



# The **YOUNG** **Hunters** Cultural Mentoring Program

ARVIAT AQQIUMAVVIK SOCIETY

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# Cultural Mentoring Program for Young Adults

## Philosophy

Mentoring is an integral part of Inuit culture. Approaches to mentoring could take many forms.

Often parents would secure for their child a sanajii or a person who agreed to take on the role of “maker”. That person would provide guidance and training to the child in the specific area that the parents sought. This brought the child into very close relationship with his/her “maker” and ensured that the best teaching and advice would be available to him/her.

Children were also closely connected through family kinship ties. Often Aunts and Uncles had the biggest responsibilities for training/advising youth. They also may have had these special relationships with members of the avvaq family – relatives of the person they were named after would take on responsibility to ensure the youth received all the skills and knowledge they also had to offer. If the avvaq was still living then their relationship to a child would be very close and special advice and teaching would result as well.

Apprenticeship relationships were very common and served an important purpose. The role and hoped for outcomes of these kinds of relationship is outlined in extensive conversation with Louis Angalik.

## Pilimmaksarniq

### The Master/Apprenticeship Relationship

A conversation with Louis Angalik

For Inuit, the process of pilimmaksarniq implies that every child will become skilled in a variety of ways. However, each child also has special abilities and talents which s/he can contribute, at a level of expertise, to improving the common good. Both the general process of pilimmaksarniq and the specific end goal of mastery in a specific area relied very significantly on the strength of relationship. The terms for this are pilimmaksaijuq- the teaching by an expert, and pilimmaksakgaujuq - the learning in order to develop expertise. The goal was pisukititauniluktuq- being able to go on your own and continue to learn by yourself through experience.

Initially, laying the foundation for all learners starts with what is placed into the sack or puuq in the heart of the child. Every child must be grounded in the beliefs (maligait) and know how to live by those beliefs (through the values). Learning how to live the beliefs requires the same process as learning how to master a skill. The process is grounded in a loving relationship that shares the common goals of making a human being. It is understood by Inuit that learning is only relevant when it is actively applied in life. In this way, making mistakes is encouraged. Children will be given warnings about what to expect, but they are not overly protected from the outcomes of their actions. Mistakes are made in order to achieve greater understanding. Parents were told not to give help immediately but to expect a child to struggle with something so that s/he would develop independence and determination.

Children were expected to reflect on the mistake they had made and to come up with their own answers. This ability to reflect, analyze and come to conclusions for improved action developed critical thinking skills and gave children confidence to take initiative in life. An adult would not offer

correction for a task until the child asked, "Am I doing this right?" This created an awareness that the learning was as relevant as the teaching and that the child could be actively self-directed in his/her learning. It also meant that a child was at a point of understanding that s/he knew what s/he needed to ask. This developed deep thinking skills and promoted self-awareness and self-assessment. This leads a child to become motivated to seek solutions and also to be aware of his/her true self- understanding the strengths and abilities and limitation each might possess. A person who can self-assess in this way, makes more progress. The goal is to become more directed in your learning path as you focus on filling the gaps in your ability levels. You learn to find the answers within yourself- building self-reliance.

Deep thinking is also being able to use memory and to apply it with imagination. For example, it is not enough to remember cloud patterns and what happened to the weather the last time you saw those clouds. Knowing what happened the last time, you must imagine what might happen this time, taking into consideration all the elements that you observe now. In order to be accurate at predicting events, you must have a well-developed sense of imagination. Imagination generates the greatest ability and is essential to deep thinking.

A natural extension of this process of developing critical thinking is explained in the term "iqqaqqaukkaringniq"- being innovative. To a certain extent, the ability to be innovative is innate, but the process of pilimmakgaujuq would enhance and enable this development. Necessity creates demand and opportunity to try a new response. An individual with the confidence to try something new, does so through the continual promotion of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. For those children who grow up in families where resources are plentiful, there may be a tendency to become complacent about taking action. The expectations for becoming highly skilled and self-reliant may not be as strongly emphasized. In some families, for this reason, the expectation to share and contribute to the common good is stressed in order to create a need

for children to strive beyond the immediate place of comfort. The act of struggling or striving without giving up—persistence and determination—is thought to result in resilience in the face of hardships. These attitudes are extremely highly valued in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. It is exactly this personal struggle to achieve that is motivating and the degree to which it is applied by an individual that in reality marks his/her success in life. To not have tried is viewed as the most significant failure by Inuit social standards.

