



Hope and Resilience

Culture in the Prevention of Suicide:
Protective Factors from Suicide in
American Indian and Alaska Native
Communities

Objectives

- How is Indigenous suicide different?
 - How culture matters
- What are protective factors from suicide?
 - How are protective factors different from risk?
- What does research say on the role of in protection from suicide for American Indian and Alaska Native youth?
- How could these research findings be applied locally?

Indigenous suicide is different Culture matters

- Key findings in the social epidemiology of American Indian suicide

Suicide rates by ethnicity and age group -- United States, 2006-2010

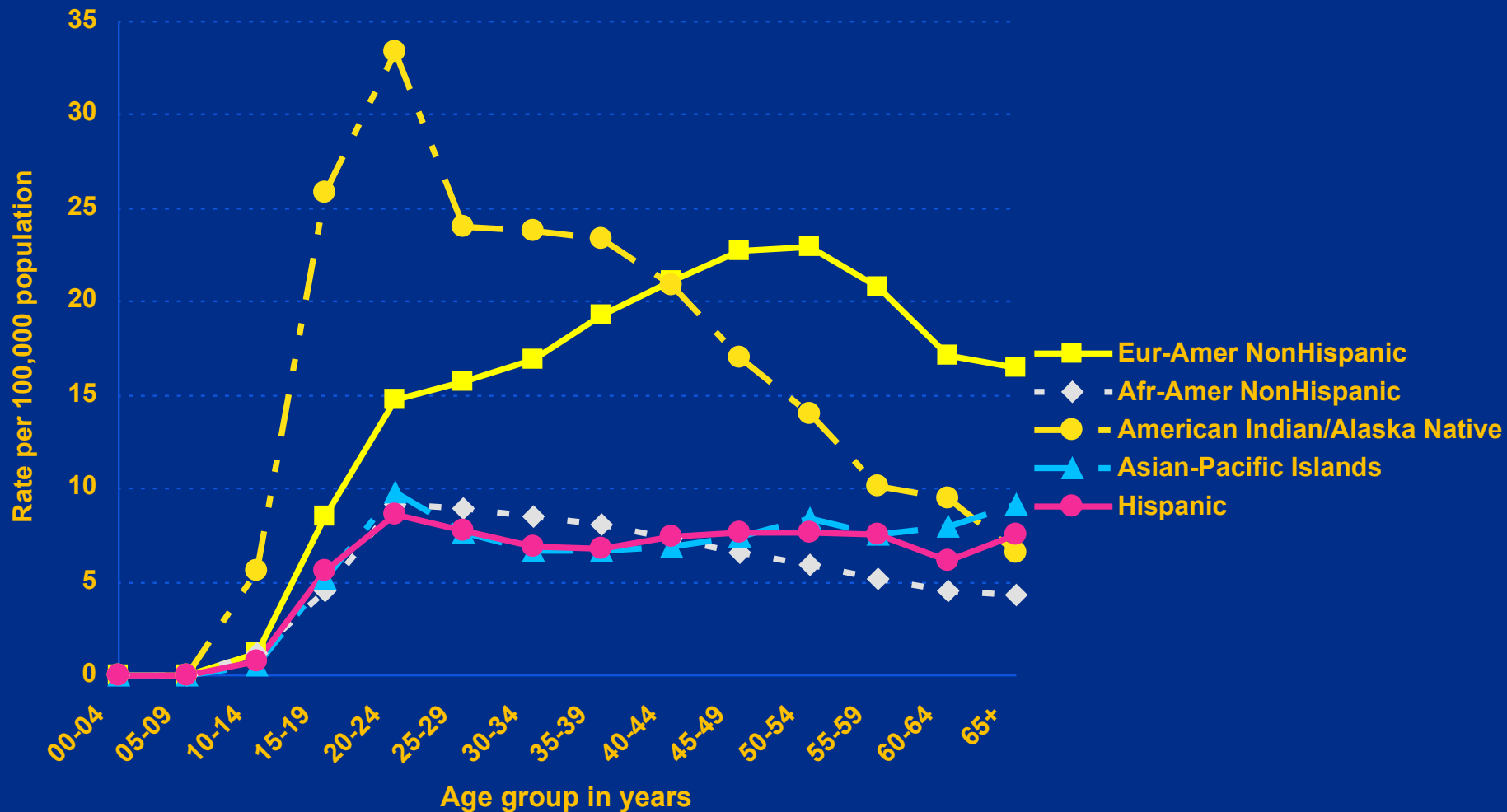
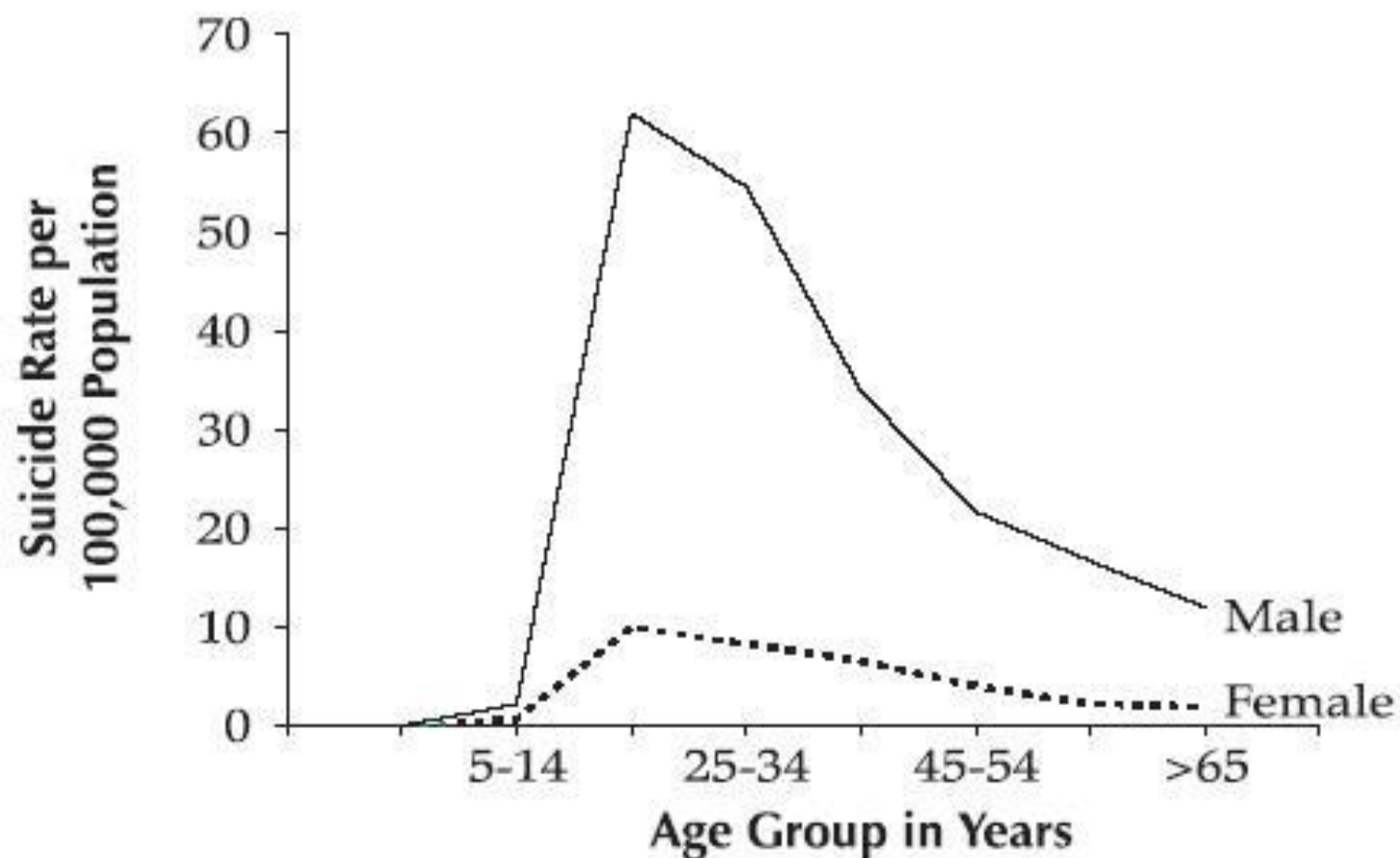


Figure 12. Suicide Rates, by Age Group and Sex—Native Americans,* 1979-1992



*Residing in IHS service areas.
Source: IHS mortality tapes.

