

OTTAWA INUIT CHILDREN'S CENTRE

RESEARCH REPORT: BACKGROUND FOR AN
INUIT CHILDREN AND YOUTH STRATEGY FOR ONTARIO –

Final Report



Ottawa Inuit
Children's
Centre

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Handwritten text on a white piece of paper, written in yellow marker. The text is arranged in four lines and appears to be a mix of letters and symbols, possibly representing a name or a message. The first line contains a series of loops and a triangle. The second line has a large 'M' and a horizontal line. The third line features a large 'L' and some smaller characters. The fourth line shows a large 'J' and some other characters.

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TERMINOLOGY:

- As recommended by ITK, this report uses the term “Inuit Nunangat” to refer to the four Inuit regions of Canada: Nunavut, Inuvialuit (part of NWT), Nunavik (Northern Québec) and Nunatsiavut (Labrador).
- Inuk is the singular form of Inuit.



Introduction



THE MINISTRY HAS ASKED THAT THE STRATEGY FOCUS ON THREE PRIMARY GOALS.

THIS REPORT DISCUSSES THE FINDINGS FROM A RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS UNDERTAKEN BY OICC, AND SETS OUT A SERIES OF RECOMMENDATIONS THAT FLOW FROM THOSE FINDINGS.



The Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services has been directed by Cabinet to develop recommendations for a provincial Aboriginal Children and Youth Strategy. The primary focus of the Strategy is to improve outcomes for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Aboriginal children and youth.

The Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre (OICC) and Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI) were asked to prepare recommendations about a provincial Inuit Children and Youth Strategy, as an element of the overall Aboriginal Strategy.

The Ministry has asked that the Strategy focus on three primary goals:

1. First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Aboriginal children and youth have better access to the services they need;
2. More culturally appropriate services are available for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Aboriginal children and youth; and
3. More community-based solutions are supported, enabling greater community control over services for their children and youth.



This report discusses the findings from a research and community engagement process undertaken by OICC, and sets out a series of recommendations that flow from those findings. The report is organized along the lines of the five questions that the Ministry asked First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners to consider:

1. What are the outcomes that matter the most to children, youth, their families and communities? How will we know that we have achieved these outcomes?
2. Describe the types of programs and services required in order to deliver on these outcomes? What services and programs will this new system be accountable for?
3. What does enhanced Aboriginal control over program and service design, delivery and planning involve? What needs to change so that we can move toward such a dedicated service system for Aboriginal children and youth?
4. How will the system be managed/governed? How will organizations, communities and the province measure success in terms of how the system is managed/governed?
5. How will Aboriginal agencies work together and with mainstream agencies and Aboriginal communities? What practices will need to be either strengthened or created in order to ensure that children and youth who move on and off reserve and between communities receive seamless services?



Methodology



OICC AND TI AGREED ON A JOINT WORKPLAN FOR THIS RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PHASE, IN WHICH EACH AGENCY UNDERTOOK SPECIFIC TASKS INTENDED TO COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER.



OICC and TI agreed on a joint workplan for this research and community engagement phase, in which each agency undertook specific tasks intended to complement each other. The OICC elements of this joint workplan included the following steps:

- a) **Literature review of promising practices in working with Inuit children and youth in Canada:** A total of 55 documents were included in the review and the majority of these were Inuit-specific. The review discusses 17 promising practices specifically related to Inuit children and youth, grouped into categories related to culture, family, Inuit-specific and Inuit-driven services, and organizational/ systemic considerations. The results of the literature review were used to formulate some of the questions for the instruments used with Inuit youth, parents of Inuit children and youth, and agencies serving the Inuit community. The literature review is attached as Appendix E.
- b) **Demographic research:** A variety of provincial and national sources were consulted to ascertain the size of the Inuit population in Ontario, the proportion who are children and youth, rates of growth, and the distribution across the province.
- c) **Youth focus groups and survey:** Three focus groups were held with a total of 33 Inuit youth in the Ottawa area. Parental consent was obtained for those under 15 years. The questions and exercises used in the focus groups are attached as Appendix A. A simplified version of the questions was used to survey Inuit youth who were unable to participate in the focus groups, and a total of 16 completed youth surveys were received, for a total youth responses of 49. Survey questions are provided in Appendix A.
- d) **Parent focus groups and survey:** Two focus groups were held with a total of 13 parents of Inuit children and youth, and a shortened version of the focus group questions were used in a survey completed by 58 parents, for a total parent response of 71. The focus group and survey questions are provided in Appendix B.
- e) **Interviews/survey of Aboriginal and main-stream agencies serving the Inuit community:** 19 in the Ottawa area, 8 Aboriginal services in communities across Ontario, the Government of Nunavut, and a senior Inuit leader in Ontario and Canada. The interview and survey questions are provided in Appendix C, and those interviewed are listed in Appendix D.

In addition, after the completion of the research reports by OICC and TI, the two organizations held a joint Community Forum on September 20, 2014 to validate the research findings and gather additional community input on the concerns and priorities. A total of 120 community members attended the Forum.





The Inuit of Ontario



THE ACTUAL NUMBERS OF INUIT IN ONTARIO MAY BE DRAMATICALLY HIGHER THAN OFFICIALLY REPORTED.

General Inuit Population in Ontario

Inuit in Ontario constitute a small but very fast growing population. According to the National Household Survey (NHS), there were 3,360 Inuit living in Ontario in 2011¹, about 1% of the Aboriginal population in Ontario (MAA). This is up from 2,035 in 2006 (Census, MAA), an increase of 65% in five years. Inuit numbers also increased in the previous five years, by 48% from 2001 to 2006 (Census, MAA). If this pattern continues, there will be over 15,000 Inuit in Ontario in just over 10 years from now. This dramatic increase is not due to the birth rate

alone – many Inuit move to Ontario from the North each year, and a greater number of Inuit already here may now be identifying themselves as Inuit in the census and NHS.

These numbers probably under-estimate the Inuit population to a considerable degree. For example, in Ottawa, the 2006 census pegged the Inuit population at 645 but Inuit agencies in the city estimated that a more accurate number would be 1,800. It is also important to note that the controversial decision of the federal government to suspend the mandatory Long Form Census and replace it with the voluntary

1. This is Inuit only identity, that is, it excludes people who are Inuit and First Nations, or Inuit and Métis



National Household Survey (NHS) was strongly criticized by statistical experts. One of the main concerns with the NHS was that it would lead to high levels of under-reporting by certain groups in the population and these experts specifically mentioned Aboriginal people as likely to be under-reported. For example, the 2006 Census reported 32 Inuit in Timmins, whereas the 2011 NHS reported none – of course, this is possible but with such high growth rates, it is less likely than under-reporting.

Thus, the actual numbers of Inuit in Ontario may be dramatically higher than the numbers officially reported by Statistics Canada.

Setting aside concerns about the accuracy of the total numbers, what the data does provide is a rough sense of the distribution of Inuit across the province. In 2006, 82% of Ontario Inuit lived in urban areas (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, based on census data). There are 43 Census Agglomerations (CAs) in Ontario, which are generally urban areas, and data from the 2011 NHS reveals the following information:

- 26 CAs have an Inuit population of 0 (including Timmins which had 32 in the 2006 Census);
- 12 CAs have 0 – 100 Inuit;
- 5 CAs have over 100 Inuit : Ottawa-Gatineau 860, Toronto 640, Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo 225, St Catherines-Niagara 190, Oshawa 125. Note: In the 2006 Census Ottawa had 645 and Toronto had 320. It is difficult to know the extent to which the 2011 data is due to changes in the Inuit population of the two cities, and how much is due to differences in data collection methods between the 2011 NHS and the 2006 Census.
- CAs have a total Inuit population of 2,610, which means that 750 Inuit live in rural areas of Ontario outside these CAs.

Inuit Children and Youth

Inuit are a very young population. In 2006, nearly four in ten (38%) were 14 years of age and under compared to 23% of the First Nations population and 18% of Métis. In Ontario, 34% of Inuit were 14 years and under, and 29% were under the age of 13. In Ontario, 56% of Inuit were under 25 years of age. This pattern was still true in 2011, when 36% of Inuit in Ontario were 0-14 years of age.

Inuit children outside of Inuit Nunangat are more likely to have multiple siblings than other Canadian children. For example, twice as many Inuit families (16%) have four children as other Canadian families (8%). Also, Inuit children are more likely to live with two parents compared with other Aboriginal children.²

School boards in Ontario are beginning to invite their Aboriginal students to self-identify. In Ottawa, 181 students have identified as Inuit in the Ottawa District School Board out of 1500 First Nations, Inuit and Métis students in total. The Ottawa Catholic School Board declined to separate out numbers for Inuit, but has a total of approximately 600 First Nations, Inuit and Métis students who have self-identified. However, as one principal in a school with significant Inuit population pointed out, there are many more who do not identify.

Inuit in Ontario have a high school completion rate of 59% (compared to over 80% among the general population), and 7% have a university degree. Inuit are less likely than Métis but more likely than First Nations to have completed high school, and to have completed a Bachelor's degree. (MAA).

The Ontario Inuit labour force participation rate is 65% and the unemployment rate is 15% (MAA), which is about double the rate for Ontarians overall.

2. Statistics Canada. 2008. *Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006: Family, Community and Child Care* (Catalogue no. 89-634-X - No. 001). Ottawa ON: Statistics Canada.



Gaps and Barriers



SOME OF THE PARENTS MENTIONED THAT A KEY CHALLENGE IS THAT, IN ORDER TO PROVIDE SERVICES FOR INUIT WE NEED TO HAVE A WAY FOR PEOPLE TO SAFELY SELF-IDENTIFY.



Gaps and barriers in services were identified primarily by parents and service providers and to a lesser extent by the youth themselves. Difficulties are widespread: in the survey, parents indicated that their children had received negative experiences at the hands of mainstream service providers that ranged from 8% of families (in hospitals and child welfare services) to 24% of families (in high schools).

1. Safe Self-Identification: Some of the parents mentioned that a key challenge is that, in order to provide services for Inuit we need to have a way for people to safely self-identify. Currently, many Inuit youth and families hesitate to declare their cultural background because of the negative stereotypes and racism they have encountered. In some cases, they have internalized this shame and passed it on to their children. This issue is closely linked to the next barrier, the lack of cultural competence in services.

2. Lack of Cultural Competence and Cultural Safety: In many instances, parents and youth find that service providers know little or nothing about Inuit culture. As an Inuk, the child is essentially invisible to the service provider. Even those who are made aware of the child's cultural identity often confuse Inuit with First Nations, and have no understanding of the important differences between Inuit and other Aboriginal cultures.

This is compounded by the small number of Inuit children and youth in most mainstream and Aboriginal services. In the interviews with service providers, even among Aboriginal agencies, Inuit rarely constituted more than 10% of the children and youth served, and often far less.

The result is that services are not provided in a way that is culturally safe for these young Inuit. Their cultural identity and sense of self are not respected, acknowledged or supported in any conscious way, and many actions of the service provider may actually undermine the cultural well-being of the child or youth. Youth referred to their experiences

in these types of situations with a disheartening sense of inevitability, as it is their daily reality in so many cases. The only exceptions they and the parents highlighted were Inuit organizations, or specific service providers who have made a significant effort to consciously reflect and honour Inuit culture in multiple ways.

Parents in particular spoke of the contrast between services where their children were culturally safe and others where they were not. One mother talked about a number of schools her daughter had been in, and how finally they ended up at one where Inuit Elders and resource people come to class to present, where posters show proud Inuit, and her daughter was encouraged to perform throat-singing at the school's National Aboriginal Day event. "All the other schools were a problem," said the mother, contrasting them with this one school. Many of the positive actions she noted were the result of the Bridging the Gap program of the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre which collaborates with the school boards to provide an Inuit liaison worker to support understanding of the Inuit culture by staff and students.

Other examples were given of Inuit children or youth who are in group homes, in the health care system, in recreational programs or other services who have no cultural supports whatsoever.

One of the results of the lack of cultural competence has sometimes been misdiagnosis of the child's needs. Schools sometimes label Inuit children as "special needs" because their learning and communication styles are different from what the teacher is used to. One parent related the instance of her daughter, who school officials repeatedly labeled as having learning difficulties or delays. In fact, she is of high intelligence and is now successfully pursuing her university education.

One part of cultural competence is understanding the history and context of Inuit, and history of trauma that a family may bring. Some children and youth



may struggle in life in part because of the impacts of harm done to previous generations – residential schools, forced relocation, and the slaughter of sled dogs, among other collective traumas that have had an enormous impact on Inuit.

“Until you really understand the impact through the generations, then you begin to see what may be at work but they are not telling you.”

– *Mainstream service provider*

3. Bullying and Violence: Youth and parents described incidents of bullying, particularly at school, and violence directed against Inuit children and youth. The underlying racism in Canadian society is mirrored in the actions of the children, youth and adults these young Inuit come in contact with in much of their everyday lives – classmates, parents of classmates, strangers on the street, service providers, and others. The violent behaviour is merely the tip of the iceberg of prejudice and racism that these Inuit children and youth must face and learn to counteract in order to create a positive life path for themselves.

4. Systems Designed on Non-Inuit Cultural

Assumptions: Many of the service systems are designed on the basis of assumptions that do not necessarily hold true for Inuit children, youth and families. For example, many youth move back and forth between the North and Ontario, or their family moves frequently within Ontario, while services assume a certain stability in the lives of children. Also, most services are highly individualistic, while the Inuit culture is built around the extended family and community. Children will frequently be adopted into the family of a relative or a friend, while maintaining open and ongoing relationships with their birth family. This wider circle of family is difficult for many service providers to understand or even see,

and even more difficult to acknowledge in their systems and protocols, which are designed around the individual child or a very narrowly defined version of “family”.

“I have come to realize that when a child refers to ‘Mom’, it may mean someone who is their aunt, and their biological family is in the North.”

– *Mainstream service provider*

“Everything we do is inundated by individualism, and this is so different from the Inuit way of being.”

– *Mainstream service provider*

The central role of the extended family in Inuit culture is in no way reflected in the “norm” of how services in Ontario are designed. At best, the immediate family is acknowledged and perhaps included, but often not even that. Parents cited numerous difficulties in accessing services and programs as a family.

Youth also pointed to the important role of family, citing this as one of the three top elements of a good life, and asking for more programs and services that involve their whole family.

Not sufficiently integrating Inuit culture and values was also mentioned as a gap by service providers. The Aboriginal and mainstream service providers interviewed for this research were primarily those which have a relationship with the Inuit community and have tried to make changes so as to reflect and celebrate the Inuit culture in the way they work. The efforts made are significant and laudable: service providers seek out and involve Inuit Elders and



cultural teachers, integrate traditional foods and games and include Inuit content books, resource materials and toys. However, they also acknowledged that there is much more to be done. All of the service providers interviewed were able to cite various steps they had taken to try to integrate Inuit-specific supports, but they also pointed out that these efforts are still only a small part of the overall work they do with children and youth. They also rely almost entirely on Inuit organizations to provide the expertise, contacts, resource materials and guidance for these actions.

The child welfare system was highlighted as a specific example of the clash between the service and legal framework surrounding children in Ontario, and the Inuit culture. The Child and Family Services Act stipulates that when a child is adopted, he or she ceases to be a member of his or her family of origin and becomes exclusively a child of the adoptive family. As CASO pointed out, this is the opposite of Inuit cultural practice.

