

NUNAVIK BACKGROUND

Population: Approximately 12,000-14,000 (nearly 11,000 of indigenous, predominantly Inuit descent) - estimates based on StatsCan/Nunavik in Figures – Duhaime et al (2015)

Nunavik (“great land” in Inuttitut) includes 14 fly-in villages around Quebec’s Northern coast.



Source: Makivik Corporation

Demographic profile: Over 90% of Inuit in the region speak Inuttitut as their first language. The estimated life expectancy as of 2008 (most recent available data) was estimated at 66 years (relative to 80 for the Province of Quebec). Approximately 60% of the adult population have not completed any secondary, while approximately 7% have completed a University undergraduate degree or higher (compared to 26% for Canada). Source: 2011 Canadian Census/Nunavik in Figures – Duhaime et al (2015)

Socio-political context: current day Nunavik was largely defined by the 1975 *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement* which led to the incorporation of the region’s 14 Northern Villages (local municipalities), as well as the Inuit owned Makivik Corporation and the Kativik Regional Government.

Excerpt from a news article from CBC News, by Catou MacKinnon, Posted March 21, 2016:

Nunavik village grieving 5 youth suicides in 3 months

The mayor of Kuujuaq has a message for everyone, young and old in his community. "It will come to pass," Tunu Napartuk said. "We forget, especially when it's more difficult. We have a tendency to think we'll be in this state, in this pain, forever."

Since December, five young people in the village of 2,500 in Nunavik, the Inuit territory in northern Quebec, have taken their own lives. There have also been several attempted suicides. Napartuk, 43, is the father of six young children. He held three year old Lucina on his lap as he talked about what it's been like since the first death.

"At first, it was very difficult," he said. "There was a lot of frustration — of course, everyone was in pain. But there was also a lot of frustration and some anger, really, it wasn't easy at all." Napartuk says that has changed and people have started pulling together. Suicide prevention workers, elders, health workers and teachers are supporting the grieving families. They are also trying to encourage young people to speak out.

"My sense is there is a little bit more hope in the community, and it makes things a whole lot easier," Napartuk said it's not necessary to declare a state of emergency, as the Pimicikamak Cree Nation in Manitoba did after the deaths of six people since Dec. 12, 2015.

"The community has been regrouping really well, and trying to find ways to help each other, find support within and we have the resources," Napartuk said.

CIRQINIQ – THE SOCIAL CIRCUS PROGRAM

What is the Cirqiniq Program? *Cirqiniq* is a combination of the English word *circus* and the Inuktitut word *siqiniq* (sun). Essentially, Cirqiniq is a social circus program integrating Inuit culture and the arts. The Cirqiniq Program was created in 2009 pursuant to a five-year agreement between the Kativik Regional Government (KRG) and the Cirque du Monde program implemented by Cirque du Soleil for vulnerable youth. More specifically, the Cirqiniq Program is implemented by the KRG Recreation Department with the advisory support of Cirque du Monde.



Social Mission: Through circus arts, the Cirqiniq Program gives youth an opportunity to express themselves and explore their boundaries. It appeals to a wide range of interests, teaching different forms of performance and visual arts, including juggling, acrobatics, dance, music, clowning and set design. By fostering Inuit culture, self-esteem, a sense of belonging, creative expression and perseverance, the Cirqiniq Program promotes positive lifestyle choices among participants and meaningful contributions to their communities. The Program targets all youth, including those who no longer attend school.

Autonomy and Sustained Inuit Cultural Heritage: Since its inception, the Cirqiniq Program has been constantly evolving in order to be able to offer Nunavik youth stimulating workshops that incorporate emerging trends, Inuit storytelling and legends.

With a view to developing independent circus arts programs in every community, seasoned senior instructors from the Cirque du Soleil visit the communities to provide training to junior instructors. The junior instructors will thus be enabled to operate their local program without

the continual presence of senior instructors, who are freed to deliver assistance for other purposes.

In 2015, the KRG will conduct visits to all 14 Nunavik communities to re-assess their continued interest in the Cirqiniq Program and their capacities. As well, a new mandate aimed at more fully integrating elements of traditional Inuit culture is now at the heart of all the activities of the Cirqiniq Program.

Cirqiniq Program 2015 - Main Projects

Winter and Fall Tours: Visits will be conducted to all 14 Nunavik communities to deliver junior-instructor workshops and organize training for youth circus artists aged 13 and older.

Igloodik Exchange: Seven junior instructors, escorted by two senior instructors, will travel to Igloodik, where they will create a performance for Igloodimmiut in cooperation with the Artcirq Program.

Cirqiniq Summer Camp: The sixth annual Cirqiniq Summer Camp will be organized this year at Kangiqsualujjuaq from July 21 to 27. Between 40 and 50 youth from across Nunavik will participate in group workshops and training to develop their creativity and improve their artistic skills. Throughout the week-long camp, participants will contribute to the creation of a grand finale performance. Gatherings will also be organized to talk about suicide prevention, alcohol and drug addiction, and healthy eating.



Photo: Don Murray, CIRQINIQ Summer Camp, 2013

Partnership - A Prerequisite to the Success of the Cirqiniq Program: The importance of the support received from various regional and local organizations cannot be understated. This support makes the Cirqiniq Program, and its focus on Nunavik youth, sustainable. Listed below are the partners of the Cirqiniq Program and brief descriptions of their generous contributions.

Cirque du Monde (Cirque du Soleil): In addition to sharing their social-intervention expertise, the social circus instructors possess a thorough knowledge of technical skills, safety rules and teaching methods suited to the context and participants. The projects are adapted to each community and a positive influence in the lives of the youth participants.

Air Inuit: Air Inuit offers 30% discounts on all flights for the purpose of the Cirqiniq Program.

Ungava Tulattavik Health Centre: In 2011, the Cirqiniq Program and the Ungava Tulattavik Health Centre partnered so that youth participants would have access to social-worker support. Ungava Tulattavik social workers attend Cirqiniq activities to provide support and direct responses for youth participants, as required.

Kativik School Board: Nunavik schools are committed to the Cirqiniq Program, providing after-class use of school gymnasiums at no charge for Cirqiniq Program activities. As well, school administrators regularly invite circus instructors to take part in physical education classes. Cirqiniq Program staff maintain regular contact with school directors to make sure scheduled Cirqiniq activities do not interfere with the school calendar and to keep teaching staff informed of developments.

Northern Villages: Local recreation coordinators assist Cirqiniq junior instructors throughout workshops and with preparations for performances.

Avataq Cultural Institute: Theatre instructors and facilitators of the Avataq Cultural Institute participated for the first time in 2014 in the Cirqiniq Summer Camp. This role will continue to grow as the Cirqiniq Program integrates Inuit culture more and more into workshops and performances in the communities. The Avataq Cultural Institute has built a solid reputation in Canada and abroad as a cultural leader. Avataq's mission is to ensure that Nunavik Inuit culture continues to develop so that future generations may continue to benefit from the rich heritage and wisdom transmitted by their ancestors.

Cirqiniq background information source: Kativik Regional Government Website – www.krq.ca