



Arctic Council Workshop

March 2017 – Draft Program

Background

The suicide rate among Inuit communities across the Arctic is among the highest in the world. In Canada, the suicide rate among Inuit regions ranges from five to 25 times higher than the Canadian average. Facing these alarming numbers, Nunavut Premier Peter Taptuna declared suicide a public health crisis in the territory on October 25, 2015. In early 2016, the Government of Nunavut released a one-year rapid action plan for suicide prevention in Nunavut, entitled *Resiliency Within: An action plan for suicide prevention in Nunavut 2016-2017*. At a national level, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) has developed the National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy which aims to coordinate actions to prevent suicide among Inuit. In parallel to these territorial and national responses to this crisis, international cooperation is key to address this important issue across the Arctic states.

“Reducing the Incidence of Suicide in Indigenous Groups - Strengths United through Networks” or RISING SUN is an initiative designed to build upon the Canadian-initiated mental wellness project of 2013-2015. Whereas the Canadian-initiated project focused on best practices from the literature and community-based interventions, RISING SUN is compiling a common, science-based set of outcomes and measures to evaluate the key correlates associated with suicide prevention interventions, across Arctic states, including Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States.

Common metrics, developed through an iterative engagement with Permanent Participants, community leaders, and mental health experts, will facilitate data sharing and pooling, evaluation, and interpretation of interventions across service systems. These metrics will aid health workers to better serve the needs of their communities while helping policy makers measure progress, evaluate the scale up of interventions, and identify impediments to implementation and cultural adaptability challenges. Arriving at common metrics and reporting systems is especially important in the Arctic, where the vast geography, number of remote communities, and breadth of cultural diversity, pose challenges for systematic approaches to suicide prevention.

The project will result in a toolkit of common outcomes and measures for suicide prevention efforts, applicable across the Arctic, which could expand Arctic states’ capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of evidence-based interventions to combat suicide. A final report synthesizing results from the described activities will be delivered by the end of the U.S. chairmanship in the spring of 2017, highlighting the work done through this project and laying out options for coordinated implementation of the toolkit and evaluation of efforts to scale-up effective interventions during future Arctic Council chairmanships, at the discretion of Arctic Council member states and their respective mental health stakeholders.

Workshop objectives

The Workshop has two specific goals. The first goal is to review both the Canadian and international communities’ collective understanding of suicide that will ultimately lead to a clear and common definition of suicide determinants in the Arctic. It will also allow participants to assess activities of the past five years of evidence gathering and strategies (starting with the Nuuk Conference and up to the more recent development of the RISING SUN Initiative and ITK’s National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy).

The second goal of the Workshop is to jointly determine a format and dissemination strategy that will maximize opportunities for cooperative implementation of the RISING SUN toolkit. This will take into account current activities underway in the Arctic Council countries that are related to building resilience and preventing suicide. This will also lead to the development of a path forward for future activities under the Arctic Council leadership of Finland’s Chairmanship (2017-2019). A Workshop report will be developed and disseminated following the event.



Workshop Program

Frobisher Inn, Astro Hill Complex, Iqaluit, NU
March 1 and 2, 2017

DAY 1 – March 1

- 8:00** Registration opens
- 8:30** Meet and greet; coffee and light breakfast
- 9:00** Opening Ceremony
- 9:15** Welcome and Opening Remarks
- Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC)
 - Nunavut's Minister of Health
 - Senior Arctic Official of Canada
 - RISING SUN
- 9:45** Strategy on Mental Wellness Presentation
- 10:15** Keynote Speaker
- 10:45** **Networking break**
- 11:00** Youth's Perspective - Presentation from National Inuit Youth Council
- 11:30** Panel discussion - Review of evidence and progress in the past five years from the Nuuk Conference to Rising Sun - What we've learned:
- Nuuk Conference
 - Canadian Chairmanship
 - National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy
- 12:30** **Lunch**
- 1:30** Breakout session
Focus: Broad review of challenges and gaps towards determining a common understanding of suicide and identifying commonalities (*1h discussion with facilitators, 30 min for key messages development*)
- 3:00** **Networking break**
- 3:15** Report back on discussions and general conclusions from Day 1
- 3:45** Closing remarks
- 4:00** End of Day 1



DAY 2 – March 2

8:30 Coffee and light breakfast

9:00 Opening Remarks

9:10 Community leader testimonial

9:20 Arctic Council's Permanent Participants perspective

- Aleut International Association (AIA)
- Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC)
- Gwich'in Council International (GCI)
- Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC)
- Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON)
- Saami Council (SC)

10:30 **Networking break**

10:45 Progress update on the RISING SUN Initiative and its components: Delphi methodology, Meetings outcomes & Toolkit

12:00 **Lunch**

1:00 Breakout Session

Focus: RISING SUN / family and community level interventions / relationships; how to reconcile quantitative and indigenous measures and identifying future research areas.

2:00 Reporting in plenary on breakout sessions (Moderators)

2:30 **Networking break**

2:45 Way forward: Opportunity & Challenges

3:15 Finland representatives - Chairmanship 2017-2019

3:30 Closing Remarks

3:45 Closing Ceremony

4:00 End of workshop