All of our systems are not Inuit systems – they have been imposed. We need to start over.”

– Mainstream service provider

5. Lack of Continuity and Coordination Among Services: Parents indicated numerous challenges in dealing with the complexity of the service system. Even navigating one of these, such as the education system or the health care system, is difficult; when parents have to deal with several systems, it becomes extremely demanding.

There were varied experiences with the hospital and health care system, with some parents indicating their child received good treatment and others saying they had difficulty accessing appropriate services (e.g. family doctor) until they went to the clinic for the Inuit

community clinic operated in Ottawa by TI. Some also commented that the health system does not understand the N-card, issued by the federal government to recognized Inuit clients to enable them to access health benefits which are billed to the federal government. It is equivalent to the status card issued to First Nations, but many pharmacies and other providers do not recognize it, causing problems for families.

The gaps in services and lack of system coordination are particularly true for the constellation of services in the mental health and addictions field. Service providers are ill-equipped to deal with the complexity of concurrent issues or the layers of trauma that some young Inuit carry. One parent related the challenges of being shuffled back and forth between services that are supposedly expert in dealing with the issues her son was facing, with none of them being truly able to rise to the occasion. There is growing awareness of the need, but there is still a huge gap between acknowledging mental health issues and actually getting appropriate services. Parents indicated that the health care system is skilled at dealing with physical trauma but that there are major gaps and problems in dealing with mental and emotional trauma.

Overall, parents indicated that for their child to receive necessary services, they frequently had to advocate and navigate the system for themselves. This requires a considerable investment of time and energy, as well as skills and knowledge about the system (or the willingness to research that information), and a determination to continue in the face of obstacles. Many parents simply do not have the time, or the advocacy skills, to do this. As one parent who had been through the system said, “I almost gave up.”

“Inuit parents are not necessarily pushy, and if you don’t have a big mouth, your child will be overlooked.” – Parent



Youth indicated that they were not always made aware of culturally-based services or programs that are available, and some expressed disappointment at not having been able to access programs they would have liked. For example, one young woman talked about cultural activities in her school that she did not hear about until later.

6. Lack of Inuit-Specific Services: Parents and service providers commented on the uniqueness of Inuit culture and practices, and the distinctions between Inuit and other Aboriginal peoples. In the Ottawa area, many urban Aboriginal service providers make a sincere effort to incorporate Inuit cultural traditions and teachings into their program and services, but this is challenging when only a small portion of their clients are Inuit. As a result, Inuit elements fade into the background or are a very minor part of what the children and youth are exposed to.

“We get absorbed into the pan-Aboriginal. It’s not the same.”

– Parent

“Aboriginal organizations are really First Nations and impose the First Nations culture without meaning to.” – Parent

“My child comes home and says, ‘Mom, why don’t we smudge?’ ”

– Parent

“We have longstanding relationships with First Nations organizations, but we are just becoming aware of the nuances of this [Inuit] population... Inuit are clearly a lot different from the other two [First Nations and Métis].”

– Mainstream service provider

Youth mentioned participating in several programs offered by Aboriginal organizations, and for the most part they enjoyed and appreciated these activities, such as talking circles, sports programs, and culturally based youth programs. These services fill a need in the community, and Inuit youth take advantage of the fact that they are offered. However, a number of Inuit youth mentioned that they would enjoy these types of programs even more if they were offered by Inuit organizations.

There are also gaps in programming for specific age-groups, for example, more Inuit-based programming is needed for school-age children.

Insufficient numbers of Inuit foster parents and adoptive families is a particular issue that needs attention. This is a challenge in both Ottawa and Toronto, and can be expected to continue to grow. A significant number of children come south from Nunavut because the service system in the North simply does not have the capacity to address the level of trauma and the need for children to be placed in other homes, either temporarily or permanently. Some also come because of kinship relationships and are placed with family members in Ontario.



Kinship care is preferable for Inuit children, but there is no financial support as there is for children placed with non-relatives. This financial disparity may be an issue as a larger proportion of Inuit families are struggling with modest financial means.

Parents and CAS both identified that more facilitators are needed for the Circle of Care, an Aboriginal-specific, distinction-based service linked to CAS Ottawa. There is a large backlog (approximately 40 Inuit, First Nation and Métis families are waiting for the Circle of Care) because it works and families want to use it, so that this is a service deserving of expansion. The Circle of Care is set up to provide Inuit-specific services but there are challenges in finding Inuit facilitators. One of the Aboriginal service providers familiar with Circle of Care commented that one Liaison Worker in CASO or in other systems to work on behalf of all three Aboriginal groups (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) is insufficient. It may be important to have a specific Inuit Liaison Worker in each of the key systems, such as CAS, health care, the education system and so on.

Outside of Ottawa, Aboriginal service providers also work hard to meet the needs of Inuit clients, and encounter similar challenges. Many of them have been successful in integrating some aspects of Inuit presence into their programming. Aboriginal Head Start programs, for example, have a small number of Inuit participants, anywhere from zero to three children in any given year. However, three of the programs make a point of ensuring Inuit stories, toys and activities are included in their programming as a best practice, regardless of whether there are Inuit children in the program that year. They rely on OICC and national training events to connect them with Inuit resources, and the agency with the most developed supports to Inuit children indicated they rely on OICC as their “go-to” source of information.

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto has also made specific efforts to serve Inuit clients in a culturally appropriate way. Approximately 20 – 50 Inuit children and youth use various of their services each year. A close relationship with OICC allows them to bring in cultural supports and training for staff. OICC also advises them on addictions, child welfare and mental health so that they are able to refer to Inuit-specific services (e.g. have referred youth to Mamisarvik, a residential treatment program in Ottawa dealing with addictions and trauma). They also have the word “welcome” in several Inuktitut dialects on the wall in their entranceway, along with various First Nations languages, as a gesture to recognize that Inuit are part of the Toronto community. However, there have also been challenges. Some of the major barriers identified related to the difficulty in finding interpreters, Elders and cultural teachers for clients and staff.

The Government of Nunavut reports a small number of Inuit children at Sick Kids Hospital from their jurisdiction and there are likely others from the population of Inuit living in Toronto. However, there are no cultural supports whatsoever for these children and youth while they are in the health care system.





Outcomes



WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES THAT MATTER THE MOST TO CHILDREN, YOUTH, THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES? HOW WILL WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED THESE OUTCOMES?



Parents and youth were very consistent in their descriptions of what children and youth need to live a good life. The following information was gleaned from the parent and youth focus groups, and from the youth surveys.

Inuit children and youth grow up in a society that acknowledges and celebrates Inuit culture.

Youth and parents spoke extensively about how little most Canadians know about Inuit. Children and youth are often the only Inuk in their class, or perhaps one of a few in the school. Their teachers, their classmates, the parents of their friends all have little or no understanding of Inuit culture. At best, they might know something about First Nations.

All Canadians need to learn about Inuit history as an integral part of their education from an early age, and the contribution of Inuit needs to be part of the understanding of the general public. As First Canadians, Inuit culture brings a richness that youth are proud of and which they need to see accepted and honoured in the society around them. It is important to reflect back to Inuit children and youth who they are, and the importance and value of Inuit in Canada.

“To be in a place in which you are accepted for who you are, you are nurtured and cared for and you are valuable.” – Youth

Inuit children and youth are safe and protected, and grow up free from violence, racism, prejudice and bullying.

The eradication of racism and violence from the lives of Inuit children and youth will go along way to establishing a more positive life for them, both currently and as they grow into adulthood.

“To live a good life, one should know who they are and where they come from, have access to services and live life not worrying about negative stigmas.” – Youth

Inuit children and youth have access to their culture.

Parents want their children growing up in their culture from a young age. Youth want to have regular opportunities to spend time with Elders, to learn traditional practices such as sewing traditional clothing, drumming, throat-singing, carving and story-telling, and to participate in social activities with other Inuit where they are surrounded by those who understand their culture.

[A good life is] “Family, friends, education and Inuit culture.” – Youth

Inuit children and youth know who they are, are proud to be Inuk, and are comfortable walking in both worlds – Inuit and mainstream.

With a strong foundation in their own culture, Inuit children and youth will be well equipped to succeed in both the dominant culture and the Inuit world. They will find ways to live in both worlds, and to integrate their Inuk identity with whatever they choose to do in Canadian society.

Inuit children and youth have a strong connection to the land.

The land is central to the Inuit way of life and identity. Regular opportunities to be on the land for outdoor pursuits, such as sledding, camping, snowmobiling, hunting, fishing and berry-picking reinforce this important bond. Youth in particular emphasized how



important this is to them, and how it is part of living a good life. Parents also identified the importance of this – some observed how children and youth exhibit almost no behavioural problems when they are out on the land, and that it has a healing effect on them.

The Inuktitut language is thriving in Ontario.

Language is a cornerstone of culture, the embodiment of a people’s way of thinking and seeing the world. By ensuring Inuit children grow up in an environment where Inuktitut is a full and vibrant part of their lives, they are equipped to truly live in their culture.

Inuit children and youth grow up in strong Inuit-positive families and surrounded by a caring community.

Youth talked about the importance of their family as a support and named their family as one of the three most often named essentials for a good life. They are clear that they include in this their extended family, wherever these family members are, and regardless of whether the youth lives with their birth family, their adoptive family, a foster family, or in any other setting. Parents reinforce the importance of a strong family around the Inuk child or youth.

Parents and service providers underscored the importance of supporting and strengthening Inuit families as a way to support Inuit children and youth. These are supports that help ensure the family is meeting their basic needs of food and housing, is able to access the services they need.

“Kids thrive if parents thrive.” – Parent

Parents also indicated that, for Inuit children who have been adopted or fostered by non-Inuit families, it is important that caregivers have the knowledge, training and aptitude to provide a culturally positive environment for the child.

Youth also talked about having a caring community around them, and the essential role of friends, neighbours and people who listen to them and guide them.

*[Having a good life means...]”
People are there for you, someone to talk to.” – Youth*

*[Having a good life means...]”
Having family and friends around or support. Knowing I have a reason to live” – Youth*

Inuit children and youth lead healthy, active lives.

Youth repeatedly referred to sports, fitness and recreation as a major element in living a good life. Parents reinforced this view, highlighting the social, emotional and physical benefits of participating in sports. Land-based programs and activities, and opportunities for hunting, fishing and other traditional activities on the land, figured prominently in the comments, especially from youth.

Having access to country food was frequently mentioned by youth, and to some extent by parents, who see it as a way to reinforce their children’s cultural heritage and also acknowledged it is an activity their children sincerely enjoy. Service providers commented on country food as a means for gathering the community, and providing social interaction within the Inuit community.

Finally, parents and service providers included good quality health care as an element of children and youth living a healthy, active life.



“As soon as you say ‘country food’, boom! – everybody is there.”

– Aboriginal service provider

Inuit children and youth have the confidence and the skills to thrive in whatever way of life they choose for themselves.

Parents and service providers, particularly educators, emphasized the importance of youth having resilience, self-confidence, problem-solving skills and other abilities that will enable them to build a good life for themselves in whatever way they choose. Part of this is education and preparation for adult life. Parents and youth also want to see Inuit growing into leadership roles in society.

“I want them to be able to say ‘I can do this’.” – Parent

*[Having a good life means...]
“Live up to your plans and goals.”*

– Youth

*[Having a good life means...]
“Do the best you can.” – Youth*

Inuit families have the means to provide their children and youth with safe and adequate housing and a decent standard of living.

One of the key elements of providing a good start in life for Inuit children and youth is to ensure they grow up in families where the basic needs of food, housing and safety are met, and where the families have the resources to enable their children to participate in society.

Some indicators that might be used to mark progress towards these outcomes include:

- a) Programs are available that allow Inuit children to be educated in Inuktitut from birth through Grade 6. English or French would be introduced as an instructional language along with Inuktitut in primary school.
- b) Integration of accurate Inuit history and culture into Ontario curricula, e.g. Canadian history.
- c) Inuit youth report less bullying and racism at school.
- d) Increased awareness/profile in the general public of Inuit culture and history.
- e) Wider availability of culturally-based activities, and greater participation in these by Inuit children and youth.
- f) Larger number of Inuit families and youth know of Inuit services available.
- g) Increased cultural competence of key service providers, especially in communities with a significant Inuit population. This would include service providers in the education, health and child welfare systems.
- h) Higher educational attainment by Inuit children and youth; improved performance in the school system.
- i) Better health outcomes for Inuit children and youth.
- j) More Inuit youth take on leadership roles in the community.
- k) Higher percentage of Inuit children and youth are in Inuit families – birth families, adoptive families, foster families.
- l) A growing percentage of Inuit children and youth speak their language and retain it into adulthood.



Providing Effective Services for Inuit



DESCRIBE THE TYPES OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES REQUIRED IN ORDER TO DELIVER ON THESE OUTCOMES? WHAT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS WILL THIS NEW SYSTEM BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR?



Program and Services of Interest

The key programs and services that are of primary concern to parents and youth who participated in the focus groups and surveys are:

- Education system;
- Health care system;
- Mental health system;
- Social and community services, particularly sports and recreational activities, youth programs; and
- Child welfare system.

The youth focus groups and survey, and the parent focus groups and survey inquired about services in the community which were being provided appropriately, and areas where there were concerns or gaps. The parent focus groups also delved more deeply into changes that are needed. Service providers were asked about ways in which they addressed promising practices for Inuit children and youth in their services, gaps and barriers in services, and services needed. For the most part, service providers tended to offer solutions in their own sector rather than commenting on service needs more broadly.

The Importance of Inuit-specific Services

Although numbers are low compared to the overall Aboriginal population, the Inuit community tends to be a tight-knit one with a common culture and, although there are dialect differences, a common language. Because Inuit have their roots in a limited number of communities located in Canada's Arctic, there is also a greater possibility of ties among people in Ontario. All of these factors make organizing services more feasible than in a more heterogenous population of similar size.

Inuit have a distinct culture and history that is different from First Nations and Métis (Rae, 2011; OICC, 2013a). In a study of urban Inuit, youth, parents and Elders all indicated that it is important that the Inuit community is understood to be distinct from other Aboriginal cultures (OICC, 2013a).

Participants at the National Urban Inuit One Voice Workshop identified that a pan-Aboriginal approach, in which First Nations, Métis and Inuit are dealt with through the same service, is really predominantly focused on First Nations. The experience of Inuit is that services are provided to them as if they were First Nations (Patrick and Tomiak, 2008).

This view was shared by Inuit youth, parents and Elders in an Ottawa study. They indicated that pan-Aboriginal organizations and activities tend to reflect First Nations approaches and culture. While people value the connection and the common experience with other indigenous cultures, it is important that the uniqueness of Inuit culture be reflected in the services provided (OICC, 2013a).

Indigenous youth and practitioners have raised concerns about the pan-Aboriginal approach to service delivery, and Inuit youth find the largely First Nations approaches not culturally relevant for them. Use of the medicine wheel, for instance, is viewed as inconsiderate and disrespectful (Blanchet-Cohen et al, 2011).

