

Barrow Study on Suicide in relation to Spirituality, and Alcoholism

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Introduction

For the Inupiat suicide was not common because of a strong fortitude and supportive community when facing hardships and emotional, physical, and social problems. Spiritual beliefs, strong values, loving families and the healthy life style all contributed to cultural identity which contributed to a resiliency where in a person was able to face difficult problems and adversity. The family, values, and healthy life style are still important to the Inupiat today; all of these attributes are inseparably inter-twined with the concept of personal well being or wellness (Reimer, 1996, 1999).

Suicide is now affecting the Barrow, Alaska community. Within the last few years, the increasing number of suicides has shocked the community and left some in a state of despair. Today, there are people in the community who are struggling with either suicide ideology or attempts because serious problems are eroding cultural identity and the strong supportive community they once experienced. To understand the underlying factors that are causing these suicides, and a diminishment of the Inupiat way of life and shared values, a study was conducted by Reimer (2002) that looked at how strong values, loving families, healthy life styles and positive spirituality served as protective factors against suicide. Once more this basic format has been adopted to understand the suicides at Barrow and develop a plan for Prevention.

Most studies fail to look at spirituality, either positive or negative and its influence on suicide as understood from an Inupiat worldview. The questionnaire used in Barrow is based on a questionnaire developed under a Minority Supplement, and a subsequent paper written by Catherine Swan Reimer, Ed.D. (2002), titled "What is the Relationship of Suicide, Alcohol, Abuse, and Spirituality among the Inupiat. The questionnaire asks about alcohol abuse, Spirituality, Well Being or Personal Well Being (PWB) and also the personal and community strengths. Thus the purpose of the study is; (1) to understand the reasons why community members of Barrow take or attempt to take their lives (2) to understand how alcoholism and spirituality influences a person to contemplate or commit suicide, (3) to understand the strengths of the person as well as the community which promotes happiness for the community of Barrow.

Background and Significance

Suicide

In the last thirty five years suicide has increased among the Inupiat and continues to be a problem; especially among males who have a high incidence of suicide (Gessner, 1997; Strickland, 1997). In a study conducted by Maniilaq in 2000 (Kotzebue – unpublished) they stated that within a ten-year period from 1990 to 1999, there were three completed suicides with two attempts in the Inupiat village identified as Village #3 with a population under 400. The Inupiat Village #1 with a population under 400 had three completed suicides and three attempts. Village #4 had 12 completions and 84 attempts with a population less than 3000. Village #2 with a population under 800 had 7 completions and 18 attempts.

Most of the completed suicides for eight villages in the region between 1990 and 1999 were males between the ages 15 to 59 and three females between the ages of 20 to 34. Suicide attempts by age group and sex during these years showed a greater increase of attempts by woman than men in the age bracket from 15 to 24. 47.7 percent of the suicides were completed by firearms and suffocation accounted for 21 deaths for each group. Drug ingestion was 54.7 percent for 93 attempts between the years of 1990 to 1999. Firearms and suffocation were the most used methods in completed suicides while drug ingestion was the preferred method for females for suicidal attempts. Both suicide attempts and completion took place at home, with averages being in the 80's percentile rank; most individuals were single (70's percentile rank).

In the Reimer study (2002) each of the respondents who participated could not remember any suicides early on but they then started happening in more recent times for different villages. A Kivalina elder remembered the first suicide happening in 1940, while another elder didn't think there were any suicides before 1960. A Selawik male thought the first suicides happened in the 1950's when two women committed suicide in his village. But it wasn't until the 1980's when everyone's attention was focused on the problem because there were twelve suicides in fourteen months, four times the national average.

Now, the attention is on Barrow where in less than a year there have been five suicides with one being a suicide/murder case. Of the five suicides that were committed in 2009, all were males between the ages of nineteen and twenty-eight. In 2008, there was a sixteen year old who committed suicide.

Alcoholism

Alcohol abuse is a major factor in suicides among all people and increases the risk for suicide and is associated with 50% of all suicides and 5-27% of alcoholic's suicides (Robins, L. N., Helzer, J. El., Weissman, M.M. 1994). Depression is often common with alcoholics (Murphy, 1992) because of the Serotonin link between these two illnesses (Sellers, Naranjo, and Peachey (1981). With or without a mood disorder, alcohol is the most frequent substance identified with suicide completions and attempts (Andrews, 1992; Rich, Young, Fowler, 1986).

In Alaska, alcohol is the number-one problem in behavioral health risk factors (Landen, 1996). There were 45 suicide deaths in the NANA Region from 1991 through 2000, representing 10.3% of the statewide suicide deaths (438) during that period (Bureau of Vital Statistics, Alaska Division of Public Health, 2002). Among Alaska Native males between 15-24, 72% of suicides were linked to alcohol (Hickle, Lowe, Clarke, Steuber, & Whistler, 1994). Among the Inupiat male, alcohol was involved in both suicide attempts and completions by 52.1% as compared to marijuana with which was only 0.09% (Maniilaq, 2000). No history of mental health problems was linked to 52.3% of the Inupiat completed and 48.8% of the attempts over a period from 1991 to 2000. Three major contributing factors for all Inupiat suicides were divorce/separation; relationship conflict; and substance abuse.

In the Reimer study (2002), the Inupiat respondents were aware of the changing drinking patterns since the 60's in that drinking was pervasive in the villages prior to that time, but without any suicidal behavior. Some saw alcohol as a Native problem, not being able to drink like other races, i.e. – "hold their liquor" or "social drinking". Others saw alcoholism as a spiritual problem. Divorce, physical and sexual abuse, job loss, depression, guilt and shame, and opening up the person to negative spiritual forces were problems associated with substance abuse.

