



Inuit Tobacco-free Network

Tobacco reduction resources, research and events for health workers in Inuit communities

Inuit health workers learn more about smoking cessation, youth create personal video stories, and more

An update from the Inuit Tobacco-free Network Project, 2010

We all know now that quitting or reducing tobacco use is one of the best things you can do for your health and well-being as well as for that of your family and community. The Inuit Tobacco-free Network (ITN) wants to help lower smoking rates and use of tobacco among Inuit. That's why we provided smoking cessation training for health workers in Inuit communities and gave Inuit youth their own video cameras to record personal, creative stories about quitting smoking.

The Inuit Tobacco-free Network is coordinated by Inuit Tuttarvingat of the National Aboriginal Health Organization. It was funded in 2009-2010 by Health Canada, and received advice and guidance from the National Inuit Tobacco Task Group, coordinated by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

Successful distance education training

The ITN completed a distance training course on smoking cessation and related topics for health workers in Inuit communities in July 2010. Each regional health authority in Inuit Nunangat supported the on-the-job training.

While our target number for the course was 25 participants, 28 health workers from the four Inuit regions completed the self-directed learning course, choosing from a variety of course options. Each participant also selected and/or conducted community-based assignments on tobacco use reduction. Most participants focused on working with individuals at their health clinic, educating and assisting with quitting, as well as working with the community. The trainees targeted adults and youth with activities such as: youth camps, prenatal groups, mini-quitting contests, radio shows, a game show, poster competitions, workshops, quit smoking groups, individual counselling, presentations, sessions with elders, displays and more. A number of the school-based activities, including those with younger grades, took place last fall.

The participants in our distance education course were almost entirely female and held Community Health Representative positions, even though we made efforts to reach out to other types of workers. The ITN contracted Consultancy for Alternative Education, a consulting company with experience in tobacco cessation in the North, to carry out our four-month training program. Training was conducted one-on-one after determining that the best way to reach participants and to receive responses was directly by phone and not teleconferences – 419 phone calls from 10 to 45 minutes were made in total. Mail was used to send course materials as e-mail proved less effective for this group. The resources were

much appreciated – for their accessibility, cultural appropriateness, Inuit content, and Inuktitut syllabic translation. Participants mentioned that they had few if any new, appropriate materials to do their community education work, or to give to patients:

“It’s about time that we got some new resources for tobacco education. My old things have been seen many times before so now with the new books they will be interested.”

“I read both the books and they are really good. I’ll use them every time now and they’ll really help the smokers I am working with. I started a quit smoking group before with about eight people but none of them managed to quit. I didn’t know exactly what approach to take. Now with “Healing from Smoking” and “Helping Smokers Heal” I will have the help that I didn’t have before.”

Our evaluation involved conducting a detailed pre- and post-self assessment on the knowledge, attitudes and skills of the trainees. Most participants felt they made very significant advances in learning. The trainers agreed that the self-assessments were quite reflective of the participants’ initial levels and advances. It is important to note that the successful outcome of the course was only possible due to the enthusiasm of the participants who made the effort to take on the extra load (and opportunity) of the course during their work schedules.

“This talk [phone conversation with trainer] is helping me to get my confidence again. I lost confidence in myself and felt guilty when I started smoking again. That was after 10 years of being a non-smoker.”

“I feel bad about doing nothing on tobacco for more than two years now, so I am pleased to get some help to start again.”

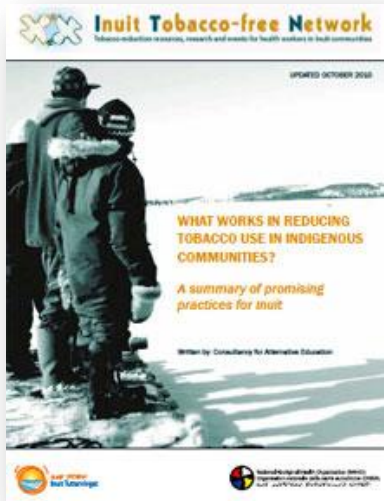
A lack of on-going support is one of the reasons why many health workers in Inuit communities haven’t been able to sustain work on the challenging topic of tobacco reduction in the past. To mitigate against this, trainers planned follow-up activities with each participant to make use of the resources they received during their course to continue to improve their practice in tobacco cessation.

“My next step will be to facilitate a study group of the health workers at the clinic who are smokers.”

Beyond the funded project, trainers have committed to providing one-on-one support to any participant that wants it over the next year.

Useful materials for Inuit

Prior to the training course, ITN prepared a literature search to help inform the training component. This led to the publication: *What works in reducing tobacco use in Indigenous communities? A summary of promising practices for Inuit*. It is available at www.InuitTobaccofree.ca, in three dialects of the Inuit language, English and French.



A longer document offering the abstracts from the literature search, along with other information and food for thought questions for health workers will be available in 2011. The Inuit Tobacco-free Network will also prepare some information materials from the distance education course.

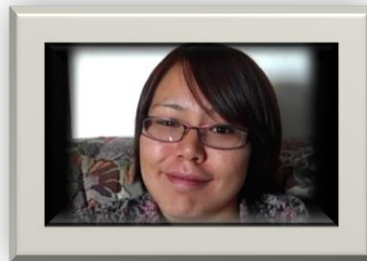
Youth video stories

A youth component of the project involved providing Flip video cameras to several Inuit youth to record personal stories about smoking or quitting smoking. Six youth, chosen for their leadership skills, participated: five in the North and one in Ottawa.

ITN provided them with a few camera tips and interview guidelines to record creative, personal stories. After conducting interviews and gathering footage in the Inuit language or English, they sent USB sticks with the material to our film editor. And for not a whole of money, presto! we produced seven, short, bilingual quitting stories, an introductory video, and one PSA to help encourage others on their path to quitting. The youth participants were allowed to keep the cameras after the project was completed. These by-youth-for-youth stories were posted on YouTube to reach a wide youth audience.



A youth interviewed in Panniqtuuq, Nunavut



A filmmaker, interviewer and interviewee in Kangiqsualujjuaq, Nunavik



A youth interviewed in Nain, Nunatsiavut

Check them out on YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/NAHOnews or see the “Stories and Recollections” section on www.InuitTobaccofree.ca. And see www.Pauktuutit.ca for all their newly digitized tobacco use reduction videos, which the ITN facilitated this past year.

If you would like to join the network or learn more, e-mail: ITN@naho.ca

Quotations in this article are from several ITN training participants