Inuit are best placed to identify and understand their own needs, and to define services, programs, policies and research that are led by and for Inuit. This is the best way to take into account the unique cultural, social and economic factors that Inuit face (Cameron, 2011). Inuit direction and control are also the most effective ways of ensuring that Inuit traditional knowledge about children and youth and how to support them is incorporated into the appropriate services (Rae, 2011).



A study of the child welfare system in Nunavut suggested that “cultural competence is not enough” when the services and programs are designed from a non-Inuit perspective. Despite the best intentions of all concerned, the services inevitably undermine or contradict traditional Inuit values. The study recommended that, to be effective, programs be designed from the outset by Inuit and based on Inuit culture, values and traditional knowledge. (Johnston, 2009)

In an urban context, the Inuit community may be more geographically dispersed and is linked through social networks, cultural practices and common services and organizations (Patrick, 2008). Because urban Inuit are part of a much larger, dominant society, Inuit control of Inuit services is even more critical in these circumstances.

It should be noted that capacity-building in Inuit communities is essential to ensure sustainable Inuit control and direction (Rae, 2011).

Over and over, parents and service providers highlighted the effectiveness of services that are specific to the Inuit community. Youth asked for more Inuit presence in their schools, and for the opportunity to participate in more activities in Inuit organizations and linked to Inuit culture. They specifically talked about the importance of time with Elders, country food, land-based activities, Inuit staff, non-Inuit service providers who understand Inuit history and culture, and being able to participate in events as part of the Inuit community. Parents emphasized the distinctiveness of Inuit culture and the difference in the depth and quality of cultural elements that are provided by Inuit services and organizations compared with others.

Even Inuit-specific elements of mainstream agencies are appreciated. Parents referred often to Bridging The Gap liaison workers in the school system; the role of these Inuit workers is to support Inuit in the schools through liaison with teachers, advocacy

within the system, and presentations to students and teaches about Inuit culture. Parents commented on the tremendous impact of their children seeing Inuit resource people in the classroom – that they became more proud, more motivated, more positive.

Parents also pointed out that Inuit have a very strength-based approach, and it is important that Inuit be involved in all aspects of design and delivery of services intended for Inuit.

“More contact with their Inuit peers gives them hope.”

– Mainstream service provider commenting on the noticeable impact of providing Inuit elements in their service.

“This needs to be Inuit-led because, truthfully, we don’t really know.”

– Mainstream service provider

Promising Practices

The literature review (see Appendix E) identified 17 promising practices in providing services to Inuit children and youth, which can be very briefly described as follows:

- 1. Inuit-driven:** Inuit are best placed to identify and understand their own needs, and to define services, programs, policies and research.
- 2. Inuit-specific services:** Inuit have a distinct culture and history that is different from First Nations and Métis and it is important that the Inuit community is understood to be distinct from other Aboriginal cultures.



3. **Community involvement:** In Inuit communities, more effective solutions to problems arise when community members come together and move toward positive solutions.
4. **Youth engagement:** Involvement of youth in creating, planning and delivering youth programs is seen as an essential practice for effective results.
5. **Based on Inuit culture and values:** The inclusion of cultural teachings and traditions is considered an important element of programs and services for Inuit children and youth . The Inuit holistic view of health and human development can offer strength, balance, control over one’s life, and social resources to support a well-rounded life.
6. **Involvement of Elders:** Elders have a key role as the carriers of Inuit culture and teachers of Inuit values, and so their role in services and programs for children and youth is seen as essential.
7. **Land-based activities:** Inuit paradigms of well-ness are closely linked to one’s relationship to the land and land-based activities are one way to involve children and youth in healthy and culturally relevant activities.
8. **Traditional practices and foods:** Integrating traditional knowledge, practices, food and celebrations has been effective in services and programs for Inuit children and youth.
9. **Use of Inuit language:** *“Our language is who and what we are and the health of our language lies at the core of our wellbeing.”* (Mary Simon, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami).
10. **Family involvement:** Families (including extended family members) play an essential role in Inuit society, and services to children and youth need to include and support families.
11. **Parental supports:** Parents have a fundamental role in ensuring the well-being of their children, and raising them to prepare them to live a good life. Programs for Inuit children and youth need to incorporate direct supports for parents of these children.
12. **Recognition of complex needs:** A significant number of Inuit children are dealing with complex challenges, including a history of trauma, speech and language difficulties, FASD, autism, learning disabilities and other special needs. These challenges are clearly not unique to Inuit children and youth, however cultural disruption and intergenerational trauma have a distinct impact on Inuit children and need to be considered in service delivery.
13. **Holistic approach:** recognition of the health and social context of Inuit children and youth, including housing, income, history of trauma, racism, bullying, food security, etc.





14. Strength and resilience-based approaches: Elders speak of Inuit cultural teachings that create resiliency, including the importance of hope and belief that things will get better, the ability to recover from setbacks and keep going, and the responsibility to face difficulties and make things better. Traditional Inuit society also values the strengths and contributions of each individual and the importance of their contributions for the common good.

15. Inuit staff: Having qualified Inuit staff providing the services and programs for Inuit children and youth is an important aspect of high quality, effective services. Inuit staff can provide important value-added in the delivery of services, by integrating and modeling cultural values and practices in the program, and linking the services to the Inuit community.

16. Cultural competency and safety: Service providers, Indigenous organizations, and parents of Inuit

children and youth have all identified the need for training for service providers to provide culturally competent and culturally safe services for Inuit children and youth.

17. Service collaboration and integration: Community partnerships and collaboration are an essential part of providing high quality services to Inuit children and youth.

Youth and parents were asked to provide feedback about the importance of these promising practices to them. This included youth at focus groups, a survey of youth who were not able to be part of the focus groups, and a survey of parents. Figure 1 below shows the practices most frequently chosen; however, all of them were considered important and there was not a large variation between the highest and lowest scores – aside from the overwhelming popularity of country food among youth in the focus groups.

Figure 1: Most Important Promising Practices According to Youth and Parents

| Parents (58 survey responses) | Youth (16 survey responses) | Youth focus groups (33 participants) |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on Inuit culture and values • Access to country food • Services cooperate with each other • Non-Inuit staff understand Inuit history and culture • Provides help with learning difficulties, disabilities or special needs • Supports and help for parents • Holistic: recognizes all aspects of a person’s life • Includes traditional practices • Inuit-specific | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elders are involved in program • Supports and help for parents • Provides help with learning difficulties, disabilities or special needs • Services cooperate with each other • Inuit are decision-makers • Inuit staff • Land-based activities • Youth are involved in planning and deciding activities • Based on Inuit culture and values | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inuit-specific • Access to country food • Use of Inuktitut • Elders are involved in program • Land-based activities • Involves the whole family • Inuit staff • Non-Inuit staff understand Inuit history and culture • Provides help with learning difficulties, disabilities or special needs |



Services and Programs Needed

Inuit-specific children and youth services currently exist only in Ottawa. Looking forward, one of the first steps in a provincial Inuit Child and Youth Strategy will be the establishment of a provincial Inuit agency or body to coordinate and be accountable for delivery of Inuit-specific services in the province.

Over the coming several years, Inuit-specific child and youth services in Ontario will be particularly important in the following areas. The promising practices identified in the literature and reinforced by the community feedback would be important to integrate into all of the programs and services.

A. OTTAWA

1. Education System

- a) Expanded Bridging the Gap program.

There are currently two Bridging the Gap positions in the Ottawa system under the responsibility of OICC. These liaison workers provide support and information to teachers and school staff, support and advocate on behalf of the students, and work in collaboration with teachers to provide an Inuit presence in the classroom, such as cultural presentations.

Education officials commented on the usefulness of these positions and the impact of their work in the schools, including providing knowledgeable information and suggestions to teachers, supporting the students, and undertaking actions to raise the profile and understanding of Inuit culture in the school, such as through presentations in the classroom. Parents highlighted the tremendously positive impact on their children of having Inuit resource people in the classroom,

creating pride and excitement in their children, and raising awareness and respect among their child's classmates. The only concern was that there was far more work to do than two liaison workers could accomplish. The suggestion of parents and of an Aboriginal service provider was to expand this program so that there is a liaison worker in every school with a significant Inuit student population.

- b) Grades 1-12 Inuit-specific education program.

Service providers commented on the important step of having established an Inuit kindergarten program, which is currently operated by OICC in collaboration with the Ottawa Carleton District School Board at Robert E. Wilson Public School. Parents suggested that it would be important to explore continuing this model through grades 1 to 12, perhaps starting with the elementary grades. This might be in the form of an Inuit school, or an Inuit program or class within a school. The advantages of providing an Inuit-specific education experience include the opportunity to embed language and culture throughout the curriculum, and enabling the provision of culturally safe, wraparound services for the children and their families.

- c) Cultural competence of educators.

Parents, educators, service providers beyond the education system, and youth all emphasized the importance of continuous training and development to enhance the cultural competence of teachers and other staff working with Inuit students. Parents repeatedly contrasted the negative experience of their children in schools where teachers were unaware of the history and culture of Inuit with the positive impact of schools where Inuit are acknowledged and celebrated, and Inuit culture is regularly introduced into the curriculum and the activities of the school. In these schools,



Inuit Elders and cultural presenters are invited in, there are posters and other visible reminders to students of the positive role of Inuit in Canada. As one principal commented, it is important that students see themselves reflected in their school environment.

The Ottawa Aboriginal community provides annual opportunities for teachers from all school boards to participate in workshops to enhance their cultural competence, and schools with significant Inuit populations regularly send one or two teachers to these events (participation is limited due to space). However, Inuit culture is only one small aspect of these trainings, and more intensive follow-up by Inuit agencies is necessary for schools with Inuit students. Parents emphasized that Inuit trainers are essential for these sessions.



- d) Support for pursuing post-secondary education.

Parents highlighted the challenges of supporting their children through the post-secondary system, and the isolation and racism they face there. They asked for cultural supports to encourage and strengthen these Inuit youth as they pursue higher education.

2. Youth Programs

- a) Culturally-based prevention and resiliency programs.

Youth asked for expanded programs to support them in leading healthy lives. Sports, recreation and culture figured prominently in their specific suggestions, including land-based activities, summer or March break camps, outdoor sports, opportunities to be with other Inuit youth in a social, recreational or cultural context, opportunities to spend time with Elders, activities with their family, and events and programs with country food. Parents and service providers highlighted a similar range of programs to build the pride, self-confidence and skills of youth. It should also be noted, however, that not all Inuit youth wish to immerse themselves in Inuit culture and some activities and services need to be designed to accommodate that while also leaving the option open for them to access their culture when they choose. Service providers, particularly educators, identified the need for culturally based programs for school-age children and youth.

Parents talked about the need to locate programs near to where the children and youth live throughout the city. Those not near the OICC and TI facilities in Vanier sometimes have difficulty getting to programs. Alternatively, it



may be possible to develop transportation solutions so that all can participate regardless of where they live.

b) Mentoring.

Mainstream and Aboriginal service providers asked for an expanded number of Inuit cultural teachers, Elders and mentors for Inuit youth who may be clients or participants in their programs.

c) Drop-in programs.

Youth and parents mentioned the importance of informal gathering places where youth can socialize and spend time together in a safe and culturally-based context. Simply spending time with other Inuit youth is a benefit in itself.

3. Health Care System

a) Create at least one Inuit medical advocate/ navigator/liaison worker to support parents, children and youth.

This position would serve several functions: assist parents and young patients to navigate the health care system, advocate on behalf of patients as needed to encourage the health care professionals to better understand and respond to the needs of Inuit children and youth in their care, and provide information and presentations on cultural competence to health care professionals. Families use the health clinic provided through TI and appreciate this Inuit-specific service however there are still many medical needs that can only be met through mainstream services. Service providers acknowledged the complexity of the health care system and the challenges in obtaining appropriate and

culturally safe services, and supported the concept of an Inuit liaison worker and possibly two, given the need.

b) Provide culturally safe mental health services for Inuit youth.

Parents and service providers identified the need for significantly improved mental health services. The services to respond to mental health needs or crises are either absent or over-burdened and are not equipped to provide culturally safe care. Inuit children and youth often have complex needs related to a history of trauma, cultural disruption and intergenerational issues that may manifest in violence, suicidality or other serious mental health issues. Youth themselves identified the importance of having a circle of caring individuals around them to deal with challenges and problems they may encounter in life. Parents and service providers indicated that youth will often not go to mental health services and so “the service must go to them”. For example, one educator highlighted that students have asked for an Inuk counselor to come to the school; they specifically requested an Inuk because they want someone who understands their culture and background and who has life experiences that are similar to their own.

Parents highlighted the need for wraparound services for all Inuit youth and children that include ready access to a range of mental health supports from prevention to intervention and treatment, and supports for the family. Finally, parents pointed out that parental supports are also an essential part of the service: one parent commented that, after many dead-ends and problems in accessing services, when they finally connected with services that met their child’s needs, they as parents were also provided



with a counselor who helped them and also gave them suggestions on working effectively with their child.

- c) Consider operating one or more Inuit-specific group homes.

Inuit youth from Nunavut currently live in group homes where service providers do their utmost to provide the clinical treatment and other supports they need, but have a limited capacity to provide a culturally safe program. Parents suggested it may be more appropriate to provide these supports in Inuit-specific, culturally-based group homes.

- c) Recruit Inuit foster and adoptive parents.

New strategies are needed to identify, engage and support families in the Inuit community who can foster and/or adopt Inuit children.

- d) Designate the Ottawa Inuit community as a “native community” for purposes of the Child and Family Service Act, and designate an Inuit agency to represent the community in child welfare matters.

This would allow the Inuit community in Ottawa to negotiate with CAS Ottawa on behalf of Inuit children in care to ensure their needs are addressed in a culturally competent and safe manner.

4. Child Welfare

- a) Revise the PRIDE and SAFE programs to be culturally appropriate.

These programs are provincially mandated to train and screen prospective adoptive families. The Aboriginal Committee of the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies is seeking to have the programs adapted to Aboriginal needs. Given the distinctive Inuit culture, it was suggested that Ontario needs to develop a version for families who are considering adopting or fostering Inuit children.

- b) Expand the Circle of Care program.

Circle of Care provides culturally safe supports to First Nations, Inuit and Métis families dealing with CAS, however current demand far outstrips the capacity of the program. The program needs to be expanded to meet the growing demand. An important element of the expansion is to identify an Inuk facilitator.





B. TORONTO

This rapidly growing Inuit community may be approaching the size of the Ottawa community (although data is unreliable). There is already a nucleus of interested community members working towards creating Inuit children's programming.

- a) Provide organizational support to the group of community members to enable them to formalize an Inuit children's program, either as a stand-alone agency or under the aegis of the Inuit provincial body.
- b) Work with Native Child and Family Services to strengthen the availability of Inuit child welfare services, including providing cultural supports such as Elders, interpreters, cultural teachers, ceremonies and other supports. It was suggested that it would be very helpful to have OICC or another Inuit agency establish an office in their building for more effective services for Inuit clients.
- c) Work with relevant school board officials to explore the need for a Bridging the Gap program in schools where there is a significant Inuit student population.
- d) Work with Sick Kids Hospital to explore the need for an Inuit liaison worker for system navigation and advocacy with the health care system, including mental health services.
- e) Organize community events to gather Inuit in the city, assess needs, and build capacity to design and deliver services in the future.
- f) Consider a satellite operation in Oshawa and/or Hamilton where population data suggest there may be a significant number of Inuit.

