUBMITTED TO:

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RESEARCH REPORT

Applying Inuit Cultural Approaches in the Prevention of Family Violence and Abuse

Introduction/Rationale

This paper represents an initial response by Pauktuutit National Strategy for Abuse Project, to address the issues of spousal, sexual, and child abuse evident in many communities throughout Nunavut and in other aboriginal communities today. The mandate of the project is to ascertain and record Inuit traditional values, philosophies and practices as they pertain to the treatment and healing of abused and abusers. From this gathering of information, the goal is to move to concrete methods, models and activities, which will be effective and appropriate in addressing the social problems of Inuit today.

Key principals, values and interview approaches were agreed upon by the writer/researcher and four experts/healers each chosen from a different region of Nunavut. These four healers are recognized as Inuit cultural knowledge experts and in that capacity provided their cultural knowledge, traditional methods of healing, and best practices. A series of questions were presented to the experts, designed to further probe the nuances of Inuit cultural practices. These four experts and the writer/researcher shared knowledge and perspectives with the intention of providing direction for the implementation of a visible, consistent and accessible healing/counseling response throughout the Inuit communities.

It is not the intention of the writer to put down the efforts and commitment of those healers and counsellors who currently work in the communities, but rather to enhance their effectiveness by recommending areas which might be the core focus of any future training programs. Many of these healers are not being utilized to their full potential, or to the full advantage of those who need them. Whether this situation has evolved through unawareness of what they can provide, or a lessening of the recognition that these services are valid, is uncertain. Whatever the cause, it is becoming increasingly evident that a consistent frontline of counselors who practice traditional healing methods is required throughout Nunavut. Current southern based philosophies of treatment and predominantly southern manned treatment centers do not appear to answer the needs of all. There are those who require healing based upon the age old perceptions and understandings of the Inuit world.

Root Causes

It should first be understood that widespread abuse which involves physical violence, sexual abuse of women and children, addictions to alcohol and drugs, do not evolve quickly. We must recognize that these patterns of behavior are the result of several generations of inappropriate attitudes concerning the self and others. That these destructive actions are becoming normalized and severely detrimental to Inuit culture and well-being is evident in the despair of our young people marked by an increase in the

school drop out rate, and tragically, in the number of teen suicides. Families are apparently overwhelmed by the magnitude of their problems and perceive no effective worlds, they move from one way of thought to another. The writer maintains that an understanding of how many of the abusive attitudes and practices evolved through the generations from the traditional Inuit world to today, is essential to any effective healing process.

There are many root causes for abuse. Initially, the abused or the abuser may experience jealousy of one kind or another, leading to issues of dominance and control. Money issues also can spark other stresses. Children become pawns in a cycle of actions and reactions, based in anger or despair, drawing them in and affectively continuing the cycle into the future. Abusive behavior takes many forms: verbal, mental, physical, and while causes may appear to stem from current stresses and problems; it is more likely that the root causes reside in the past. The abuser may have experienced similar treatment in childhood, probably by an abuser who was, in turn, abused earlier. For this reason, the fears, threats, hopelessness that are felt today will require an understanding of cultural history and behavioral patterns in order to be healed. Only when an individual recognizes his own roots will he/she be able to begin the healing process. Without an understanding of how his/her attitudes and ways of dealing with problems evolved, he/she cannot begin to break the cycle, often both victim and perpetrator.

Such individuals have available to them various counseling programs, family help centers, battered wives hostels, and women's groups to help improve their lives for the moment. Healers and counselors are available in the communities and can be very beneficial, if those in need seek them out. Southern counselling services cannot probe the Inuit cultural past as effectively as local healers, but these healers must be granted the recognition, respect and trust which will allow a healthy, positive construction to proceed. The lives of many people in the Northern communities are adversely affected by unresolved root problems, and these people are, therefore, living with anger and rage. Such a situation demands a group of willing, competent, culturally sound healers, who will be on hand to provide first response counseling.

