



# Ten Steps/ Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Framework with Elders Consultation

*Dedicated to the Elders of Nunavut. Thank you for your wisdom.*





## 1. Understand the problem

– Pijitsirniq (knowledge and service)

In order to begin a process of healing and change for a community when they have or are still experiencing violence, the adults of the community need to understand the problem. Understanding violence, and the effects that interpersonal violence have on people in their community, is the first step by which people can begin to make the change. Pijitsirniq is the principle of public service. Serving or providing for family and community. In the act of learning and acknowledging the problem of violence in the community, the participants are taking the time to learn about the issue, and are serving their community. The participants are choosing to be the safe adults for the children and youth in their community, they are choosing to provide a leadership role in ending violence for their community, and they are choosing to be the role models who learn about and develop an action plan to deal with the problem.

### How do we learn about our own history here in the North?

When we were raised, up to a certain point, we lived nomadically, and largely simply within our immediate family units. Now that we live together in larger communities, we are learning new things about the land, as most of us have come together in these communities from different areas of the North.

### How can we start to use the wisdom of Elders to inform the continued practiced wellness in our communities?

We have lived hard lives. We know that there is pain you are experiencing, but believe us when we say we have experienced our own pain in our days. We love you and we want you to learn from our experiences with learning to cope, the mistakes we made, and the resiliencies we realized we had. You are capable of learning the skills to live off the land, as well as how to live well in larger communities, and we want to support you in that.

### To learn about the issues, we feel we need supports in order to help support our young people

We would love to be able to teach our young people the skills they need to live on the land. We would like to involve the learning of their parents and other adults in the community, as the burden to shoulder all of the teaching and resources needed to teach these skills is too much for too few of us Elders. We feel it is important for the young people to have the skills to live in today's larger communities, as well as being able to live a good life in the North in the ways we were taught when we were children.

## 2. Recognize people's vulnerability and resilience

– *Pilimmaksarniq (skills/knowledge acquisition)*

Step two is recognizing people's vulnerability and resilience. This is understanding that everyone can experience violence, but that there are certain people, such as children and youth, who are more susceptible to being targeted by violence and abuse. This workshop provides the learning around violence which can be described by pilimmaksarniq. This principle describes the importance of knowledge and skills development. In this step, participants are learning about the importance of understanding who is the most vulnerable to violence, and the best ways that we can support both these and all other people in their communities in the interests of harm and risk reduction.

### What are the strengths of the people of the North?

We have always had the concept of learning new skills and acquiring knowledge for the betterment of the family unit. This was woven into our way of life. Now we need to find a way to weave this concept of driving the desire to learn new skills into living in larger communities. We have a wide and diverse range of knowledge that we can draw upon from our years of experience, and if we combine this with the creative energy of our youth, I'm sure we can build really good support systems in our communities. We also have good network systems of people both in our community, and people who are from our communities, but now work elsewhere. We can make use of these networks to further strengthen our work.

### What are the special vulnerabilities of the young people of the North?

Young people in our communities lead seemingly adultified lives by making risky lifestyle choices, and starting families at younger than average ages. We are most concerned that they have not been given proper care and support in learning the skills they need to live good lives as adults, and in turn raise their children to live good lives. We are also concerned that they do not have access to the mental health support and counselling services that we need to begin the process of healing. The social problems today look differently to us from the ones we experienced. We can provide some stories of our own resiliency, but we need health support to provide more help for kids where we cannot give

a contextual analysis of their issues today. They are simply living in a different world than what we were used to. We are here to help, but we need to help to do this.

### What could the bridge the differences between the strengths and vulnerabilities of people in the North?

We see the ability for young people to learn the culture and heritage from which they have come as an important pillar to raising the resiliency of our young people in the North. They need to learn the skills we were taught when we were young to live and care for the land in the North, while also needing the skills to live in a contemporary world, in order to lead successful lives. However, before we can help them learn the skills to live a good life, they need some support in dealing with the social problems that exist in our communities, such as extensive substance abuse and thoughts of self-harm. We need to look at the root causes of violence in our communities, educate on these topics to all members of our communities, provide counselling and addictions support to those who need it. Once the adults and young people have begun a process of healing from the social ills that exist in our community, we can then begin to look at building their other skills.



