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UNGAVA TULATTAVIK HEALTH CENTER
CENTRE DE SANTÉ TULATTAVIK DE L'UNGAVA

SHEET 6 – HEALING, RECOVERING, PASSING ON

Trauma is part of history. Strength is part of identity.

Cultural Safety Team
Reference Guide on Nunavik and Cultural Safety
Sheet 6 of 16



Inuit are not defined only by a history marked by hardship. They are also the keepers of a language, a culture, and a wealth of knowledge that continue to shape Nunavik today.

Understanding this reality means recognizing that healing is not only about overcoming the wounds of the past. It is also about building on the strengths that have always helped individuals, families, and communities move forward.





WHY THIS TOPIC IS IMPORTANT AT UTHC

Historical traumas are part of Nunavik's history, but they do not define Inuit individuals, families, or communities.

Today, numerous Inuit-led initiatives promote the transmission of language, knowledge, culture, and connection to the land. These strengths contribute to well-being, healing, and cultural continuity.

For UTHC staff, understanding this reality means acknowledging the hardships of the past while focusing on the resources, strengths, and leadership of the people and communities we serve.

A culturally safe approach is not just about understanding of historical traumas. It also means recognizing the strengths that Nunavimmiut draw upon every day.



Photo UTHC – During the broadcast "De garde 24/7"

IN PERSPECTIVE

Seeing the Whole Person

Recognizing historical trauma is important, but recognizing a person's strengths, knowledge, and resources is just as essential. A balanced approach helps ensure that Inuit are not defined solely by their history and fosters relationships based on respect, partnership, and trust.



UNDERSTANDING HISTORICAL TRAUMA

Historical trauma does not result from a single event. Rather, it reflects the cumulative impact of experiences lived by individuals, families, and communities over time, including medical evacuations, rapid social changes, and other imposed policies.

These experiences did not affect everyone in the same way. Some people experienced significant consequences, while others found strength within their families, culture, or communities that helped them navigate these hardships.

Today, the effects of these experiences may still be present, either directly or indirectly. These experiences may be part of a person's story, but they do not define who they are or who they can become.



Photo UTHC – Kangiqsualujjuaq

GOOD TO KNOW – Every Journey Is Unique

Historical trauma does not affect everyone in the same way.

Every person, every family, and every community has its own journey, its own resources, and its own way of making sense of its history.

Recognizing this diversity helps us avoid generalizations and approach each person with openness, curiosity, and respect.



THE STRENGTHS THAT HELP COMMUNITIES THRIVE

Inuit communities have undergone profound transformations over the past few decades. Despite these changes, they continue to build on strengths that support the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

Language, family, Elders, the land, traditional activities, and the sharing of country food remain important pillars of community life. They help pass on knowledge, strengthen identity, and reinforce connections between generations.

These strengths do not remove the wounds of the past, but they play an essential role in healing, strengthening belonging, and building the future.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW – Protective Factors

Research and Inuit organizations recognize several factors that promote the well-being of individuals and communities:

- ✓ language and culture;
- ✓ family ties;
- ✓ Elders and the transmission of knowledge;
- ✓ the land and land-based activities;
- ✓ a sense of belonging to the community.

These protective factors are at the heart of many community well-being initiatives across Nunavik.



Photo: Fred Lemire / Inuit Culture 5

In Nunavik, the land is more than a place. It is a source of knowledge, healing, identity, and connection between generations.



HEALING TOGETHER

Healing takes many forms. For many Inuit, it is rooted in family, language, life on the land, the teachings of Elders, and participation in community life..

Across Nunavik, many initiatives are designed and led by Inuit to meet the needs of their communities. They build on Inuit knowledge while, where appropriate, integrating health services, social services, and contemporary approaches

There is no single path to healing. Every person, every family, and every community follows its own path, based on its history, strengths, and aspirations.