In the interest of clarity and coherence, Pauktuutit has drafted the following sections as an amalgam of healing strategies, based on the interviews with the elders.

Treating Victims

Victims of abuse, become abusers. Frustrated, unable to fight their abusers effectively, they take their anger out on others, often their children. For this reason, children become physically abused and hatred grows. Children pay for their parents' frustrations. Victims who are not able to deal with their fears lash out at those who cannot fight back, and the cycle of physical, mental, and verbal abuse is continued.

Healers work with many victims and recognize the subtleties of the different situations in which they find themselves. Denial is one of the most prevalent and difficult issues that abusers and victims experience. When healers are working with individuals in denial, it

is often very difficult -almost impossible- to break down the barriers so that healing can begin.

- Healers patiently approach the client with examples comparable to their own situation in order to make them more accepting of what is true for them;
- Healers also stress repeatedly that the client is not alone and encourage him/her to admit the possibility of help, a concept they are often reluctant to put any faith in;
- The main focus of the healers is to 'grab into' the victims denial and refuse to give up. The healers take ownership of the process and the struggles of their clients. Eventually, the clients soften and relent, allowing themselves to receive the help offered them;
- Inuit healers feel very strongly that counselling should not be in unfamiliar surroundings, but rather take place in the home or some other non threatening environment. A safe, comfortable location is essential in the treatment of sexual abuse victims, in particular, since people are very fragile;
- With this in mind, the healer also ensures that his/her voice and tone is calm, patient in order to soothe the client. It is essential also to control gestures carefully so that the counsellor's body language remains non-threatening in all circumstances;
- Counselling can take place individually or in groups, depending upon the specific context of the problems and the desires of the clients. It is usual in a spousal situation to see the wife first, then the husband, then both later. A healer may advise, but ultimately the process unfolds by consensus based on the comfort level of the client;
- Victims of sexual abuse often have feelings of unworthiness towards themselves, which can lead to resistance to the healing process. Involving them directly in decisions about how that process evolves can be beneficial to their self-esteem and promote a more positive outlook;
- Inuit healers are verbal counsellors; they often do not take notes during a consultation, although questionnaires are sometimes given to the client preceding the actual session in order to allay any fears the client may have concerning the process. It is therefore necessary, following each interview with a client, for the healer to center him/herself in preparation for sessions to come. This often involves periods of being alone and quiet in order to reflect on the interaction. Notes may be taken at this time regarding any omissions, particularly difficult unresolved issues; any changes in approach the healer may wish to take.
- The process often includes personal reflection on the part of both client and counsellor, making the interaction truly reciprocal in nature, with the counsellor as a personally involved participant. This is somewhat different from the disinterested role often taken by southern counsellors. It should be noted however, that there is an inherent danger that the counsellor, because of his personal commitment to this process, might inadvertently take sides in a dispute. This must be avoided, as it would inevitably indicate a biased and therefore

inaccurate view of the problem, and the unfair judging of one or more of the parties involved. This is a very fine line and great care must be taken.

- It is also essential, of course, that all conversations be regarded as confidential. This ensures that the clients feel secure in their healer, trust him/her, and are therefore candid with him/her. Any divulging of personal information must be avoided also, because, in many cases, gossip and ridicule are already part of the problem.

The healing process can run smoothly only if the healer is a respected, trustworthy individual. The client and the community as a whole must regard the healer in this way, or the process cannot succeed. Generally having Inuit healers facilitating their own people is valuable because of the understanding each has for the other.

One important factor of healing in the Inuit context is the strong resistance that men demonstrate towards the counselling process. This stems from a prevalent lack of respect for things they feel concern women, often including their pain. It is also possibly a result of their disinclination to accept responsibility for damage they may have caused others or to admit weakness in themselves. It is therefore strongly suggested that outside healers be brought in to counsel men if the process becomes difficult. Currently, many men are not being helped, and the cycle continues.

