

Umag

Men's Association
L'association des Hommes D'Inukjuak





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: Andy Moorhouse - *Vice-President, Economic Development*, Makivik Corporation

Team: Tommy Palliser (Team Leader), Allie Aculiaq, Eric Atagotaaluk, Michael Kasudluak, Pauloosie Kasudluak Jr., Rhoda Kokiapik, Eliassie Weetaluktuk

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

The Unaaq Men's Association

The association was created in 2001 in Inukjuak, Nunavik, and sought to address the root cause of suicide among young men. The association set out to address challenges such as loss of identity, low self-esteem, and limited connection to Inuit culture among Inuit men. The men's group was formed as a preventative initiative. The association is one of the few grassroots initiatives in Inukjuak which has been able to operate consistently, and is seen as a model for supporting communities across Nunavik.

"A not-for-profit community organization, a true inspiration for all Nunavik communities!!!" - George Delatolla (from Unaaq Men's Association on Facebook)

Comprehensive Traditional Programming

The objective of the project was to develop a comprehensive traditional training program for young men in Inukjuak to promote cultural knowledge, skills, and well-being.

Key activities included:

- Local announcement of AIP prize and development of a plan (Feb. 2018)
- Hiring and training a new General Manager (May 2018)
- Research on Inuit tools and equipment at Avataq Cultural Institute (June 2018)
- Hiring of camera crew and preparation of video training program (June 2018)
- Launch preparations for the traditional program (Fall/Winter 2018)

Seasonal Programming

Programming is specific to each season, following a traditional activities guide. While different activities happen throughout the year, there is always a strong focus on **personal development and relationship skills**.

Every year, there are **around 300 to 400+ young** men that participated in various activities led by seasonal guides. Between **5 to 10 Elders** join to share and teach their knowledge and skills.

Summer students (about 6-8 each year) also worked with the association and learn to make qajaq, manage summer camps, and help younger kids take part in activities and programming.

In addition to traditional programming, young men also participate in Wilderness First Aid Training.





