

Substance Abuse in Nunavik and Isuarsivik Regional Recovery Centre

- Short background on myself and Isuarsivik Regional Recovery Centre
- Profile of substance abuse and addictions services in Nunavik
- Isuarsivik's Development Plan 2016-2036
- Call for actions to be considered by the *Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec*





Isuarsivik is an Inuit community organization independent of the public network governed by a volunteer board of directors composed of:

- David Forrest, Chairperson and representative of the population
- Mary Aitchison, Vice-Chairperson and representative of the population
- Sammy Duncan, Treasurer and representative of the population
- Martha Greig, representative of the population and designated elder
- Dr. Charlotte Perret, representative from Ungava Tulattavik Health Centre
- Steven Kelly, representative from Inuulitsivik Health Centre
- Shirley White-Dupuis, representative of Northern Village of Kuujuaq

Our executive director is Alicia Aragutak. Alicia is also president of the Regional Suicide Prevention Committee and former president of Qarjuut Youth Council.

At Isuarsivik, we have been delivering quality and culturally sensitive inpatient addictions services to Inuit of Nunavik's 14 communities for more than 20 years. Our current program is 42 days long and is mainly based on the Minnesota 12 steps/AA model to which we have added a 2 weeks Inuit-specific trauma component.

Our mission is to provide a culturally based recovery program, as a means for Inuit to achieve a healthy, addictions free lifestyle.

We are the only addictions recovery center in the Canadian Arctic and the only one across Canada to offer services in Inuktitut. Something to be proud of.

Our high standards have allowed us to obtain Accreditation Canada's primer status.





Situation with Isuarsivik's current facility

Isuarsivik operates from a building built in the 1940s by the American Air Force. Its age, size and layout prevent Isuarsivik from offering its program in an optimal manner and from responding to the present needs of the population for inpatient addictions rehabilitation.

Lodging of Participants

- The Center's 9 beds are not sufficient to meet present needs and we must work on a cycle basis alternating between men and women which creates long delays for admission.
- Due to lack of beds, an average of 10 applicants are denied admission at each cycle.
- There is no accommodation available for partners and children who would be interested in participating in the rehabilitation program.

Space for clinical activities

There is no adequate space for group therapy or traditional and cultural activities such as sewing or carving.

Office space and lodging for the staff

There is currently a lack of office space, and no adequate housing for the staff, which is a major obstacle to the recruitment and retention of employees.



Questions on the current Isuarsivik ?

Impact of substance abuse in Nunavik

The scope and intensity of the problems related to substance abuse in Nunavik are affecting the entire Inuit society:

- Mortality rates due to alcohol four times higher in Nunavik than in the rest of Quebec/Canada;
- Preoccupying prevalence of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) according to the observations of health professionals and communities;
- An alarming level of recorded crime and an over-representation of Inuit within correction services
- A severely disproportionate level of reports to the Youth Protection Services and placement of children.

A study conducted by the NRBHSS in 2015 concluded that the cost related to alcohol abuse is a shocking **\$72M per year** when the costs of incarceration, health problems, policing, and lost employment/productivity are factored in.

Context of substance abuse and addictions in Nunavik

Historic and social processes explain part of the drinking and drugging problems in Nunavik:

The colonization and subsequent changes, both radical and swift, experienced by the Inuit of Nunavik over the past decades had grave repercussions. These effects are manifested in the wide-ranging psychosocial and health problems currently afflicting the Nunavimmiut, including the abuse of substance (Parnasimautik, 2014).

Systemic factors contributing to the prevalence of addictions:

- the overcrowding of residential housing/related unrelenting stress
- the difficulty of mental health and addictions services to adequately respond to the current needs.

This historical and systemic context often leads to intergenerational transmission of trauma.

Problematic alcohol use

Adult

Occasional or regular drinkers rose from 17% in 1992 to 77% in 2004. A proportion slightly lower than rest of Québec.

What characterizes alcohol use in Nunavik compared to the other regions in Québec is the high number of binge drinking episodes:

- The proportion of weekly binge drinkers is three times higher than the rest of Quebec and Canada.

Pregnant women

44% reported having drunk alcohol in 2004.

Front-line workers note FASD increasingly affects Nunavik newborns and children.

Youth

The age of first use is decreasing since the 1990s.

The proportion of students who engaged in regular binge drinking in 2005 was 10 times higher than for the rest of the province.

Binge drinking accounts for some of the riskier behaviours observed such as:

criminal acts, parental neglect, violence, sexual abuse, suicidal acts, accidents and driving under the influence, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Problematic drug use

Adult

The percentage of drug users went from 36% to 60% between 1992 and 2004.

Cannabis was by far the drug most often used (60%) in 2004, followed by cocaine (7.5%).

Regular use of cannabis

80% of young men use cannabis on a regular basis

Cannabis use is trivialised and the risk of dependency or mental health issues are underestimated.

Youth

RISQ survey with high school students reported (2005-2006):

- 50% had used drugs at least once during the previous year (Plourde, Brunelle et al., 2007).
- 60% of those young drugs users were regular users

Regular use of cannabis by youths whose brain is still developing increases risk of psychosis and long-term mental problems

Impact of cannabis legalization is unknown

Current service supply for substance abuse and addictions in Nunavik

Prevention and public awareness:

The Inuit association Nunalituguait Ikajuqatigiitut (NI) organizes various information activities in the region's communities and schools.

The CLSC employees and the community liaison wellness workers (CLWWs) periodically participate in or organize prevention and awareness activities in the communities, notably in relation to FASD.

NRBHSS Public Health and Planning and Programming Departments: sporadic events/campaigns to promote healthy habits and raise public awareness.