Though dedication on the part of the healer is not in question, it is noted that certain situations may present a threat to the healer himself/herself. Then he/she should withdraw from the process and allow the client to pass to the next level available, namely the professional or government agencies in place. It should not be forgotten that Inuit healers represent a first line of treatment for these clients, and it is likely that some cases will need to be referred beyond this level.

One important issue pertaining to Inuit women must be addressed; appropriate parenting. Currently, many mothers are pursuing their own interests (some very unhealthy—drinking, gambling, and so on) while their children are neglected. Healers must teach mothers that their children come first, including limitations to their own personal desires. This is an essential step towards breaking the abuse cycle and building guilt free families.

Contrary to most southern practice, Inuit healers have traditionally felt an obligation to be proactive. It is not uncommon for a healer to approach an individual he/she feels may be in need of help, rather than passively waiting for clients to come to him/her. Thus, a healer takes some responsibility for the rectification of ills he/she might see in his/her own community.

Traditionally an elder would normally lead his or her family in counselling, gathering local elders to meet to solve family problems in the community. Thus, there developed a counseling circle to address serious spousal disputes. It is very strongly felt that no secrets should be kept within families. Now, often the fact is that information is withheld from individuals and these secrets cause problems to arise. Hiding the actions of the

abuser through a misguided sense of sympathy or loyalty allows him/her to commit further abuse unchecked.

Healers feel that it is important to address the teens and other children directly, asking openly what their concerns are or why they are engaged in unhealthy activities. It is felt that the direct approach is best with children and problems can be more honestly dealt with this way. Many children today, it is felt, are 'spoiled' in the sense that they lack loving discipline and are instead given material things as a substitute, and often unchecked freedom. They seek attention as a result, now often resorting to suicide in a misguided notion that others will take notice, perhaps not realizing the finality of their choice.

It is important to note that healing knowledge is shared only by oral transmission. Mothers and grandmothers 'knew what was healthy and unhealthy' and spoke of these things to those of the next generations who showed an interest. Therefore, the traditions are flexible and open to varied interpretations, as well as difficult to collate and teach to others in a structured way.

It is agreed that a healer must possess certain qualities; pride without conceit, strength of will, trustworthiness, confidence, respect for the Inuit ways. Healers must give themselves fully 'whether the load is heavy or not', and do this humbly. It is also understood that a healer will be strong in matters of the spirit, able to 'give the process to God' in order to give themselves appropriately to those in need.

The Family

Too many Northern families are in crisis. Traditional Inuit child rearing practices and values are clashing with those of the non-aboriginal world and young people are no longer absorbing enough knowledge of their own cultural way of life. They are instead drawn towards those facets of the modern world to which they are exposed by television and the obvious material temptations, without truly understanding the associated consequences and cultural realities of southern society. They are becoming rootless people, unhappy and unhealthy.

At the same time, there is a recent tendency for families to relinquish their responsibilities for guiding their children and family into a secure knowledge of who they are and what to value. In many instances, children rear themselves and their siblings. Therefore, family problems are growing because of a lack of parenting, and the children are growing up without the ability to parent their own children appropriately - a recipe for disaster.

Today's northern parents must begin to turn to traditional counsellors for advice and instruction in the raising of their children, as they did in the past. Compounding this situation, many children are exposed regularly to spousal assaults, verbal abuse and ridicule. Communication in many families is non-existent. Teenagers are rejecting their elder's ways while having no alternations to replace them. They become lost and confused, angry and frustrated without knowing why, and naturally turn to each other,

where there is no mature wisdom to be gained. Drugs, solvent and alcohol abuse, and promiscuity all become replacements for the family nurturing they lack. They spiral downwards in anger and despair, resulting all too often in suicide.

It is crucial that family members receive the help they need in reestablishing positive contact with one another; before anything else, the children must come first. Healers are essential in this.

A healer can assist parents and children to understand the responsibilities that exist within the family group for their own well-being. Therefore, elders must work with youth more often and more in-depth in order to impart appropriate life values.

