

Gallery of Actions - Example 4

Title/Name: *Fostering Youth Mental Health and Resilience to Climate Change: An Overview of the Inuit Mental Health & Adaptation to Climate Change and IlikKuset-Ilingannet!/Culture-Connect!*

Description/objectives: Inuit populations have been identified as particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate change on health and well-being, including mental health, due to the rapid changes in climate and environment in the Circumpolar Region, continued reliance on the land for sustenance and well-being, already-present health disparities, and difficulty accessing health-sustaining resources. Regional research conducted through the *Inuit Mental Health Adaptation to Climate Change* projects in Nunatsiavut, Labrador (2012-2013), indicated that Inuit were experiencing mental health impacts from a rapidly changing climate and the resulting impacts to environment, animals, and plants. Participants reported: intense emotional reactions associated with loss of activities, identity, and sense of place (grief, anxiety, stress, distress); real and potential increases in consumption of drugs and alcohol; potential increases in suicide ideation; and potential aggravation of acute anxiety disorders and major depression. These findings contribute to the emerging research on climate change and mental health, and provide a baseline of potential pathways through which climate change may continue to impact on mental health. This research also indicated that youth and middle-aged adults are particularly susceptible to the mental health impacts of climate change programming that enhances and expands resilience through youth mentorship and relationship building was not only desired, but also thought to assist in mitigating and responding to the mental health impacts of climate change, while promoting sustainable cultures and increasing knowledge transmission among generations.

Responding to these needs, and building on these research findings, the *IlikKuset-Ilingannet!/Culture-Connect!* program was designed and piloted in Rigolet, Makkovik, and Postville, Nunatsiavut from October 2013 to March 2014 to explore if cultural mentorship programs linking youth and adults together have the potential to enhance and expand mental health, build adaptive capacities and youth resilience, and increase knowledge transfer among generations to promote sustainability in health and culture. This program united youth with adult mentors in each community to learn cultural skills—hunting, trapping, food preparation, snowshoe-making, music, carving, art, and sewing—in order to assist both youth and adults in connecting together in a positive and health-promoting environment dedicated to knowledge transmission and cultural skills development and preservation. The *IlikKuset-Ilingannet!* project explored

Both the IMHACC and the *IlikKuset-Ilingannet!* projects were framed within an EcoHealth approach, emphasizing community engagement and leadership at all stages of the research, interdisciplinarity in thinking and approaches, a dedication of knowledge-to-action, a focus on research for social justice and action, a commitment to approaching sustainability issues from multiple perspectives, and an integration of multiple knowledge frameworks, epistemological, and ontological frameworks. These initiatives have enjoyed great support and success for a) expanding into new dimensions of climate change research in the North through adding a mental health lens; b) creating a community-designed and community-led mentorship program focused on providing cultural skills training to foster resilience and adaptive capacities to rapid climate change.

To view a video of the *IlikKuset-Ilingannet!* program, please visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAulcH3uXnc&list=UUyKlzPIGvz8r9rbh9HGEuOQ>

"I think this is a program that should definitely continue, because it's one where it's showing the value of cultural activities. And it's not always just learning, it's participating and feeling involved in something cultural. It's important. It's a mental health outlet. It's somewhere to go when maybe someone doesn't have somewhere to go. It's a place where you feel valued and you are respected and we're glad you're there and you're glad to be there and it should be something that continues." *IlikKuset-Ilingannet!* Participant.

Where does/should your action take place? Programs in Nuantsiavut, Labrador.

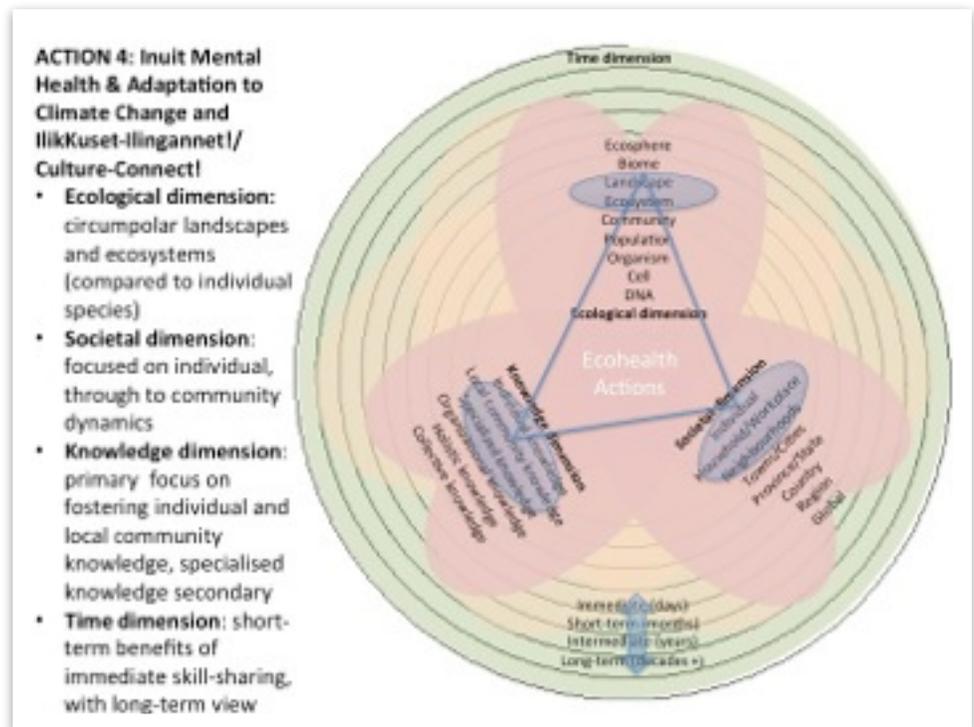
Who is/should be engaged?

<p>The following people were involved in in the project IMHACC program:</p>	<p>The following people were involved in in the project IlikKuset-Ilingannet! program:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Local Research Coordinators, 1 in each community (Nain, Hopedale, Postville, Makkovik, and Rigolet) • 5 community mayors • 120 interview participants • 25 video interview participants for a documentary film • 17 digital storytelling workshop participants • 1 Researcher/Evaluator for the Nunatsiavut Department of Health and Social Development, Goose Bay, Labrador • 1 professor/principal investigator from McGill and Cape Breton University • 1 Master's student from McGill University • 3 undergraduate research assistants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 Inuit youth from Nunatsiavut, Labrador, ages 15 to 25 years old (5 youth in Rigolet, 5 youth in Makkovik, and 5 youth in Postville) • 15 adult mentors from Nunatsiavut, Labrador, ages 35 years and older (5 mentors in Rigolet, 5 in Makkovik, 5 in Postville) • 3 Local Inuit Research Coordinators, one in each community • 3 community mayors • 1 Researcher/Evaluator for the Nunatsiavut Department of Health and Social Development, Goose Bay, Labrador • 1 Inuit film maker from Iqaluit, Nunavut, who worked with youth to create a film about the <i>IlikKuset-Ilingannet!</i> program • 1 professor/principal investigator from McGill and Cape Breton University • 1 Master's student from McGill University

What are the opportunities for collaboration/coalition/scaling up of the activity?

We are currently looking for ways to scale up and expand two parts of this work:

1. Continue to examine the connections between climate change and mental health in other Indigenous regions across the Canadian North, as well as throughout the Circumpolar World
2. Continue to support the *IlikKuset-Ilingannet!* program in Rigolet, Makkovik, and Postville, and work with other interested Indigenous communities to support this program in other locations.



We are also making connections with other Indigenous organizations and communities who are focusing on fostering youth resilience to social and environmental change and sustainability issues.

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