



Isuarsivik

# Ilagiitigut anngiangijaqatigiinnirq ilurqusivuttigut

AIP 2021 \$1 Million Laureate





## Isuarsivik Recovery Centre's Ilagiitigut anngiangijaqatigiinnirq ilurqusivuttigut won the AIP \$1 million prize in 2021.

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The **Arctic Inspiration Prize** is the largest annual prize in Canada. It inspires, enables, and celebrates the achievements of the people of the North, recognizing diverse teams with innovative projects in the fields of education; health and wellbeing; culture, arts and language; science and traditional knowledge; climate change; food security; and the economy.

**Nominator** Christine Barnard  
*Executive Director, ArcticNet*

**Team** George Kauki and Sarah May (*Team Leaders*), Mary Aitchison, Robert Fréchette, Wanda Gabriel, Elena Labranche, Samuel Lagacé, Siasi Mark

This report was compiled and created by the Qatalyst Research Group, with the help of Ilitaqsiniq, the project team, and AIP.

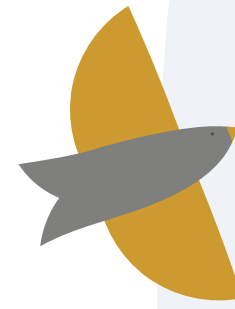
# Isuarsivik, The Recovery Centre of Nunavik

The Isuarsivik Regional Recovery Centre, located in Kuujuaq, focuses on the root causes of substance abuse and breaking the circle of trauma, preventing its transmission to the next generations, and fostering a better future for all of Nunavimmiut.

The new facility has 6 suites, including 12 individual rooms for a total of 22 adult beds and 10 additional beds for children.

The number of staff working in the new facility has grown to more than 60 staff, mostly from Nunavik.

Isuarsvik considers adults and children enrolled in its in-house recovery program as its “guests”.