The Role of the Community

In the Inuit understanding, the problems of an individual are the problems of the community as a whole. It is accepted that all community members collectively have responsibility for the well-being of its individuals. It therefore follows that those who are aware of abusive situations or the suffering of children should not turn a blind eye, but take the responsibility of involving themselves in the effort to find solutions. This is not to say that members of a community should fall into the traps of judging one another, gossiping or ridicule, as these practices are as damaging to the victims of abuse as the abuse itself, thereby multiplying problems. It falls to the community healers, usually elders, to have the wisdom and presence to advise not only the immediate victims, but those who would do harm by base curiosity and interference.

A healthy community has a strong core of community leaders, school and church personnel, as well as counseling agencies in place who work together to protect young people and their families.

Such mentoring and protection can be seen in the willingness of people to take a sincere, caring interest in the welfare of their neighbors to pitch in and help in a family crisis, rather than allowing a family to founder on its own.

It is in the best interest of the whole community to maintain healthy relationships within it, since the problems of an individual or a family can affect the tone and stability of that community. This is most evident when alcohol, drug or solvent abuse enters the equation, and when children cease to function appropriately in the school setting. Violence and abuse are diseases which do not confine themselves within a specific household. Further than this, given the interconnectedness of northern communities, what one experiences, all may experience. In short, damaged families require support which is positive and constructive, and this is a community responsibility.

The schools of Inuit communities are focal points for social activity in most communities, and as such are the logical beginning for healthy interaction. Welcoming elders and other agencies into the schools on a regular basis should provide channels for learning and counselling with youth, and the opportunity to identify potentially serious problems

which might benefit from early intervention. Obviously, the establishment of healthy social activities and outlets for children (and adults!) conducted in a positive atmosphere, will go a long way to building strong, well constructed, supportive communities. Sharing interest and Inuit knowledge on different topics can be of great value to all.

In addition, town councils and other agencies would be wise to provide recreation centers and healthy gathering places for teens. Abuse Prevention Committees need to be established and continually visible throughout the north so that youth receive appropriate guidance as they grow and mature. Overall, the guidance of strong, positive adults is an essential requirement for a healthy future for our children in an abuse free world. Healing is a daily process of the wise parenting and community nurturing of our children, as much as it is specific crisis intervention.

Elders, as healers, play a significant role in the life of a northern community and this contribution to Inuit life should be acknowledged and respected more by all members, but particularly by the youth. Young people must be encouraged to regard the elders as valid sources of information about their cultural past, and as logical choices when seeking help or advice. Continuous interaction, the normalization of story telling, and the daily teaching of traditional practices, such as sewing, singing, carving, hunting and so on, are invaluable ways to impart cultural pride, a strong self-image and positive inter-relationships among young people, thereby founding future families and communities which will be healthy and happy.

Inuit Cultural Perspective

Although the elders consulted represent the traditions of four different Inuit regions, it is evident that their understanding of Inuit culture and the needs of their people is consistent. Their overall perspective of the world and what is healthy within it can be expressed clearly by the six principles of **Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit**.

Piliriqatigiinnngiq: working together for the common good. This implies knowing one's role within the group and making judgments and decisions which benefit all within the group, be it the family or community at large.

Avatikmik Kamattiarniq: the maintenance of environmental wellness. This can be interpreted in this context as a balanced and healthy interconnectedness of the mental, physical, and spiritual dimensions of the individual, the family, and the community.

Pijittsirarniq: the contribution to the common good through services to others and leadership, concepts which are not mutually exclusive, but inherently part of the same ideal of wisdom in Inuit culture.

Pilimmaksarniq: empowerment. It applies here in the sense of accessing information, gathering it and using it to make right that which is wrong socially and spiritually, and to work toward a balanced and strengthened Inuit society.

