

Report title:

Inuit Tuttarvingat of the National Aboriginal Health Organization Strategic Plan 2010-15

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Under the *Canadian Constitution Act, 1982*, the term Aboriginal Peoples refers to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people living in Canada. However, common use of the term is not always inclusive of all three distinct people and much of the available research only focuses on particular segments of the Aboriginal population. NAHO makes every effort to ensure the term is used appropriately.

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National Inuit Committee on Health, Inuit Public Health Task Group, *Nipingit* – National Inuit Committee on Ethics and Research, the *Irnisuksiiniq* – Inuit Midwifery Network, the Inuit Tobacco-free Network, Alianait Inuit Working Group on Mental Wellness, and others.

... and finally, all of those who have served on the NAHO Board of Directors and the Inuit Tuttarvingat (formerly the Ajunnginiq Centre) Governing Committees since 2000.







Introduction

Who Are We? What Do We Do?

Inuit Tuttarvingat collects and shares information and knowledge on a wide range of health and wellness issues of concern to Inuit. Inuit Tuttarvingat was originally known as the Ajunnginiq Centre, but changed its name in October 2008. “Tuttarvingat” comes from the Inuktitut word *tarvik*, which best describes the idea of a “centre”, and *tuttag* which means where something lands; it is like a grounding place.

The centre receives direction on its activities from an eight-member Governing Committee made up of representatives from each of the four regional Inuit organizations as well as Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada and the National Inuit Youth Council. You can visit our Web site at www.naho.ca/inuit to find out more about our work.

Inuit Tuttarvingat is the Inuit-specific centre of the National Aboriginal Health Organization, an independent national organization that promotes health and wellness for Inuit, Métis and First Nations.

The First Eight Years – 2002 to 2010

Soon after Inuit Tuttarvingat was up and running in 2002, staff visited each of the four Inuit regions and held meetings with community representatives to find out which health issues mattered most to Inuit and how a national organization could help communities promote health and wellness. The results of these meetings can be found in *Ajunnginiq Centre Regional Health Workshops 2002* (www.naho.ca/inuit/english/pdf/ajunnginiq_centre_report.pdf). The document shaped the work of the centre over the coming years, assisted by the Governing Committee and regular consultations with other Inuit organizations.

Over the last eight years, Inuit Tuttarvingat has grown from a fledgling centre to a busy, productive centre working on a number of health and social issues, with links to many Inuit communities and organizations. The work of the centre has focused more on public health issues and disease prevention, rather than health systems and treatment issues. Inuit Tuttarvingat has worked on a wide range of issues over the years, from mental wellness/addictions, midwifery and child and youth issues to health careers, education and climate change.

Some highlights from these years include:

- × A series of publications and resources featuring Inuit knowledge of counselling skills, addictions treatment, Inuit midwifery and resilience and coping.
- × Knowledge-sharing networks for Inuit working in the areas of housing, healthy economic development, Inuit midwifery, tobacco use reduction and mental wellness.
- × Launch of *Nipingit*: National Inuit Committee for Ethics and Research, a joint initiative with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.
- × A five-way partnership with the Inuit regional organizations on *Naasautit*: Inuit Health Statistics, a project to develop capacity for and access to Inuit health data.
- × A three-part call-in TV program and DVD on Inuit health and wellness.
- × A popular Web site.
- × Education materials and community visits to promote health careers.

Time for a Renewed Direction

As the National Aboriginal Health Organization moves into its next five-year funding cycle, it is time to review the work that has been done at Inuit Tuttarvingat and set some priorities for the next five-year period, 2010-15. Our work has grown and changed, but so has that of other Inuit organizations, and some of the needs have changed. There are different opportunities and challenges for the centre compared to 2002.

In 2008, the Governing Committee and staff at the centre began a process to review the vision, mandate, principles and values, goals and priorities for our work over the next five years. This document is the outcome of the process, which also included discussions with a group of elders in October 2008, as well as meetings with each of our major partner organizations throughout 2009.

An Inuit Vision: What Does It Mean to be Healthy?