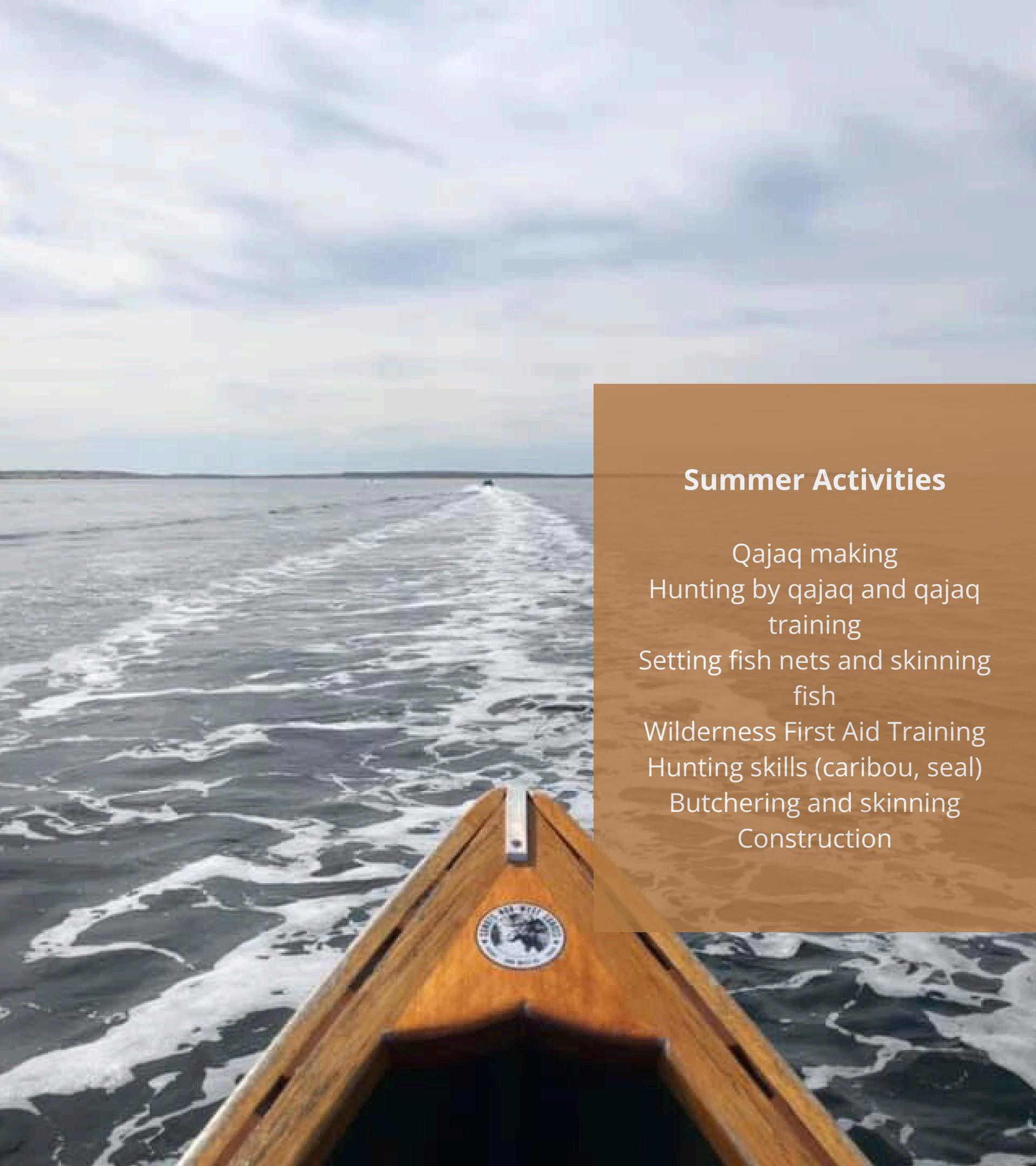
Winter Activities

Igloo-building
Hunting (seal, ptarmigan, caribou, polar bear, etc.)
Navigation
Sea-ice conditions analysis
Dog team raising and handling
Traditional carpentry (qamutik, dog team sled, unaaq, etc.)
Butchering and skinning



Spring Activities

Fish net making and repair
Hunting and fishing skills (goose, ice fishing, seal on ice)
Butchering and skinning animals
Seal skinning to make a traditional float (Avataq)



Summer Activities

Qajaq making
Hunting by qajaq and qajaq training
Setting fish nets and skinning fish
Wilderness First Aid Training
Hunting skills (caribou, seal)
Butchering and skinning
Construction



Fall Activities

Traditional carpentry
Hunting and navigation
Butchering and skinning

Training Program & Resources

With over **50 traditional tools and equipment** used by Inuit men (hunters), the association wanted to preserve this information and share it with future generations.

- **Educational Videos:** How-to guides on making traditional tools and equipment, hunting techniques, survival skills. Filmed by a trained camera crew.
- **Comprehensive Toolkits:** Detailed descriptions and instructions for making traditional tools and materials needed for each tool, including sourcing and preparation methods. Usage guidelines have been developed and step by step instructions and illustrations for traditional skills.
- **Workshops and Classes:** Seasonal workshops include hands-on training sessions aligned with seasonal activities. They include direct mentorship and teaching from experienced elders.



Increased Knowledge of Inuit Culture & Connection with Elders

Participants increase their cultural knowledge and intergenerational bonds by working with elders who teach traditional skills and share stories. Some skills include:

- **Hunting:** Techniques for hunting various animals, using traditional tools.
- **Navigation:** Reading natural signs, using traditional navigation methods.
- **Surviving on the Land:** Building shelters, finding food and water, first aid.
- **Carpentry:** Making traditional Inuit tools and equipment like sleds and kayaks

