

# SMART CITIES CHALLENGE

Community, Connectivity, and Digital Access  
for Suicide Prevention in Nunavut



## Project Overview

This proposal is a collaborative effort to implement protective and preventive measures to reduce the risk of suicide in Nunavut through a decentralized and community-based digital health and wellness platform.

This platform will leverage digital access and connectivity to increase the availability and accessibility of mental health resources and support systems to all Nunavummiut with a focus on integrating materials in Inuktitut.

## Key Initiatives

- **te(a)ch** is a free, accessible, sustainable, and culturally responsive K-12 computer science curriculum for Indigenous youth in Nunavut with digital content and materials that are reflective of Inuit culture.
- **Makerspaces** in each community provide inclusive, safe, and nurturing environments for youth, while also acting as hubs for digital education and experimentation that apply the principles of S.T.E.A.M.
- **Mesh Networks** and local intranets will be deployed in each community to provide affordable, safe, democratic, and Inuit-led communications that mobilize electronic services for mental health and wellness and share resources.
- **Digital Art Therapy Applications** involve expanding the platforms for Art Therapy by incorporate digital forms of self-expression and communication.
- **The Wellness Chat:** is a community chat application system that will enhance peer support groups and contribute to maintaining communications between individuals through general and private chat channels, as well as through local wellness resources and referrals to qualified health and wellness experts.
- **Gamified Interventions:** feature opportunities for playing and making games through computer-based mechanics created specifically by and for Inuit, incorporating a framework of cultural safety and trauma-informed care.
- **211 Nunavut App:** will centralize medical information that is accessible in Inuktitut - as well as local resources and options for treatments.

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## Next Steps

Our priorities lie in meaningfully engaging with community residents and piloting the installation of a mesh network and makerspace in one community.

### Consultation:

- The development of a marketing campaign geared to requesting input on each specific activity and the platform as a whole by Inuit living in each of Nunavut's 25 communities. This campaign will be accessible in Inuktitut, and will be conducted on the ground through community presence, as well as online.
- Community consultation through the organization of youth-centred informational and engagement sessions, focus groups, interviews, surveys and other forms of discussion and feedback
- Institutional consultation through networks that include Councils, Mayors, Senior Administrative Officer, Economic Development Officers, Community Wellness Officers, Government Liaison Officers, Regional Inuit Organizations, and Community Liaison Officers.

**Mesh Network Pilot:** The piloting and scoping of a mesh network in one Nunavut community will be useful for determining scale and size of the network in response to the geographical and environmental conditions.

**Makerspace Pilot:** We will pilot a Makerspace in one Nunavut community to provide safe and nurturing learning spaces for youth, deliver the te(a)ch curriculum and house supernodes and access points to the local mesh network.

## Background

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, a national organization that represents and advances the rights and interests of Inuit in Canada states that “the elevated rate of suicide among Inuit in Canada is the most urgent



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EMBRACE LIFE COUNCIL  
CONSEIL SAISIS LA VIE



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challenge facing our people and it demands a national response<sup>1</sup>. In Nunavut, the suicide rate is ten times the national average. To face this crisis, the Nunavut Association of Municipalities is partnering with Pinnguaq Association, Embrace Life Council, and the Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre (QHRC), with support from Northwestel to produce a Inuit-specific digital mental health platform alongside permanent infrastructure in each of Nunavut's 25 communities.

This proposal is aligned with, and meant to complement the action items from, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami's National Inuit Suicide Prevention Plan, and from Inuusivut Anninaqtuq (United For Life), Nunavut's Suicide Prevention Action Plan for 2017-2022.

This platform will ensure a continuum of mental wellness support through digital technologies guided by the principles of a trauma-informed approach, recognizing the histories of colonial violence and social inequities for Indigenous communities in Canada. It will contribute to closing the gap on education, employment, and health disparities as called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the Qikiqtani Truth Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, [National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy](#). Page 4. Accessed April 16th, 2018