Culture Matters

- Highest rate group for suicide in US
 - White males over age 84
- Suicide rates for American Indian elders are low
- Overall rates for American Indians are high, and in particular for youth
 - Leading cause of death for American Indian youth age 15-24
 - Young American Indian males at particular risk for suicide
 - American Indian females attempt more

Culture Matters

- The story of American Indian suicide is more complex than overall suicide rates
 - The story includes community strengths and resilience

Tribal differences in the prevalence of thoughts of suicide

Table 1. Prevalence of suicidal behaviors in the three samples.

	Suicidal ideation			Suicide attempts		
	Northern Plains (<i>n</i> = 1,560) <i>n</i> (%)	Southwest (<i>n</i> = 1,343) <i>n</i> (%)	NCS (<i>n</i> = 5,872) <i>n</i> (%)	Northern Plains (<i>n</i> = 1,560) <i>n</i> (%)	Southwest (<i>n</i> = 1,343) <i>n</i> (%)	NCS (<i>n</i> = 5,872) <i>n</i> (%)
<i>n</i> (%)	109 (6.8) ^a	62 (5.0)	1,008 (12.9)	140 (8.7)	62 (5.0)	366 (4.6)
OR-1 (99% CI)	0.49 [0.36, 0.66]*	0.36 [0.25, 0.51]*	1.00	1.96 [1.45, 2.65]*	1.08 [0.74, 1.58]	1.00
OR-2 (99% CI)	1.38 [0.89, 2.13]	1.00	–	1.82 [1.20, 2.75]*	1.00	–

Note. All *ns* are unweighted values, all percentages are weighted values.

OR-1 = unadjusted odds ratio, reference group is the NCS sample; OR-2 = unadjusted odds ratio, reference group is the Southwest tribe; NCS = National Comorbidity Survey; CI = confidence interval.

**p* < .01.

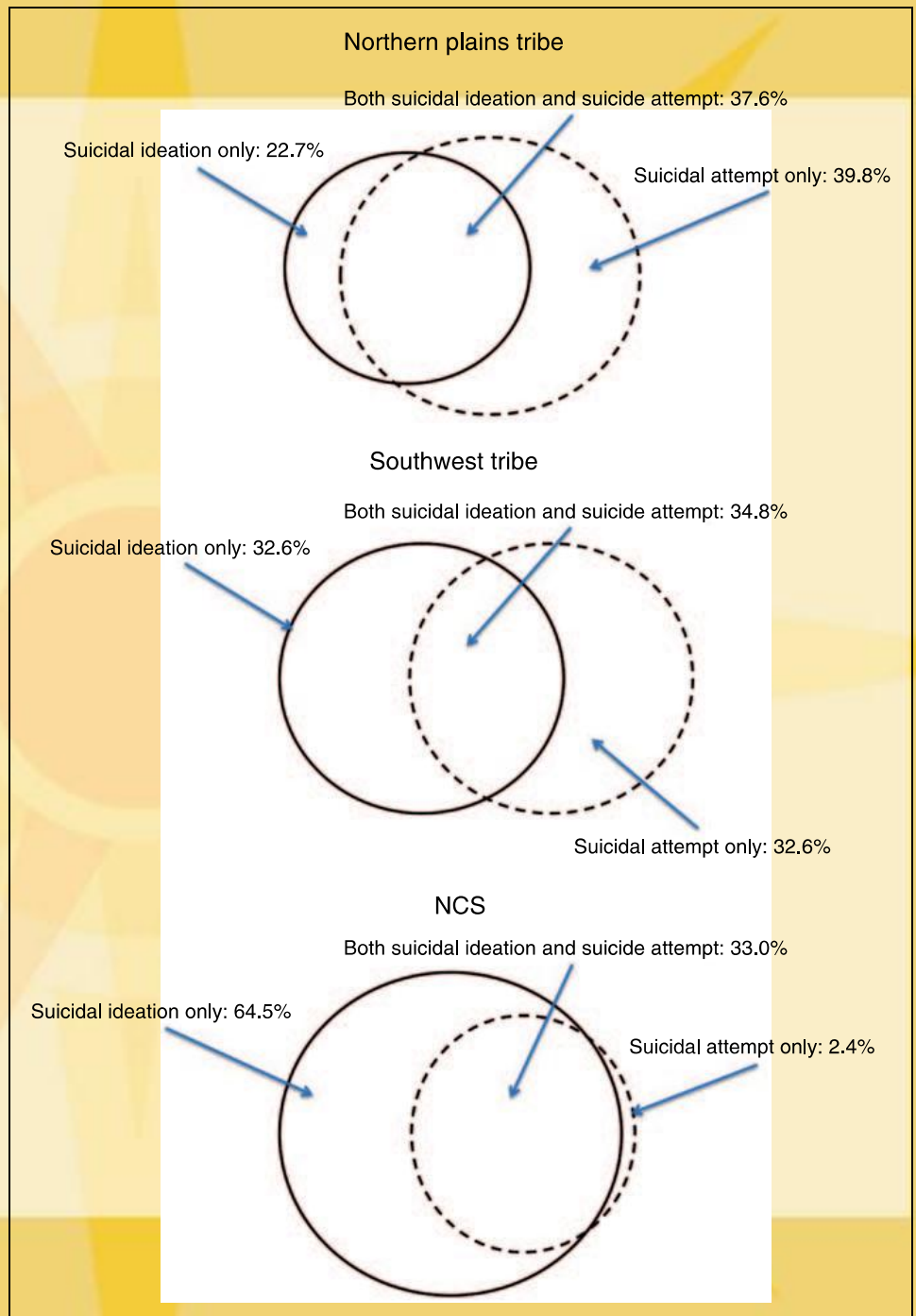
^aThe percentage reported indicates that 6.8% of individuals in the Northern Plains reported suicidal ideation.

