



Sustainable Development
Working Group

26 July 2019

**Local 2 Global:
Circumpolar collaboration for suicide prevention
and mental wellness**

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Project Title:</p> <p>Local 2 Global: Circumpolar collaboration for suicide prevention and mental wellness</p> | <p>Lead Country/Project leader(s):</p> <p>Co-leads: Canada, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Finland, Sweden, Kingdom of Denmark and Iceland</p> <p>Other Arctic Council member states and Permanent Participants with interest in the topic are invited to take part.</p> |
| <p>Summary of Required Project Inputs:</p> <p>Funding In-kind</p> | <p>Relationship to other AC Working Groups:</p> <p>None at this time.</p> |
| <p>Summary of project objectives and main outcomes:</p> <p>Stemming from Project CREATeS under the Finnish chairmanship (2017-2019) which built on the Sharing Hope project from the Canadian chairmanship (2013-2015) and the RISING SUN initiative under the U.S. chairmanship (2015-2017), Local 2 Global aims to facilitate international collaboration and connections between circumpolar communities working to prevent suicide and support the mental wellbeing of all Arctic youth and communities, including Arctic Indigenous Peoples who have the highest rates of suicide in the Arctic. The project takes a holistic approach founded on the SDWG guiding principles of collaboration, concrete achievements, and inclusive engagement and activity. The project’s objectives are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth and Community Capacity Building: to build youth and community capacity through participatory methods including Digital Storytelling Workshops. 2. Promotion of Suicide Prevention Strategies and Policy: to promote the implementation of suicide prevention strategies by facilitating circumpolar knowledge exchange of evidence-based prevention. 3. Adverse Childhood Experiences: to address links between adverse childhood experiences and suicide prevention through a research initiative. <p>The Arctic Council provides an ideal platform to strengthen circumpolar collaboration for suicide prevention across member states and with Permanent Participants and to increase awareness of suicide prevention strategies at the international level. The key outcomes of this project will be: strengthened youth participation in SDWG projects a strengthened circumpolar network of communities, frontline workers, and institutions working for suicide prevention and mental wellbeing of Arctic youth and communities, with emphasis on Indigenous Peoples; a deeper understanding of links between adverse childhood experiences and suicide; contributing to building youth and community capacity; facilitation of evidence-based, culturally-sensitive advocacy; and increased international awareness of suicide prevention efforts.</p> <p>Given the emphasis that Arctic States place on mental wellness and suicide prevention and the importance of a sustained commitment to this goal, the Local 2 Global project will span a 4-year period throughout the Arctic Council chairmanships of both Iceland (2019-2021) and Russia (2021-2023).</p> | |

Background

Mental health and suicide prevention are urgent social priorities across the circumpolar north where high rates of suicide represent a preventable health crisis for Arctic Indigenous communities. In particular, youth and Indigenous Peoples are at an elevated risk of suicide, while families and entire communities bear the burden of unresolved trauma and grief following deaths by suicide. Though each community's experience of suicide is unique, this crisis is inextricable from structural factors shared across the Arctic, including colonization, rapid socio-cultural change, historical trauma, political marginalization, and social inequity.

In response, there are unprecedented efforts underway to address suicide and mental health across the Arctic and in Indigenous communities. Over the past decades, Indigenous Peoples, government agencies, and health care providers have worked diligently towards suicide prevention. Suicide is a collective epidemic but its causes and impacts can differ by region; thus, community-led action is central to suicide prevention. Indeed, there is compelling evidence that community control over programming is an effective step towards preventing suicide. Arctic communities have developed and continue to offer holistic approaches to suicide prevention that meet our diverse needs, including youth mentorship programs, community programming, culture camps, family healing circles, walks for life, and school- and land-based programs. Many communities have also expanded access to culturally-appropriate mental health services that operate from Indigenous ways of being and knowing. Suicide is not only a mental health issue, but a product of living conditions and social contexts; as such, it must be tackled not only through medical or clinical approaches, but by creating favorable socio-economic conditions for a good life and the thriving of Arctic communities.

There is an ongoing need for knowledge transfer between Arctic states to share wise practices, understand how suicide prevention strategies are working, and advance and articulate a shared understanding of suicide to inform prevention efforts. The pursuit of these priorities requires a significant role for communities, youth and Indigenous Peoples to ensure that international collaborations work to support communities' expressed needs.

