



ᑭᐱᑖᑦ (KAMAJIIT) PROGRAM



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(Kamajiit)  
Program  
won the  
2019 AIP  
\$450,000  
prize.

**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:** Michael Gordon,  
Director General, Kativik Regional Government

**Team:** Susan Aglukark (Team Leader), Andrew Gentile, Elizabeth Gordon, Hovak Johnston, Mikka Komaksiutiksak, Ulrike Komaksiutiksak, Jesse Tungilik

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

# THE KAMAJIIT PROGRAM "CARETAKER"

**The Kamajiit Program** was designed to address the root causes of high school dropout rates. The program evolved from a desire to understand and address the gaps in support that hinder students from completing their education.

The program is delivered by the Arctic Rose Foundation, a charitable organization that evolved from the Arctic Rose Project, founded by Inuk singer-songwriter Susan Aglukark in 2012.

The foundation works to support Northern Inuit, First Nations and Métis youth through the creation of Indigenous-led, arts-based after-school programs and other engaging cultural and creative projects.



# ARCTIC ROSE FOUNDATION TIMELINE

The foundation delivers two interconnected programs: Messy Book supports younger students in grades 5-12, while Kamajiit focuses on high school students and, more recently, some college students. The programs represent a continuation of support for students grounded in Inuit culture and linked through expressive art.

**2012**

Founded by Inuk singer-songwriter Susan Aglukark as the Arctic Rose Project

**2016**

Receives charitable status and becomes the Arctic Rose Foundation

**2018**

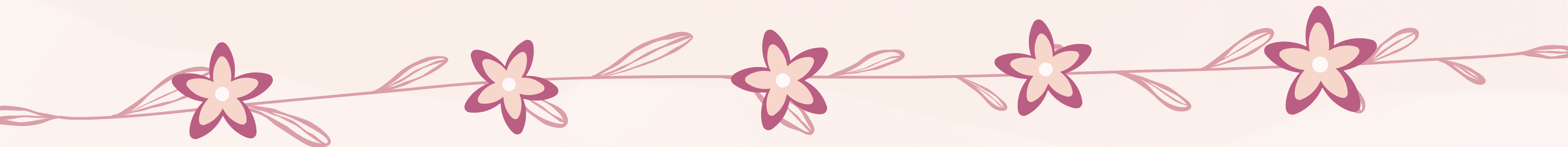
Launches the Messy Book Program

**2019**

Arctic Inspiration Prize Awarded  
Launch of Kamajiit Program

**2020**

The Arctic Rose Foundation is officially incorporated





# REBUILDING DIGNITY

The Kamajiit project became a dignity initiative focusing on meeting the basic needs of students by providing essential resources like food, clothing, and hygiene products, alongside hands-on creative activities rooted in Inuit culture. The project offers a wide range of supports to students, tailoring it to their individual needs to help them complete their education.



basic needs (healthy food, clothing, hygiene products)



mental health support through expressive arts



safe and quiet space for mindful focusing

THE KAMAJIIT PROGRAM HAS BEEN DELIVERED IN TWO COMMUNITIES: RANKIN INLET AND ARVIAT.

SINCE 2020, THE KAMAJIIT PROGRAM HAS HELPED OVER 60 YOUTH.



# ADDRESSING THE BASIC NEEDS

The daily morning program begins with an hour of self-care, during which youth have access to breakfast, showers, hygiene kits, and clean clothes. Students can also use the laundry facilities and supplies.

Other basic needs are met through the Program. For example, the Kamajiit assistant collaborated with a local seamstress and the local business, Eskimo Point Lumber Supplies (EPLS), to make Parkas for students. The program also delivered 40 food hampers during the end-of-year exam time to registered participants, grades 11 and 12.

*“We opened the breakfast model at 8:00 in the morning to see if it would support high school students. One participant came in panicked about an exam. I calmed her down, offered a quiet space to study, and made her toast and coffee. This act of kindness broke the ice, creating a safe emotional space. She passed her exam and was proud.”*

Susan Aglukark





# PROVIDING A SAFE SPACE

Many program participants come from overcrowded homes where they do not have their own space. Kamajiit provides students with a safe space for healthy emotional expression, where youth feel safe and are able to focus on reading, studying or just being themselves. Most importantly, the students thrive in an environment where they can exercise control over their project and creations.