How is Indigenous suicide different?

Suicide attempts without suicidal ideation were more common in two American Indian samples

Data were from the baseline nationally representative National Comorbidity Survey (NCS; $n = 5,877$) and the representative American Indian Service Utilization, Psychiatric Epidemiology, Risk and Protective Factors Project (AI-SUPERPFP; $n = 3,084$).

Bolton, Elias, Enns, Sareen, Beals, Novins, The Swampy Cree Suicide Prevention Team, The AISUPERPFP Team (2014)



Indigenous suicide is different

- American Indians from these tribes less likely to have suicidal thoughts
- Northern Plains more likely to have attempted suicide compared to the U.S. general population
- Southwest tribe similar to the U.S. general population

Indigenous suicide is different

- The suicide risk continuum model
 - Proposed from research with US general population samples
 - Suicidal ideation is an important precursor to suicide attempt
 - Not supported for American Indian people in existing research

Protective Factors vs Risk Factors

- Risk Factors

- Factors associated with

- Higher likelihood
- Greater severity
- Longer duration

- of a problem

- Protective Factors

- Improve people's resistance to risk factors and to problems/disorder

Prevention of Suicide among American Indian Youth

- The most powerful risk factor for suicide attempt was having a friend who attempted or completed suicide
 - Suicide exposure of a friend or acquaintance associated with new-onset of major depression

Prevention of Suicide among American Indian Youth

- Increasing 3 protective factors was more effective at reducing the probability of a suicide attempt than decreasing risk factors
 - discussing problems with friends or family
 - emotional health
 - family connectedness
- Presence of protective factors decreased the risk of a suicide attempt among adolescents without risk factors

Protective Factors:

A Strengths Based Approach to Prevention

- Protective Factors
 - do not simply reduce risk
 - Moderate risk
 - Provide a strengths based framework for research and prevention
 - Provide a positive framework for working with communities confronting a painful issue

Protective Factors:

A Strengths Based Approach to Prevention

- Highlight research that shows important protective factors that are culture specific
- Traditional culture as prevention in tribal communities
- A health and well-being promotion approach to suicide prevention