Qanuqtuurunnarniq: resourcefulness and adaptability. The application of this principle is obvious here in dealing with many and varied situations as a healer, always called upon to be creative, flexible, and solution oriented.

Aajiqatigiinnngniq: co-operation and consensus. The Inuit healing process is successful only to the extent that it is reciprocal, based throughout on the opinions and contributions of both the client and the counsellor, each recognizing the value of the other's perspective. Thus, solutions are consensually reached and therefore sound.

These guiding principles are inherent to Inuit traditional counselling practices and reside in the healers of today as the basis of their strength and wisdom.

Recommendations for the Future

Based upon the observations and advice of the elders interviewed, as initiated in the preceding pages, the following recommendations are presented for the enhancement of the role of Inuit healers within northern communities.

1. The transcription of all that can be learned from the oral tradition of healing practices. This generation of elders is the last truly traditional source we will have available to us. Their knowledge must be collected now.
2. The gathering and compilation of any written materials which may exist throughout the north by current and past healers, pertaining to specific case studies, advice, healing practices. This is of vital importance, and must be done in a timely fashion.
3. The establishment of centers in which Inuit healers train future Inuit healers in a structured, consistent manner. In addition, an effective screening process for applicants should be considered.
4. The establishment of a set of qualifications for Inuit healers.
5. The establishment of a visible structure of frontline Inuit healing personnel who work in conjunction with existing agencies and who receive salaries equal with their role in Inuit society.
6. A Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and Northwest Territories program designed to educate families and young people about the role healers can and should play in the building of healthy families.
7. The direct involvement of Inuit healers in the designing and implementation of drug and alcohol prevention programs.
8. The direct involvement of Inuit healers in open discussion and educational programs designed to bring physical and sexual abuse issues into the open.
9. Consultation with Inuit healers in the establishment of counselling services and education programs aimed specifically at male members of Inuit society, designed to address the issues of abuse and the healthy regard of women and children.
10. The set up of an effective children's help line, available to all children in Aboriginal communities, with access to traditional Inuit counsellors.

11. The involvement of aboriginal counselling experts in government planning and regulations.
12. Facilitation of movement from one community to another of healers when needed to assist in special circumstances.
13. The appropriate training of southern staff and counselors in a knowledge of Inuit culture and values, so that disparities in the two approaches are alleviated.

Best Practices: Inuit Healing/Counselling

1. Healers ensure confidentiality in their interactions with clients. The healer has to be a respected, trustworthy individual. The clients have to feel secure in their healer and trust him/her. The healing process can run smoothly only if the healer is respected;
2. Healers sometimes approach a victim to initiate the counseling;
3. Healers must live respectable and trustworthy lives themselves, in order to demonstrate wisdom which individuals and families will choose to seek. The conversations must be kept confidential so that the clients can feel secure in their healers, trust him/her, and are therefore candid with him. Divulging of personal information must be avoided, because it can lead to gossip and ridicule;
4. Healers must concentrate on counselling men, who are most often the abusers, and who tend to resist the process. If the process becomes difficult, it is strongly suggested that outside healers be brought in to counsel men. Most of the men are not being healed, and the cycle continues, therefore counselling men is very important. It is critical to breaking the cycle of abuse;
5. Healers regard spiritual well- being as very important. The healer has a strong faith in matters of the spirit in order to give themselves appropriately to those in need;
6. Healers allow the client to participate in decisions concerning the direction the process will take. Involving them directly in decisions about how the process evolves can be beneficial. Questionnaires are sometimes given to the client preceding the actual session in order to allay fears the client may have concerning the process;
7. Healers are conscious always of their own gestures, expressions and voice tone during interactions with a client. The healer ensures that his/her voice and tone are calm and patient in order to soothe the client. It is also very important to control gestures carefully so that the body language of the counsellor remains non-judging non-threatening;
8. Healers prefer to counsel individuals and families at home. The healers feel strongly that counselling should not be in unfamiliar surroundings, but rather take place in the home or some other non-threatening place.