*"I am okay now where I am".*

*"I like Arctic Rose program because it's a safe space for me to do my homework. I enjoy coming every time. It's a calm place for me to work. I feel like it is the only place I have to do homework without my children. I feel like I have more motivation to get work done here. It's nice and quiet."*

**Students**



# MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT THROUGH EXPRESSIVE ART

In the Kamajiit program, participants explore diverse mediums like sculpting, painting, and beadwork, guided by Inuit Guest Artists each month. All artistic processes offer a powerful way to express emotions, refine skills, and share stories.

Guest artists teach expressive arts sessions which help participants identify their emotions and sit with those emotions. The goal is to build emotional capacity through dance, painting, writing, music, etc.



“

I have seen first-hand the positive outcomes that occur when we use art to connect with our ancestral culture and identity.

SUSAN AGLUKARK



“It's not just about the painting; it's about the feelings you have when you're painting.”



# GUEST ARTISTS

The Kamajiit Program works with guest artists who travel to communities and support and inspire youth by teaching them performance arts and other culturally grounded artistic activities such as beading and fur crafting.



# C U L T U R A L   C O G N I Z A N T L Y   H O L D I N G   S P A C E

Being aware of the environment of crisis within our Inuit communities, and cognizant of the impact of the historical trauma, and utilizing this awareness when we facilitate in the ARF Rooms.

The programming is grounded in Inuit culture and language and adapted to the needs of youth and communities. The activities incorporate traditional language and help young people learn new words and new ways to talk about mental health. In the exploration of the language, youth learn how to speak about mental health in a way that is healing.

As youth reclaim their culture and are grounded in culture, they learn how to understand emotionally equitable space and be comfortable to express themselves. They are also learning basic communication skills and are able to communicate more boldly and confidently.







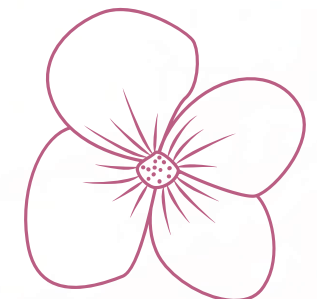
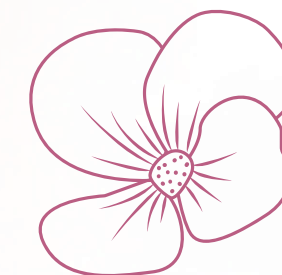
# EMPOWERING YOUNG LEADERS

All those engaging with Kamajiit program learn a wide range of personal and employment skills:

- Applying for funding
- Communication Skills
- Art skills
- Leadership skills
- Studying skills
- Technical skills
- Social Emotional awareness
- Being mindful
- Holding the space for themselves and others
- Emotional intelligence

*“I enjoy being a Kamajiit Youth Support Worker because I was one of the participants last year, and it helped me a lot to finish my homework in a quiet and safe space. I wanted to support students the same way the Kamajiit supported me during my studies.”*

**Kamajiit Youth Support Worker**



# INCREASED CONFIDENCE AND SENSE OF BELONGING

Kamajiit participants have increased confidence and a sense of belonging. The project helps students connect to their community, other young people and a network of support.

Through the Kamajiit Program in Arviat, youth had the incredible opportunity to learn fur crafting with Guest Artist Rachel Marin, guided by ARF team member Desiree and Kamajiit Youth Support Assistant HollyAnn. These hands-on experiences not only celebrate traditional skills but also instill hope, confidence, and cultural pride in every session.





# MENTORSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH LEADERS

Since 2020, the Kamajiit Program has hired **10 youth leaders** and trained them in holding space, cultural cognizance, basic mental health training, creative expression program training, job readiness skills, and leadership development skills. For example:

- In the first year of the program, Kamajiit hired, trained, and mentored three post-secondary students to support students at Maani Ulujuk High School in Rankin Inlet.
- In the second year, three high school students worked at Kamajiit to coordinate with the partner schools to plan and deliver the breakfast program, prepare and distribute self-care kits, connect with partners in the community, and mentor participants in the program.
- Kamajiit Assistants supported the program through on-site and virtual mentorship.





# PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATORS

In addition to Arctic Inspiration Prize, the Kamajiit Program is supported by Nunavut Arctic College, Community Learning Centre, Arviat and John Arnalukjuak Highschool, Arviat.



The program partners with guests artists such as Artist Rachel Marin, a skilled fur crafter who continues to support and inspire youth in their learning journey.

The hope is to continue to work with Arctic College to provide similar services, create quiet spaces and open conversations to respond to the needs of college students.