### 3. Define protection instruments

– *Aajiiqatigiingniq (consensus decision-making)*

The third step is defining protection instruments. This overlaps with the principle *aajiiqatigiingniq* which is the concept of consensus decision-making. The reason this overlaps exactly is because the participants in the workshop are coming together to make decisions about what risks the children and youth in their community are facing, and what they can do to mitigate those risks. They are making these decisions, and defining their protection instruments as a collective. Once their protection instruments are defined, that means that all community members can be on the same page about what is and is not acceptable treatment of children and youth and all other people in the community.

#### How do we work on protection of our children in the North?

We have always worked hard at keeping our children safe. We have talked about how we used to live more nomadically in the North, and so previous to settling in communities, if an issue of child protection became apparent, we would deal with it within the family system. We recognize that most of our options and templates for child protection are offered to us from the Government of Nunavut (GN) health, education, and justice systems and services, as well as RCMP. We think these services are valid and can be of use in the North, however we would like more input in how the children in our communities should be protected.

#### In what ways can we improve child protection in the North?

We think that the best way child protection in our communities can be improved, would be more deepened relationships between government and RCMP services. We know of different programs that exist, but we do not know how to practically apply them, nor of the other programs out there. We believe that with more ongoing communication, contact and regular visiting by GN service workers, and RCMP detachment officers (so, really, a general increased presence) in our communities, would increase the effectiveness of these services, and we would guess people's access and use of them.

#### What are your suggestions for increasing relationships between services and the North?

We think that if we had joint sessions hosted between members of our community, and the service provider, that we could really entrench positive working relationships between government services and our communities. For example, we recommend a good place to start would be a first session which addresses the wrongs and hurt that institutions have inflicted on Inuit people historically. The next session would look at how these services can be accessed and practically used in our communities. It should be noted that we believe all of these sessions need to have joint service provider and community presence, to really emphasize a good working relationship, and the commitment to that relationship.



## 4. Create a prevention team

– *Pilirriqatigiingniq (collaborative relationships)*

The fourth step is to create a prevention team. These are the people who will have oversight for the protection instruments, who understand the problems well, and who will work toward maintaining safe environments for children and youth. Pilirriqatigiingniq says that people in the community will make best use of resources, all people in the community will contribute, and they will work together in collaborative relationships. A prevention team is made up of a collaborative of people who are committed to creating safe environments. The creation of a prevention team is making use of the best resources for people in their communities. For the Inuit it is Elders who have the most wisdom and knowledge, therefore engaging Elders in the prevention is the best use of resources. However, creating and maintaining safe environments is the job of all adults in the community. All people can contribute, and all people should contribute. Once the prevention team (Elders) have learned about violence prevention, they will work in collaborative relationships to educate all children and adults in the community.

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### What is the best approach to getting the work done to make our communities safer?

We believe that a wellness committee would be the best approach to making sure the work gets done to make our communities safer, and increase supports for people who need it. We want to approach this work in terms of holistic wellness and health, and we need to appoint people within the committee to be responsible for certain aspects of the work. We think there are enough adults in our community who would be willing to support this work. However, we think the most important part of this work will be the appointment of a leader who will be the driving force of the committees' work tasks, and who will ensure everyone is doing their individual jobs. We need help in identifying who this leader will be.

### What is the role of Elders in this important safety planning work?

We would play an important advisory role in the leadership of this wellness committee. We think the head leadership needs to be fulfilled by a leader adult from the community, and we would like to provide advice and support on how to keep communities safe.

### Who else should be part of planning work in creating safer communities?

We believe that all people in the community need to be represented on this committee. This means that we need to engage the Elders in advising the committee, we need to engage the adults to help lead the initiatives of the committee, and we need youth members on the committee to represent youth interests, youth needs, and provide the skills that young people possess. Everyone in the community should feel like they are either part of the work of this committee, or that their interests are being represented by the committee members.