9. Healers are persistent in their treatment of clients, contrary to some other counseling processes. If a client is reluctant to discuss problems, the traditional healer does not relent in efforts to engage him.
10. Healers reserve the option to not make contact for a time after consultations, in order to reflect on both their own and the clients' contribution and to plan future sessions. It is necessary, following each interview with a client, for the healer to center him/herself in preparation for sessions to come. Notes may be taken at this time regarding omissions or any change in approach the healer may wish to take.
11. Healers become personally committed to the process and take ownership of the outcome.

Important Abuse Prevention Services

It is essential that all facets of abuse prevention programs in Arctic communities eventually be Inuit based. Obviously, this is not the case at present, but work is ongoing in some areas while others pose significant challenges and require persistence and dedication to accomplish.

I. Advocacy

Perhaps this area is key.

- Recommendations and papers such as this one, expressing specific Inuit perspectives, will in due course articulate all that must be done.
- Women's groups, such as Pauktuutit, will continue to play a crucial role in implementing strategies and lobbying government agencies for services.
- Schools will also be at the centre of much that and can and will be done: a venue for elders to connect with children, for local health representatives to present essential health and social information, to display posters; for groups of parents or other support groups to meet and discuss their ideas and concerns.
- Local radio can play a central role in community life and is a means by which opinions and information can be shared immediately.
- The shelters and local safe houses for abused women and children must provide a trusted, confidential context in which people can speak their own language with trained Inuit employees.
- Advocating Inuit traditional values by providing land trips for non-Inuit and Inuit youth (in particular) is essential so that Inuit knowledge becomes a part of our being -landscapes, hunting, cooking, sewing, survival techniques - and a means by which others can know us better.
- Advocacy programs within the correctional system are also essential. These must be culturally appropriate and implemented by Inuit, designed to counsel and heal abusers and offenders – even while in jail. Offenders need to be brought back in touch with traditional values, ways and language, including story and song as a means of healthy expression.

II. Crisis/Emergency Intervention

In crisis, people need what is familiar and comfortable. It is not acceptable that an individual be faced with another culture's ways in an emergency. When emotionally stressed, Inuit need Inuit, their knowledge and familiarity. Therefore, frontline personnel must be Inuit: the teams manning suicide response hotlines (currently based in Iqaluit), and suicide response teams; staff in safe houses; healing circles gathered for a specific intervention or crisis; local ministers and healers. These resource people must be (and on most instances are) available when needed, and versed in appropriate ways of meeting a wide variety of needs, a huge challenge.

III. Corrections/Justice

Efforts to heal and mentor the offender must not overshadow the needs of the victim. Too often, victims are lost in the process, or are made victims doubly by the loss of a family member to the correctional system. It becomes a no-win situation. Currently, many communities have committees of elders who mentor both offenders and victims, before and after court. They also deal with marital problems, family problems, and spousal abuse issues. Youth committees also work with offenders and victims to find solutions and corrective measures which satisfy all parties and move towards healthier interactions. Teachers, RCMP officers and others in the community are also available to be part of this process when appropriate.

The court system also provides opportunities for elders committees to contribute their views concerning penalties in specific cases. All of these practices are positive steps, and mitigate the potentially detrimental clash of two cultures in times of family trauma.

IV. Health

This is a very broad category, encompassing multiple issues of physical, mental, emotional and social well being. Confidentiality is of primary importance in all facets. Currently, and for the immediate future, key health personnel are non-aboriginal. Again, there arises the need for Inuit training, interpretation and mentoring. It is greatly appreciated when social workers or mental health workers seek the advice and input of local healers. Thus, the process is part northern, part southern. It would be beneficial if these local people were to participate in decisions regarding patients'/victims' removal from a community. Where time permits, perhaps nurses could refer less serious cases to healers or elders so that language barriers and cultural differences do not interfere with best choices. We look forward to a future in which there are Inuit and non-Inuit health care providers working side by side in equal capacities.