Sadly, Inuit face many historical, social and economic conditions that negatively affect our health. We all need to work toward better health for Inuit. But what does “health” mean to Inuit? Here are our ideas.

A healthy Inuk...

- × Lives a healthy lifestyle – eats country food, stays active, avoids addictions
- × Combines traditional and modern living
- × Is kind to family members and others
- × Knows the land, knows their limitations
- × Is self-reliant, self sufficient and independent
- × Helps others and is useful to the community
- × Is a good role model to others



Health is about how you live and how you connect with others. We each have the power to live a “healthy” life.

A healthy Inuit family...



- × Shares leadership in the family and support for each other
- × Respects and cares for children, youth and elders
- × Is able to adapt to changes without violence; knows when to get help
- × Together, leads an active, traditional lifestyle as much as possible
- × Thinks about the future

A healthy Inuit family is a strong unit that supports all its members.

A healthy Inuit community...

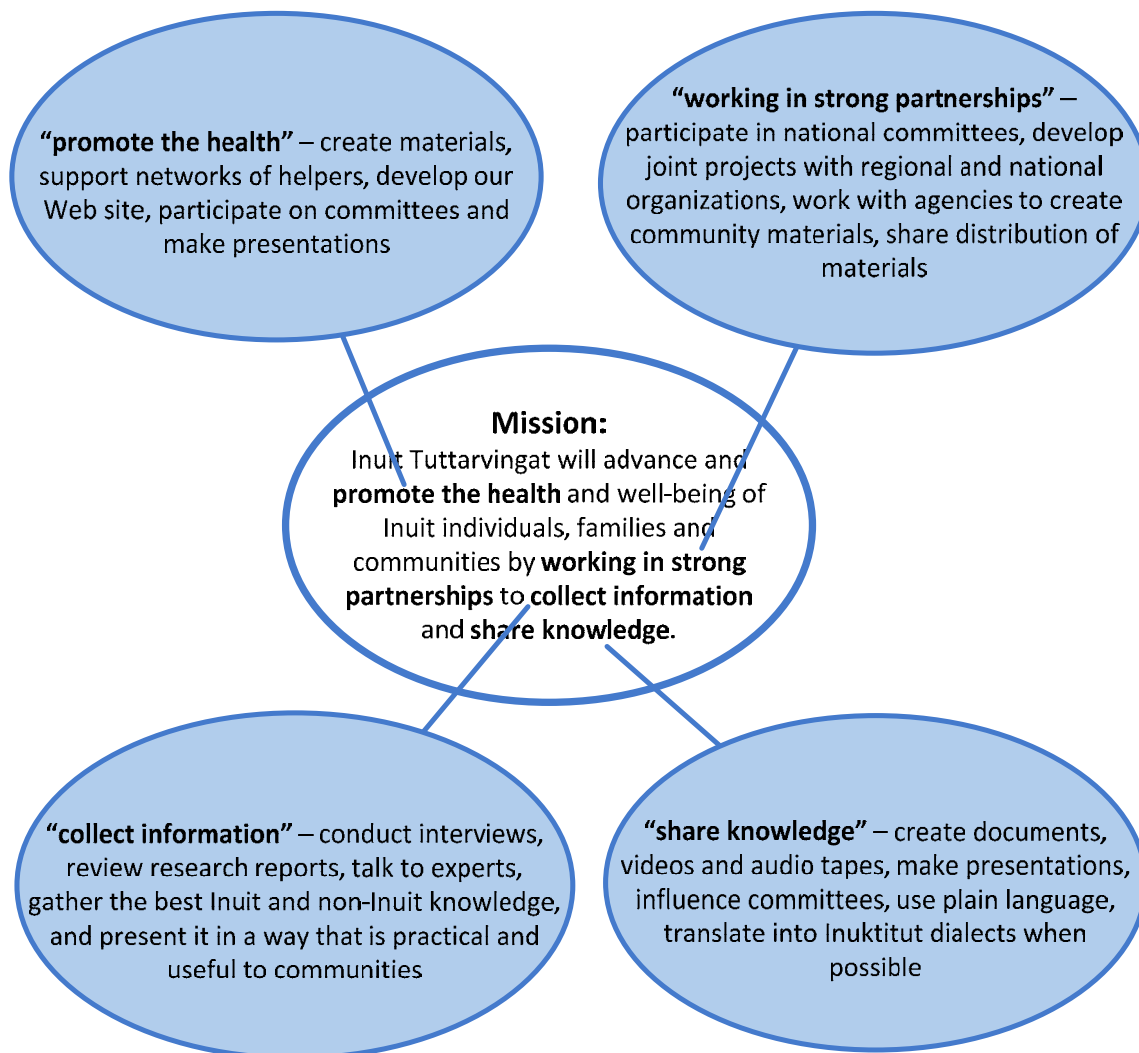
- × Works for each other and shares resources
- × Carries on its traditions and shares traditional knowledge
- × Has recreation facilities and programs for youth
- × Has sufficient infra-structure (a health centre, a justice committee, and elders council)
- × There is spiritual guidance
- × People are treated fairly