## 5. Complete a risk assessment

– *Pilimmaksarniq (skills/knowledge acquisition)*

The fifth step is to complete a risk assessment. This is to look at the community or organization and determine the risk factors in the community that people face. Again, the principle of pilimmaksarniq looks at acquiring knowledge for the community. In the workshop, the participants are learning about all the different risks known and even unknown that they themselves and the children and youth in their communities encounter. They will learn about the different things they can do to combat those risks, and in the process are gaining the skill to assess risk.

### Do you feel that people in the North have access to enough support systems and information about community risks?

We feel that there is enough information about risks that are provided to our communities, but just as equally there are not enough supports offered to go in conjunction with different risk and safety information pieces. For example, it is commonly known what the different risks are with consuming substances such as drugs or alcohol, in the form of harm and risk reduction messaging. However, people have such pain that they still continue to consume substance in very risky ways, despite knowing all the harm messages around that behaviour.

### Whose job is it to ensure that there is consistent safety messaging being given out?

We keep coming back to the concept that our lives, in terms of community living, used to be vastly different – we used to live in single family units, and moving across the land based on the seasons. Now that we live in larger communities together, it is a challenge to achieve consistency in the kinds of wellness, safety and risk, health messaging for all the families in our communities. We need help in creating these consistent safety and education pieces, especially with our children and youth.

## 6. Develop policies and procedures

– *Qanuqtuurunnarniq (resourceful solutions)*

The next step for the participants is to develop all the policies and procedures that will maintain safe environments for children and youth. Qanuqtuurunnarniq is the concept of coming up with resourceful solutions within the community. This is particularly important for the Inuit, as practical solutions for a psycho-social issue like interpersonal violence that exist in southern communities, may not be culturally applicable for people in northern communities. For example, because children tend to speak in Inuktitut when they are bullying each other, some teachers in communities in Nunavut came up with various solutions for this. One solution was to write respectful and disrespectful language terms in Inuktitut in their schools, so that children could learn that even in another language they must be respectful. It will require the knowledge and skills of everyone in the community to come up with relevant and practical ways to tackle interpersonal violence in their communities.





## 7. Educate adults, youth and children

– *Qanuqtuurunnarniq (resourceful solutions)*

Once the training is over, what next? The participants need to promote their new plans and strategies to the rest of the people in their community. Therefore the next step is to educate adults, youth, and children in what they have learned about violence, and what they plan to do to eradicate interpersonal violence (the plans and procedures previously developed) in their communities. Step seven is similar to step six in the sense that it will take all of the creative solutions and ideas of the community members to determine how they will educate all the people in their communities as qanuqtuurunnarniq defines. Communities in the North are more remote, the needs of people may be different in every community, and violence issues may look different in every community. All of these things need to be taken into account when examining how the education processes will be advanced.

### **If you had to pick one primary education audience, for violence and safety, who would it be?**

We want to focus on building the strengths and resiliencies of the parents and adult caregivers in our communities. We need all generations in our communities to work together to create and maintain safer communities, and right now we see the parents as needing the most resiliency work. They need support in building their strengths as individuals (counselling and mental health support), and then we need to follow up with general violence prevention education and training for them.

### **How do you propose creating stakeholder buy-in with this group of adults?**

We believe that we will get some interest from some of the adults and parents straight away. Once there are some involved, it will grow and others will join. We think that we can reach a wide group of adults, parents, and caregivers, by providing this information and learning in a variety of ways. We could provide short educational clips over our local radio stations, which are provided in Inuktitut, and which Inuit people listen to, to a wide extent, in our communities. We also think we should provide learning workshops for parents to learn more about preventing violence and creating safer environments for their children.