Other drugs, mostly marijuana, in addition to alcohol, have become a problem and many believe that the drugs and alcohol contribute to suicidal behavior. Some participants believed that alcohol and drugs relieved spiritual problems. *Alliiqtu* or when something is really bothering a person's mind, alcohol is a way to escape from it but it may open the mind into more serious spiritual problems such as possession. In this study, (Reimer, 2002), most participants from the four Northwest Region villages believed that negative thoughts and negative spiritual encounters were related to alcohol/drug use and in this state, suicide was attempted or completed. The mind was weakened and brought down to a negative spiritual state which then lowered the person's resistance to negative spiritual thoughts or influences (Reimer, 2002). Barrow has increasingly seen the effects of alcoholism in the community as the younger people join adults in drinking and substance abuse.

Spirituality

Spirituality provides meaning and coherence, nurtures beliefs, and the interconnectedness of all life, relationships with others and the natural world (Antonovsky, 1980; Lowery, 1998). The literature suggests that spirituality is a major factor in promoting health and well being (Dana, 1993; Bensley, 1991; Ellis & Smith, 1991; Ellison, 1983; Ellison & Smith, 1991; Katz, 1993; 1997; Matson, 1995; Reimer, 1996; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). Research also suggests that spirituality is a protective factor against suicide (Hoelter, 1979; Jacobs, 1967; Nelson, 1977; Stack, 1981; Stack, 1983) and alcoholism (Moss, Edwards, Edwards, Janzen, & Howell (1985). Christian religion, among the Inupiat, has been reported to have a negative relationship between religiosity and suicide (Gartner, Larson, Allen, 1991).

Native American spirituality has been generally discussed by various authors: (Deloria, 1973; Underhill, 1965). However, existing literature does not provide a clear definition of Alaska Native spirituality among the major Native groups, which are the Aleut, Athabaskan, Haida, Inupiat, Tlinkit, Tsimpshian, and Yup'ik. There have been a few Native writers who have written about spirituality relative to their specific tribe (Kawagley's, 1993; Napoleon, 1991). Hazel and Mohatt (2001) discuss cultural and spiritual processes by defining an Alaska Native

worldview with emphasis on a Yup'ik Eskimo theory for alcohol recovery. Works that define spirituality for Alaska Natives are sparse and often limited in scope and understanding and especially its relationship to spirituality.

Traditional Inupiat spirituality is mostly discussed in relation to shamans, spiritual practices and taboos (Brandson, 1996); Mendenhall, Sampson & Tennant, 1989), rituals (Grim, 1983), beliefs (Reimer, 1996; 1999) and the introduction to Christianity by early missionaries (Mendenhall, Sampson & Tennant, 1989). Attention has been directed to the multiple dimensions of the positive aspect of Inupiat spirituality as it relates to happiness or personal well being and the community (Reimer, 1996, 1999, 2000). Little attention has focused on the negative aspects such as spirit possession and visitation from dead relatives and friends. In a preliminary study funded by the NIAAA, Reimer (2000) investigated this spiritual phenomenon and found, based on interviews, evidence that there was a relationship to suicide.

Moreover and with significant importance, the Inupiat have embraced Christianity and have integrated with their concept of spirituality (Reimer, 2002). Yet little attention has been given to integrating their concept of spirituality into treatment plans and suicide prevention. The elders continually stated that their belief in Christianity was important for their wellbeing and protection from depression and suicide (Reimer, 2002).

In summary, this researcher was asked by the Native Village of Barrow to conduct community based interviews asking these questions since there have been no studies looking at: (1) the reasons why Community members of Barrow took their lives; (2) how alcoholism and spirituality contributed to suicide; (3) and to understand the strengths which promotes happiness (personal well being or well being), both personal and for the community of Barrow.

Methods

Sample

Random samples of male, female, youth, young people, middle age, and elders, community members were randomly selected. A total of 36 participants were interviewed during a two-week period. The majority of those asked, agreed to be interviewed. Interviews were conducted by Catherine Reimer, John Reimer, with two interviews conducted by Robin Mongoyak. The majority of the interviews were done by John and Catherine, thus enhancing continuity. See Appendix A for a breakdown of the participants who shared their views and understanding of the reasons why there are so many suicides affecting the community of Barrow. See Tasks Completed (Appendix B), for the scope of work done through the two week period. Some of these meetings enabled this researcher to identify potential people to interview. See appendix C to review the questions.

Procedure

Qualitative research methodology was used in this study to explore the reasons for suicide among the Barrow community members. Before leaving for Barrow, the latest research on suicide and resiliency were reviewed. The earlier study by Reimer (2002) was reviewed as well. Also some contacts were made by phone and the internet of others who have worked with the Native American suicide problem. Specifically, current studies, especially those relating to resiliency were explored as well as reviewing from past studies the early writings, and oral history related to Inupiat spirituality, alcoholism, and suicide housed in the oral history archives of the University of Alaska Fairbanks (Reimer, 2002).

An open-ended interview questionnaire was used from Reimer's (2002) study that contains two general questions with more specific probes. The main questions were: Could you tell me some reasons why you think Inupiaq men (women) take their lives? What contributes to personal happiness and feeling good and lessens happiness and feeling good? Probes explored the Inupiat word *aarigaa* or happiness and feeling good, and an exploration of Inupiat spirituality. A third general question was asked that explored personal and community strengths as resiliency factors which is one of the contributing factor to diminish suicide among Native Americans.