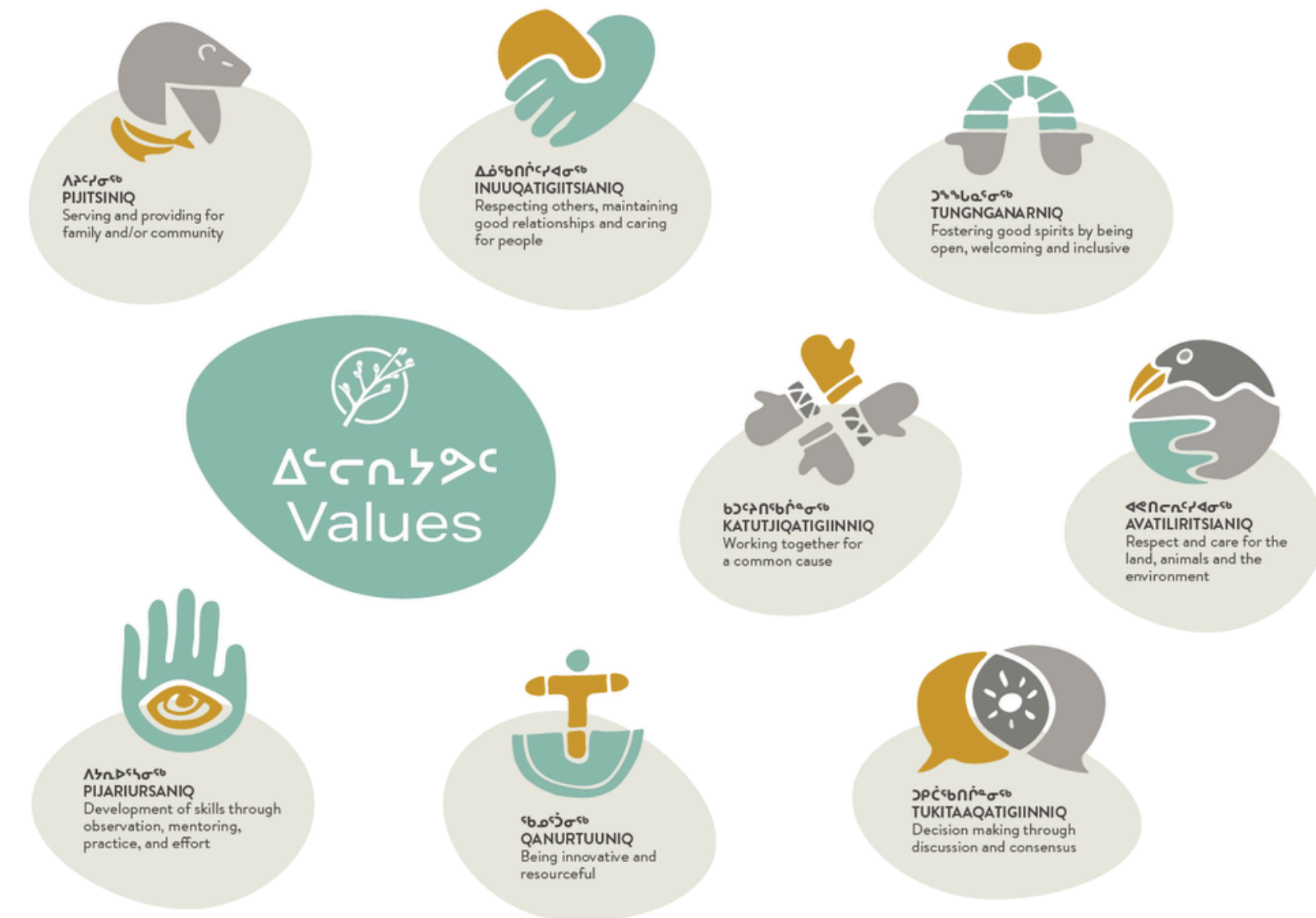


**Isuarsivik** is the only in-house substance use recovery centre in Quebec established by and for Inuit that offers culturally adapted and specific addiction services for Nunavimmiut.

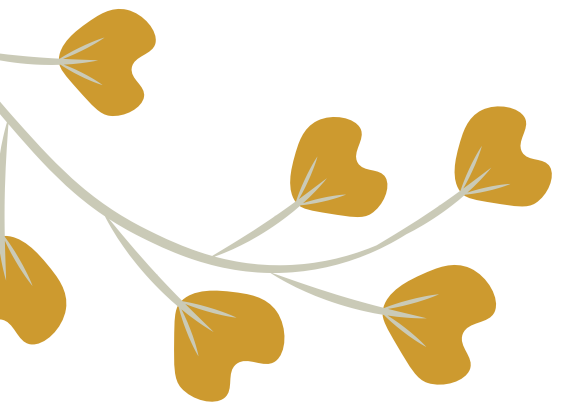
# Healing Through Culture

From the 8-week In-house Collective Recovery Program to the Continued Care Services and through consultation, counselling, support groups, and community services, the Recovery Centre of Nunavik help Nunavimmiut with various backgrounds and life experiences to recover from past traumas and overcome difficulties associated with substance use.

Over the years, Isuarsivik has gained excellent knowledge in healing through culture, with a care model that blends traditional Inuit values and the best of modern practices in addiction and trauma.

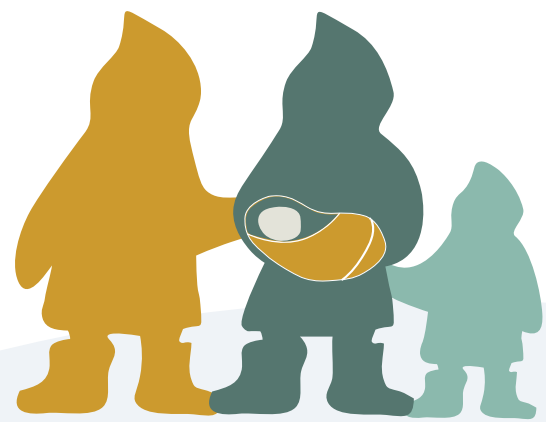






**60**

Days of in-house  
recovery program



## Family at the Heart of the Healing Process

Ilagiitigut anngiangijaqatigiinnirq ilurqusivuttigut is the only healing program in Quebec to provide support to families rather than just the person suffering from substance abuse. Guests can attend the program on their own or accompanied by family members or anyone they consider important to their healing journey like their children, partner, siblings, grandparents, or foster or extended family.