In describing this, Louis Angalik recalls the story of the Woman Who Married a Dog and gave birth to dog children. When her father threatens to harm her children, out of love for them, she sets them off in a kamik out to sea. As she is sending them off, the words she leaves with them are these: “Difficulties come upon us all. To prevent yourself from going into hardship, always try. No matter what you might encounter, never stop trying.” He went on to say that this was the source of hope in life—hope comes from our own efforts to improve our situation.

Becoming successful with a high level of mastery is dependent on the strength with which we apply pilimmaksarniq. The habits, attitudes and characteristics which are developed and enhanced in early childhood prepare a child to be the person s/he will become. To be pilimmaksimajuq each individual must be equipped with all the necessary skills and to have been provided with multiple opportunities to practice and develop these abilities throughout life. Parents and mentors need to be intentional in the areas of sharing information, instilling values and beliefs, in setting high expectations and providing real learning opportunities for children. Every person who becomes pilimmaksimajuq, in essence is a role model for others at all times and will always be recognized as being successful and a person to emulate. (Aug. 2011)

Task teams (piliriqatigiingniq) were also opportunities for mentoring. Louis Angalik also described how the best learning opportunity was through group tasks. He used building a qamutik as an example of how a

group consisting of all ages would work on a common task. Younger members were expected to watch carefully and to assist in whatever ways they were capable. Even by just passing materials or cleaning up was a helpful effort that would bring them thanks and recognition of effort. In this way every child can feel part of the team and have a sense of shared accomplishment. Learning by watching others and doing small tasks continues to be a very effective way of gaining skills. This model is one that is used both in the YHP and in the new Uvajuqatsiangningniq mentoring project.

## **Uvajuqatsiangningniq Mentoring Program**

### **Description of the program**

The Uvajuqatsiangningniq Mentoring Program developed out of the Young Hunters Program. Older youth still wanted to be able to participate in YHP, but we were also aware of many young adults who were generally disengaged in the community and could benefit from a skill-based program. We were also aware that their disengagement was often a result of having meaningful relationships in the community and being isolated from their main peer group. The mentoring approach has been developed with a view to healing, reconnecting and building capacity around cultural identity.

As an off shoot of YHP we organized a series of short workshops for young adults, linking them with Elders and expert/mentors. There were week-long workshops in ulu and qamutik making, a 2 week-long workshop in way-finding/mapping and a 10-day land trip. This initial approach was very successful. We followed up by canvassing young adults about the kinds of skills they wished to learn about and then designing workshops to meet those needs. Every workshop includes instruction in cultural expectations for living a good life.

## Engagement of target participants

An important end goal of our projects has always been the engagement and training of youth because it is our youth who will make sure the efforts we make now are sustainable into the future. In order to attract youth we have to make the opportunity attractive. There are several ways to do this.

- 1.** In designing our project proposals we build in funded opportunities for youth employment. Most youth become involved in order to have a job or skills that are marketable. These jobs are usually offered through the summer period, but also as after school work. Often the youth who are hired will continue to work with us after school to host “clubs” for younger kids. This ensures that the activities continue, but also allows youth to share the skills they have been developing with the next generation. Our after school programs have included Youth Monitors, Young Hunters and youth media/technology work.
- 2.** Programs that we offer to older youth, such as the Uvajuqatsiangningniq Mentoring Program provides opportunities for young adults to work with mentors in projects that interest them. The skills gained through these workshop often have income potential attached to them. This is an incentive that attracts participants. We can explain the financial potential of knife/tool making, running a trapline, basic construction or meat preparation. The unadvertised benefits are usually the greatest – reconnection with key supporters in the community and the formation of peer support networks with are healthy and positive.