V. Educational/Therapeutic Programs

There are several areas where the need for educational programs is critical. One of these is the education of mothers regarding their primary obligations to their children, discipline, day to day childrearing practices, cooking, organizational skills, the emotional and physical needs of their children, dental care, and so on. With the advent of southern schooling, the attitude toward parenting has become detrimentally lax in many cases.

Children themselves need to be taught, also, in a persistent and dedicated fashion about life and coping skills, moral values, self-protection strategies, and other important matters. Counsellors and elders need to be in the classroom regularly with a coherent message.

The school curriculum must include these things, and they must be delivered by trusted Inuit teachers, health representatives, elders and counsellors, so that living well becomes normalized and the community does, in fact, raise its children into a second adulthood.

Traditional skills in household matters, land skills, skin preparation, stories, traditional ayaya, throat singing and drum dancing need to be taught regularly and pervasively. Theatre is an excellent vehicle by which to impart values. Dramatizations of every day situations is very powerful in provoking thought and discussion on such issues as parenting skills, suicide prevention, solvent abuse, drug and alcohol issues, family problems and traditional attitudes. This would provide a gathering point for communities, and a healthy outlet for young energies.

Radio campaigns that promote healthy living would reach many people daily and help to bring important issues to the forefront.

VI. Shelters

The need for dedicated shelters which are safe, secure and private within the smaller communities cannot be overstated. Presently, some communities have emergency shelters which can be used at the discretion of the Social Worker. These are the homes of selected community members, and provide women and children with immediate safety and comfort for the night or until a flight out is available. But, there is nothing long term. There are occasions when RCMP use jail cells as protection for victims in an emergency. Inuit staff are needed so that victims have the comfort of Inuktitut and ease of communication. Traditional food and activities should be made available.

VII. Support Groups

These groups take many forms, depending on the immediate need. Family groups address the needs of individuals within the family; children's support groups mentor those who cannot represent themselves adequately to seek the help they need; support groups alleviate some of the trauma of suicide; elders and youth committees. Most are not officially organized, but rather are formed to respond to needs within the community as they arise.

Counsellors themselves need to gather to exchange views and build their strategies and to gain support from each others' experiences. Members of any such group must be committed to be helpful and above all, discreet. Times and locations of gatherings must be contingent on the requirements of the client, as timely intervention is imperative. Inuit healers are essential here. Support groups succeed only when healers and clients understand each other and share a common world view. Only then can clients express themselves in a way that will lead to healing and comfort. Inuit needs must be met by an Inuit operated support system.

VIII. Counselling/Healing

This category is closely associated with support groups. They function together. At present in the aboriginal communities, most 'official' counselling is done by southern staff, while Inuit healing remains an unofficial resource. Nevertheless, Inuit counsellors provide much needed help and support. Healers and counsellors are recognized as Inuit cultural knowledge repositories, and they deal with many different issues and crises, individually and in groups. This allows for counselling to be done in Inuktitut in the clients own context.

The counseling process is often a long one, and sufficient time must be allowed if it is to be successful. Local healers can probe the Inuit cultural past to uncover root causes more effectively than southern counsellors. Staying engaged is the key here, as is empathy with the Inuit client. Often, a client will prefer to include the support group directly in the counselling process.

Healing is needed extensively in the aboriginal communities. Victims need assistance and continued guidance throughout all phases of the long healing process.

Elders are not organized in this way, but network with each other as needed to build the required supports for healing. Circles are formed and committees are on call. Also, local church ministers become involved in the counselling and healing of many in need.

CONCLUSION

Northern society is changing rapidly. The impact of the southern world is compounding social problems which were already in existence. Individuals and families are struggling with great difficulty to meet the challenges of the transformation, and not always succeeding. In fact, Inuit society is in trouble, and its very survival may be in question. More than ever before, there exists a need for a competent force of healers who can guide Inuit successfully through this transition into the next phase of our history.