The family program is a 60-day stay at the new Isuarsivik facility and on the land surrounding Kuujjuaq, welcoming guests from all the communities in Nunavik. The new daycare and classroom ensure comprehensive support for the Youth accompanying their parent(s) or legal tutor(s), allowing school-aged children and teenagers to keep up with their studies through daily classes with the teaching staff.

Families are supported by elders, addiction counsellors, hunters, scholars and community members through Inuit values and culture and the connection to the land.



# Recovery Activity Workbook

With the help of AIP funding, a new Recovery Activity Workbook was designed to support participants in their 8-week Collective Recovery Program. This workbook serves as a comprehensive reference for clinical counselling activities, integrating modern clinical practices with the culture and values of Nunavik Inuit. It has been developed from extensive consultations and focus groups involving key partners in Nunavik. The workbook is available in both Inuktitut and English, ensuring accessibility and cultural relevance for the community.



## Healing Activities

- Connecting with Inuit values
- Developing good relationships with yourself and others
- Healing as a family and healthy parenting
- Healing as a couple with counselling
- Understanding trauma and intergenerational trauma
- Walking through grief, shame and guilt
- Digging up the roots of addiction and learning healthy coping skills
- Learning anger management
- Communicating in a healthy and positive way
- Healing through culture and traditional knowledge
- Healing through elders' counselling and intergenerational learning



# Portrait of Recovery

In addition to the Recovery Activity Workbook, the Program developed a Portrait of Recovery to support their guests' recovery journey. The Portrait of Recovery is an exclusive and private video featuring the healing journey of four Inuit of Nunavik. Guests are inspired and encouraged by their fellow Inuit who have faced and overcome similar challenges.





– Mary Aitchison

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[Click here to Watch the Video](#)

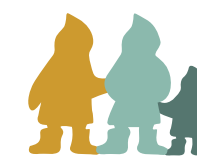
## Collective Care

Since the opening of the new centre in Spring 2023, 123 guests have participated in the programming, including 25 families.



**123**

Guests



**25**

Families

*“This initiative enhances programs as we try to heal our people through culture and family programs, being on the land, and having a clinical aspect. It's one of the first in Canada because we supply family therapy, house play, and family counseling with different age groups.”*

*Etua Snowball, Executive Director*



# Breaking the Cycle of Trauma

The program creates the opportunity to begin healing the family bonds that have been strained by trauma, substance use, and sometimes prolonged separation. These parents receive support in strengthening the connection with their children and learn to recognize and meet their children's needs. The approach is non-judgmental and adjusted to meet each family's goals and needs.

During their stay, the program offers:



Parenting support



Programming for pre-school  
and school-aged children



Family-oriented  
activities



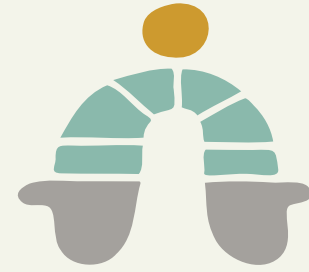
Couples counselling

**“ Our ancestors’ relentless perseverance brought us to modern days which should not simply be forgotten and remain to persevere with the same strength and courage. Intergenerational trauma is very real in our communities and often induces addiction. Individuals and families had ways to strengthen endurance, which needs to be practiced and applied to modern ways. -Etua Snowball, Executive Director**





