



MAMISARVIK HEALING CENTRE

Promising Practices in Indigenous Harm Reduction

BACKGROUND

When translated from Inuktitut, Mamisarvik means **“A Place of Healing”**.

The residential treatment program began in 2003, with a 12-bed treatment centre and as a 10-bed transition house to meet the overwhelming need of Inuit in crisis. Since then, over 500 people have participated in the residential treatment program and accessed a wide range of Tungasuvvingat Inuit’s comprehensive wrap around services. The program is offered in both English and Inuktitut for women and men aged 18 years and older. It was recognized throughout the country as an early leader in the movement toward trauma-informed recovery through cultural healing and wellness.

The healing centre was originally funded through the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, but when that closed in 2013, Tungasuvvingat Inuit invested its own funds. The centre also received funding from the Nunavut government and Correctional Services Canada based on fees for services. The centre closed in March of 2016 due to a lack of funding.

Tungasuvvingat Inuit was planning to re-open Mamisarvik in early 2019. There have been some delays due to issues around the new building. It is anticipated that the program will open in October 2019. The program will be open to men and women.

TARGET POPULATION

Mamisarvik Healing Centre is an Inuit-specific substance use and concurrent disorder treatment program located in Ottawa, Ontario. Clients must self-identify as Inuit. It is the **ONLY** Inuit specific centre for the treatment of substance use and trauma in Canada. When the program ran from 2003-2016 many clients came directly from the North to access the services, they needed. The new program is currently funded by the Ontario government and will be offered to Ontario Inuit. Mamisarvik is scheduled to re-open in 2019.



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WISE PRACTICES

The first day they arrive at Mamisarvik, clients are enveloped in a culturally appropriate home-away-from-home. Two-thirds of Mamisarvik's staff is of Inuit descent and clients are encouraged to speak Inuktitut or English in their recovery work, whichever they prefer.

Mamisarvik offers a holistic, bio-psycho-social-spiritual model of trauma-and-addiction treatment year-round, powered by the twin healing engines of group and individual counselling. Clients learn that they are not bad people trying to become good people. They are people with problems, learning how to solve them. They learn that addictive behaviour is primarily a way of attempting to kill the pain of underlying trauma. They learn how to live healthy lifestyles. They learn to love themselves.

Launching in 2019, the Mamisarvik Healing Centre will offer an Inuit-specific, eight-week (53-day), residential treatment program for women and men aged 18 years and older. The supportive and experienced interdisciplinary team will incorporate a strengths-based, trauma-informed approach with an emphasis on Inuit culture and traditions.

Clients will attend day-time programming focused on trauma, addiction, Inuit history, anger management, gender-group discussions, assertiveness and continuing care. Elders offer traditional healing knowledge and incorporate on-the-land activities. Staff support clients with evening recreational activities including art therapy, Inuit crafts, life skills, visits to community centres, and recovery support groups.

MEDIA ARTICLES

[*https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/ti-mamisarvik-healing-centre-1.3442166](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/ti-mamisarvik-healing-centre-1.3442166)

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/mamisarvik-inuit-addictions-treatment-centre-reopens-1.3947522>

http://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/65674ottawa-based_treatment_centre_starts_up_with_women-only_program/

<http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/fv-vf/comp-recu/p17.html>

There is also a Day program that will be offered in 2019:

The day program will be offered three times a week for seven weeks, beginning 17 June 2019. Mamisarvik will be open to the Ottawa urban Inuit community. The program elements consist of:

- > Learning about Inuit history and healing practices;
- > Exploring the science of addiction;
- > Understanding and expressing thoughts and feelings;
- > Harm reduction strategies and techniques for self-regulation;
- > Acquiring beneficial coping skills.

SUCSESSES

"This place transforms people," she said. "You see a life change. You see a life begin to dream, begin to love themselves. Begin to forgive themselves. Begin to forgive others. These are major things that happen to a person here."*

CHALLENGES

Mamisarvik closed in March 2016 due to lack of funding. The reopening has been delayed due to challenges with the new building.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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