To that end, it is crucial that we begin immediately to build an organized visible and respected counselling structure in the Aboriginal communities. Prospective healers must be recruited, screened and trained. We must probe the wealth of knowledge which resides in the elders who still remembers the old ways, while we still have those elders as a resource. The contribution that healers make to our society must be acknowledged, enhanced and rewarded.

Women's groups, in particular, should lead by lobbying government for policy decisions and funding to accomplish these goals in the interests of building a strong and healthy Inuit Canadian society. The ways of the past may show us the way to the future.

Biographies of Researcher/Writer and the Four Inuit Experts

Audrey Qamanirq, Researcher/Writer & Teacher, Arctic Bay, Nunavut:

Audrey is a very ambitious, hard working individual who because of her skills is called upon to do many jobs. Audrey has been a teacher for over 10 years. She operates her own interpreting/translating business. She is a Legal Aid Worker with Maliganik Tukisiniarvik. She instructs Inuktitut As A Second Language for Nunavut Arctic College. She is the secretary for the Health Committee in Arctic Bay. She volunteers as the Director for the Kicking Caribou Theatre Company (organizing and supervising traditional activities such as traditional ayaya songs, throat singing and drum dancing workshops and plays). Audrey completed a project with Qikiqtani Inuit Association coordinating the Youth Cultural Program at the same time as being the Researcher/Writer for this project.

Hilda Lyall, Counsellor, Healer & Elder, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador:

Hilda is a counselor, an elder and a healer who is now retired but worked for many years as an adult educator and counsellor in corrections, college and friendship centers. She is a former board member of the Labrador Inuit Association and has recently formed an Inuit women's group, "Annaukatigengit" in order to help women with social problems. Hilda also runs her own interpreting/translating business.

Abraham Arnakaq, Healer, Pangnirtung, Nunavut:

As a healer and counselor, Abraham provides individual and group healing sessions. He works on his own and with other co-healers including his wife Meeka Arnakaq. He also provides healing in the prisons including the Tupiq Program, a federal correctional program. He serves any group or individual who is seeking help with an emotional problem. Currently, he is training to become a reverend at the Pangnirtung's Anglican Church.

Kanayuq Salomonie, Counsellor, Facilitator, Cape Dorset, Nunavut:

Kanayuq coordinates and facilitates the "Living A Healthier Lifestyle, Living Without Problems" sessions in Cape Dorset. She conducts healing sessions with individuals who are experiencing a hard time in life, from all categories including couples, offenders, victims, men and women. Kanayuq also travels to other communities and presents workshops on healing and support groups. She facilitates a regular women's support group in Cape Dorset and provides assistance to other counselors/healers in the community. Kanayuq also develops and delivers healing sessions in the 'Tupiq Program', for federal Inuit offenders at Fenbrook Institution. Kanayuq is also Women's representative on the QIA (Qikiqtani Inuit Association) Board.

Lolly Annahatak, Social Worker, Elder, Kuujuaq, Nunavik:

Lolly works for the Tulattavik Hospital as a community social worker and team leader in her fieldwork for social assistance in the Ungava region. Lolly has broken many disability barriers in Nunavik; she was the first student guidance counsellor for the Kativik School Board and the first Inuk to earn a Certificate in Northern Social Work.

Later, armed with a Bachelor of Social Work from McGill University, Lolly translates and teaches courses in the McGill University Certificate Program in Northern Social Work Practice. She has visited many communities of Nunavik to conduct research for the Nunavik Health Board on the needs of persons with disabilities. Lolly worked with the Tapiriilirmiᓂ committee that was established in 2000 to conduct a field trip, for the purpose of promoting a grass roots awareness of the need for elders and youth to ‘join together for strength’. She was a member of the Inuit Justice Task Force and president of NI, a regional organization devoted to the eradication of substance abuse. Lolly is currently a part of the Aboriginal First Nation Suicidal Prevention Committee for the Province of Quebec.