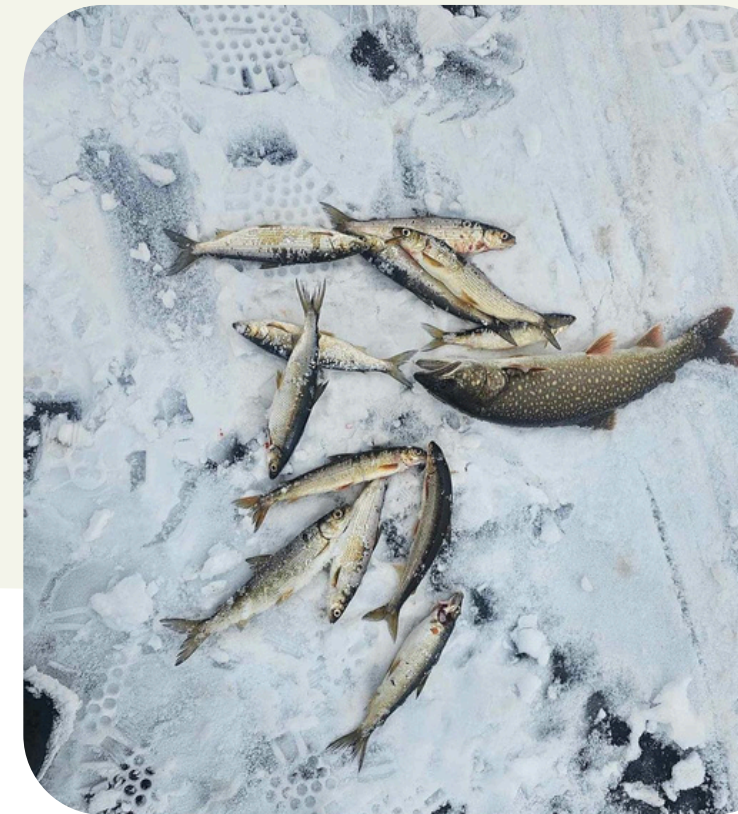
# Reclaiming the Culture



Culture is a powerful tool for grounding, belonging and purpose, and is a major protective factor against adversity and risk-taking.

For example, during their stay at Isuarsivik, guests will experience various cultural experiences according to the season. They may learn how to build Avvik and Innirvik, and how to use tools to clean, stretch and dry seal skin. These creations are inspired by the ancestors who have been using them for thousands of years as tools of survival that help Inuit support their families and communities and provide for community needs. In winter, guests will learn to build Qamutiit or Qajaq, or sew Atigik.