C. OTHER COMMUNITIES

- a) For communities with a significant Inuit population, such as Thunder Bay, Niagara-St Catherines, and Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge, investigate the level of interest in Inuit-specific children and youth services.
- b) In addition, the provincial Inuit organization can enhance supports to Aboriginal services that are likely to be working with Inuit youth and children, building on the work of OICC. This would include:
 - Culturally-based Inuit resource materials;
 - Cultural training for staff;
 - Identification of local interpreters and Elders, and
 - Ongoing advice and consultation.

D. SOCIAL DETERMINANTS

Successful outcomes for Inuit children and youth will not be solely dependent on effective community programs and the efforts of their families. There is also a wider context that profoundly shapes the lives of young Inuit, and social determinants of well-being such as poverty and racism. Three areas of action which might usefully be addressed in a provincial strategy include:

- a) Develop a public awareness initiative to improve the public understanding of the Inuit. One of the service providers commented that Ontario needs a reconciliation process which shares important truths about the history of Canada's relationship with Inuit, acknowledges the impact of these on the well-being of Inuit, and begins to build a new relationship based on mutual respect.



“People know a little about residential schools, but have no idea what happened in the North.”

– Mainstream service provider

- b) Explore specific strategies that can help Inuit families move out of poverty. Service providers and parents identified that issues of poverty, unsafe or unstable housing arrangements, and precarious food supply for families has a dramatic effect on the ability of some children and youth to succeed, and on the ability of their families to provide a secure and supportive home life for them.
- c) Consider options for housing for Inuit youth who may be in need of a culturally safe community environment to live (e.g. at risk of homelessness, transitioning from the North). Several parents and youth and one service provider suggested a supportive housing apartment building where youth could affordably and safely stay. This could also provide a small community of mutual support, socializing and cultural activities.

Community Validation

The Community Forum held in September 2014 reviewed highlights from the research report and provided feedback on the priorities and direction set out. Community members strongly reinforced and confirmed the major service needs and key principles/practices set out above. In particular, the Community Forum emphasized the following key points:

1. It is critically important that Inuit cultural values and practices shape the design and delivery of services and be integrated throughout children and youth programs. In particular, Elders and parents at the Forum emphasized that learning and retaining Inuktitut is key for the retention of culture. For example, children who attend Sivummut Head Start are exposed to the language all day in the program and then go into the school system where the presence of Inuktitut drops to almost nil. This is a serious gap in services for children. Elders also emphasized the importance of ensuring the high quality of the language taught to children and respect for dialects. In the same vein, it is important that services for Inuit children and youth include a significant number of Inuktitut-speaking staff.
2. Children and youth in the education system need greater supports in the education system, including assessment of developmental and learning challenges and assistance to address these, and Inuit cultural presence in the schools. In-school supports are key for the success of Inuit children and more attention is needed to ensure the proper array of supports are available. The suggestion of forming an Inuit school was raised, which would facilitate an educational environment where language and culture can be reinforced.
3. A wide range of cultural and recreational activities are needed for children and for youth to keep them engaged in the Inuit community, provide culture-based learning experiences for them, provide them with time on the land and keep them involved in positive, life-affirming and fun activities. This might include sports, recreation, outdoor games and activities, camping, art, music and other activities, all or most with a cultural component.



4. Mental health services are critically important, especially for older children and for youth. Parents reiterated their frustration with the lack of services, and the absence of cultural safety on the part of many service providers.
5. System navigation is very important as families, youth and children try to find their way through the complex and confusing maze of services and service gaps. This was especially emphasized with respect to the health system but also for social and community services, education system and others.
6. The housing needs of youth was a concern, and the suggestion of some kind of housing support, or facility, or system navigation to find safe and affordable housing was raised.
7. The Community Forum also mentioned the importance of continually improving the skills and professional training of staff in Inuit-specific services, and moving towards expanded professional services in all aspects of programs and services for Inuit children and youth. Parents do not want to have to choose between a highly specialized professional service and a culturally safe service – they want the two to be one and the same. This capacity development will be important to bear in mind as work is undertaken to create an Inuit-specific service system.





Inuit-specific Service System

WHAT DOES ENHANCED ABORIGINAL CONTROL OVER PROGRAM AND SERVICE DESIGN, DELIVERY AND PLANNING INVOLVE? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE SO THAT WE CAN MOVE TOWARD SUCH A DEDICATED SERVICE SYSTEM FOR ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH?

HOW WILL THE SYSTEM BE MANAGED/GOVERNED? HOW WILL ORGANIZATIONS, COMMUNITIES AND THE PROVINCE MEASURE SUCCESS IN TERMS OF HOW THE SYSTEM IS MANAGED/GOVERNED?

HOW WILL ABORIGINAL AGENCIES WORK TOGETHER AND WITH MAINSTREAM AGENCIES AND ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES? WHAT PRACTICES WILL NEED TO BE EITHER STRENGTHENED OR CREATED IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO MOVE ON AND OFF RESERVE AND BETWEEN COMMUNITIES RECEIVE SEAMLESS SERVICES?



Inuit-driven Service Delivery

To move towards the programs and services described above and to ensure implementation of the promising practices identified in the literature and by the community, one of the first steps would be the establishment of an Inuit-specific provincial organization to develop, guide and be accountable for Inuit-specific services. Currently, the two main Inuit service delivery agencies in Ontario, OICC and TI, both have networks and relationships with service providers across the province to support delivery of services to Inuit clients. OICC relationships focus on provision of services to children and youth, however the networks of both organizations are important.

Creating the Inuit provincial service organization will need to be done in a way which respects certain principles:

- Inuit-specific service delivery is the goal: in some communities this can be implemented immediately (e.g. Toronto and expansion of

service in Ottawa), while in other communities the services will arise as the Inuit population grows and coalesces around the need for children and youth services.

- Service development will be in areas determined by local community need, and at a pace which is sustainable for that community.
- Inuit stakeholders will be the key decision-makers in determining the structure of the organization.
- The organization will build on existing relationships, programs and services.
- The organization will provide advice and expertise to the development of local services, in support of Inuit community members establishing the program or service.
- Service delivery will include a range of options

depending on what is in the best interests of the local community, including autonomous local Inuit agencies, satellite operations of existing Inuit agencies, and partnerships with Aboriginal or mainstream agencies.

An Inuit-specific service delivery system will look different in different parts of the province. In Ottawa, where there is an established and extensive Inuit community, as well as local Inuit service delivery organizations, a more comprehensive range of Inuit-specific child and youth services are possible, including those listed above.

In Toronto, where there is a growing Inuit population, it is timely to start with an Inuit children's program based on initial interest expressed to OICC by members of the Inuit community there. There is also potential for other core services as highlighted in the suggestions above.



One of the major challenges is that, outside the Ottawa region and Toronto, Inuit do not yet constitute a critical mass of population sufficient to warrant their own services. This will change as the population continues to rapidly grow, particularly in cities where there is already a significant nexus of Inuit, such as Niagara-St Catherines, Oshawa and Kitchener-Waterloo.

Thus, the strategy would have three aspects:

- a) An Inuit-specific service system can be expanded or established in cities where the population base and community interest can sustain it: at this point, Ottawa and in the near future, Toronto.
- b) The ability to create Inuit-specific programs or activities in communities where there is a smaller Inuit population. These may be satellite operations of established Inuit organizations. Since the Inuit population is very young, and Inuit culture attaches great importance to children, it is likely that child or youth-focused services will be the first area of interest for an emerging Inuit community.
- c) In the meantime, and for communities who continue to have a modest Inuit population, it is likely that Inuit will continue to access Aboriginal child and youth services. Provision must be made to ensure that these agencies are cognizant of their Inuit clients, and practice cultural competence and cultural safety. A number of Aboriginal organizations have already recognized this, such as Shkoday Abinojiiwak Obimiwedoon in Thunder Bay and Native Child and Family Services in Toronto, who have taken concrete steps to reflect Inuit culture and provide services that are culturally specific to the extent that they are able.



Although there are important variations across the Inuit population in Ontario, this is overall a more cohesive and similar community than, for example, the diversity of First Nations in the province. Inuit share a common language and generally understand each other across the different dialects. Inuit also share a common homeland and, despite important regional variations, many important cultural practices and teachings. The cohesiveness of the community also means that, when Inuit move to Ontario from the North, they generally connect with other Inuit in the community where they move.

All of this makes it more feasible to have an Inuit-specific service system, even for such a small population.

Collaboration with other Aboriginal Services

Once again, a distinction can be drawn between the situation in Ottawa, in Toronto and elsewhere in the province.

In Ottawa, OICC is part of a well-established coordinating network under the umbrella of the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition, which brings together First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations providing direct services to the community. There are strong relationships among the Executive Directors of the various agencies, and regular communication and collaboration at the program level and with respect to community events. As the Ottawa Aboriginal community grows, these collaborative relationships can always be improved, however there is a strong foundation from which to work.

Aboriginal service providers in Ottawa identified the opportunity for strengthened collaboration with Inuit organizations, particularly assistance in

providing stronger cultural supports for their Inuit clients, and the involvement of Inuit mentors and cultural teachers to interact with Inuit children and youth in their agency.

In Toronto, one of the main Aboriginal services working with children and youth is the Native Child and Family Services, which has a strong relationship with OICC. This collaboration can form part of the basis for expanded Inuit services in Toronto. For example, the agency representative interviewed suggested that ideally the Inuit community would have an office in their building, to facilitate ready access for their clients to Inuit cultural supports and community, including Elders, interpreters, child and youth services, and so on.

Outside of Toronto, Aboriginal agencies reported relatively few Inuit children and youth in their services. Those that reported current or recent Inuit clients indicated they relied on either OICC or contacts made with Inuit services in the Far North (at a national training event) for resource materials they use with Inuit children and youth. A strong relationship with Ontario Inuit services would be important to nurture and strengthen.

Aboriginal services would like to see strengthened collaboration, so they can call on Inuit agencies for support in terms of identifying Elders, cultural teachers, role models, programming and staff training.

Collaboration with Mainstream Services

Parents, youth and service providers emphasized the importance of collaboration among service providers. This is seen as critical in providing well-coordinated and seamless care for children and youth, and also for ensuring that Inuit services are involved wherever possible. Parents in particular indicated that some



mainstream service providers are not aware of Inuit services and do not refer their children or involve these services.

OICC has a long history of collaboration with mainstream child and youth service providers in the Ottawa area and many of the agencies interviewed, both in Ottawa and outside of it, described OICC as the “go-to” organization on Inuit children and youth. OICC has been instrumental in the progress made to improve the cultural safety of child welfare services and education services, working closely with the respective school boards and with CAS Ottawa. However, these are large systems, particularly in education and health care, and much more work is needed to engage mainstream service providers, particularly the myriad of frontline staff that Inuit children and youth come into contact with.

The system-level relationships have been established, at least in the Ottawa area. Based on input from service providers and parents, what is needed next is to:

- a) Extend the presence of Inuit liaison workers further into the main service systems working with Inuit children and youth in Ottawa, so that there is a frontline advocate able to support families and inform and educate staff; and
- b) Establish the system level relationships with health and education authorities in Toronto to begin exploring provision of Inuit-specific services.

Seamless Services for Children and Youth Moving between Ontario and the North

At any given time, there are close to 30 children and youth from Nunavut who are in Ontario temporarily for specialized medical, child welfare or behavioural services³. In addition, there are many more who live in Ontario but continue to have family in the North. Many families make an effort to regularly visit their home community to reconnect with extended family and to ensure their children spend time on the land and in the culture of their ancestors. These visits may coincide with the summer to provide opportunities for hunting and fishing, however they could take place at any time of year.

As a result of this relatively frequent travel between Ontario and the North, children and youth need excellent coordination and collaboration between service providers in Ontario, Inuit organizations in Ontario, and the Government of Nunavut. This is particularly true for services in Ottawa and may become more relevant in Toronto as Inuit services grow there.

Discussions with the Government of Nunavut representative and other service providers indicate that the collaboration needs to include the following elements:

- a) Effective transition planning between services in Nunavut and services in Ontario, including medical services, education, addictions services, child welfare services, mental health services, and others. Part of this would be convening stakeholder meetings involving the full spectrum of services working with a child or youth (e.g. residential services, school, Inuit agencies, family and the child or youth), to plan the services provided while the child is in Ontario and to facilitate their return home.

3. Catalyst Research and Communications. 2013. Feasibility Study: *Needs of Nunavut Children and Youth in Ottawa, Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre.*



- b) Cultural supports and advocacy for all Inuit children and youth arriving in Ontario. Currently children may arrive for a specialized service and receive excellent care but only within the narrow parameters of that specialized service. The child or youth may, as one service provider stated, “languish without community contacts” in that they have little or no cultural, social or language environment that supports them as Inuit.
- c) Ensure that children from the North continue their education while they are temporarily in Ontario, and that children who go North continue their education while temporarily in Nunavut. Each school board has a somewhat different approach to integrating children and youth in their jurisdiction on a temporary basis and this needs to be clarified so that they can be admitted to the school system quickly.
- d) Close collaboration between Inuit agencies, perhaps under the aegis of a new provincial Inuit body, to ensure the coordination of Inuit-specific services and the coordination of cultural supports and advocacy related to mainstream services.





Conclusion



The Inuit population in Ontario, although small, is growing very rapidly, both through natural growth and through migration from the North. This is also a very young population, with tremendous need for child and youth services. An Inuit-specific service system is essential for providing the programs and services, coordination and cultural safety these children and youth need.

Inuit organizations in Ontario have already established a solid base of service delivery, primarily in Ottawa and also in Toronto, Thunder Bay and other communities through advice, support and collaboration provided to Aboriginal agencies serving Inuit children and youth.

Building from this strong foundation, the next stage of work will include:

- a) Creating a provincial Inuit organization to oversee Inuit-specific service delivery throughout the province, and to provide expert consultation, training and resource materials to Aboriginal and mainstream services working with Inuit children and youth.
- b) Expanding and improving services in Ottawa where the community has articulated a range of specific and urgent needs.
- c) Establishing Inuit-specific services in Toronto and other communities where the population and need warrants it.

Appendices

Appendix A: Youth Focus Group and Survey Questions

ONTARIO INUIT CHILDREN AND YOUTH STRATEGY – YOUTH FOCUS GROUPS PROTOCOL

1. What are the services you use in the community, and what is your experience with these services?

List all the key services on a large sheet posted on the wall. Give the youth three piles of stickers: yellow for services they feel good using, red sticker for services where they were not treated well, and blue for a neutral feeling about the service. If they have never used the service, don't put any sticker at all.

DISCUSSION:

- Pick out the services that have a lot of yellow stickers: *Why did you give this service a happy sticker? What did they do that made it a good experience for you?*
- Pick out the services that have a lot of red stickers, and ask similar questions.

2. What does it mean to live a good life?

Ask them to draw a picture of what they see as a good life for themselves. They would do this as a small group (3 -5 youth per group) so they can build on each other's ideas, or individually if they prefer. Then ask each person to speak to the picture and the parts of it that are important to them, even if they are repeating what other people have said.

3. What are the things that matter most to you in services and supports? This question is about existing services and also new ones that are needed.