After reading the participant consent form and agreeing to be interviewed, each question was read out loud to the participant. Questions were clarified if needed and further prompts were used to get a detailed answer to each question. The interview lasted from 1 to 2+ hours depending on how much the participant wanted to say. One person took questions home and answered them since there was not enough time due to a lengthy discussion on suicide and problems. Every effort was made to write down the complete response, but some summarizing was done. If a participant began speaking about something else besides the question, they were reminded of the question. After each question/response we asked “Is there anything else?” After transcribing verbatim, interviewers read back the answers to confirm that what was written was what they said.

All recommendations for change or clarification by the participants were made to the transcriptions. Since the questions could bring up strong personal feelings and memories, counseling was provided if desired. For example, one woman had to be counseled because some of the questions brought up very strong memories; she felt better and was grateful that she could talk about the whole incident. Others requested counseling during interviews or after a talk or the Talking-Circle. Finally, all procedures were reviewed and approved by the Native Village of Barrow.

Informal discussions and communications were also integrated into this study so that a better understanding of the suicide problem could be an added component to give insights on the personal or community problems. These conversations were discussed by John and Catherine Reimer each day.

Results

The following are the results based on the research questions. Three main categories are discussed: Alcoholism, Spirituality, and Strengths in relationship to suicide. The alcoholism and suicide results are also integrated in the Spirituality section under reasons why people commit suicide. Greater detail is given to Spirituality; in particular, the sections titled Cultural Spirituality and Non-Ordinary Spiritual experiences since alcohol and suicide are related to these constructs and little could be found in the literature pertaining to these constructs except for the Reimer study (2002).

General Question – Why Inupiat do men/women take their lives?

The majority of the participants interviewed felt that alcohol and relationship problems were contributing factors. Also that alcohol use itself caused relationship problems and vice-versa. Participants mentioned different human development needs that were not met in the family and that there were outside influences that could contribute to suicide attempts. The following general thoughts were cited on how these needs were not met due to the following stages of life development due to community problems, personal problems, traumatic memories, alcoholism and also the lack of cultural and traditional ways of living which did not support, for example, the young person's identity of themselves:

1.) At early ages, some lost parents due to alcohol abuse.” One person said, “For myself mother died when I was 8 years old and I was lost, angry, and confused.” Many burdens were put on young children like taking care of young children and feeling pressured at an early age. Others were raised with parents scolding them and belittling them. Poverty and not having things was another problem for young children. Some alluded to the “No Talk” rule which is common in children of alcoholics. Some would not talk about their feelings or thoughts when someone committed suicide within their family. Adults were not mindful on how suicide among family members could effect the children. “Those people who lose family members by suicide, they keep it to themselves because they are ashamed. Just keep it in the family.” Some children remembered the horrible effects of suicide within the extended family system.

One person summed it up but also alluded to the Adult Children of Alcoholic characteristic of *denial* (Ackerman, 1987) by saying this about early childhood development: “Some people did not deal with their problems as a child and it affects them. There was no spiritual guidance, no hope, loss of innocence as a result of sexual abuse, rejection, and feeling unloved.”

Another factor was the *boredom* due to a lack of activities for young people because parents were not involved in their social development. “Not loved, missing parents, no family support and they feel empty”, was what an elder wisely said. Elders wished that there was more parental control and some parenting skills for young people who have children at a young age. Young people are also caught in the tug between the Western Culture and Inupiaq (traditional) ways as parents did not teach them due to their alcoholic lifestyle. Television teaches them one way as well as the schools and for some there are no elders or parents that take the time to teach the traditional way of life that supports Inupiat identity. One person said, “We are born lost in a society of TV, but don’t see as Natives. There is a battle going on between Western culture and traditional Inupiat culture.” The question one participant said is this, “Should I buy meat or hunt it? I blame it on families who don’t have a place to go to find oneself and not worry.”

Due to the drinking in the family, the children experience a dysfunctional family system and thus inherit symptoms that are common among *Children of Alcoholics who* (Ackerman, 1987). This is because they suffer oppression, depression, and without coping skills, they begin the cycle of dysfunction. They also suffer from unresolved grief, often medicating themselves with drugs or alcohol. Substance abuse allows the person to cope in the world, but he or she still carry within problems that are never expressed. The person does not express them because they never learned communication skills to share feelings or problems. As these feelings become more intense, sometimes the only solution is suicide so the person can escape from the pain. By not talking, not expressing feelings, not trusting, and staying in denial; these children of alcoholic families are following the rules of the Alcoholic Family (Ackerman, 1987).

2.) Adolescence and young adulthood is a time to find one’s identity and develop communication skills as they interact with peers. The *young person*, as one older person said,

“Feels hopeless and no solution to problems because of the unresolved grief and the cultural changes that overwhelm a person.” One young girl said that because she lost her mother at 8 she was angry, lost and confused and could not express her feelings to anyone because she did not trust them. “I became delinquent and didn’t want to eat. I began thinking of suicide. At age 13, I began cutting myself and thinking about ways to kill myself. My stepmother was an alcoholic.”

One person said, “Some people did not deal with their problems as a child and it affects them.” Elders saw the young people “had lost their identity and spirituality.” Another saw it as a “Loss of identity.” Another said it was a “Loss of identity, with no purpose and acceptance.” One said, “the mind is altered by alcohol, making person more vulnerable to influence of Satan to make wrong choices, no hope, become depressed, negative thoughts like no one loves me, no one wants me, why go on living, why go on living and a person takes own life.”