The Arctic Council provides an ideal international stage to strengthen networks of collaboration for suicide prevention. It offers an inclusive space for Indigenous voices to advance community involvement in decision-making and emphasize positive steps and successes, exemplifying how to connect international and community levels more effectively. It can help facilitate evidence-based, culturally-driven advocacy, research and knowledge exchange between member states and between researchers, communities, youth and Indigenous Peoples. Further, the Arctic Council can help raise awareness and advance a shared understanding of suicide and suicide prevention in the circumpolar north. The Arctic Council can continue to be a venue for strong and united voices on suicide prevention and mental wellbeing and support the capacity of communities to manage current and future challenges affecting the quality of life of Arctic residents.

Rationale and alignment with Arctic Council work

This project directly supports the Icelandic chairmanship's priority of People in the Arctic and its emphasis on sustainable development underpinned by strong communities and resilient youth. The proposal is designed to build on good work in progress, and sustain, support, and expand the circumpolar networks of collaboration and knowledge sharing that developed under the Arctic Council's existing SDWG projects. To better support continuity, the project is also designed to structure the SDWG's work on suicide prevention and mental wellbeing in circumpolar Arctic communities beyond the conventional two-year project cycle, instead spanning the Arctic Council chairmanships of both Iceland (2019-2021) and Russia (2021-2023). A four year commitment by the Arctic States emphasizes the importance of mental wellness and suicide prevention in circumpolar regions.

The design of this project is directly informed by recommendations from the SDWG's existing work in this thematic area. It speaks to priorities outlined in the SDWG's strategic framework such as human health, community vitality, and engagement, and builds on the SDWG's strong record of assisting in the coordination of research on suicide prevention. It also reinforces the priority themes within ICC Canada's 2017 discussion paper "Continuing Our Unity: Advancing Indigenous Suicide Prevention in the Circumpolar Arctic" that built on the SDWG's RISING SUN project (2015-2017).

The project is also informed by and strongly aligned with the priorities of the Arctic Council. In particular, this project supports the Arctic Council's ongoing commitment to international collaboration and knowledge sharing to enhance the health and wellbeing of Arctic residents, as articulated in the 2011 Arctic Health Declaration. It also aligns with the 2013 Kiruna Declaration, which specifically articulates Arctic Council member states' intention to "undertake further work to improve and develop mental wellness promotion strategies."

Objectives

This project has three objectives:

1. **Youth and Community Capacity Building:** to build youth and community capacity and enhance engagement of lived experience through participatory methods including Digital Storytelling Workshops.
2. **Promotion of Suicide Prevention Strategies and Policy:** to promote the implementation of suicide prevention strategies through a study tour for front line workers.
3. **Adverse Childhood Experiences:** to address links between adverse childhood experiences and suicide prevention through research initiative.

Activities and outputs

Four key activities will take place as part of Local 2 Global over the next four years: digital storytelling workshops, knowledge exchange, a circumpolar adverse childhood experiences research initiative, and a "Voices of Strength" circumpolar forum.

Digital Storytelling Workshops

Digital storytelling workshops began under Project CREATEs and will continue under Local 2 Global, providing the opportunity for participants to create digital stories connected to the theme of suicide prevention and mental wellness. This next iteration of the digital storytelling project will continue to bring together participants from different circumpolar regions and the invited participants will be expanded to include families in addition to youth. Opportunities for intergenerational engagement by matching youth with Elders throughout the storytelling process will be explored. Emphasis will be placed on hosting workshops with Indigenous facilitators and in Indigenous languages to create safer spaces and help recruit those who are hardest to reach. To create opportunities for peer-to-peer support and leadership development, youth that participated in the CREATEs digital storytelling workshops will also be invited to participate in Local 2 Global. Upon completion and depending on participant consent, the digital stories will be shared widely, both in communities and at the international level, to raise awareness about suicide prevention and mental health in the Arctic, amplify Indigenous youth voices on suicide prevention, and link youth experiences to implementation practices.