List relevant characteristics from the lit review (below) on a wall chart and give each youth 16 stickers and ask them to use the stickers to rate each characteristic: the more important the

characteristic, the more stickers they can attach. Walk through the list to make sure they know what each of them refers to.

- Inuit-specific;
- Inuit are decision-makers;
- Community members are Involved in activities and decisions;
- Youth are involved in planning and deciding activities;
- Based on Inuit culture and values;
- Land-based activities;
- Includes traditional practices;
- Access to country food;
- Use of Inuktitut;
- Elders are involved in program;
- Involves the whole family;
- Supports and help for parents;
- Inuit staff;
- Non-Inuit staff understand Inuit history and culture;
- Holistic: recognize all aspects of a person's life;
- Help with learning difficulties, disabilities, special needs;
- Services cooperate with each other; and
- Program uses social media and the web.

DISCUSSION

Pick a few of the top characteristics and ask youth to talk about why this is important, and perhaps what it looks like.

4. If you could add one new service or program for youth in the community, what would it be?

Open discussion and/or round.

OICC Youth Survey

1. What are the services you use in the community, and what is your experience with these services?

| | Positive experience, I was treated well | Not good or bad | Negative experience, I was not treated well | Have not used this service |
|----------------------|--|------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Hospital | | | | |
| Public School | | | | |
| High School | | | | |
| University/College | | | | |
| Sports program | | | | |
| OICC | | | | |
| TI | | | | |
| CAS - Children's Aid | | | | |
| Wabano | | | | |
| Community centre | | | | |
| Church | | | | |
| Odawa | | | | |
| Counselor/therapist | | | | |
| Doctor/nurse | | | | |
| Minwaashin Lodge | | | | |

2. What new services do you think Inuit youth need in Ottawa?

3. What are the things that matter most to you in services you use or might use in the future?

| | Very important | Important | Not Important |
|---|----------------|-----------|---------------|
| Inuit-specific | | | |
| Inuit are decision-makers | | | |
| Inuit staff | | | |
| Non-Inuit staff understand Inuit history and culture | | | |
| Community members are involved in activities and decisions | | | |
| Youth are involved in planning and deciding activities | | | |
| Based on Inuit culture and values | | | |
| Land-based activities | | | |
| Includes traditional practices | | | |
| Access to country food | | | |
| Use of Inuktitut | | | |
| Elders are involved in program | | | |
| Involves the whole family | | | |
| Supports and help for parents | | | |
| Holistic: recognize all aspects of a person's life | | | |
| Provides help with learning difficulties, disabilities or special needs | | | |
| Services cooperate with each other | | | |

4. In your own words, describe what it means to live a good life.

Appendix B: Parent Focus Group and Survey Questions

ONTARIO INUIT CHILDREN AND YOUTH STRATEGY – PARENT FOCUS GROUPS PROTOCOL

1. What are the services your children use in the community, and what is your experience with these services? What works well in these services? What were the problem areas and how can these be addressed?

Hand out list of services, and discuss as many as time permits, or as parents are interested in commenting on.

2. What new services do you think Inuit children and youth need in Ottawa?
3. How important to you are the following characteristics in services for your children?

Hand out list of characteristics, and discuss as many as time permits, or as parents are interested in commenting on.

4. What is the life that you wish for your child?

OICC Parents Survey

1. What are the services your children use in the community, and what is your experience with these services?

| | Positive experience, my child was treated well | Not good or bad | Negative experience, my child was not treated well | My child has not used this service |
|----------------------|---|------------------------|---|---|
| Hospital | | | | |
| Public School | | | | |
| High School | | | | |
| University/College | | | | |
| Sports program | | | | |
| OICC | | | | |
| TI | | | | |
| CAS - Children's Aid | | | | |
| Wabano | | | | |
| Community centre | | | | |
| Church | | | | |
| Odawa | | | | |
| Counselor/therapist | | | | |
| Doctor/nurse | | | | |
| Minwaashin Lodge | | | | |

2. What were the problems with the negative services?

3. What new services do you think Inuit children and youth need in Ottawa?

4. Are the following characteristics important to you in services for your children?

| | Very important | Important | Not Important |
|---|-----------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Inuit-specific | | | |
| Inuit are decision-makers | | | |
| Inuit staff | | | |
| Non-Inuit staff understand Inuit history and culture | | | |
| Community members are Involved in activities and decisions | | | |
| Youth are involved in planning and deciding activities | | | |
| Based on Inuit culture and values | | | |
| Land-based activities | | | |
| Includes traditional practices | | | |
| Access to country food | | | |
| Use of Inuktitut | | | |
| Elders are involved in program | | | |
| Involves the whole family | | | |
| Supports and help for parents | | | |
| Holistic: recognize all aspects of a person's life | | | |
| Provides help with learning difficulties, disabilities or special needs | | | |
| Services cooperate with each other | | | |

Appendix C: Service Provider Interview and Survey Questions

ONTARIO INUIT CHILDREN AND YOUTH STRATEGY – AGENCY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The Ottawa Inuit Children’s Centre (OICC) is preparing recommendations to the provincial government about a provincial Inuit Children and Youth Strategy. To help prepare recommendations for the Inuit portion of the Strategy, OICC is gathering input from Inuit youth and families, and from Inuit, pan-Aboriginal and mainstream service providers, as well as conducting a literature review of promising practices.

The Ministry has asked that the Strategy focus on three primary goals: better access to services; more culturally appropriate services; more community control and community-based solutions.

1. Please estimate the number of Inuit children and youth you have had in your programs over the last three years.

2013-2014: ____ Inuit out of
____ total children/youth

2012-2013: ____ Inuit out of
____ total children/youth

2011-2012: ____ Inuit out of
____ total children/youth

2. Do you ask about Inuit identity in your registration or orientation process?

Yes No

3. Attached is a list of some of the promising or recommended practices for services for Inuit children and youth that have emerged from a literature review OICC has just completed. Could you comment on which of these you have been able to integrate into your services with Inuit children/youth and how?

4. Do you currently work with any Inuit organizations or use materials and resources they may have produced? (e.g. national Inuit organizations or local Inuit service organizations in other communities if you do not have such agencies in your city) If yes, please describe.

5. What are the **most important** services and supports Inuit children and youth need, in order to have a good life?

6. Of the services and supports you listed in question #5, which are the **major gaps** right now in your community for Inuit children and youth?

7. What are the barriers that make it difficult to provide the services that Inuit children and youth need? Do you have any suggestions about ways to address these gaps and the barriers?

ONTARIO INUIT CHILDREN AND YOUTH STRATEGY – SERVICE PROVIDER SURVEY

The Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre (OICC) is preparing the Inuit-specific component of an Aboriginal Children and Youth Strategy to recommend to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. The Ministry is also in discussion with First Nation and Métis organizations to prepare input to the Strategy.

The Ministry has asked that the Strategy focus on three primary goals:

1. First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Aboriginal children and youth have better access to the services they need;
2. More culturally appropriate services are available for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Aboriginal children and youth; and
3. More community-based solutions are supported, enabling greater community control over services for their children and youth.

To help prepare recommendations for the Inuit portion of the Strategy, OICC is gathering input from Inuit youth and families, and from Inuit, pan-Aboriginal and mainstream service providers, as well as conducting a literature review of promising practices.

Your input as an Aboriginal provider of children's services would be much appreciated, by completing the attached survey.

You can return the survey to the researchers hired by OICC:

Catalyst Research and Communications
Tel: 613-565-4081
Fax: 613-565-9229
E-mail: catalyst@bellnet.ca
Regular mail: 78 Delaware Ave,
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0Z3

Thank-you for your help!

Your name: _____

Telephone: _____

Organization: _____

4. Please estimate the number of Inuit children and youth you have had in your programs over the last three years.

2013-2014: _____ Inuit out of approximately
_____ total children/youth in our programs

2012-2013: _____ Inuit out of approximately
_____ total children/youth in our programs

2011-2012: _____ Inuit out of approximately
_____ total children/youth in our programs

5. Do you ask about Inuit identity in your registration or orientation process?
Yes No
6. If you have Inuit children in your programs, how have you been able to reflect Inuit culture in your centre or your programs (e.g. pictures, toys, books, crafts, stories, visit from an Inuk Elder, etc.)?
7. Do you currently work with any Inuit organizations or use materials and resources they may have produced? (e.g. national Inuit organizations or local Inuit service organizations in other communities if you do not have such agencies in your city). If yes, please describe.
8. What are the **most important** services and supports Inuit children and youth need, in order to have a good life?
9. Of the services and supports you listed in question #5, which are the **major gaps** right now in your community for Inuit children and youth?
10. What are the barriers that make it difficult to provide the services that Inuit children and youth need?
11. Do you have any suggestions about ways to address the gaps and the barriers you listed in questions 6 and 7 above?

Appendix D: Participating Agencies

OTTAWA

Jason Leblanc
Tungasuvvingat Inuit

Karen Baker-Anderson
Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre

Cynthia Willman,
Principal
R E Wilson Public School

Geordie Walker,
Principal
Rideau High School

Kristin Kopra
Ottawa-Carleton
District School Board

Carl Dobbin,
Vice Principal
Ottawa Technical High School

Richard Sauderson
Urban Aboriginal High School

Katie Lewis-Prieur
Ottawa Catholic School Board

Elaine Kicknosway
Minwaashin Lodge

Tina Slauenwhite
Tewegan Transition House

Haley Ford-Robinson,
Child and Youth Healthy Living
Wabano Centre for
Aboriginal Health

Warren Lewis,
After School Coordinator
Wabano Centre for
Aboriginal Health

Vanessa Cyr,
Wasa-nabin Coordinator
Wabano Centre for
Aboriginal Health

Colleen Sauvé,
Healthy Babies, Healthy Children
Odawa Native Friendship Centre

Ruston Fellows,
Dreamcatchers Youth Support
Odawa Native Friendship Centre

Andrea Easton,
Community Wellness Coordinator
Métis Nation of Ontario
(via e-mail)

Tracy Engelking and Claire Jutras,
Children's Aid Society of Ottawa

Louise MacNeil,
Bairn Croft Residential Services Inc

Trudy Metcalfe,
Larga Baffin Ltd.

OUTSIDE OTTAWA

Taunya Paquette,
Native Child and Family Services
of Toronto

**Niwasa Aboriginal
Education Programs**
Hamilton

**Shkoday Abinojjiwak
Obimiwedoan,**
Thunder Bay

**Waninawakong
Aboriginal Head Start,**
Sioux Lookout

Waweniwin Learning Centre,
Moosonee

**Zaagi-idiwin Aboriginal
Head Start,**
Fort Frances

**Waabinong Head Start Family
Resource Centre,**
Sault Ste Marie

Mark Arnold,
Government of Nunavut

Dilico Anishinabek Family Care,
Thunder Bay

RESOURCE PERSON

Mary Simon,
Former President of ITK,
former Canadian Ambassador
for Circumpolar Affairs, former
board member of Tungasuvvingat
Inuit, among many other
leadership roles in the local,
national and international
Inuit community.



Appendix E: Literature Review

Literature Review:
Promising and Recommended Practices in
Service Delivery for Inuit Children and Youth

Prepared for
Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre
by
Catalyst Research and Communications

March 28, 2014



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Introduction

The Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre is engaging with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to develop an Inuit-specific element of a provincial Aboriginal Children and Youth Strategy. To help inform that strategy, literature on promising practices was reviewed.

Most of the literature consulted for this study is Inuit-specific, however there are also references to some Indigenous studies which specifically included Inuit communities and/or participants.

The review includes both promising and recommended practices. This means that some of the practices reported here have been tested and the literature summarizes the experience of communities, clients and practitioners with these practices. The review also includes practices that Inuit organizations and/or community members recommend, which may be based on their experience or on what would be effective in their judgment.

The literature reviewed is drawn primarily from the fields of early childhood education, health, education, substance abuse, child welfare and mental health.

Not all of the promising and recommended practices are unique to services for Inuit children and youth, but they have all been highlighted by the relevant sources as being particularly important for this population.

As recommended by ITK, this report uses the term "Inuit Nunangat" to refer to the four Inuit regions of Canada: Nunavut, Inuvialuit (part of NWT), Nunavik (Northern Québec) and Nunatsiavut (Labrador).

Inuit-Specific and Inuit-driven

1. INUIT-DRIVEN

"We must seek our own solutions to improve our situation. Our ability to make our own decisions was taken away from us; we must now take it back." (Inungni Sapujjijit: Task Force on Suicide Prevention and Community Healing 2003, p.10, cited in Cameron, 2011).

Inuit are best placed to identify and understand their own needs, and to define services, programs, policies and research that are led by and for Inuit. This the best way to take into account the unique cultural, social and economic factors that Inuit face (Cameron, 2011). Inuit direction and control are also the best ways of ensuring that Inuit traditional knowledge about children and youth and how to support them is incorporated into the appropriate services. (Rae, 2011).

One of the principles of Aboriginal Head Start Inuit child care services is that governance is controlled by the community being served (Pauktuutit, 2007). This approach is reinforced by other work in the Aboriginal community, including the Touchstones of Hope: Reconciliation in Child Welfare Project which identified the principle of self-determination: Respecting that Indigenous Peoples are in the best position to make decisions regarding Indigenous children. (Rae, 2011).

Research suggests that youth suicide prevention programs that are under the control of Inuit youth and Inuit communities are more effective than other programs. (Kral, 2009).

The delegation of more responsibility to Inuit organizations for the delivery of children and youth services is one way to increase Inuit oversight and direction. There are precedents for this in the Métis community, such as the Métis Child and Family Services Agency in Manitoba and Métis Community Services on Vancouver Island. (Rae, 2011).



A study of the child welfare system in Nunavut suggested that “cultural competence is not enough” when the services and programs are designed from a non-Inuit perspective. Despite the best intentions of all concerned, the services inevitably undermine or contradict traditional Inuit values. The study recommended that, to be effective, programs be designed from the outset by Inuit and based on Inuit culture, values and traditional knowledge. (Johnston, 2009).

In an urban context, the Inuit community may be more geographically dispersed and is linked through social networks, cultural practices and common services and organizations (Patrick, 2008). Because urban Inuit are part of a much larger, dominant society, Inuit control of Inuit services is even more critical in these circumstances.

It should be noted that capacity-building in Inuit communities is essential to ensure sustainable Inuit control and direction. (Rae, 2011).

2. INUIT-SPECIFIC SERVICES

Inuit have a distinct culture and history that is different from First Nations and Métis (Rae, 2011; OICC, 2013a). In a study of urban Inuit, youth, parents and Elders all indicated that it is important that the Inuit community is understood to be distinct from other Aboriginal cultures. (OICC, 2013a).

Participants at the National Urban Inuit One Voice Workshop identified that a pan-Aboriginal approach, in which First Nations, Métis and Inuit are dealt with through the same service, is really predominantly focused on First Nations. The experience of Inuit is that services are provided to them as if they were First Nations. (Patrick and Tomiak, 2008).

This view was shared by Inuit youth, parents and Elders in an Ottawa study. They indicated that pan-Aboriginal organizations and activities tend to reflect First Nations approaches and culture. While people value the connection and the common experience with other indigenous cultures, it is important that the uniqueness of Inuit culture be reflected in the services provided. (OICC, 2013a).