Community-based support services:

Youths and adults struggling with substance abuse can consult the CLSC interveners (assistance, advice, referral to treatment services). However, it is rare that the local intervener is specialised in counselling for addictions.

Lack of specialised outpatient and aftercare counselling.

Specialised inpatient services:

No inpatient detoxification services in the region.

Isuarsivik is the only inpatient recovery centre in the region: **the 9-beds facility does not meet the present need of adults, families and pregnant women.**

Inuit of Nunavik can also access treatment centres in Southern Québec or centres funded by the federal NNADAP program.

No inpatient addictions services for youth in the region.

Questions on the context of
substance abuse in Nunavik?



Isuarsivik Development Plan

The strengthening of the continuum of care for addiction has been identified as a regional priority in Nunavik since 2010.

In 2016, our Board of directors has adopted the *Isuarsivik Development Plan 2016-2036*. This plan is our way to contribute to Inuit's journey towards recovering health, power and their future.

Objectives of the plan

1st: Improve the current services and organization

Strengthen the organization and its programming in order to ensure the quality of services offered to clients, to guarantee a healthy working environment for staff, and to achieve the required standards to obtain the MSSS certificate of compliance.

2nd: Increase capacity to welcome clients

Increase the volume of clients that Isuarsivik can accommodate in order to be able to welcome every admissible adult Nunavimmiut that wants to receive culturally relevant recovery services in Nunavik, now and in 2036.

3rd: Develop a family approach

Develop and implement a family approach for the recovery services that can support couples, families with children and pregnant women in lessening the impact of substance abuse.

4th: Support the development of initiatives to address the concerns expressed by Nunavimmiut

Parnasimautik, Ilusiliriniqmi Pigutjiutini Qimirruniq and Saqijuq's consultation processes have highlighted regional priorities in the addictions field. Isuarsivik is committed to meaningfully contribute to a coordinated cross-sector approach to address the underlying issues fueling substance abuse and deploy a network of community-based Inuit addictions counsellors as well as the Nunavik Wellness Court.

Towards the new Isuarsivik Regional Recovery Centre

The project provides for the construction of:

- a 22-bed facility for individual adults and up to 32 clients during a family program
- office space for more than 40 employees
- daycare and school tutoring area for clients' children
- 12 2-bedroom units for staff

The project also plans for :

- the emergency admission of pregnant women to prevent FASD
- the strengthening of the cultural component to increase protective factors
- the creation of a Continued Care Services Department to deploy outpatient and aftercare services across Nunavik
- the hiring of specialised mental health workers/nurse specialised in addictions to better support inpatient clients



Towards the new Isuarsivik Regional Recovery Centre: funding the new Centre and Services

Regional, provincial and federal partners have rallied around Isuarsivik's project as a major positive initiative to address the root causes of substance abuse, violence and suicide amongst Inuit of Nunavik.

Operational funding

The \$6.1M yearly budget has been fully secured thanks to the funding from the NRBHSS' resource envelope for community organizations and the *Ungaluk Safer Communities Program* managed by Makivik Corporation and the Kativik Regional Government (KRG).

Construction project

As a community organization, securing funding for the infrastructure aspect of the project has proven challenging.

After completion of the Schematic Design Phase, the construction budget is estimated at \$37M.

So far, more than \$17,5M has been secured from Isuarsivik, KRG, Makivik, Province of Québec (Société du Plan Nord) and Government of Canada (Indigenous Services). Partners are confident the remaining funds will be secured under the new *Rural and Nordic Communities Infrastructure Program* managed by Infrastructure Canada.

Construction starts in the Summer of 2019. Target for opening is Fall 2021.



Towards the New Isuarsivik Regional Recovery Centre

The path ahead

The **New Isuarsivik Regional Recovery Centre** is a symbol of our communities coming together to take back our regions' future and protect our way of life in the North.

We have started to recruit strong Inuit leaders and professionals who are steering the development of the new Centre.

We launched a process to revise and improve our current adult program and develop family services.

In partnership with our Saqijuq partners, we are in the process to hire a community-based Inuit addictions counsellor in Puvirnituk and we are supporting the deployment of the pilot-project for the Nunavik Wellness Court.

Addressing the traumas and substance abuse that are the major root causes of social distress in Nunavik is fostering the empowerment of Nunavimmiut, and will enable their full contribution to the economic, cultural, social and political development of their region.

To know more about the project, please send an email to:

communications@Isuarsivik.ca

and visit us at:

www.isuarsivik.ca



A group of people is gathered around a table covered with salmon fillets and tools, likely in a community meeting or workshop. The scene is dimly lit, with the focus on the salmon and the people's hands. The text "Questions on Isuarsivik's Development Plan?" is overlaid in white on the image.

Questions on Isuarsivik's Development Plan?

Call for actions to be considered

Empowerment of Indigenous Peoples is key to healing and development:

- governments, civil servants and public services agencies must engage Indigenous leaders and communities in a respectful way and ensure programs' frameworks are sufficiently flexible to support Indigenous communities' initiatives and priorities.
- The development of academic and accredited culturally-relevant training programs to foster professional and leadership development amongst Indigenous Peoples must be prioritized.
- The impact of colonization on the Indigenous communities must be recognized and programs must be created and deployed to actively support decolonization in all spheres of activity.

Recovering from trauma and lessen the impact of substance abuse must be prioritised in Nunavik:

- governments, civil servants and public services agencies must ensure the construction and opening of the new Isuarsivik Regional Recovery Centre is not delayed.
- specialised inpatient services for youth must be designed and deployed urgently.
- outpatient and inpatient detoxification services must be created.
- enough funding to deploy community-based Inuit addictions counsellors across the region must be secured.
- academic and accredited training for Inuit addictions workers must be designed and deployed urgently.