Knowledge Exchange Study Tour

Within Local 2 Global, knowledge exchange will be facilitated primarily through a study tour for frontline workers with a focus on implementation of suicide prevention strategies, particularly on practices that are culturally sensitive and locally appropriate. The tour will involve a cohort of participants from participating Arctic Council member states who will visit other Arctic communities to learn about existing suicide prevention programs. The tour aims to elevate wise practices by showcasing community-led programs on the international stage, while also cultivating dialogue and support across regions and between practitioners. The tour will be documented and materials such as presentations, videos, and booklets will be created for participants to share in their home regions to ensure that project outcomes will be shared with a broader audience. A summary for policy makers will be produced along with a report on the study tour with recommendations for how best to carry forward similar knowledge exchange activities (for example, through a second tour, or an online circumpolar platform for knowledge sharing between frontline workers).

Circumpolar Adverse Childhood Experiences Research Initiative

The need to better understand the connection between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and suicide has been repeatedly noted in international research. As such, we propose the development of a circumpolar ACE research initiative beginning with a circumpolar workshop on ACE to shape and inform this initiative. The workshop will bring together stakeholders such as (researchers, practitioners, community leaders, funding agencies, and policymakers) to discuss ACE research needs, explore existing ACE-related interventions that support families, and ask how research can address challenges and concerns appropriately. Possible outputs of the workshop include a synthesis report and joint statement of action or a funding call. It is expected that a research initiative will be shaped by those involved in the workshop.

Local 2 Global Circumpolar Forum

The culminating project event will be a circumpolar forum that brings together all project participants from the digital storytelling workshops, the knowledge exchange study tour, and the ACE research initiative to share their experiences, knowledge, and ideas. Stakeholders will also be invited including youth, frontline workers, researchers, Permanent Participants, and government representatives. This event aims to integrate all of the objectives of this project to further strengthen circumpolar relationships between stakeholders and link all activities and outcomes into a common goal, aiming to draw political attention and develop recommendations for stronger support of local action. It will integrate all of the objectives of this project— digital storytelling participants will have an opportunity to screen their stories on the international stage; study tour participants will be invited to share recommendations and experiences from the study tour; and research teams will be invited to present ongoing research activities and results. As an outcome of this forum, a joint communication on circumpolar suicide prevention will be prepared that will make recommendations for, and form the basis of, an Arctic Declaration on Suicide Prevention and Mental Wellbeing. This Declaration would aim to raise awareness of the Arctic suicide crisis and mobilize political action.

Outcomes and deliverables

Besides the specific deliverables identified below, the key outcomes of this project will be: a strengthened circumpolar network of communities, frontline workers, and institutions working for suicide prevention and mental wellbeing of Arctic youth and communities, including Indigenous Peoples; a deeper understanding of links between adverse childhood experiences and suicide; contributing to building youth and community capacity; facilitation of evidence-based, culturally-sensitive advocacy; and increased international awareness of suicide prevention efforts within Arctic states.

Project deliverables include:

- Summary report from the digital storytelling workshops
- Expanded library of digital stories hosted on Project CREATEs website
- Communications plan for a campaign to share digital stories

- Summary report from the knowledge exchange study tour
- Study tour materials to be disseminated in participants' communities and regions
- Design of a circumpolar ACE research initiative
- Arctic Declaration on Suicide Prevention and Mental Wellbeing
- Interim project report at 2-year mark and final project report 4-year mark

Partnership and project governance

Beyond partnership between the co-leads of this project, there are ongoing and anticipated partnerships with project participants (member states and Permanent Participants) and stakeholders. For example, in Canada, ongoing partnerships from Project CREATEs that will extend into future work include partnership with national and regional Indigenous organizations, community organizations, youth Project CREATEs participants, national funding agencies, and academic institutions.

Timetable

Project activities are expected to begin in September 2019, corresponding with Iceland's first SDWG meeting. The intended date of project renewal is May 2023, corresponding with the end of Russia's Arctic Council Chairmanship. At this point, there will be the option of renewal for a further multi-year cycle building upon the existing objectives and activities and the progress, outcomes, and recommendations to date. A projected timeline for activities is as follows:

Year 1 (Winter 2019-2020)

- Establish Action Teams
- September 2019 kick-off event connected to Iceland's proposed child and youth workshop
- Digital storytelling workshops held (locations to be determined)
- Study tour locations selected
- Study tour application process established, and call for participants issued
- Study tour participants selected and notified
- Circumpolar Workshop on Adverse Childhood Experiences planned and held
- Communications strategy designed and launched

Notable events: Inuit Studies conference (Montreal, Canada, October 3-6, 2019), SDWG Meeting (September 2019)

Year 2 (early Fall 2020-2021)