Indigenous youth and practitioners have raised concerns about the pan-Aboriginal approach to service delivery, and Inuit youth find the largely First Nations approaches not culturally relevant for them. Use of the medicine wheel, for instance, is viewed as inconsiderate and disrespectful. (Blanchet-Cohen et al, 2011).

3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Inuit cultural paradigms of wellness include the well-being and strength of the community and in the relations among community members. (Pulla, 2013).

In Inuit communities, more effective solutions to problems arise when community members come together and move toward positive solutions (Pulla, 2013). In Inuit and First Nations communities, programs work better when communities choose them and contribute directly to their development. The most effective programs are not imposed from outside but rather result from extensive involvement of the community in creating all aspects of the program. (Kirmayer et al, 1996; Health Canada, 2012).

Engaging and empowering the Inuit community in the design, delivery and evaluation of children’s services is strongly associated with high quality Aboriginal and Inuit early childhood education programs. This involvement needs to include parents, Elders and community members. (Pulla, 2013; Pauktuutit, 2007).

Inuit community members can bring their cultural values related to child-rearing, traditional knowledge and experience in the community to bear when developing services for their children (Rae, 2011). Consequently, community engagement is closely related to keeping the children and youth programming culturally grounded and culturally relevant. (Pauktuutit, 2007; Blanchet-Cohen et al, 2011).

One study indicates that primary sources of health information for urban Inuit are within the Inuit community: Elders, family, friends, Inuit organizations and to a lesser degree Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers. This is different from non-Inuit models of knowledge transmission which rely on

publications, whereas Inuit rely on the Inuit community. (McShane, 2006).

Community control was cited as an important element in choosing programs to reduce Inuit youth suicide in Nunavut, based on analysis of literature, case studies, key informants and household survey data (Tierney, 2007). A study of the pattern of suicides in two Nunavut communities also concluded that community control was key in successful suicide prevention, and in fact was the determining factor. One community had the highest 10-year suicide rate of any community in the Canadian Arctic, and then no suicides at all for several years. Community members reported that one of the critical reasons for this was the gathering of the community members to talk about suicide and what to do, including through a local youth committee. Out of these extensive community conversations came ideas that the community implemented, including a series of activities for youth, some actions that community members could take to help one another and a decision by the local housing committee to remove the closet rods in every house (hanging oneself from the closet rod was the primary method of suicide in this community). Inuit in other communities commented that the people of this community did something “from within” that had stopped the suicides. (Kral, 2009).

A second community had nine suicides in four years. Then they had an entire year without a suicide. Two events had taken place that community members talk about in relation to suicide prevention: community control and the making of a film in the community that restored pride in traditional Inuit ways. The community involvement took the form of a youth committee that started holding meetings every two weeks in response to the large number of suicides in the community. This youth committee gradually identified and then implemented a series of actions in the community, including creating a youth centre, involving Elders to teach traditional practices and provide guidance to youth, a local crisis line with trained youth peer counselors, spring camping trips with Elders and youth and actively promoting the learning of Inuktitut and its dialects. (Kral, 2009).

This same pattern held true with Inuit communities in Alaska that were experiencing high rates of suicide. Several villages showed a decrease in

these rates while other villages did not – the essential feature of the successful prevention projects was that they were community owned from start to finish. (Kral, 2009).

Youth themselves emphasize the value of community-based programming, and providing services in a way that includes all, such as through community gatherings. (Blanchet-Cohen et al, 2011; Ottawa Inuit Children’s Centre, 2013a).

4. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Involvement of youth in creating, planning and delivering youth programs is seen as an essential practice for effective results, both for Indigenous youth programs in general and for Inuit-specific youth services (Pulla, 2013; Blanchet-Cohen et al, 2011; Ottawa Inuit Children’s Centre, 2013a; Health Canada, 2008). Inuit youth have unique perspectives and leadership skills to contribute that can be invaluable in designing services that address their needs.

Ways of engaging youth include social media and web-based approaches (Health Canada, 2008), and the formation of youth councils or committees, such as the National Inuit Youth Council and their project on suicide prevention called Inuusiqatsiarniq. (Blanchet-Cohen, 2011).

Empowerment of youth is an essential underpinning of engaging them in contributing to programs and services. This includes leadership development opportunities, learning and practicing new skills, and becoming part of organizational structures and processes (Blanchet-Cohen et al, 2011; Pulla, 2013). Youth are often committed to giving back to their community and interested in leadership opportunities (Ottawa Inuit Children’s Centre, 2013a). These empowerment activities are important to prepare youth to more fully engage in designing and delivering programs for other youth, and they are also important in themselves as ways of developing confidence, learning useful life skills and social competencies, such as problem-solving and decision-making. (Pulla, 2013).

Culture

5. BASED ON INUIT CULTURE AND VALUES

“We must pass this knowledge to our children – they will keep the qulliq burning for future generations.” (Pauktuutit, 2007, p.).

(Note: the importance of language, as the conveyor of culture, is treated separately in a later section of this literature review.)

“Inutsiaqpagutit is the term that refers to teachings that will lead one to living a good life. Still today, leading a good life focuses on personal and collective obedience to following the teachings that are foundational to Inuit worldview or Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. Although each of these teachings is defined separately, they are followed holistically and are viewed as interconnected and inseparable.”

Inuit believe that when a person’s life is troubled, s/he needs to refocus on the central values and beliefs in order to regain balance and come back into harmony with the world. Being in a state of imbalance will lead to ill health. To prevent this, there are many teachings passed on in the forms of sayings that guide the individual to healthy living.” (Tagalik, 2012, pp. 4-5).

The Inuit holistic view of health and human development can offer strength, balance, control over one’s life, and social resources to support a well-rounded life. (Tagalik, 2012).

The inclusion of cultural teachings and traditions is considered an important element of programs and services for Inuit children and youth (Rae, 2011; OICC, 2013a; OICC, 2013b; Tagalik, 2012; Terriplan, 2010; Arnakaq, 2010). Providing Inuit children and youth with a strong foundation in Inuit culture and values requires identifying and explaining beliefs, traditional practices and values, and demonstrating how these can be lived every day. (Pulla, 2013).

The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada has promulgated five principles for Indigenous child welfare services, one of which is : The culture and language of an Indigenous child will be honoured and supported through the

provision of culturally based child welfare and family support services. (Blackstock et al, 2006).

Despite these strengths of Inuit culture and values, this historically strong culture has been disrupted by a colonial past that included residential schools and forced relocation of families and communities. This has damaged patterns of handing down cultural teachings from one generation to the next. (Tagalik, 2012).

Inuit families and communities work to overcome the damage and disruption to the culture imposed from outside. In 2001, approximately 17% of Inuit children in northern territories participated in cultural activities at least once per week, and 50% were found to spend time with Elders at least once per week. (Findlay and Kohen, 2001).

Unfortunately, for some Inuit in the south, accessing cultural and traditional practices can be more difficult. Inuit outside Inuit Nunangat were much less likely to participate in Inuit cultural activities (63% vs 36%) or in seasonal activities such as gathering berries (60% vs 33%), and hunting, fishing or trapping (58% vs 45%). They were also less likely to have their children in childcare arrangements that promoted traditional and cultural activities, only 56% in the south compared to 70% in Inuit Nunangat. (Statistics Canada, 2008).

An evaluation of programs for Inuit, First Nations and Métis youth revealed that many of the effective programs integrated traditional culture in their activities (Health Canada, 2010) and programs that integrate Inuit Traditional Knowledge were rated as more effective in preventing youth suicide in Nunavut. (Tierney, 2007).

One of the five main aspects associated with quality Aboriginal early childhood education programs is that they promote Indigenous languages and culture. (Pulla, 2013).

A case study on incorporating the *Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective* into a junior high school science classroom revealed that including Inuit-based values and points of view increased students’ self-esteem, and reinforced them as valued

holders of knowledge – they can share what they know about their culture from what they have learned from family. Integrating Inuit values also enhanced their sense of belonging, which can reinforce school performance (DeMerchant, 2001). Elders emphasize that for the identity of Inuit to be intact and strong, Inuit cultural values and beliefs need to be conveyed to children and youth in practical, tangible ways. (Elders Focus Group, provided to the author as a supplement to OICC, 2013a).

Youth themselves agree with the importance of culture. Urban Inuit youth have shown a strong interest in learning skills and traditions that strengthen their Inuit cultural identity and sense of belonging, including their connection to the Inuit community and to Elders (OICC, 2013a). In a study involving Indigenous youth, both First Nation and Inuit, the youth indicated that culture provided balance and healthy relationships. However, this balance has been de-stabilized by the incursion of non-Inuit cultures, and many youth commented on their confusion about their place in this changed society. For example, traditionally the transition from childhood to adulthood was clearly marked by rites of passage, such as iglu-building for young Inuit men. These traditional practices are increasingly difficult for young Inuit living in urban settings, as they are often cut off from Elders and other traditional teachers they have access to in the North. (Blanchet-Cohen et al, 2011).

A major challenge facing Inuit youth is that they are torn between two worlds, two cultures and do not always have the supports to reconcile the two (Tierney, 2007). However, many Inuit youth are seen by their parents as skilled at balancing the two cultures. (McShane, 2006).

“The songs of our fathers, our old stories which we used to hear from older people will be gone and we will never hear them again. All this will be lost, so let us wake up and restore our old methods and culture while there is still time.” (Unipkausivut: Building Language and Literacy Skills Through Oral History, Nunavut Literacy Council, 2004, p. 5. cited in Pauktuutit, 2007).

Observation is the traditional way of teaching cultural practices and values, but urban Inuit parents report more often using direct instruction, perhaps because

there are fewer Inuit models around for the children to observe. (McShane, 2006).

Suggested methods for incorporating culture into programs and services for Inuit youth and children include the following:

- a) For young children, traditional knowledge and practices can be exemplified in food, games, celebrations, stories, outdoor activities, traditional songs, demonstrating traditional skills, teach juggling songs, drumming, throat singing, and using songs during routines and transitions, for example, washing hands, good morning songs, and tidy up songs; build snow forts and iglus, provide child sized qamutiqs for pulling each other, provide child-sized traditional clothing and outdoor gear (e.g. snow goggles), have arctic skins/furs in the dramatic play area, and stuffed arctic animals to play with, set up a small tent to support camping play; commission local sewers to make Inuit dolls, doll clothing, and puppets, and provide stuffed arctic animals to play with. (Pauktuutit, 2007).
- b) It is also important to share cultural information with parents, such as giving them written versions of traditional songs, so they can reinforce the learning at home. (Pauktuutit, 2007).
- c) For older children and youth, there can be language and history courses; involvement in traditional arts and crafts; participation in the transmission of community traditions and Elders’ teachings; participation in youth drumming and dance groups; and involvement in regular community ceremonies and feasts. (Pulla, 2013).
- d) Métis Community Services on Vancouver Island has developed a Cultural Planning Policy that provides Cultural Safety Agreements and guidelines for adoptive parents of Métis children so that adopted children maintain ties to the Métis community and knowledge of Métis history and experience while being raised in non-Métis families. (Rae, 2011).
- e) In an exchange program involving Inuit youth, the youth indicated that making presentations on

Inuit culture to non-Inuit enhanced their sense of pride and ownership in Inuit culture. (Aylward, 2012).

- f) Urban Inuit youth expressed an interest in learning throat singing, drum dancing, how to make drums, beading, sewing an amauti, and carving soapstone. (OICC, 2013a).
- g) Elders suggest that urban Inuit youth need to experience the things that Inuit needed to do to survive (e.g. how to skin a seal, who gets what parts of the seal and why; how to make a real full size sled and harnesses, go dog sledding). Opportunities to do these tangible things will strengthen youth's identity. (Elders Focus Group, OICC 2013a).

6. INVOLVEMENT OF ELDERS

Elders have a key role as the carriers of Inuit culture and teachers of Inuit values, and so their role in services and programs for children and youth is seen as essential (ITK, 2011b; Pulla, 2013; Pauktuutit, 2007). Elders play an important role in Inuit society in raising children and education of youth. Involving Elders in children's services such as child care centres helps keep the program culturally relevant. (Pauktuutit, 2007).

Some see a strong role for Elders as message bearers, bringing the lessons of a good life to children, and contributing in this way to more positive outcomes for children. (Tagalik, 2012).

In response to the desire to include Elders, a number of programs and practices have been implemented. Programs bringing youth and Elders together are being developed in many northern communities, to try to counteract the emerging separation of the generations brought on by the incursion of southern culture. (Kral, 2009).

Youth camps are one way in which Inuit organizations seek to connect youth with Elders. For example, the Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre in Nunavut offers Makimautiksat Youth Empowerment and Wellness camps in which Inuit youth are able to

meet and work with their Elders, artists, and other resource people. It is hoped that through the relationships formed, the youth will keep the Elders and others in their lives as they grow and move forward into adulthood. (Pulla, 2013).

There are also a number of opportunities to introduce Elders into early childhood education settings, including on staff, as presenters or speakers for staff training or for parent workshops, and as resources in the children's program to sing songs, drum dance, tell stories, treat skins/furs, or demonstrate crafts and sewing. Children's services can also invite community Elders for tea or a luncheon, or visit the Elders' lodge/centre with the children. (Pauktuutit, 2007).

In a study of a health information tool in Inuktitut developed for urban Inuit, the fact that the information on the CD was selected and given by an Inuk Elder was very important in the credibility of the material. Given the limited access to Elders in the south, this could be an excellent tool to help youth access the wisdom of Elders. (McShane, 2006).

Elders in the urban Inuit community are willing and interested in playing this role, and want to be a support to youth, in schools, in organized programs, or to be available to listen and talk with them on an individual basis. (OICC, 2013a).

In a Nunavut community with many youth suicides, one of the measures that helped reduce suicides to zero was that Elders were available to teach youth about traditional ways of life, and also provided group counselling sessions for young women and young men (Kral, 2009). Youth reciprocate this interest in engaging with Elders in meaningful ways, indicating that they would value spending time with and learning from Elders (OICC, 2013a). Parents also think that Elders can bring a great contribution to the lives of their children, and this includes non-Inuit parents. (OICC, 2013a).

7. LAND-BASED ACTIVITIES

Inuit paradigms of wellness are closely linked to one's relationship to the land and animals (Pulla, 2013). The Inuit Holistic Learning Model was developed

through discussions among Inuit learning professionals, community practitioners, researchers and analysts. The model depicts the linkage between Inuit lifelong learning and community well-being, and one of the essential domains of learning is the land. (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).

Land-based programs are one way to involve children and youth in healthy and culturally relevant activities. This can include traditional harvesting activities, such as berry-picking (Pulla, 2013). Other examples of land-based activities for youth include hunting trips, learning dog handling skills with dog teams, hiking programs, and camps involving Elders sharing stories, history and lessons from Inuit culture. (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2011).

On-the-land land programs can also combine traditional and modern activities, such as sports, crafts, recreation activities or support groups, which can be organized in a way that they allow the youth to spend time on the land. (Pulla, 2013).

Even without going out onto the land, using examples of hunting or other land-based activities in discussions allows the introduction of values, beliefs, understanding and attitudes related to the land or to animals or features of the land. This reflects a “holism” that is intrinsic to Inuit cultural understandings and in which the land plays a foundational role that can be the starting point for many important ideas and lessons. (DeMerchant, 2001).