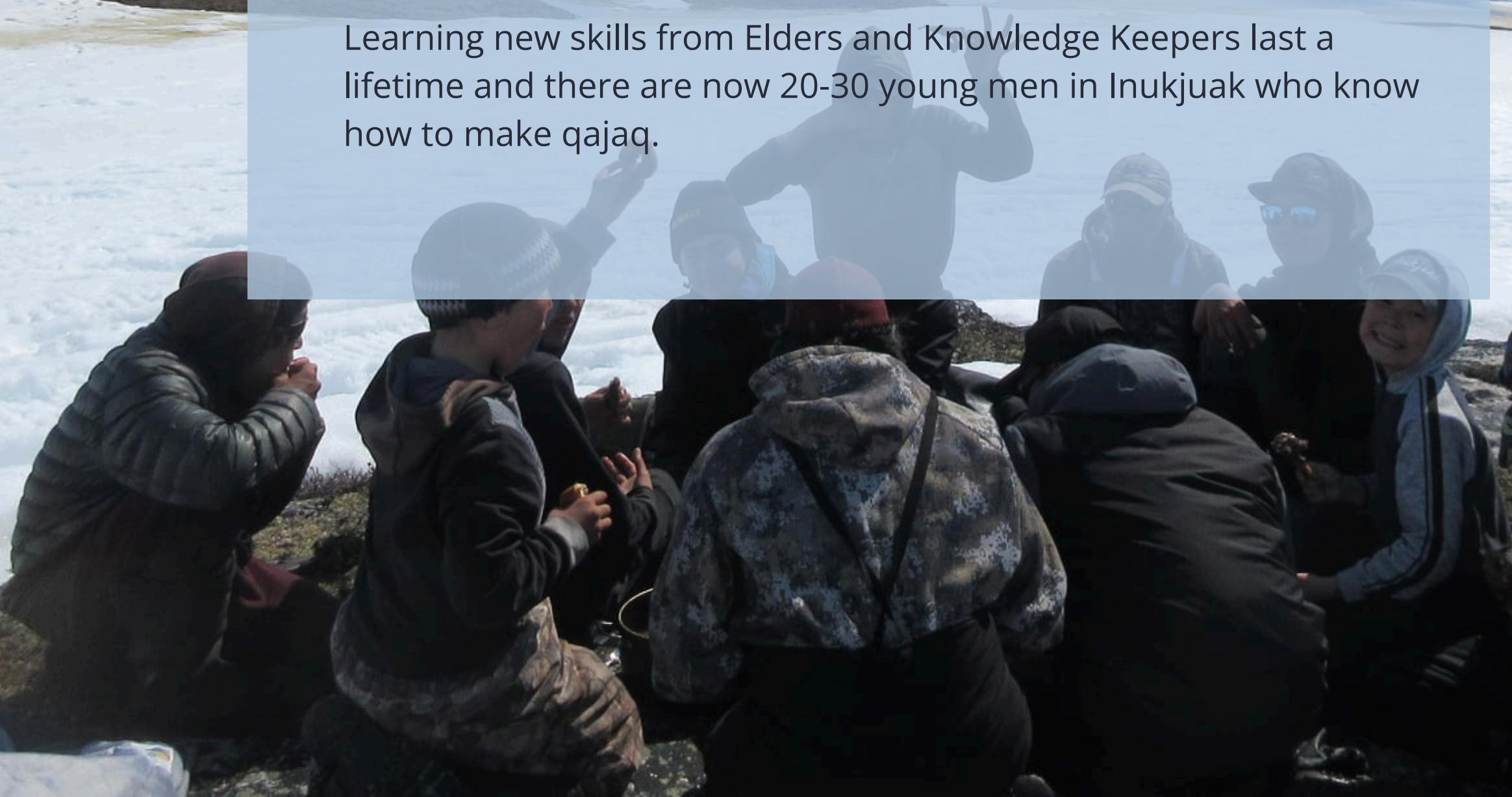
"We matched them with elders who were caring and wanted to pass down the knowledge. Some of the elders have never stepped into a school, and they don't speak English, we are very lucky to have those elders." - Tommy Palliser



Youth Involved in Traditional Activities & a healthier Lifestyle

Youth who spend time learning on the land with the Unaaq Men's Association have improved physical and mental health, adopt healthier lifestyles, and learn self-reliance.

Learning new skills from Elders and Knowledge Keepers last a lifetime and there are now 20-30 young men in Inukjuak who know how to make qajaq.



Higher Self-Esteem, Independence, & Pride

Participants experience enhanced self-worth and confidence by mastering practical and traditional skills, developing leadership capabilities, and connecting to the land and others. The personal achievements and increased cultural knowledge and participation resulted in increased pride in the culture, traditions and their contributions to the communities.