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## 8. Respond to disclosures of violence

– *Tunnganarniq (open and inclusive environment)*

The eighth step is learning how to respond to disclosures of violence. While the Ten Steps program is about preventing violence from occurring and maintaining safe environments, instances of interpersonal violence are still bound to occur, especially in the beginning. Defining the procedure for responding to disclosures is actually a necessary step in maintaining safe environments. Tunnganarniq says that a community should have an open and inclusive environment. This is very important as a concept in examining violence and especially for listening to people's personal stories of violence. One of the primary reasons for which people do not talk about their experiences of violence or abuse, especially when they have been victimized by it, is because they feel ashamed or guilty (among many other things) and they do not want to talk about it. Creating and maintaining an open and inclusive environment so that people can feel free to talk about their experiences with violence, will mitigate the chances that they keep their wounds hidden and the cycle perpetuated. Once an experience of violence has been openly shared, then the healing process can really begin, and prevention of violence from reoccurring can be reinforced.

### What are our biggest barriers to helping other people with their pain and violence in their lives?

Our social problems in the North are not often understood to a good extent by outsiders. We believe that government and RCMP services can provide a large amount of support to the people in our communities. However, historically, our pain has been rejected, and we have felt like our problems have been belittled, and ourselves marginalized. We would like for there to be a deeper understanding of the history of our social problems (where they stem from), what our current issues are, and how we can be part of the process, instead of being marched through one. We deserve to be part of the solution to making our communities safer. In recognizing these cultural imperatives beforehand, we believe that the mental health supports of government and RCMP services will greatly help our communities in healing and becoming stronger.

### What are our teachings about the importance of our children?

We have always cherished our children as sacred. We do not believe in interpersonal violence, however we especially hold our children in a high perspective as our future leaders, and so we have to walk a good path, so that they can then follow that good path. We are prepared to do the work to make our communities safer for all the people in our communities, but particularly for our children and youth because they are our future, and they are worth it.







## 9. Meet the challenges

– *Tunnganarniq* (open and inclusive environment)

- I. Since time immemorial, Inuit have been strong survivors. How can we use this to teach our communities that change takes time, a lot of work but will be worth it
- II. What do you recommend is said to encourage people to keep going and not give up?

The ninth step is to meet the challenges. Creating safe environments is no easy task, but once participants have gone through all the previous steps, they can see how it is manageable as a process once they have begun. However, there will often be challenges, sometimes barriers, to creating and maintaining safe environments. As with the previous step, this step also includes the notion of *tunnganarniq*, which is to have an open and inclusive environment. Burying any challenges, pretending that they are smaller, or not as significant as they really are, directly contradicts the process of creating safe environments. In order to create a better system of safety, meeting any barriers that occur in an open manner means that the system can look at strengthening any gaps that were missed or not considered the first time.



## 10. Maintain safe environments

– *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq (respect for all)*

- I. What will our community look and feel like if we can get this done?  
(What does it look like, feel like, sound like)
- II. How should we celebrate this?

Once the participants and community have gone through the process of developing their framework of creating safe environments, it is equally important to maintain safe environments. This means the community can come back together and look at whether or not they are abiding by their original goals of a safe and respectful environment for all community members. *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* is the principle that respect and civility should be extended to every single individual within the community, and looks at these people as being individuals within the context of their larger community - in other words, extending respect to every individual as individuals, and individuals being an important contributor to the whole group. The community should look to create safety and respect for everyone within their community.

### Encouraging and Positive Statements for Community Members:

1. You are a capable person surrounded by people to love and support you. If you are facing tough times, we are here to be a safe place for you to talk and move forward.
2. You are never alone to deal with your problems. You have a group of people here who will listen and work with you to come up with solutions to deal with them.
3. You have every right to feel safe and respected, and everyone in this community wants you to feel safe and respected.
4. You can do anything you want with your life, and you can be anything you want. Everyone here respects the right for you to decide the direction of your own life.
5. In your relationships with other people, you should never feel alone, hurt, or scared. We are here to help you know what loving and respectful relationships are.

## The hurt can stop

Respect Education aim:

To create safe environments free of violence—  
abuse, bullying, exploitation—through prevention  
education and response.



**CANADIAN  
RED CROSS**



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