## Getting Started

### Ideas for program implementation

The most important starting point is consultation. Find ways to bring your target group of young adults together to talk about their needs and interests. Often this is an incentive activity that involves food and social opportunities. Invitations can be made over community media, but one-to-one invitation have the best results. If you build it into your budget, you can offer gift cards for those who attend. This event is to gather information and ideas for the design of your program so we feel it is an activity that participation can be compensated for. It is important to get people in the door.

Once we collect ideas it is important to keep the young adults engaged. If a workshop is being planned, have those who were suggesting it help with the design, the format, the scheduling, suggesting the mentors who they would like to work with. This kind of collaboration will always result in better participation.

We offer short courses on the various skill topics, but is expected that participants will pursue their interest and build skills often staying connected with their mentors. If we offer a second workshop, it is a good idea to bring back some of the most committed people from the first workshop to assist. This gives them opportunity to use and build skills, but also a way of giving back and helping others. It gives them recognition for their efforts and helps to build their reputation and confidence. In your budget you can include small stipends for this kind of work.

## **The role of purpose, reputation and contribution**

In our young adult program the key objectives are around re-engagement in positive and self-sustaining ways. Healing is inherent in the approach because relationship-building with Elders and mentors always involves advice giving, counselling and encouraging. In colonized populations, the need for healing is about reconnecting with cultural beliefs to promote positive sense of belonging, identity and purpose. IQ principles are used in the delivery of skill-based workshops and so the expectations and thinking that is grounded in those beliefs is always being shared in the workshop environment.

Inuit are expected to become highly skilled. This opportunity is provided in these workshops. However, the belief extends to the responsibility that one must use those skills to improve the lives of others. It is through the contribution of one's abilities that one gains reputation and a respected place in community. This is critical to the lives of young adults today. Beyond the workshop itself, planning must be given to how we create and support opportunities for young adults to then contribute their new skills. Beyond using these skills as income generating, there must also be opportunities to share skills and knowledge in ways that go beyond self-gratification and actually improve the lives of others. This should be part of the initial planning for your mentorship program, but it is also an opportunity you should take with participants to engage them in how they see ways to "give back" as they complete each workshop. The aspect of giving back should be an expectation for successful graduates from every workshop.

## **Planning a program proposal and budget**

The program plan and budget are difficult because you really want to tailor each program to the ideas that are generated by the participants themselves. Activities will certainly vary and so will the cost of those activities. For example, a workshop in learning to train a dog team make not have many associated costs other than mentor salaries, whereas small engine repair or skin sewing will be more expensive workshops to run since they would involve facility spaces and many material costs as well. It is advisable in your workshop budget costs to average on the high side of costs. Whenever possible fund in-kind sources to help reduce costs. For example, if you do a sewing program that will provide warm clothing to children through Income Support they may be able to assist with material costs. Local businesses are also often helpful, especially if they see advantage for the community as a whole. It is also a good idea to ask the participants to help each other by running fund raising activities to assist with the workshop delivery. In Arviat we constructed a cabin for the Hunters and Trappers Organization. This was an opportunity to teach basic construction methods. We used the money from that project to pay for additional materials to build a second cabin which was raffled off in the community. All the income from the raffle was then used in the program. Participants learned important skills, they can point to an HTO cabin they take pride in contributing for community use and they feel good about the funds raised to keep the mentoring opportunities going. These are considerations that should be part of the planning for long term sustainability for a mentoring program.

## Continuation & Longevity

### Program evaluation

In order to keep funding coming, you need to be able to show results. From the outset create ways to gather the information that will allow you to describe the activities, challenges and successes. We find it important to log all the activities. This log is a very general description of what was done, who attended, specific skills addressed and any outcomes from that session. Being able to report participants' attendance rates and the number of products produced and the skills being taught are important. In addition, you may want to use skill checklist to show how participants progressed.

*See appendix for example of a Skill Checklist*

You should also consider exit surveys that will help both with reporting on the satisfaction of participants and mentors and also on the recommendations for program improvement.