Graphic by Benny Boyd

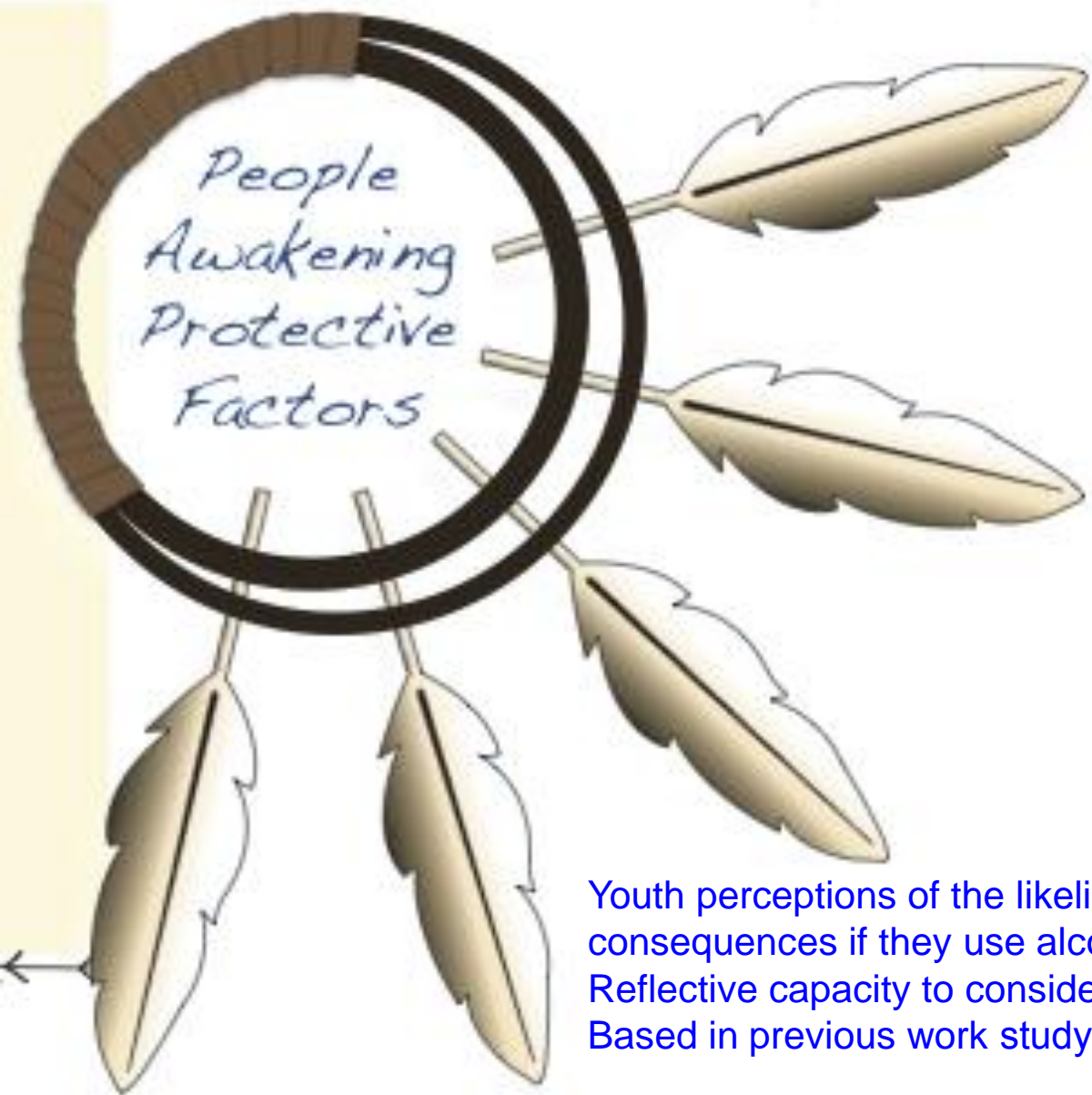




Qungasvik Projects:

Development of Research Informed Prevention Programs using Tribal Community Knowledge





Alcohol Protective Factors

Umyuangcaryaraq = 'reflecting':

Reflective processes about the consequences of alcohol use

Youth perceptions of the likelihood of experiencing specific consequences if they use alcohol
Reflective capacity to consider potential consequences of actions
Based in previous work studying the concept of "ellangneq"

Ellangneq—Awareness of connection with others, the natural environment, and the spirit world, and reflection on the consequences of alcohol use on these connections.