Land-based youth camps were assessed to be an effective program to reduce Inuit youth suicide in Nunavut (Tierney, 2005; Kral, 2009). In one program, a small group of youth and elders spent time on the land in the summer where the Elders taught traditional skills and knowledge in the context of storytelling and practice. The youth found their time with Elders to be very positive, and responded to this opportunity with enthusiasm and an eagerness to learn. (Kral, 2009).

In urban settings, land-based activities are also critical, and programs that provide Inuit youth with opportunities to learn culturally-based outdoor skills help keep them connected to their heritage and their community (National Collaborating Centre for

Aboriginal Health, 2011). Some urban Inuit youth agree with this and value their connection to the land. They have expressed the desire for more opportunities for land-based activities, such as ice fishing, hunting and camping. (OICC, 2013a).

8. TRADITIONAL PRACTICES AND FOODS

Supporting traditional Inuit practices, such as custom adoption, is essential to improving family and child security in the child welfare system (Rae, 2011). Some positive developments have been noted in the NWT with respect to foster families seeking to respect traditional practices by maintaining good relationships with the biological parents of the children they are fostering. (Terriplan Consultants, 2010).

Incorporating Inuit traditional knowledge, practices, food and celebrations in the curriculum for young children has been identified as important. This can be done through stories, songs, outdoor activities, sharing and demonstrating traditional clothing or tools (Pauktuuti, 2007). Youth learning traditional practices, such as sewing caribou parkas or making the traditional *kamutiq* or sledges from whalebone and sealskin, has been linked to lower suicide rates among Inuit youth in the Arctic. (Kral, 2009).

Providing access to country food is another way to reinforce traditional practices, and can be integrated into ongoing programming as well as special events and celebrations. A variety of country foods such as caribou, seal, muktak, and fish can be incorporated into a balanced and nutritious menu (Pauktuuti, 2007). The protective merits of traditional foods may go beyond balanced nutrition – Nunavut communities which report frequent consumption of seal or caribou have lower rates of youth suicide (Tierney, 2007). Use of country food is also a way that adoptive or foster families can provide positive environments for their Inuit children. (Terriplan Consultants, 2010).

For urban Inuit children and youth coming to Ottawa, country food will have likely been an important food source for them. In 71% of Inuit households in the Arctic, at least half of the meat or fish eaten was country food (Tait, 2001), and 72% of families with

pre-schoolers said that they had an active hunter in the household (Egeland, 2009). Unfortunately, this may change in the future, as fewer Inuit youth in the North are participating in traditional harvesting activities (65%) compared to older Inuit (90%). (Tait, 2001).

9. USE OF INUIT LANGUAGE

“Our language is who and what we are and the health of our language lies at the core of our wellbeing.”

Mary Simon, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. (Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), 2011a).

“Once you have the languages the culture is strong.”

Former Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated president and Nunavut Land Claims Agreement signatory Paul Quassa stated in 2003. (NTI, 2011a, p. 1).

“The Inuit language provides access to the distinct worldview of our people and an entire way of life: its use adds a layer of meaning and context to the world we live in and in doing so, reinforces the cultural, geographic, and ethnic identities and ties that make us unique.” (NTI, 2011b, p. 1).

The Inuit language is one of only three Indigenous languages in Canada spoken by a large enough population base that long-term survival is likely. (Mary Jane Norris, cited in NTI, 2011).

However, use of Inuktitut is declining in Nunavut, falling from 57% of residents who use an Inuit language most often at home to 54%, from 2001 to 2006. Over that same time, English as the predominant language at home rose from 26% to 44%. (Nunavut Bureau of Statistics, 2007).

This decline in Inuit languages may be due to a number of factors. Many Inuit were sent to residential schools where they were cut off from their culture and where speaking Inuit languages was prohibited. The incursion of English culture, through settlers coming to Inuit homelands and the invasion of English language through mass media, the internet and web-based technologies have also played a major role. (Tait et al, 2010).

In 2006, 64% of Inuit children across Canada under the age of six had the Inuit language as their mother tongue – the same percentage as in 1996. However, outside Inuit Nunangat, the figure was much lower, at 12%. At that time, 70% of Inuit children could understand the Inuit language, and 62% could express their needs in the Inuit language. (Tait et al, 2010).

Outside Inuit Nunangat, only 19% of children were exposed to Inuit language every day at home, compared with 72% nationally. This is important because a child’s ability to learn the language is linked to being exposed to it at home and in other settings. Over eight in 10 (83%) Inuit children exposed to the Inuit language at home every day were able to express their needs in the Inuit language, compared to less than 10% of Inuit children who did not have daily home exposure. Being exposed to the language daily in the homes of others and elsewhere in the community also helps improve proficiency. (Tait et al, 2010).

Outside Inuit Nunangat, about 10% of Inuit children had at least one parent with the Inuit language as their first language (Tait et al, 2010). In a survey of 102 parents of Inuit children in Ottawa, 52% reported that they were speaking predominantly English at home and 40% spoke both Inuktitut and English at home. Parents reported that the language children spoke most often at home was English in 62% of the cases. (OICC, 2009).

Language is the conveyor of culture, but the relationship also goes the other way. Language starts to lose some of its complexity and meaning without a living cultural context. “As Inuit today have less time and access to the cultural experiences that underpin their language, there is a decrease in understanding of the concepts linked to words and the relevance of the word itself as it relates to the cultural experience.” (Tagalik, 2010, p.).

Early childhood programs are key for Inuit language retention and revitalization, because language is acquired most easily at these early cognitive stages. Experiences in Hawaii and New Zealand have shown that Indigenous language immersion programs in early childhood are also positive learning experiences for parents who wish to strengthen their own use of the language. (NTI, 2011).

Providing a language-based curriculum for young children is considered an important element of early childhood programs for Inuit children, including stories, songs, and activities in the Inuit language (Pauktuutit, 2007). The Government of Nunavut has determined that the Inuit language will be the primary language from pre-school to grade 3, and from then on education will be bilingual. (NTI, 2011).

Parents of Inuit children in the south report that the use of Inuktitut in their children's programs improves the quality of their education (Patrick and Tomiak, 2008). For Inuit children growing up in the South, learning the language also allows them to speak with grandparents who live in the North, and parents have observed that this was important to the children and acted as an additional motivator for learning the language. (Patrick and Tomiak, 2008).

Instruction of children in an Inuit language also has benefits for their parents. It provides a way for parents who were not raised in Inuit Nunangat to become more aware of Inuit culture and to enhance their pride in their culture (Patrick and Tomiak, 2008). It also provides a means for parents to improve their own language skills. (Rowan, 2007).

A case study on incorporating the *Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective* into a junior high school science classroom revealed that incorporating Inuit-based perspectives increased students' pride in their language, and the value of the language in their eyes. (DeMerchant, 2001).

There is evidence that investing in Inuit language and teaching it as the first language of instruction, such as Inuit language in Nunavut, results in improved educational achievements, and improved individual and collective well-being (Wright and Taylor, 1995). One study in Nunavut found that Inuit pre-schoolers who have a good foundation in Inuktitut tend to do better when they enter school. (Beveridge, 2012).

Tumikuluit Saipaaqivik became the first Inuktitut-only daycare in Iqaluit in 2008. The centre's policy is that Inuktitut only will be used at all times whether the child speaks it or not. Children who attended the Tumikuluit daycare have a very high readiness for kindergarten and know their alphabet and numbers

in Inuktitut and English. They also show excellent academic performance in elementary school. English is the dominant language in Iqaluit, so the children usually learn English through television and from their family and friends. In this respect, Iqaluit is similar to cities in Ontario where Inuit may live in an overwhelmingly English environment. The immersion model of Tumikuluit encourages bilingualism by offering a solid foundation in the Inuit language that balances with the English learned in the non-school environment. (Beveridge, 2012).

In the child welfare field, the Touchstones of Hope Project launched by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada states that one of the five basic principles of reconciliation is that the culture and language of an Indigenous child will be honoured and supported through the provision of culturally based child welfare and family support services (Rae, 2011). In an evaluation of child and youth programs in First Nation and Inuit communities, not having services available in the Indigenous language was a shortcoming, according to 52.5% of community staff. (Health Canada, 2010).

Offering a fully Inuktitut program for students in Ottawa and other Ontario cities may be challenging, depending on the availability of qualified Inuktitut speakers. However, it is still possible to integrate Inuktitut into the education programs to some degree, using Elders or other community members teach to Inuktitut words, phrases, and greetings to the children. (Pauktuutit, 2007).

Inuit Elders in urban settings emphasize that the importance of language in keeping the Inuit identity of youth strong. (Elders Focus Group, OICC, 2013a).

Inuit youth in Ottawa, when asked, have also indicated their interest in learning Inuktitut. Parents have also supported the importance of learning the language. (OICC, 2013a).

The international experience also underlines the importance of retaining and promoting Indigenous languages, including Inuit languages. Greenland overcame language loss in the 1950s and now has a thriving Inuit language. At the Nunavut Inuit Language Standardization Symposium in 2011, the

Director of the Greenland Language Secretariat stated that the two principal reasons for this success were the establishment of the Home Rule Government that gave Greenlanders authority over their affairs and making the Greenlandic Inuit language the primary language in the education system. (Beveridge, 2012).

An Inuit immersion ECE program (Nikaitchuat) was launched in Kotzebue, Alaska by parents concerned about language loss and the erosion of cultural pride. The program is funded by parent tuition, the tribe, the regional government, and the regional land claims corporation. The program has developed an Inuit language curriculum, as well as a phrase book for parents to use at home. (NTI, 2011).

In New Zealand in 1982, the Kōhanga Reo movement, with support from the Ministry of Māori Affairs, created a network of Māori language programs for pre-schoolers in community centres, church halls, and schools. These paved the way for primary school immersion programs, second-language learning programs for parents, and culturally based education. (NTI, 2011).

Family

10. FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Families play an essential role in Inuit society, and services to children and youth need to include and support families (Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, 2013a; Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, 2013b; Arnakaq, 2010). Elders recommend that activities not interfere with family time, and instead reinforce the importance of family members spending time together (OICC, 2013a). Parents feel that youth need opportunities to do things with their family as well as with other youth, and want opportunities to be together in the Inuit community as a family (2013a). Youth also report that they are interested in activities that involved the whole family, including outdoor activities such as camping and snowmobiling. (OICC, 2013a).

Parental and family involvement is one of the six components of Aboriginal Head Start. Parents and

guardians are the child's primary teachers and they have the most important influence on their child's development. It is the parents' right and responsibility to be involved in all aspects of the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of the program. (National Collaborating Centre, 2011).

Families are also a primary source of health information, along with friends and organizations in the Inuit community. This is different from non-Inuit models of knowledge transmission which rely on publications; instead, Inuit are more likely to rely on personal contact. (McShane, 2006).

Extended family members are also a key part of the lives of many Inuit children. Inuit children are more likely to live with adoptive parents or grandparents than other Canadian children. For the Aboriginal Children's Survey, the parent or guardian responding to the survey was a birth mother or father in 79% of cases, compared to 98% for Canadian children overall responding to the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth. Grandparents (4%) and adoptive parents or guardians (12%) made up the majority of the remaining parents or guardians who responded to the survey for Inuit children. However, outside Inuit Nunangat, 1% live in two parent families with grandparents, 4% live in lone parent families with grandparents, and 1% live with grandparents only. This is significantly less than Inuit in Inuit Nunangat, and close to non-Aboriginal rates. (Statistics Canada, 2008).

These data are consistent with other sources showing that preschool Inuit children in Nunavut have a lot of contact with their extended family – 84% of them see their extended family often or every day (Egeland, 2009). At a national level, including children in and outside of Inuit Nunangat, Inuit children received focused attention from extended family members at least once a week: 71% receive this attention from grandparents, 72% from aunts and uncles and 69% from cousins. The vast majority of parents or guardians of Inuit children (91%) reported that they were not the only person involved in raising the child. (Statistics Canada, 2008).

Historically, adoption was a common practice in Inuit society and continues to be widespread. "In Inuit society, there is no stigma attached to being adopted.

It is a practice... in which a child knows his or her birth parents and family members.” (Tungasuvvingat Inuit, 2014). Indeed, traditional adoption practices of Inuit have been legally recognized by northern governments (Pauktuutit, 2006). In Ottawa, adoptive and foster parents of Inuit children expressed particularly interest in opportunities to be exposed to Inuit cultural teachings. (OICC, 2013b).

Inuit children outside of Inuit Nunangat are more likely to have multiple siblings than other Canadian children; for example, twice as many Inuit families (16%) have four children as other Canadian families (8%) (Statistics Canada, 2008). Also, Inuit children are more likely to live with two parents compared with other Aboriginal children. (Statistics Canada, 2008).

In the changing social and economic landscape, Inuit men have been stripped of many of their traditional roles and responsibilities they had. They are no longer the harvester, the provider or the protector, and instead require skills for completely different types of jobs and find themselves facing new social problems (National Collaborating Centre, 2011). This transition in roles is not restricted to Inuit fathers in the northern territories and may also be a challenge faced by Inuit fathers who have moved to Ottawa with their families.

Fathers may be the “greatest untapped resources in the lives of Indigenous children,” in the words of Grand Chief Ed John of the BC First Nations Summit. Disruption of parenting across several generations in First Nations, Inuit and Métis families is a result of colonization, residential school systems, and policies of forced assimilation affecting languages, cultures, ties to land and families (National Collaborating Centre, 2011). Aboriginal men in Canada face high rates of poverty, unemployment, suicide, incarceration and other issues, “conditions that make it very difficult for fathers to be connected to their children and to sustain their connections.” This makes it all the more important to involve fathers, and encourage cultural connections between Indigenous fathers and children. Involved fathers can contribute to positive outcomes in their child’s life – improved academic achievements, healthy psychological and emotional outcomes, and stronger social-interaction skills. (National Collaborating Centre, 2011).

Effective ways to involve family members include programming specifically designed for families and special events and celebrations (OICC, 2013b). Volunteering is also good way to engage parents in decisions about services and in delivering those services. In Ottawa, most parents of Inuit children reported not having enough information about how to volunteer, and cited other major barriers as being lack of time, and limited access to transportation and childcare (OICC, 2013b). One important way of creating and maintaining a positive relationship with parents is through demonstrating respect for their values and beliefs about child-rearing (Pauktuutit, 2007). Specifically related to fathers, hunting trips, camping trips and other father-son activities on the land provide opportunities for young men to learn traditional skills, and for the forging of stronger bonds and deeper levels of trust and understanding across the generations. (National Collaborating Centre, 2011).

11. PARENTAL SUPPORTS

Separate from the question of involving parents in programming for children and youth is the need for supports for parents. Parents have a fundamental role in ensuring the well-being of their children, and raising them to prepare them to live a good life. Programs for Inuit children and youth need to incorporate elements that are direct supports for parents of these children. (Rae, 2011; OICC, 2013a; Tagalik, 2012; Terriplan, 2010).