Depression and Boredom continued to come up, as well as its relationship to the other as one person said: “The majority suffer from depression. It is also a lack of purpose, lack of activities and no active in the community... add all this to drinking. Most youths are bored. When I talk to young people I will say, “Hi, how are you doing?” They always say, “I’m bored.”

Besides alcohol, there were other influences such as music that “influences one to commit suicide, especially rap, peer pressure, sexual abuse and negligence by parents.” One person said, “When drinking or drugging along with a person’s underlying issues, like depression, the music effects people. It gives permission to commit suicide if you are hurt, especially Rap music. TV propagates the devil’s work and yet there are spiritual channels that can help.”

Family members also enabled young people to drink because of no positive activities which brings about depression among the young people. “Adolescents and teenagers often rebel against the rules set by parents and grandparents. Often, the child will be rejected by parents because of their rebelling. One should scold but do not reject their children and talk to them” was said by one female elder. It is important to keep tabs on young people and praise children.

Many do not have manners and need help from counselors to learn these. Not forgiving others is ugly. Pornography is around and influences young ones to have children at an early age and date young. Poverty and welfare and not earning money can cause struggle.” Also mentioned was that the youth did not have a place to go to and learn how to date; they also did not have a voice to help solve their problems. Without places to go to, the youth then find ways to entertain themselves which is drinking, sex, and music which then causes early pregnancies and depression among the young.

3.) Young Adulthood is when the majority of suicides did occur and is often accompanied by alcohol use. “Young people take their lives with guns as well as hanging themselves, both male and female.” Most of the participants saw that relationship problems as a cause for suicide among the young adolescents and young people. A few cited the problems occurred because the Inupiat men had not developed relationship skills, communication skills, and matured as quickly as the women. The following two participants give an insight on how the community members viewed this problem.

A young man revealed the problems due to relationships:

Most of past suicides had problems with relationships. May not have had good parenting and didn't develop these skills. There is a need for more parental control. With many children in the family there was not nurturing for some and gaps, thus got nurturing from others than family and this brought about insecurity. Inupiat men are immature compared to Inupiat women. It takes men a lot longer to mature and take on responsibilities. Women get involved with young immature men and thus there are insecurities in relationships with a lot of problems. Men need counseling.

There is a big void in our dating because we see things on main stream TV and books but men are insecure in dating here so they drink and sleep with women and misjudge who their partner is if they are drunk. Thus there are many unwanted pregnancy and false dating. Many females regret the night before when they partied. Men's hearts are broken and can get emotionally unstable especially if the female cheat or flirts. Her behavior suggests to others that she wants to be with the other guy. Men also feel inferior as women move out but men stay here. Men feel inferior to work at office or administration but feel more manly with construction jobs. It is important to have young people in school come to office and show men that they can do office tasks too. *It takes seven seconds to pull the trigger before suicide and after that it is too late.*

A young woman described the relationship problem from her point of view:

Loneliness. Many men feel like they have to be with someone to be happy. One needs to be patient when picking a partner. Many pick those with bad character thus ending with relationship problems since there is infidelity. There is a process of dysfunctional relationships. 1. Woman drinks, 2. So he begins to drink, 3. She runs off with another guy, 4. Woman then yo-yo's between two men, 5. Then child, 6. She goes back to other man like "dipping in same pool" for him. 7. This process goes on for years. 8. He keeps taking her back. Thus he isn't picking a woman with good character. He should go to church to find good wife.

Communication problems seem to be a major source of conflict. Some do not know who they can trust and talk to and this leads to "Hopelessness and no solution to problems, unresolved grief, cultural changes that overwhelm person", as expressed by one person. Guilt was mentioned by another person. Most saw the underlying problem as depression because young people could not talk about what was really bothering them. Some of these problems may have been from the past and the traumatic memories or recent problems with relationships was mentioned by others.

4.) Adulthood and Middle age community members have their problems. Often the inability to communicate adequately continues to be a problem and there are more divorces and broken families and a great deal of depression and sadness within failed relationships. One person put it well, "Can't cope with their lifestyle. Don't know who to ask for help and they are drowning in addiction and loss of family members, not going through healing process, relationship problems, can't express emotions."

Another problem was due to money. "Many friends and family have committed suicide over money issues – either too much or too little"

The court systems have no mercy and do not rehabilitate a person. One young man was very angry about this as he said:

Courts should rehabilitate person to enter society yet it is backwards and continues punishing system by excluding them from reentering society in world of work and other. There is also a loss of family and connection. Inupiat have to deal with State and Federal Laws and Court system that tears family apart. People are not being allowed to mess up or make mistakes or recover from them because they are thrown in jail. Rehabilitation can only take place in family system. You can't learn if you are in jail. Some are thrown in jail and don't even know why.

Also if served a jail sentence, it is very difficult to lead normal life and be part of society. Family Issues and system ... people don't like people who are different or want to leave so it inhibits kids from trying something new. These two things, Family and Court systems can cause depression.

Cultural confusion is a problem that adds to one's depression. "Problem with trying to live our Western way of life and yet pushed to live our Traditional way of life too", complained one man. Another said, "Depression sets in, no one to talk to, cry out for help and no one supports them." Especially with men, one person explained that "Those who commit suicide are not open to communication and tend to keep things to themselves." "Put aside traumatic memories and go on. Say a prayer and go on", advised an elder.

A few community members complained during the interview that the dysfunction from adverse experiences extended to the entire community and even effected the work environment. The familiar rules of the *Alcoholic family system* were part of the fabric that causes *mistrust, not expressing feelings or concerns, and staying in denial*. As an example, once person wondered *why* her favorite counselor was asked to leave as well as other counselors. This caused confusion for her.