*See appendix for example of Surveys*

### Program funding

There are many good sources of funding for young adult/elder projects. The Departments of Culture & Heritage and Family Services have many possible options. Although these funding programs are limited, if you apply to several sources you will be able to pull together enough funding for your project.

Other good sources of funding are through Regional Inuit Organization and NTI which each have funding opportunities for programs that focus on cultural skills and young adult/elder projects.

*See appendix for Funding Programs list*

# Appendix

## Young Hunter Skill Checklist:

Name:

Date:

IQ Information				
Not yet. Always <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Usually		Listens to Elders
Not yet. Always <input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	Usually <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		Shows interest in stories and remembers details
Not yet. Always <input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	Usually <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		Knows the rules and expectations of IQ
Not yet. Always <input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	Usually <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		Identifies the significance and applies values
Not yet. Always <input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	Usually <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		Follows the IQ principles
Not yet. Always <input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	Usually <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		Has a strong sense of cultural identity
Not yet. Always <input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	Usually <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		Takes pride in Inuit ways
Not yet. Always <input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	Usually <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		Respects cultural values and beliefs

## YOUNG HUNTERS PROGRAM EVALUATION

### SURVEY - OLDER ADOLESCENT & ADULT

AGE: \_\_\_\_\_ GENDER (MAN, WOMAN, OTHER): \_\_\_\_\_

YEAR YOU WERE IN THE PROGRAM: \_\_\_\_\_

We want to learn how you feel about the Young Hunters Program. For each question, please choose ONE answer (Not at all, A little bit, Quite a bit, A lot) to tell us what happened because of the program.

1. I made stronger relationships through Young Hunters:

Not at all	A little bit	Quite a bit	A lot
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2. I now understand what it means to be a hunter:

Not at all	A little bit	Quite a bit	A lot
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3. I feel confident about hunting on my own:

Not at all	A little bit	Quite a bit	A lot
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4. I am now trying to live by Inuit values:

Not at all	A little bit	Quite a bit	A lot
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5. I made strong connections with the leaders and Elders in Young Hunters:

Not at all	A little bit	Quite a bit	A lot
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6. I feel happier being a Young Hunter:

Not at all	A little bit	Quite a bit	A lot
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7. I am making more plans for my life because of Young Hunters:

Not at all	A little bit	Quite a bit	A lot
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8. I do more things with my family because of Young Hunters:

# Funding Sources

## **Climate Change and Health Adaptation - Climate Change Preparedness North**

[www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1481305554936/1481305574833#h2-3](http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1481305554936/1481305574833#h2-3)

## **Indigenous Community Based Climate Monitoring**

[www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/150728370447/1509728402247](http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/150728370447/1509728402247)

## **Makigiaqta**

[www.makigiaqta.com/](http://www.makigiaqta.com/)

## **Indigenous Guardians**

[www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-funding/indigenous-guardians-pilot-program.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-funding/indigenous-guardians-pilot-program.html)

## **Nunavut General Monitoring Plan**

[www.ngmp.ca](http://www.ngmp.ca)

## **Government of Nunavut, Department of the Environment**

[www.gov.nu.ca/environment](http://www.gov.nu.ca/environment)

## **Movember Foundation**

[ca.movember.com/](http://ca.movember.com/)

## **Polar Knowledge Canada**

[www.canada.ca/en/polarknowledge/fundingforresearchers.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/polarknowledge/fundingforresearchers.html)

# Aqqiumavvik Society Information

## **Website:**

[www.aqqiumavvik.com](http://www.aqqiumavvik.com)

## **Youtube site:**

Arviat Wellness Centre

[www.youtube.com/channel/UCr43SHQyVwUIBTH\\_tRneNUw](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCr43SHQyVwUIBTH_tRneNUw)

## **Facebook sites:**

Aqqiumavvik Society & Arviat Harvesters

[www.facebook.com/Aqqiumavvik](http://www.facebook.com/Aqqiumavvik)

[www.facebook.com/Arviat-Harvesters-369988313197234/](http://www.facebook.com/Arviat-Harvesters-369988313197234/)

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