Reflective processes refers to thinking over potential negative consequences of alcohol



Suicide Protective Factors

Yuuyaraqegtaar
"A way to live a very
good, beautiful life"
Reasons for Life

Beliefs and experiences that make life enjoyable and worthwhile; protect from risk of suicide. Includes three dimensions: cultural/spiritual beliefs, sense of family responsibility, and others' assessment of the young person.

Yup'ik Values

- Sharing
- Hard work
- Know who you are and where you come from
- Respect and honor your elders and ancestors
- Humility
- Always cooperate to achieve what is best for the community
- Have a sacred, respectable gathering place for teaching, learning and working
- Respect the feelings and property of others
- Acknowledge, talk to, care for one another
- The company of other people helps maintain a healthy, sound mind
- People learn by watching others do and say things
- Minds are at ease as they are being entertained and kept busy with activity
- Learn from elders
- Band together
- Love one another
- Knowledge of family roles
- Respect for nature
- Always be aware of danger and your surroundings while traveling
- Always have a partner when traveling or hunting
- Cooperation
- Valuing the traditional ways and the experiences of the elders
- Always be prepared
- Always be aware of your surroundings
- Always respect our ancestors' place of residence
- People don't stop but continue to learn
- Be mindful of the consequences of your decision
- Talk about your feelings
- Learn from stories
- Love for children

Values in Action

- Awareness: Watch the seals. Seals with closed eyes are sometimes still alive.
- Safety: Never tie the seals to your boat.
- Mercecineq, Allaniuneq: Give water to seal. Always place seal head pointing toward the river when cutting it up.
- Respect and generosity: Everything is used.
- Respect and humility: Never augtaqeq, or say that you will catch one, before going out hunting.
- Aviukaq-Sharing what we have with the land

People Awakening Protective Factors



Individual protective factors

Self-efficacy: The belief in yourself as someone who can solve your own problems.

Communal-mastery: A sense that you can solve your own problems by working together with other people in your life.

Wanting to be a role model: It is a choice to live a good way as an example to others, because a person sees that their actions can influence others' behavior. Becoming a role model for sobriety is particularly important.

Ellangneq: *Ellangneq* is an important Yup'ik word, best understood as awareness, as in being aware of the consequences of your own actions and how they affect family and community.

Giving: A desire to give to others and contribute is protective when it becomes a sense of responsibility to family and community.



Family protective factors

Affection/praise: Protective families recognize a child's accomplishments in specific ways in every culture. Yup'ik families show pleasure in a child's actions in many ways, and give praise.

Being treated as special: A protective parent or caregiver tells a child they are a valuable, worthwhile member of the family or community, and therefore have a reason to be alive.

Clear limits and expectations: Protective families clearly and consistently define acceptable behavior for the child.

Family models of sobriety: Family members model sobriety and are an encouragement to others to be sober.



Community protective factors

Safe places: Protective communities have safe places for youth to go, free from substance abuse and violence.

Opportunities: Protective communities provide opportunities for youth to do positive things.

Role models: Protective communities have community role models outside the youth's family. They model appropriate behavior, live a good, clean and sober life, and share what they know with others.

Limits on alcohol use: Protective communities enforce local alcohol laws and youth curfew laws.



Murilkelluku Cikuq—Watch the Ice



Module 10

Goal:

The participants will learn ice safety skills and how to use these skills when presented with challenging life situations, including substance abuse.

Objectives:

- Teach ice safety.
- Recognize dangerous situations.
- Provide youths with hands-on experience to learn about ice and how to survive falling in.
- Explore the rewards and dangers of challenging situations.
- Find solutions on ways of surviving and coping by connecting subsistence skills with the dangers associated with alcohol and drug use.

Setup:

This module uses ice safety to teach youth how to be thoughtful and careful about life decisions. By learning how to be

People Awakening Protective Factors:

- Ellangneq
- Communal-mastery
- Self-efficacy

prepared for traveling on the ice, learning the different kinds of ice and how to survive falling through ice into freezing water, youth also learn they have some control over what happens in their lives.