Rather than an open environment to question, there were others who admitted that they were afraid to openly ask questions. There was a strong desire among some that there could be a stronger healthier support system within the community to provide a sense of well-being and happiness (aaregaa). A few felt a sense of powerlessness because of the work environment within the community.

There were other problems mentioned such as the long winters and darkness where people stay in, compared to the summer when there is daylight 24 hours a day. Environmental problems can cause depression when one has unresolved mental issues and start using drugs and alcohol to cope. Some mentioned that they feared that there were more deaths that were suicidal but listed as accidental. As an example some young people take risks and kill themselves was mentioned by one person.

There are problems also bring shame to a families name because of unsolved issues in life. “This is a small isolated community and everyone knows your issues. If word gets out and it cannot be explained away, they feel trapped and suicide is an escape from the pain of confrontation. Also, some are not able to deal with family tragedy. Also, not much awareness that people know what sign are of someone who plans to commit suicide. Every case is different. There was talk of a suicide group or gang in the community.” One member summed it up when she said, “Life’s problems too much for them; try to escape; too much to handle.”

5.) Elders had their grief and sadness to contend to in the community as well. One elder complained about her sons and the hardships in supporting one of them. Some young people were cited as taking advantage of the elders as well either financially and/or emotionally. The elders were not respected as in days of old and seemed to be put aside and not listened to. Many had words of wisdom they tried to share but were dismissed by the young people. Elders talked about how the problems of the younger family members as well as the community really bothered them.

One elder shared, “the young need to get involved with the elders. There are now just a small number of elders who will talk to community members. The others keep doors shut. What I see is that parents don’t communicate enough (I try to do that). Communication is lacking. Everyone now relies on organizations to help them (such as treatment center), but individuals need to help other individuals.” An elder complained, “These are words of wisdom that elders would like to share but *who is listening?*”

The role of alcohol in the suicide of Inupiat men and women

As in the study of four villages and the impact on suicide (Reimer, 2002), alcohol played a major factor according to most of all the 36 participants in this Barrow study. Drugs were also mentioned as a factor that gave one the courage to “pull the trigger.” Some people mentioned that during the “blackout stage” people will do things that they normally will not do when sober and that there may have been some deaths that were really “not wanted” if the person was sober.

“Some who are sober have no recollection that they were going to kill self.” Alcohol “is a *can opener* and brings judgmental feelings in mind to make one more daring, stronger, and open up all feelings that were bottled up.” Another said, “it magnifies the person’s feelings and extends frustration so the incident seems harder to deal with; it lessens inhibitions and one loses control.

When one is drinking several mental/emotional states that are usually inhibited become manifested. A person becomes violent, mental thinking is not normal and one becomes powerful. Another said, “People hold things (in check) when not drinking. Drinking makes them more verbal, cuss, language and attitudes change, especially feelings. They carry through when drinking they think of it then follow through.”

Spirituality also was mentioned. Not only does alcohol “alters mind and then they don’t make right choices, it opens mind to enemies.” It also “Opens mind to bad spirituality. Makes you think negative thoughts and be stingy.” Some believed that it was a spiritual force, coupled with alcohol influenced one to commit suicide. One person said:

Yes, my relative took his life. He was in the war and was drinking and tempted by demons to take his life and so these forces took his life while under the influence of alcohol. “If they know the body is weak, they will attack him. It creates a passage way from mental to spiritual to be vulnerable so she had no power of him.

Another brought up the role of negative influences coupled with loss of identity and acceptance which led to depression and said:

Loss of identity, no purpose and acceptance. Mind is altered by alcohol, makes person more vulnerable to influence of Satan to make wrong choices, no hope, become depressed, negative thoughts like no one loves me, no one wants me, why go on living, why go on living and person takes own life.

One man said that after a relative died in an accident, he thought of suicide but thinking of the consequences on his family he chose not to but he emphasized how alcohol did open up his mind to negative thoughts and lessened his inhibitions. As a depressant, one person said that it removes inhibitions as it magnifies the person’s feelings and this is extending to incidents which become harder to deal with because of alcoholism and lessens the inhibitions “and one loses

control.” Alcohol, to some, was a way that people managed their depression, and as a “depressant is widely available, especially when traveling it is more accessible.”

One person said:

Alcohol plays a role in depression. Families do not recognize depression or suicide signs. Suicide attempts happen when you drink since it make you Macho man” and gives them confidence to carry out any plan they make. Events like death or any big event in family can cause depression. Your destiny is not what you choose it to be, it can change in an instant.

Moreover, relationships are also affected by alcohol use and add to one’s depression by making poor choices in choosing partners; using alcohol to deal with insecurities; pushing family members away and not realizing the reality of this.

Sadly, one person said:

Alcohol and drugs are related to poor relationships but also the substances help the person finally do it after they have thought about killing themselves and preparing to kill self. The signs of preparation are seen after the fact.

The youth are not immune to the scourges of alcohol abuse and suicide. An elder said that the young ones get drunk and then take their lives. It is easy accessibility for youth to get alcohol. At parties, minors are present, and “unless the house party calls police, the police don’t know about it so they don’t give minor consuming alcohol.” Police are limited by community members not reporting. One person said, “the youth will also retaliate and scare parents if they do not give money and do opposite of what parent s want. Kids get more depressed and parents don’t know what to do or how to cope and it hurts community too.”

One person mentioned that the youth may also be affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE) because no one talked about this when alcohol first came to Barrow. Some never got help in counseling to cope with these problems due to FAS and FAE and the problem became intergenerational.