Photo: Radio-Canada / Félix Lebel

GOOD TO KNOW – Healing Takes Many Forms

Healing can be supported by, among other things:

- ✓ local camps;
- ✓ cultural activities;
- ✓ Learning from Elders;
- ✓ activities for youth and families;
- ✓ approaches that bring together Inuit knowledge and professional services.

These initiatives all share a common goal: strengthening relationships, supporting well-being, and fostering cultural continuity.

For the Inuit, well-being is built through relationships: with family, community, culture, and the land.



INUIT LEADERSHIP

In Nunavik, well-being initiatives are increasingly led by Inuit themselves. In communities, Every day, Elders, families, youth, organizations, and community leaders work to pass on language, knowledge, and values that contribute to collective well-being.

These initiatives take many forms: cultural activities, land-based camps, youth programs, community projects, family support, and opportunities for intergenerational learning.

This reminds us that communities already have many strengths and resources that partners—including the UTHC—can recognize, build on, and support.



GOOD TO KNOW – The Role of the UTHC

Cultural safety is not about bringing solutions to communities. It is about recognizing, supporting, and building on the strengths that already exist.

It means working in partnership with Inuit individuals, families, Elders, organizations, and communities.

This is how truly culturally safe care is built.

At the UTHC, this approach is reflected in initiatives developed in collaboration with staff, Elders, patients, clients, families, partners, and Inuit organizations to better respond to community realities.

Inuit communities are not only shaped by history. They also shape the future.



A STORY THAT CONTINUES TO UNFOLD

Inuit communities continue to evolve while preserving and strengthening their language, culture, and knowledge. Every day, youth, Elders, families, and community leaders help pass on this legacy while building the future.

This reminds us that the people we serve already have their own strengths, knowledge, and aspirations. Our role is to recognize these strengths, build on them, and work in partnership with individuals, families, and communities.

Healing does not mean forgetting the past. It also means continuing to pass on knowledge, learn from one another, and build a future rooted in language, culture, and the next generation.



Inuit Education Graduate, UQAT

“Culture is life. It is the foundation upon which everything else is built.” — Sheila Watt-Cloutier

LOOKING AHEAD – Seeing the Whole Person

Every encounter is an opportunity to recognize not only the challenges a person may have experienced, but also the strengths, resources, and aspirations that help them move forward.

A culturally safe approach helps create relationships where people feel heard, respected, and valued for who they are..



IN MY WORK AT THE UTHC

Understanding historical trauma while recognizing the strengths of Inuit communities reminds us that culturally safe care is not just about understanding the past. It is also about recognizing the knowledge, strengths, and resources that already exist within individuals, families, and communities.

Every person has their own journey. Some have lived through traumatic experiences, others continue to live with their impacts, and many draw strength every day from their family, culture, language, and community.

This understanding can help me:

- **see the whole person**, acknowledging both their challenges and their strengths;
- **foster a true partnership** by listening to the needs, knowledge, priorities, and choices of the person and their family;
- **recognize and build on the strengths and resources** already present within the community, rather than assuming they are absent;
- **recognize the importance of language, culture, family, and the land** in the journey toward well-being;
- **adopt a strengths-based approach** that supports autonomy, confidence, and active participation.

THE ESSENTIALS

Cultural safety is not just about understanding the challenges people face. It is also about recognizing the strengths, knowledge, and capabilities that enable Inuit individuals, families, and communities to build their future.



A FEW WORDS IN INUKTITUT

Inuuqatigiit

Living together • Community

The strength of Inuit communities lies in the relationships between people. Helping one another, sharing, and collective responsibility are central to community life.

Inuinnarniq

Being Fully Human • Living According to Inuit Values

This concept reflects a way of life guided by Inuit values, where relationships, respect, sharing, and responsibility toward others are central.

Ajunngittuq

What is good • What is going well

This word reminds us of the importance of recognizing the strengths, abilities, and resources of individuals and communities. A culturally safe approach also means recognizing what supports well-being.