Parents of Inuit children have called for parental education and awareness, developing confidence and skills, home visiting programs, in-home supports, effective communication, education on adolescent patterns, signs and basic features of substance use, stages of change and problem solving (Tagalik, 2012; Rae, 2011). The types of parental education that parents and experts suggest include: communication, signs of substance abuse, problem solving, helping children with learning disabilities, child development stages, healthy relationships, and healthy living (Health Canada, Morrison and Associates, 2008). Parents want to learn how to advocate for their children in Ottawa institutional settings such as health care and the school system. They also



want suggestions on how to instill Inuit cultural teachings and values in their children, and to have access to Elders for support to them as they try to be good parents. (OICC, 2013a; OICC, 2013b). Another suggestion from parents was to have opportunities to talk with other parents to about the challenges of raising teenagers. (OICC, 2013a).

Suggestions for how to share these skills and knowledge with parents include: workshops, open house events, resource library, speakers, newsletters, materials. (Pauktuutit, 2007).

Parents need to feel they are not alone, and that they have the support of the community around them. Families in Ontario may be particularly vulnerable to isolation, given the historical experience of Inuit families living in the North of having a wider network of extended family, friends and community members assist in raising the child. (Pauktuutit, 2006; Egeland, 2009; Statistics Canada, 2008). Bringing the community together to hold up the parents is a critical foundation for parenting and gives mothers and fathers the strength to face challenges. (OICC, 2013a).

In areas such as child welfare, approaches that allow workers to spend more time with families and provide them with preventive supports have resulted in less likelihood of going to court, and fewer child apprehensions. These supports include wellness workshops, pre and post-natal care, parenting skills, focused assistance to parents of children with ADHD, FASD or other special needs. (Terriplan, 2010).

An important part of the supports to adoptive and foster parents of Inuit children is cross-cultural training (Terriplan, 2010). Adoptive parents themselves have asked for greater cultural awareness and learning. (OICC, 2013b).

Programs need to recognize that Inuit parents are often quite young. In 2006, 26% of Inuit children under the age of six had mothers between the ages of 15 to 24; this is compared to 8% of non-Aboriginal children. About one-quarter of Inuit women aged 15 to 24 years (24%) had children; this is compared to 6% of non-Aboriginal women (Statistics Canada, 2008). It may be helpful to provide teen parenting programs along with children's services (Pauktuutit,

2007), for example, support to help the parent finish high school. (OICC, 2013b).

Elders have pointed out that other family members like grandparents also need support (OICC, 2013b) and many of the programs and supports highlighted above could be offered to extended family members.

Social Context and History

12. RECOGNITION OF COMPLEX NEEDS

A significant number of Inuit children are dealing with complex challenges, including a history of trauma, speech and language difficulties, FASD, autism, learning disabilities and other special needs (ITK, 2011b; Rowan, 2007). These challenges are clearly not unique to Inuit children and youth, however they are frequently highlighted by service providers in the Inuit community.

Child and youth services lack sufficient access to experts in special needs, to augment and support the ongoing programs. Access to experts is a support for staff, parents and the children or youth (Health Canada, 2010; ITK, 2011b; Cameron, 2011). Specialized support may include nurses, occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, physiotherapists, doctors, community health representatives and Elders. (ITK, 2011b).

A strong relationship with parents is also key to understanding and successfully addressing any special needs the children might have, including helping parents with supports and referring them to appropriate services in the community. (Pauktuutit, 2007).

Staff training is an essential element of preparing staff to work with children and youth who have special needs, including those with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (ITK, 2011b; OICC, 2013a; Pauktuutit, 2007; Cameron, 2011). Areas of training where staff of Inuit child care services have particularly identified a need include: using screening and assessment tools, working with parents, strategies for inclusion of special needs children in the "regular" programs,

and providing culturally-based activities for children with complex needs. (ITK, 2011b).

Early identification, screening and assessment tools and services are also important (Cameron, 2011; ITK, 2011b). Child care providers in Inuit Nunangat have recommended the development of screening and assessment tools more appropriate for Inuit, including Inuit-specific tools and culturally relevant materials. It was suggested that Elders be involved in developing or adapting materials for use with Inuit children and youth. (ITK, 2011b).

The issue of abuse has a long and troubling history for Inuit children and youth, and so many young Inuit may bring with them a history of trauma. The legacy of the residential school system has had a significant impact on the lives of Inuit and the inter-generational impacts can severely affect children and youth. (Pauktuutit, 2013).

13. HOLISTIC APPROACH: RECOGNITION OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

Inuit families face high levels of poverty, racism, poor housing, violence that is the legacy of a long history of colonization, dispossession, cultural disruption and discrimination (Rae, 2011), and this can be expected to have an impact on the lives of their children and youth. For example, children and youth from low-income families across all groups in Canada tend to be more vulnerable to physical and mental health problems, violence, poor academic performance and higher unemployment. These difficulties can be overcome to some extent by additional supports from their family or the community, but low-income families rarely have the resources to do so. (Totten, 2007).

Addressing these underlying social determinants, particularly poverty, will be essential to providing Inuit children with a good start in life (Rae, 2011; Terplan, 2010; Working Group for a Suicide Prevention Strategy for Nunavut, 2009; Blackstock et al, 2006). Some of these stress points are also major contributors to youth suicide among Inuit. (Working Group for a Suicide Prevention Strategy for Nunavut, 2009).

A holistic approach to children and youth services, one which takes into account the mental, physical and spiritual well-being of the youth or child, and which provides supports to counteract some of the negative social determinants is likely to help Inuit children and youth get a better start in life. (Working Group for a Suicide Prevention Strategy for Nunavut, 2009). This includes teaching Inuit youth skills to cope with adverse life events and negative emotions. Providing a cultural base is also an important way to strengthen their resilience in the face of negative circumstances. (Working Group for a Suicide Prevention Strategy for Nunavut, 2009).

Urban Inuit youth of various ages expressed interest in activities that address the development of mind, body and spirit, and that include arts, sports, and culturally based activities (OICC, 2013a). Also, urban Inuit health information was more positively received by urban Inuit when it was holistic, e.g. addressed mental as well as physical health aspects of pre-natal care. (McShane, 2006).

14. STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE BASED APPROACHES

Interventions that identify and build on the strengths of Indigenous youth contribute to positive behaviours and build their self-esteem. Drawing on their areas of interest or competency, and building on their hopes and dreams build their confidence and resilience. (Morrison, 2008).

The Makimautiksat program in Nunavut uses wellness and empowerment camps to focus on the skills and knowledge that youth already use in their everyday lives. This supportive environment helps them uncover abilities within themselves they had not recognized or appreciated, and learn to use these more consciously in their lives moving forward. (Pulla, 2013).

Elders speak of the Inuit cultural teachings that create resiliency, including the importance of hope and belief that things will get better, the ability to recover from setbacks and keep going, and the responsibility to face difficulties and make things better. Traditional

Inuit society also values the strengths and contributions of each individual and the importance of their contributions for the common good. (Tagalik, 2010). Elders also suggest that Inuit youth learn traditional skills as it will make them proud to be Inuk. (Korhonen, 2006).

Elders have identified important traditional values that can be a good foundation of strength for youth:

- **patience:** tomorrow is another day, problems can be solved, life will get better;
- **perseverance:** never give up, keep trying, difficulties can be overcome;
- **love and caring among family members and community members:** listen to each other, help each other, understand each other, teach each other, show love and caring;
- **communication:** talk out problems, solve conflicts and return to harmony;
- **awareness of self and others:** think of how your own behaviour affects others, pay attention to others so you will recognize if they need help;
- **confidentiality and respect for others:** do not gossip, do not lie, do not tell other people what you know about someone's feelings or problems; and
- **personal responsibility:** take responsibility for your own behaviour and try to solve your own problems, apologize if you do something wrong, and also take responsibility for being helpful to others. (Korhonen, 2006, p.iv).

Organizational/System Level

15. INUIT STAFF

Having qualified Inuit staff providing the services and programs for Inuit children and youth is an important aspect of high quality, effective services (ITK, 2011b; Pulla, 2013; Kirmayer et al, 2009; DeMerchant, 2001;

Pauktuutit, 2007; OICC, 2013a). Inuit staff can provide important value-added in the delivery of services, by integrating and modeling cultural values and practices in the program, and linking the services to the Inuit community (Pauktuutit, 2007). Inuit youth in Ottawa have indicated that they find it a positive attribute when programs are delivered by young knowledgeable Inuit staff, because they can help youth learn about Inuit culture, and are seen by youth as positive role models. (OICC, 2013a) .

Some studies have identified that, despite the highest intentions and best efforts of non-Inuit service providers, there are always inherent shortcomings when non-Inuit try to embody and convey Inuit culture and traditional practices in services to children and youth (DeMerchant, 2001). In this sense, it is always more desirable to have Inuit staff deliver the services whenever possible.

If Inuit with the relevant credentials are not readily available, significant efforts should be made to seek them out and recruit them, and also to provide training and capacity-building for members of the Inuit community to develop the appropriate skills. (Kirmayer et al, 2009).

A comprehensive training strategy and plan for Inuit staff combines formal education opportunities with in-service training. Training programs may need to be adapted to facilitate effective completion. Ongoing peer support and professional development is also important (Kirmayer et al, 2009; Pauktuutit, 2007). Other suggestions for training and upgrading staff's qualifications include online and distance education, mentoring and one-on-one training, involvement of Elders, prior learning assessments to recognize the value of experiential learning, partnering with other community agencies. (Pauktuutit, 2007; ITK, 2011b).

16. CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND SAFETY

Service providers, Indigenous organizations, and parents of Inuit children and youth have all identified the need for training for service providers to provide culturally competent and culturally safe services for Inuit. (Terriplan, 2010; OICC, 2013a; Blanchet-Cohen

et al, 2011; Health Canada, 2010; Kirmayer et al, 2009; Rae, 2011).

Cultural competence can also be implemented at the organizational level and can be reflected in organizational policies, systems and models of care. (Kirmayer et al, 2009).

There has been an evolution of approaches from cultural awareness and sensitivity to cultural competence and cultural safety. Cultural awareness seeks primarily to increase the knowledge of the service provider about the cultural beliefs or practices of the “other” culture, in this case, Inuit culture (NAHO, 2008). Cultural safety goes beyond cultural awareness, and is based on understanding the historical and social context of relations between cultures, and acknowledging and challenging the power differentials inherent in service delivery, including racism. It defines both the service provider and the client as bearers of culture, and calls on the service provider to be conscious of their own cultural biases and beliefs. Ultimately it is the client who determines whether the services provided are culturally safe (Hart-Wasekeesikaw, 2009). Cultural safety may include supporting the use of traditional healing approaches and reflecting specific Inuit social, cultural and historical contexts. (Kirmayer et al, 2009).

A narrow approach to cultural competence can focus on learning the practices of that culture and creating a false sense of knowledge and understanding. However, culture is complex and multi-layered and so service providers cannot possibly grasp all the essential dimensions of Inuit culture in a few workshops. To address this challenge, some experts have suggested the concept of “cultural humility”, which is a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique, in which one constantly examines one’s assumptions about Inuit culture, and reflects critically on one’s own cultural beliefs, identity and assumptions. Cultural humility also suggests that it is important to understand the intersection of various identities (Inuk, urban dweller, youth, etc.) that are unique to each individual. (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998).

The following have been suggested as the core competencies in providing culturally safe services:

1. Postcolonial understanding of the inequities faced by Inuit, and the examination of the effect of residential schools and other traumas imposed by colonization;
2. Communication and the ability to establish a relationship with Inuit clients based on respect, honesty and empathy, and which earns their trust;
3. Inclusivity and relationship building with Inuit clients and community;
4. Respect for the cultural integrity of Inuit clients, families, and communities, their uniqueness, and their diversity, including the integration of traditional practices; and
5. Recognizing Inuit traditional knowledge as being equally valid as other sources of information for developing and delivering services, and understanding Inuit worldview, values and ways of being and knowing.

(Hart-Wasekeesikaw, 2009).

The integration of Inuit staff into service delivery is not in itself sufficient to ensure that services are culturally safe, and cultural competence training is recommended for non-Inuit staff. (Kirmayer et al, 2009).

17. SERVICE COLLABORATION AND INTEGRATION

Community partnerships and collaboration are an essential part of providing high quality services to Inuit children and youth. (Pauktuutit, 2007; OICC, 2013a; ITK, 2011b; Terriplan, 2010; Health Canada, 2010; Morrison, 2008; Kirmayer et al, 2009).

This is true for several reasons. First, Inuit families, children or youth who are dealing with trauma and the complexity that implies, or who are dealing with concurrent challenges, need access to multiple services. Navigating these distinct services can be extremely difficult and confusing, especially for families already under stress. Collaboration among these agencies is essential in order to provide seamless access for Inuit children, youth and families to the

services they need, and more complete support for them (OICC, 2013a; ITK, 2011b). Case management and system navigation support are part of this seamless service delivery. (OICC, 2011b).

Second, engaging a range of community agencies reflects the Inuit holistic approach to raising children and supporting the transition of youth into adulthood, that “it takes a community to raise a child” (Pauktuutit, 2007, p. 14). The majority of community staff within Inuit and First Nations community surveyed in Health Canada study indicated that collaboration with other programs improved the continuum of care for children and youth in their community (Health Canada, 2010). Some community level staff in a national survey of First Nations and Inuit communities would go further than collaboration and say integration of services is important to bring a holistic approach to serving clients in First Nations and Inuit communities. (Health Canada, 2010).

It is essential that the relationships be active, evolving partnerships and not simply collaborations on paper. Sometimes, agencies can agree on a specific vehicle for providing coordinated services, such as a plan of care, but these may fall into disuse with time and need to be constantly renewed. (Terriplan, 2010).

A third reason that community collaboration is important is that the history of colonization and trauma Inuit have lived through requires a process of reconciliation with non-Indigenous service providers, so that services are provided on the basis of the truth about the history and context, and respect for Inuit culture (Aboriginal Service Providers of Ottawa et al, 2012). The reconciliation process involves first the step of truth-telling, in which the history of colonization is made explicit and the impacts of this history are understood. The second step is acknowledging, in which non-Inuit services accept this historic knowledge into their practice and begin to change their approach in light of it. (Blackstock et al, 2006).

The Children’s Aid Society of Ottawa has embarked on such a reconciliation process, working in collaboration with Inuit and other Indigenous organizations in the community. An evaluation of this process revealed a series of factors that are key to the

success of the relationship so far, and these include:

- Commitment of senior leadership both at CAS and among the Aboriginal service providers within Ottawa;
- A liaison committee of CAS supervisors and representatives from the Aboriginal community provided an opportunity to develop deeper relationships;
- The creation of designated teams within CAS to work with the First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities;
- The creation of the Aboriginal Liaison position to advocate and advise CAS staff from within the agency;
- Kinship and customary care arrangements are now part of the array of services recognized by CAS;
- An alternative dispute resolution process called the Circle of Care was established to support Indigenous families who have concerns in their dealings with CAS;
- Cultural training and education, including the historical context. Is provided for CAS workers in part through an Internal forum of staff within the agency who are expected to expand their knowledge about Aboriginal peoples and share it with other staff. The forum includes staff from all departments of CAS. There are regular meetings among staff to share information, see videos, hear presentations, and discuss the information they are learning; and
- There are active efforts by CAS to maintain ties to the community, through actions such as regular contact between senior leaders of CAS and Aboriginal agencies, CAS participation of in events in the First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, and inviting members of the Aboriginal community to CAS events.

(Aboriginal Service Providers of Ottawa et al, 2012).

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