One person summarized problems for youth:

Drugs and alcohol are a problem. There are drug dealers here. Parents kick kids out, but overdo it and children become distraught and feel unwanted. Friends become family. You fill in the blanks

so they commit suicide since family is not whole. Many young adults don't have a place to go and are in a closed capsule of hypocritical, sexual addicted, greedy, spoiled environment. Don't think of it as one thing (Alcohol and drugs), but there are these commercials on TV that brings you to a state where you feel left out. Young men lack of respect for their families, elders and ourselves. Young people have no where to go. They are drinking and white kids don't want them, they feel overwhelmed. Also alcohol – you are Native and it hits you differently, everything magnifies, whatever you are becomes magnified.

One person blamed the fact that there were no counseling to help and the problem with health care in general:

Our hospital is not helping because people are denied health care so some drink to eliminate pain and others say, "It is best to rid of myself of this life" because of their physical pain. There are vulnerable ages like last incident where there was no support for children and especially when one is drinking. No safe haven here. We need a Counselor and no programs here so have to go to Anchorage.

However some did not feel alcohol is the cause even though some felt it had everything to do with recent suicides. One person said, "Alcohol is a temporary solution to not feel. Yet, statistically, those who completed suicide were not alcohol related and yet another said "that 44% of the suicides in AK involved alcohol and here alcohol/marijuana plays a huge part in the recent suicides." Another said that alcohol did not play a role in all suicides and that "some just don't know how to handle life. Some try to hand on to Inupiat culture, but are impacted by western culture."

Another contradicted this by saying,

Yes, most suicides I know of were alcohol related. Some people use alcohol because of what happened to them as a child – like abuse. Some people have strong-holds like being stubborn, pride, alcohol usage, denial, blaming others and anything making you not willing to change.

Another said:

Alcohol is a "big play" in this. Remembers one froze in winter , another shot self while drunk and a young woman after graduation killed herself while drinking. Without a help of a counselor or talking to grandma this can happen.

However there were those who argued that:

Alcohol is not the cause of the problem but only way to deal with life situations and we already know 1.) how alcohol changes judgment and know how person will take life under influence and 2.) the Inupiat have inhibited themselves by having probation with this no one learns moderation because alcohol is illegal and they never learn how to drink socially and moderately.

Thus too many, “Under the influence of alcohol, they do it on impulse. They don’t know their actions, when their emotions take over, they just go with it.” And one person cites as she remember “how one froze in winter, another shot self while drunk and a young woman after graduation killed herself while drinking. Without a help of a counselor or talking to grandma this can happen.” One sadly concludes that “alcohol takes away from spirituality and from going to church.”

Spiritual forces that drive the person to suicide

There were five people who did not believe that spiritual forces could drive a person to suicide. Two people were not sure and four had heard about this from others. The rest of the participants did believe that there were spiritual forces that caused problems and could bother people. Some people believed that “wrong and bad daemons come in when drinking” as found in the Reimer study (20020).

One person believed there were evil spirits because a mother saw her own daughter after a drug incident full of evil in her daughter’s eyes and in her body. The mother went into another room with her sister and prayed. When she came out of the room, the evil had left her daughter. To this person, there is a strong relationship between negative spirituality and drugs, but also a strong relationship between spirituality and prayer.

Another agreed and thought that mind altering drugs may cause this. One woman heard voices that haunt her to take her life. “Life is not worth living anymore. There is an evil voice out there that would like to convince someone that their life is not worth living and therefore end it now. We know it is not real, a satanic voice. We get this knowledge from the Holy Bible. There are evil spirits, they are not dreams.” One of the reasons is “there are many demons behind us and

they can tempt a person to suicide.” This is because there is a spiritual warfare. One described this warfare as “a heaviness and oppressive spirit telling you that you are no good. The devil tells them to do it.”

One said, “Evil forces can put it in their thoughts, even those who believe in the Lord. I know of a few, they listened to this and committed suicide.” Another thought that people are influenced because “they are hearing voices and they start thinking that way.

To some the devil is very real. One person said, “The devil plays a big role. If he knows you are being bothered, he is going to bother you more. People don’t really think very clearly.” Another said, “There are spiritual forces that can drive a person to suicide. There is a spiritual realm that is active in society. If we don’t have a spiritual foundation, we get lost and can influence wrong spirits.” One person felt that the bad spirit was really from another human who committed suicide. “One person killed himself, and then the other did too. It is believed that the first person would not rest until, the other took his life too.” Another felt this was the devil impersonating the person who committed suicide.

There were some who were not sure and made ambivalent statements such as “Not really, if someone does not believe in God, they could get lost. No one really talks about this, but there could be bad forces, shamanism, and bad spirits. I think they are afraid to talk about it.”

The evil forces also made physical appearances. This person also mentioned shamanism as well described people who were chased by demons. “I have heard of people being chased by demons. Also bad thought brought on my outside forces can lead to attempting suicide. Years ago, at point Hope, I heard mention of negative shamanism.” Another said, “Evil spirits were in building. Could hear rumbling but after prayer the haunting stopped.”

One person saw physical evidence and also was delivered from an evil spirit and gave warnings about dissention within churches. She said, “Use Name of Jesus, then spirit leaves and person wakes up as a normal person.” She herself was delivered from an evil spirit. This person also

witnessed an indentation on mattress when something followed her. She said the name of Jesus and it left. She witnessed another evil spirit when her Church was divided, “there was disorder and a need for forgiveness and not have division among each other. The spirit of suicide can come.”