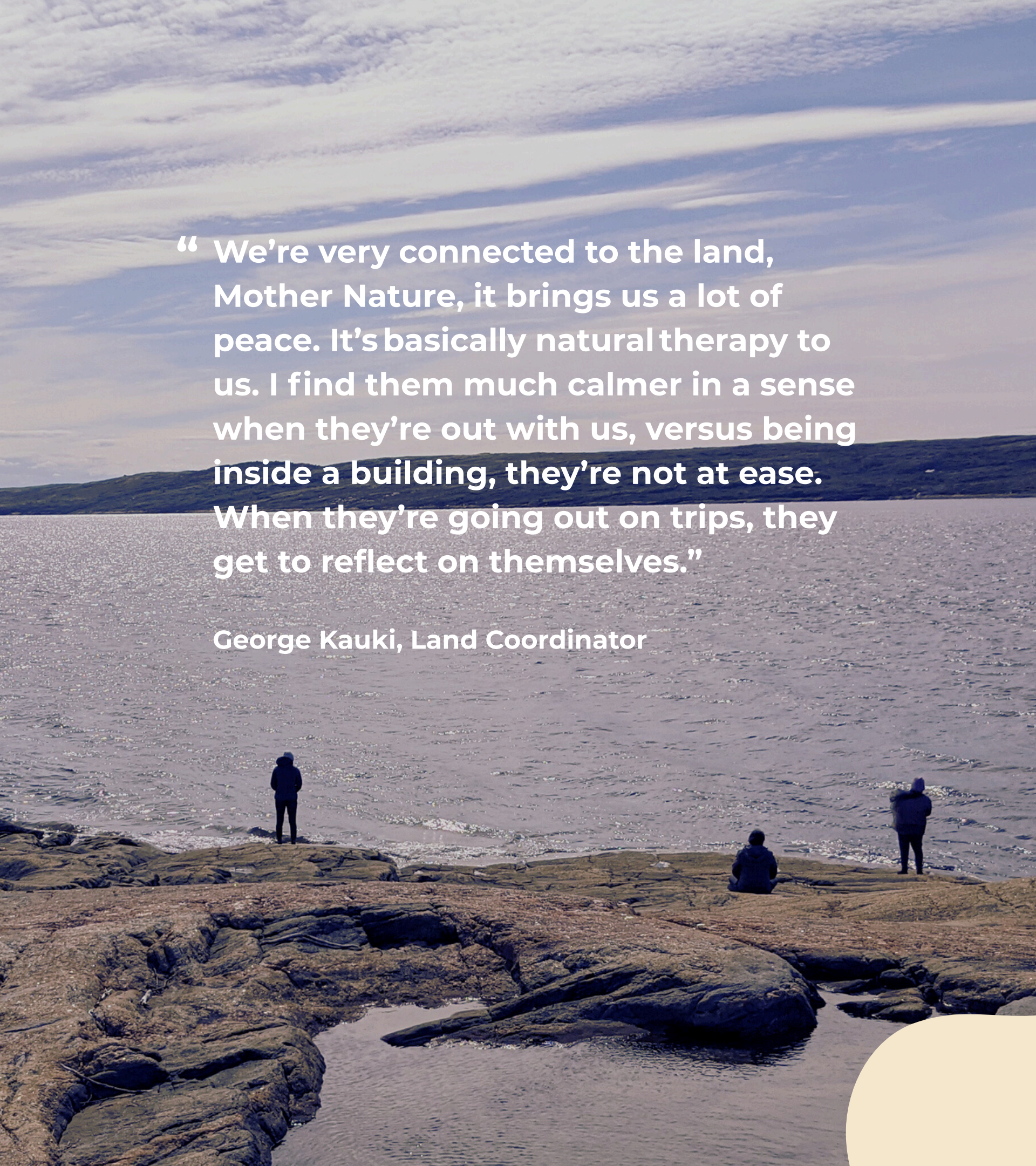
The value of having full-time Elder Advisors is fundamental as they play an essential role in establishing an intergenerational bridge by facilitating weekly Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Inuit traditional knowledge), and individual counselling sessions as well as mentoring the Centre's Cultural Counsellors.



**“People are becoming prouder to be who they are and eager to learn. Standing on their feet, being caregivers to their family, and having a healthy environment for their loved ones and themselves is what I want to see.”**

**Dolly Mesher, Inuit Values and Practices Manager**





**“ We’re very connected to the land, Mother Nature, it brings us a lot of peace. It’s basically natural therapy to us. I find them much calmer in a sense when they’re out with us, versus being inside a building, they’re not at ease. When they’re going out on trips, they get to reflect on themselves.”**

**George Kauki, Land Coordinator**

# Healing On The Land

Some healing activities on the land during the 60-day program:

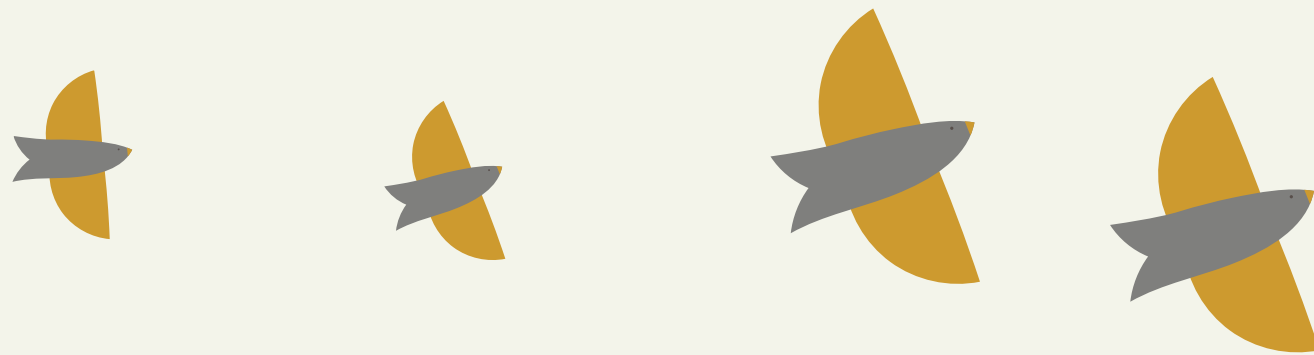
- A team of land guides facilitate outings regularly, 2–3 times a week, to traditional camps and fishing spots outside of Kuujjuaq
- 2 canoes and outboard to bring guests on the water, 10 all-terrain vehicles to get guests on the land, and 9 snowmobiles to accommodate guests’ land outings in the winter
- In 2023, Isuarsivik purchased a cabin at Navaata to host healing circles, picnics, have relaxing days, fish on the lake, hike, and cook
- 2 external Prospector Tents to host healing groups or one-on-one therapy sessions with the Recovery team





# Family Healing and Growing Together

During the first 3 cycles in the new Centre, numerous families have seen their relationship with their children improved, some of them mentioned that the recovery program has contributed to regained custody of their children after its completion.



**I realized during my stay here that I had stopped taking care of myself, physically and mentally. Instead, I was a mom first to my kids. From now on, I will take care of myself first so I can take good care of my kids too.”**

– Isuarsivik guest

**“Culturally, the impact on the program is very big. Every graduation, guests have the opportunity to speak. They say the cultural program is the top part of being here. They haven't been fishing or caught a fish in the last 10 years due to substance use. Even their children catching their first fish is significant. We use traditional practice to give them dignity, bringing food back to their community and family. It's very appreciated.”**

– Dolly Mesher, Inuit Values and Practices Manager

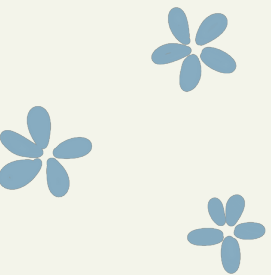


# Evolving Services

The programming at the Isuarsivik continues to grow and support other Inuit communities. In addition to an 8-week recovery program, continued care services have expanded to offer a range of services to communities.

For example:

- A new service for beneficiaries who are in detention has been created. Using a culturally sensitive approach to their situations, Care Counsellors provide one-on-one confidential counselling sessions focused on client's goals and assist them in their community reintegration.
- Every year in February, Isuasivik holds the Pingngupaa Challenge, a month-long event that allows participants to kickstart a lifestyle change and reflect on their relationship with alcohol and drugs. The Pingngupaa Challenge provides them with a chance to initiate a positive change towards sobriety or to simply decrease substance use.







## AIP Funding Impact

“The entire Isuarsivik team thanks the Arctic Inspiration Prize family for the Award. The \$1M Prize was central to increasing Isuarsivik’s profile of the collective healing approach to our new in-house recovery program. It came at the right time for us and marked a stepping stone to attract public and private funding to complement AIP funding as well as recruiting qualified and motivated workers. The sense of pride really supported the creation of a positive momentum for Isuarsivik and reduce barriers to its development. Nakurmiimarialuk!”



# Funding Partners

Isurasivik has many financial partners. In 2023, the Quebec government has committed \$9.1 million in operational funding over 3 years.

For a full list of partners and collaborators click [here](#):

## Major Financial Partners



## Financial Partners