As you develop this activity, think about how you can bridge the lessons of ice safety with the lessons of making good decisions when it comes to substance abuse. For example, you could have an expert tell a story.

Learning and teaching:

The module uses subsistence skills to build ellangneq, a sense of control over one's life. Being aware of your surroundings protects one from making mistakes. Learning from other people's



Ayaruq:
Pick
end

mistakes also helps young people make good decisions.

Also, youth will learn that they can use their own skills and knowledge to protect



themselves from danger and that they can help each other stay safe.

We recommend that you choose someone from your community who has traditional knowledge as well as practical experience with traveling on the ice. By having them tell stories about how they overcame or prevented an accident is a good way to also talk about dealing with dangerous life problems.



Summary of Hierarchical Linear Modeling Results (N=54)

	Estimate	SE	df	t	95% CI		p	Effect size (d)
					Lower	Upper		
Individual Characteristics								
Dose	0.0137	0.0718	120	2.58	0.0037	0.0238	.01	.46
Dose X Protective	0.0026	0.0067	120	0.38	-0.0101	0.0153	.70	.07
Family Characteristics								
Dose	0.0197	0.0091	120	2.17	0.0025	0.0368	.03	.38
Dose X Protective	-0.0082	0.0002	120	-0.77	-0.0284	0.0120	.44	-.14
Community Characteristics^a								
Dose	0.0148	0.0077	70	1.92	0.0004	0.0291	.06	.45
Dose X Protective	-0.0095	0.0106	70	-0.90	-0.0294	0.0103	.37	-.21
Peer Influences								
Dose	0.0313	0.0189	120	1.65	-0.0045	0.0671	.10	.30
Dose X Protective	-0.0318	0.0231	120	-1.37	-0.0755	0.0120	.17	-.25
Reflective Processes								
Dose	0.0151	0.0077	119	1.96	0.0005	0.0296	.05	.35
Dose X Protective	0.0010	0.0094	119	0.11	-0.0168	0.0189	.91	.02
Reasons for Life								
Dose	0.0124	0.0070	120	1.76	-0.0009	0.0257	.08	.32
Dose X Protective	0.0113	0.0091	120	1.25	-0.0059	0.0285	.21	.23

Elluam Tungiinun

Impact at 5, 10, and 20 sessions

Yuum
Ayuquia
(Individual
Characteristics)



Ilakelriit
Cayarait
(Family
Characteristics)



Yuut
Cayarait
(Community
Characteristics)



Reason for Life



Ellangneq



Peer



Base

5 sessions

10 sessions

20+ sessions



Protective Factors Research

- Prevention for Youth –
 - How do communities design cultural activities for contemporary youth linking to their cultural values?
 - Can these provide experiences in meaning, identity, and protection for youth?
- Focus on use of local expertise, local community staffing, and locally developed implementations of solutions

- 
- Is there a set of cultural values to guide a local model of protection?

Seven Teachings of the Anishinaabe

- Zaagi'idiwin (Love)
- Manaaji'iwewin (Respect)
- Zoongide'ewin (Courage/Bravery)
- Gwayakowaadiziwin (Honesty)
- Nibwaakaawin (Wisdom)
- Dibaadendiziwin (Humility)
- Debwewin (Truth)

Culture as Prevention Strategy

- Many Indigenous cultural practices provide community resilience strategies that develop local capacities and deliver protective resources to youth
 - Instruction and enactment of cultural values
 - Meaning making
 - Cultural identity development
- Alternative framework to risk based approaches

Culture & Hope/Protection

- *And the things they think about today, what we have as (cultural group) people, we have to go back; we have to go back to our traditional life that we were given. That's the thing, and there are four laws that the Creator gave us and we have to know these laws. –Male Elder*
- *I try to put that in perspective and then try understanding what it was like prior to the pre-contact of the European when he landed here in our homeland, and what I genetically remember from our ancestors is that our people were living a very beautiful life. There was an abundance of riches of the land and spirit. Our people were a spiritual people and we are a spiritual people and will always be a spiritual people. –Male Elder*



– From a local cultural perspective,
how is well-being defined?