Another said that the spirits were everywhere whether we see them or not:

Lost spirits are lingering everywhere for the good and the bad. The ones who have committed suicide are totally lost in confusion and have to be in that state as they wander in this earth plane. It is like the woman who use to do certain things and she is still trying to do these things, like when she was alive.

Because these spirits are everywhere one must be careful, especially the weak and vulnerable. One man said that he strongly believe in Spirits. His mom told him not to leave the baby alone because evil spirit can enter in to the child. His uncle was always bothered by a spirit. He said, it is important to have Bible in home because the “Spirits look for weak and vulnerable people.”

Another agreed with the evil spirits attacking the vulnerable by what she called “familiar spirits” and often they impersonate a relative as mentioned below.

Problem with “familiar spirits” who come in form of relative to ask them to commit suicide. But they are not relative. There are demonic spirits that know you. Person who passes on may pass on the familiar spirit which is evil spirit that starts to oppress person. That spirit roams around and looks for dry dark place where person does not have Christ, the Light of the world or is filled with the Holy Spirit so one is doer of word and has gentleness, kindness, patience. If you don’t have this you become vulnerable and open for depression which comes from “familiar spirits” and bring 7 more spirits. That is why important to go to Church if someone passes on where family and friends can come for three days and support person with love so the depression doesn’t come in

Others felt that people can bring in the evil spirits unknowingly but they can be chased out. One person said, “There are spiritual forces and many kinds such as when people bring in the Buddha spirits in. You have to break the spiritual powers of these idols.” She has seen the Holy Spirit and the dark spirits. She commands the spirits she sees to leave because of a gift she has received where she can discern the good spirits and the *bright spirits*. She mentioned that one can get gifts if one is obedient to the Lord.

Evil spirits can cause people to take their lives and counselors should be aware of this as mentioned by one Inupiat woman who “knows for a fact and from experience that there are evil spirits that try to steal, kill and destroy lives and counselors should know that. She went on to say:

Some people who are sober don't realize that they are trying to take their own lives under the cunning influence of the evil spirits. Fear of being labeled psychotic, many don't tell both young and old. This lack of sharing goes on for years and makes one angry which is passed onto children. If abused, the abuse goes onto next generation.

The Inupiat do not feel helpless against these spiritual powers and suicidal spirits, and even spirits of pornography because of their Christian beliefs:

There is a suicide spirit, a false spirit that appears to people but this spirit is subject to name of Jesus. Some are weak and really need prayer since even after prayers, these people have choices. That spirit that is prayed out a person can come back. There is a spirit of pornography. Have seen churches cast out spirits and some of these spirits talk back to person praying over them. Many from Barrow witnessed this. Real warfare. Spirits can use people. Some people think you shouldn't stir up spirits. The spirits will search other people out so they can live in them. Must pray Suicide Spirit go to the pit.

One person did not believe it was evil spirits but had her own understanding on what was happening in the community and believed it was created by a collective grief experienced in the village:

I have heard of evil spirits, but I tend to believe that compressive energies that linger after death of person and puts heavy grief atmosphere all over. It is in the village, it is as if we are creating it by our own grief. Many continue to drink because they are afraid of their spiritual being and if sober have to face it, allow it to grow and deal with spirituality. People who sober go to Church rather than AA.

One middle age man felt we were responsible to stand up to the devil and wondered if a person with schizophrenia really was hearing voices from the devil. His own brother had schizophrenia and he often wondered if the devil got him to talk as he did to him.

He said,

Spirituality is here inside of head and we have a conscious like Jimmy Cricket. “I can talk to myself, talk from inside to outside, like devil. On one side and good angel on other. Lots of temptation. Must deprive ourselves to stay on the good things. Temptation is like a human trap or a cage to get something rather than hunt an animal and gets trapped after going after bait. We are like that and not as smart as we think we are.

One person didn't have much to say about this topic but blamed the spiritual problem onto alcohol and said, "Alcohol takes away from spirituality and from going to church."

What is in the Inupiat culture or spirituality that could help to prevent these suicides?

Everyone agreed there was something in the Inupiat culture to prevent suicide. Most mentioned a strong spirituality was important and this was from a Christian belief system. To the Inupiat their "Cultural belief system is Christianity." Another said, "Culture and spirituality go hand in hand... respect for others, Inupiat values, and prayer." Many mentioned that Christianity was important because Christianity embraced the Inupiat values such as respect for family and elders and children, even though "many youth don't know culture or have respect (for others)."

Another supported this and said: "Having a spiritual foundation through Christ Jesus – this is traditional now. Our traditions, values, and morals are in alignment with Christianity."

As in the old days when the people adopted the traditional spiritual ways and diligently followed the rules, in the same way, the people follow their adopted Christianity with great strength and diligence. Prayers are very powerful as one said, "Old people's prayers were answered. Speak those prayers in present and in future the prayers will be answered."

People were helped personally as related by this woman who embraced Christianity and her old cultural ways. Both helped against suicide:

My Grandmother introduced me to Christianity when I went to live with her and she helped heal me of my suicide wishes. I learned how to let go of the hurt and pain of my mother's death. My mother, I feel, is now right by my side. Cultural - Our Inupiaq culture and values are the foundation; culture make us stronger; hunting; helping elders without hesitation; compassion and love; respect for nature and animals; cooperation and working together. I talked two other friends out of suicide by reminding them of their family and younger sister. "Don't hold it in, let it go."