Decreased Involvement in Violence, & Substance Use

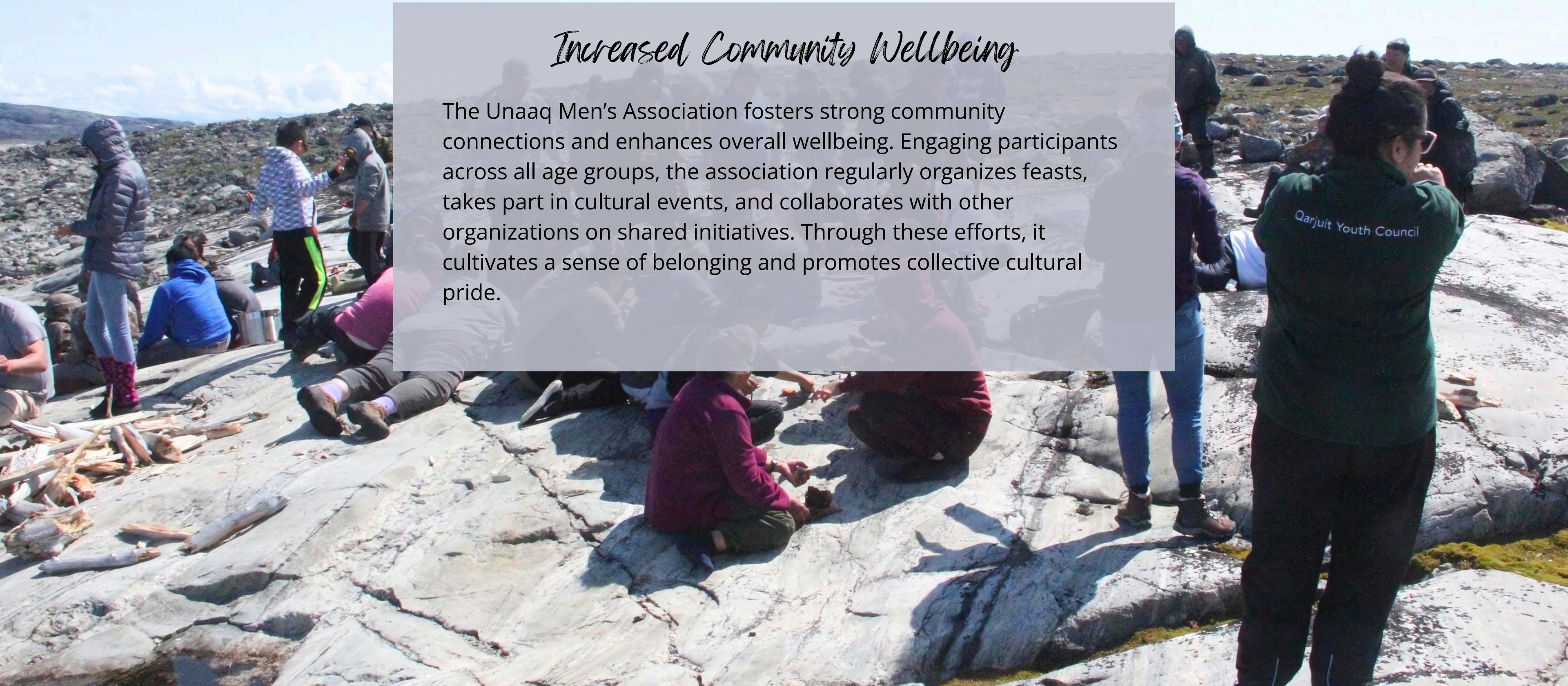
Community reports show a decrease in criminal behaviour among young men who participated in the Unaaq Men's Association training and traditional activities.

Structured traditional programs and mentorship by Elders help to increase self-worth through skill-building and by providing healthy alternative activities and coping mechanisms for individuals to channel their energy into.

Substance abuse often leads to criminal behavior and harms not only the individual, but also their family and the broader community. In contrast, when young men engage in traditional practices, they improve their mental health and wellbeing, contribute to their families, and strengthen their communities. It's a completely different path—one where they're not struggling with addiction, but instead helping themselves and others by harvesting and sharing fresh country food.

Increased Community Wellbeing

The Unaaq Men's Association fosters strong community connections and enhances overall wellbeing. Engaging participants across all age groups, the association regularly organizes feasts, takes part in cultural events, and collaborates with other organizations on shared initiatives. Through these efforts, it cultivates a sense of belonging and promotes collective cultural pride.



Development and Support of Traditional Economy

Participants are taught to skin animals like wolves, seals, and polar bears. Some use polar bear skins for pants and boots, some make seal skin mittens or hats, and individuals can sell additional pelts and skins to generate income.



Unaaq Men's Association Video



Supporting Future Leaders

Youth who originally took part in Unaaq Men's Association activities as participants are now leading programs and teaching others.

"We see the young men taking ownership of the programs they coordinate themselves sometimes. We like to see that, and now that we have new board members on the association" (Tommy Palliser)