- Digital storytelling workshops held (locations to be determined)
- Study tour held
- Communications materials from study tour produced and disseminated
- Reports and evaluation of study tour drafted for validation by participants and finalized
- Summary for Policy Makers developed
- Consideration of project activities to respond to recommendations from Circumpolar Workshop on Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Continuation of communications strategy

Notable events: ICC Health Summit (Ottawa, Canada, fall 2020), International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences (Arkhangelsk, Russia, June 15-19, 2020)

Year 3 (Winter 2021-2022)

- Local 2 Global Circumpolar Forum held
 - Digital story film festival held
 - Study tour report launched
 - Progress on ACE research initiative shared with community stakeholders and SDWG

- Joint communication on suicide prevention and mental wellbeing issued by co-leads
- Implementation of communications strategy continues

Notable events: International Congress of Circumpolar Health (details to be announced)

Year 4 (Fall 2022-2023)

- Implementation of communications strategy continues
- Knowledge exchange follow up activities (per report recommendations)
- ACE research initiative continues
- Arctic Council Declaration on Suicide Prevention and Mental Wellbeing

Costs and budget

Youth and Community Capacity Building:

- Digital storytelling workshops: \$150,000 CAD
- Communications: \$50,000 CAD

Promotion of Suicide Prevention Strategies and Policy:

- Knowledge exchange/Study tour: \$200,000 CAD
- Program assistance to document tour and prepare materials: \$25,000 CAD
- Communications: \$50,000

Adverse Childhood Experiences:

- ACE Forum: \$75,000 CAD
- Creation of research strategy (to be determined): \$15,000 CAD
- Communications: \$10,000 CAD

Synthesis:

- Local 2 Global Forum: \$75,000 CAD
- Communications: \$10,000 CAD

*Contribution from Arctic states to support travel of participants to be confirmed

Total project estimates: To be confirmed

Integration of Indigenous Knowledge and Local Knowledge

Local 2 Global's objectives and methods reflect an understanding that Indigenous Knowledge and local knowledge, and the translation of this knowledge, are crucial to support the suicide prevention and mental wellness efforts and initiatives of the Arctic States. The importance of Indigenous perspectives and knowledge systems to increase and expand knowledge and understanding of suicide and mental wellness is at the core of this project. For example, one of the methods, digital storytelling, is also reflective and appropriate to Indigenous ways of knowing as storytelling is recognized as an Indigenous approach for sharing knowledge, building community, and education, and has been used as a method of participatory and qualitative research. Furthermore, this initiative is an important step forward on a course of healing and reconciliation as it aims to provide the insight from Indigenous youth needed to develop policy that leads to a stronger future for Indigenous people and the Arctic more broadly.

Feedback from community partners informed the decision to adopt a holistic approach, with the project providing an umbrella structure to support multiple objectives that work together over a longer time period to support continuity. Extensive engagement with Indigenous and local participants and partners has directly informed the design of all proposed objectives and activities. By placing Indigenous Knowledge and local knowledge at the center of this project and working in ongoing collaboration with Indigenous

partners, this project aims to support, share, and empower culturally- and locally-relevant approaches to suicide prevention and mental wellbeing, and to ensure Arctic communities feel ownership over the project. This will lead to better outcomes by helping to ensure that projects, research, and communications undertaken at the international level are directly informed by community needs and reflect the diversity of individual community contexts.

This work will be co-led with Arctic Indigenous Peoples at all stages of the project to ensure that Indigenous Knowledge and local knowledge is not simply integrated into the work, but rather is shaping the activities, directing the conversations, and ensuring relevant and meaningful outcomes.

Communications strategy

Communication is foundational to this project, and a detailed communications plan for outreach on each objective will be developed during the first year of the project to share results and experiences with the Arctic Council and broader audiences. Dissemination of the project deliverables will aim to serve communities in terms of both content and format. For these reasons, the project's communication formats extend beyond traditional reports to include film and video, public presentations, sharing circles, and digital stories. Deliverables will be made widely accessible to community frontline workers, regional organizations, health care professionals, government agencies, Arctic Council member states, and the academic and research community. Finally, this project aims to help create and maintain relationships across scales and regions. These relationships are organic and not always evident in written project outputs or communications, but form part of the living network of collaboration that is foundational to the project. Going forward, the project aims to exemplify effective knowledge translation and multi-dimensional communication.