



St. Therese Health Centre Kugaaruk Nunavut XOB 1 KO

Phone (867) 769-6441

Fax (867) 769-6059

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As you may be aware, we in Kugaaruk have experienced three recent suicides two of whom were young people and one who was only 12 years of age. The suicide rate in Nunavut is more than 11 times that of the rest of Canada according to Health Canada and 83% of those are under the age of 30. As well the incidence of ETOH and drugs increase the possibility of impulsively committing an act that would not be done had the person been straight or sober. Every single Inuit is related to a family member who has committed suicide and many have suffered the loss of two, three or four family members over the years. White of the Globe and Mail stated "...Inuit males aged 15 to 24 have a suicide rate 40 times that of their peers in the rest of Canada" (1 April, 2011). According to the Nunavut Suicide Prevention Strategy, in 2009 alone R.C.M.P. responded to 983 occurrences where persons either threatened or attempted suicide (p. 5) in Iqaluit alone. Furthermore, statistics from General Hospital in Iqaluit, show that among people age 20-29, that almost half the injury hospitalizations are the results of suicide attempts (p. 5). These statistics are extremely troubling and demand careful cultural exploration.

Blueprint for Life is a worlds leading company that uses "Hip Hop as a community development tool and as a model for alternative education and healing" (HipHopForLife.ca, para 1). Known as a program that is the "most significant youth engagement program in 20 years" by northern politicians this program has been described as a "model for the future" by Canada's Governor General (Sustaining a program section, para, 1). This program proudly identifies itself of having the ability to reach many youth in our society who have dropped out of school or find themselves disengaged from their communities. A program that not only engages youth in a physical way but to engage the minds so as to become excited about life and learning new things is one which we would highly recommend. This mentality is transferable to not only learning within the school system but in life in general.

Blue Print workshops are structured around themes such as Bullying, Abuse, Suicide, Healthy Living, Drugs and Alcohol and these subjects were openly discussed between participants and group leaders in a way that is invitational and non-threatening. I saw youth who had have been known as 'quiet' open up in ways that were poignant and meaningful. One youth in particular has made a "360 degree turn" since the Blue Print experience in Kugaaruk.

Without a doubt the Blue Print for Life program should be offered to ALL Nunavut communities. I am inundated with requests from the youth on a daily basis asking "...can we get Blue Print to come back next year?" Using professional and strict boundaries with firm expectations of which all youth were familiar; it opened up an arena whereby the youth felt safe enough to share their concerns, troubles and experiences in a way that I had never seen done previously in Nunavut and allowed them to grow emotionally and psychologically. They learned many important lessons and it is evident they are a happier and much more well rounded group of kids. The 85+ participants put on a show that Kugaaruk had never previously watched and we have Steve and his crew to thank. We very emphatically support your work!

Sincerely,

Dianne Cameron
RPN, ADPN, CTSS, SEP, MACP
Mental Health Consultant
St. Therese Health Centre