Inuit communities have a strong tradition of working together and have the resources to help each other.

Our Mission: How Can We Help?

Inuit Tuttarvingat will advance and **promote the health** and well-being of Inuit individuals, families and communities by **working in strong partnerships** to **collect information** and **share knowledge**.



Inuit Tuttarvingat Goals

1. Conduct and promote research to enhance the health and well-being of Inuit.

We strive to collect and promote Inuit knowledge, as well as culturally appropriate “western” knowledge, that address health concerns identified by Inuit.

2. Increase understanding and awareness of the health issues affecting Inuit.

We will continue to share information and knowledge with service providers, researchers, decision makers and other audiences to improve policies, programs and services, and bring about change that benefits Inuit.

3. Facilitate and promote research that is ethical, balanced, relevant and useful to Inuit.

We will increase our efforts to work with researchers and research bodies to encourage ethical research that uses effective methods and responds to Inuit needs. We will support Inuit researchers and research that benefits Inuit.

4. Support and promote Inuit in pursuing health careers.

Inuit Tuttarvingat will continue to promote health careers based in Inuit traditional healing and Western-based knowledge, including careers in health research, policy and planning, health promotion and health services, and as well as address barriers to education and training.

5. Preserve and promote Inuit traditional knowledge and healing practices.

We will continue to place a high value on Inuit health knowledge and ways of healing, including this knowledge whenever possible in our work, but also developing ways to preserve traditional health knowledge for future generations.

6. Provide Inuit with knowledge of environmental health risks.

Inuit Tuttarvingat will support Inuit organizations and communities in making our environment as healthy as possible, and protecting the lands and resources that support health and well-being.

How Do We Approach Our Work to Promote Health and Wellness?

This picture shows how we approach our work. We want to work “upstream”, that is, make changes in the conditions that affect Inuit wellness, as well as address the most important factors that either protect our health or threaten it.



HOW WE APPROACH OUR WORK · WORKING “UPSTREAM”

A COMMUNITY AT THE MOUTH OF A RIVER spent a lot of time rescuing people who had fallen in upstream and were being swept out to sea. In the middle of a big rescue, one Inuk started to run upriver. Others said “Where are you going? We need you here to help save these people!” The community member said “I’m going up the river to see why so many people are falling in. Maybe we can do something about that.”

“Upstream” What do we need to be healthy?

- Healthy land, water and air
- Good housing
- Enough good food
- Knowledge and education
- Social support
- Health services
- Control over our lives
- Hope for the future

What protects our health?

- Kinship ties
- Support from our families
- Positive role models
- Eating healthy food
- Being active
- Culturally appropriate health care

What threatens our health?