Did you know?

In Nunavik, well-being is often understood as a shared responsibility. Family, community, Elders, language, culture, and the land all contribute to well-being.

These words express rich concepts that do not always translate perfectly into English. The explanations are intended to help readers better understand their meaning.



DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

..... more than half of Nunavik's population is under the age of 30?

Nunavik is one of the youngest regions in Quebec. This young population contributes to the vitality of communities and to the transmission of knowledge between generations.

..... Inuktitut remains the mother tongue of the vast majority of Nunavimmiut?

Despite the many social changes of recent decades, Inuktitut continues to be spoken every day in homes, schools, and communities.

..... Land-based activities continue to play an important role in well-being?

Hunting, fishing, land-based camps, sharing country food, and cultural activities strengthen family ties, cultural identity, and a sense of belonging.

..... the resilience of Inuit communities is built every day through language, culture, the land, and intergenerational bonds?

Challenges are part of Nunavik's history, but Inuit knowledge, solidarity, language, Elders, and community-led initiatives continue to shape the future.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Historical trauma is part of Nunavik's history, but they do not define Inuit individuals, families, or communities.
- ✓ Inuit communities build on many strengths, including language, culture, Elders, family, the land, mutual support, and the transmission of knowledge.
- ✓ Healing takes many forms. It is nurtured through relationships, community initiatives, cultural activities, and Inuit leadership.
- ✓ A culturally safe approach involves recognizing the resources, strengths and capacities that already exist and working in partnership with individuals, families, and communities.
- ✓ Every encounter is an opportunity to see the whole person—not only their history, but also their strengths, aspirations, and potential.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Recognizing strengths is just as important as understanding challenges. By working in partnership with individuals, families, and communities, we help create care that is respectful, compassionate, and culturally safe.



REFLECTING ON MY PRACTICE

1. How can I recognize the strengths, knowledge, and resources of a person or family without focusing only on the challenges they may be experiencing?
2. How can I build a genuine partnership with the person, their family, or their community so that their knowledge, priorities, and choices are reflected in their care experience?
3. How can I recognize the importance of language, culture, the land, and family relationships as strengths that contribute to a person's well-being?
4. What am I already doing to promote a strengths-based approach, and what else could I do?



UTHC RECOMMENDATION

Qimmit : One Shock, Two Truths (2010)

National Film Board

Directed by Inuit filmmakers Zacharias Kunuk and Neil Diamond, this documentary explores the disappearance of sled dogs from several Inuit communities during the 1950s and 1970s. Through personal stories, archival footage, and diverse perspectives, it shows how communities continue to seek a deeper understanding of this period in their history.

Why does the UTHC recommend it?

Because it shows that healing also involves acknowledging history, engaging in dialogue, and passing on stories.

It reminds us that understanding the past helps us better recognize the strength, resilience, and leadership that continue to shape Inuit communities today.



FURTHER READING



My Village in Nunavik ([National Film Board of Canada](#))

Directed by Inuit filmmaker Bobby Kenuajuak, this documentary offers an authentic, humorous, and proud portrait of everyday life in a Nunavik community. An insider's look at a vibrant culture.



Nunavik: Between Culture and Survival ([URBANIA](#))

This audio and video report explores the transmission of Inuit knowledge, hunting, language, and community life, showing how these traditions continue to play a vital role today..



Kuujuaq: Through the Eyes of Its Elders ([Avataq Cultural Institute](#))

Through the testimonies of the Elders, this work explores the major transformations experienced in Nunavik while highlighting memory, resilience, and the transmission of knowledge.



Nunavik-IcE ([Kativik Ilisarniliriniq](#))

An online educational platform developed by Nunavik communities. It offers resources on language, culture, history, and Inuit knowledge in Inuktitut, French, and English..

**Recognizing the wounds of the past is essential.
Recognizing the strengths that help individuals,
families, and communities move forward is just as
important.**