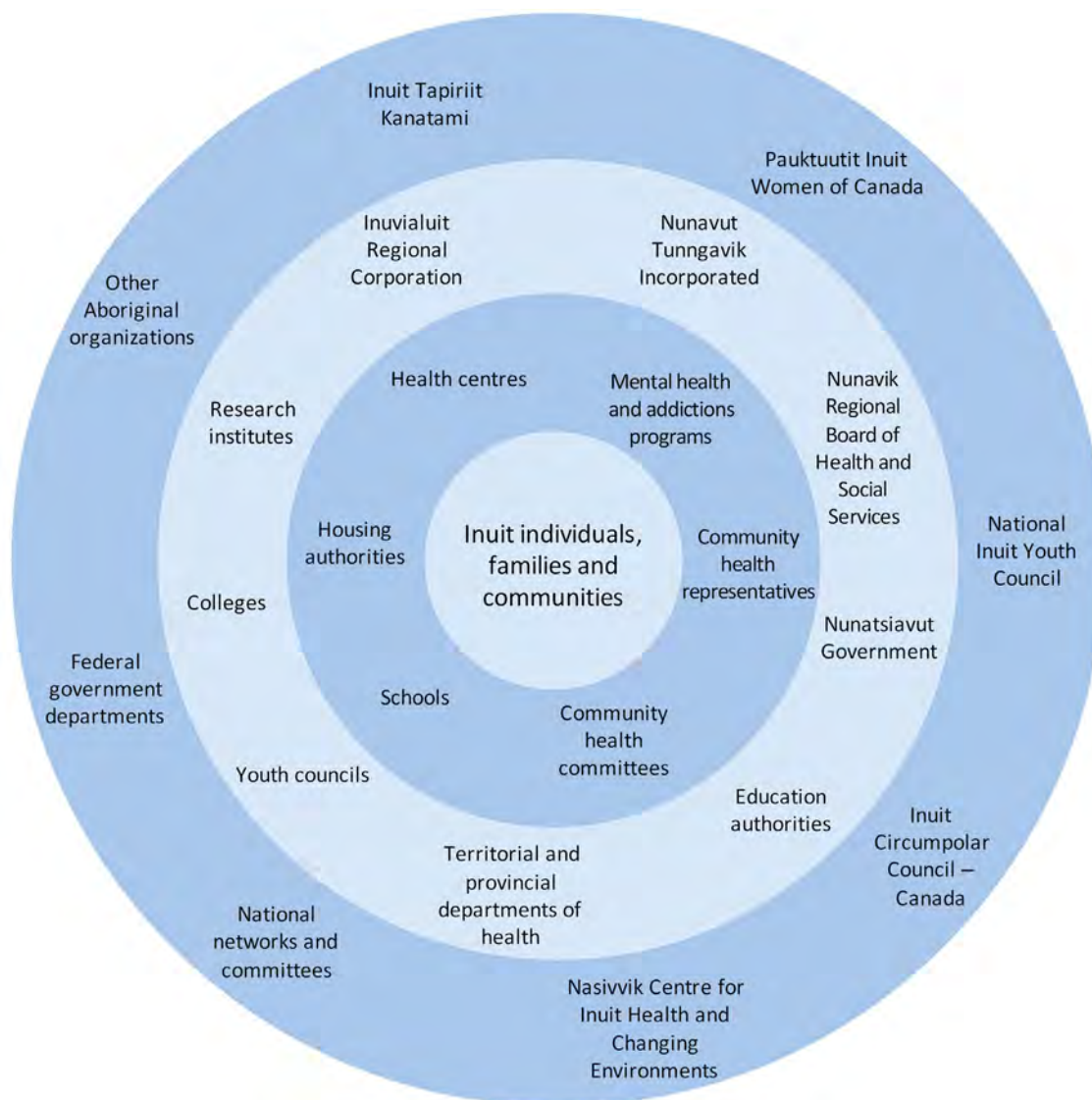
- Rapid social change
- Unhealed trauma
- Loss of culture and language
- Smoking
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Junk food

DOWNSTREAM HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Who Do We Work With?

Inuit Tuttarvingat of NAHO works with many organizations and groups at the community, regional, provincial/territorial and national levels to advance Inuit health and wellness.

While Inuit Tuttarvingat of NAHO does not work directly at the international level, we hope that our work is of use to other circumpolar and world Indigenous Peoples.



Conclusion

The Inuit Tuttarvingat Governing Committee and staff are committed to working actively with our partners, engaging in reflection and learning, and continually evaluating our activities to reach our goals.

We invite everyone who believes in sharing knowledge and developing Inuit capacity to work with us in support of Inuit health and wellness.

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