Another was helped by her spirituality and said, "When I found the Lord, my self-confidence returned. This personal relationship can help with suicide. TV and other things keeps you spiritually empty." One person was very enthused about Christianity and said:

Spirituality is being able to grow and blossom and be spiritually what you were born to be. It is opposite of TV that tries to help you look good or be intelligent and rarely hear about the

spiritually that helps us to grow. Many spiritual programs lose their spots because they are not rated as other worldly ones. Sunday is a time of rest and need to go back to this value and learn to be quiet, and find solutions to problems so one can be still.

The Bible and its teachings gave guidance and help and parallel with Inupiat cultural teachings as one person said:

In Inupiat culture we understand there is a “Flesh Man” and a “Spiritual Man” and these parallel with Bible which gives spiritual truths to build up our spiritual man which gives inner strength. Can use spiritual for wrong or be accountable and use knowledge of truth. Bible has this truth and can use it to be strong inside for Christ ways.

Yet not all held Christianity with such esteem and found problems and wondered about their old ways:

“I wonder if the old Inupiat traditions would be better. I believe in Christianity, but why didn’t God or Jesus help our family and let my mother die?”

Another said, “

In traditional culture, yes. In connection to earth and animals and subsistence it makes sense since it gives people a purpose. Most are just practicing converted Christianity now and not the traditional spirituality.

Another said:

Western man’s spirituality is different from Inupiat spirituality. Inupiat carry a spiritual sense and believe in their heart as long as they pray or go to church they are connected to God. You have to do things not just pray. Lots of hypocrisy, some are sincere and pray for you while others can be judgmental. There is lack of working together and need to come together to work together to get the community alive again.

One man found good in both Inupiat traditional spiritual beliefs and shared:

Confusion over culture and many are lost in this Western Independent and outgoing society while the Inupiat are more compact , more generalized and use to have the qargi for young men to attend. By generalized, I mean that as a group they find answers to questions.” In the old times the shamans were helping people find way in life, like a psychologist. Young men could go to them but now men are proud and don’t want ridicule but yet they need men to go to. I remember how my mother ‘s old teachings talked about good shamans who helped people and stayed with them for 24 hours and helped. Since then Christianity came and we couldn’t go through the channels that the shamans were using since they used spirit helpers. Now, Inupiat have accepted Jesus to help with the forces out there and praying to God. I have experienced answers to my prayers, especially when we were out in the waves after being warned by the

captain not to go out. We followed along and then knew the water was too high so we prayed and then something broke in the boat which made us go back to shore and not get hurt.

Another could not find the balance between Christianity and Traditions spiritual culture and said that this would be very difficult for the youth and some are “spiritually lost and have no spiritual guidance” and said:

There is a clash between Christianity and heritage because in one aspect shaman was someone who is our spiritual eyes, see future, change present and see past. On another spectrum, Christ teaches us about Heaven and Hell and angels and all this realm and still alive. They cancel each other out (Inupiaq heritage and Christianity) or are hard to grasp, it is mind-boggling for youth to leave the age of heritage and keep new beliefs.

There were suggestions for churches to “get people together and begin to dialogue”, and that it was important to know about God/Jesus and reading the Bible daily but “some go back and forth, church sometimes, when things are good they quit going. We all need a good positive force to drive us.” Some wanted the churches to have “more activities so kids won’t have to be by themselves for so long.”

Some felt the Inupiat values which could drive a person were not being followed, and said, “Youth and elders are not following these so we can compassionately guide us and influence us to direct our lives better.”

One person talked about churches coming together and the problem of cultural ways of acting that fail to help with suicide:

All churches need to come together and work together and have activities like picnic’s, camping as in her youth. Also, because of culture people are quiet and if they see a red flag they should report it and have a hot line to prevent suicide. People are shy and don’t want to speak out.

However, there were complaints that “most are practicing converted Christianity and not the traditional spirituality”. This person felt that it was important “to be in connection to earth and animals and subsistence, it makes sense since it gives people a purpose.”

The traditions are there according to this person but people have got away from the values and gave some advice about negative spirits and said:

The elders shared much, we have got away from values. Technology cause fast pace and instead of quality time with family, we give microwave pizza in front of TV and say “Don’t bother me”. Spirituality – A woman came from Teller, prayed because of alcohol and drugs – Why? Maybe we should go back to the spot where suicide happen – clean out negative spirits.

There were those who blamed community by saying, “support isn’t in community, they speak but nothing is done. This is the shortfall of community.” Others wished for cultural camps and involve more people in cultural activities and hoped the elders would speak of this. One said “About 5 years ago NVB had elders counseling and advising young people and their parents. Borough tried to send us elders to the other villages to do same thing, but it didn’t work too well. Don’t know what happened to this program.”

One complained that:

Cultural leaders and community leaders need to step up and help. Subsistence activities are culturally related. As a responder on the phone, I do not see any emergency calls during whaling season. Things stop, there are no emergency calls. Even with cultural events, negative things stop. Men are involved and it is positive. Police and ambulances are not busy during cultural events. Negativity starts when there are less whales. Problem is that the young people do not respect the captain like they use to. In the old days they listened to the captain and never questioned him. Kids do not listen and wives need to discipline the kids.

However young people could be helped through cultural activities supported by the community as mentioned by this person who said, “Culture can help. Hunting and subsistence are ways to keep kids occupied and to train them. I’d say 60% of high school youth do not have the chance to hunt and fish and go out regularly as they or family do not have dollars and/or equipment to do this.”

Also mentioned are the other cultural activities that could help. Cultural activities included hunting; helping elders without hesitation; compassion and love; respect for nature and animals; cooperation and working together; Eskimo dancing; subsistence activities, honor father and mother; cultural camps; elders talking to young people; getting together, being involved, and playing together; camping, picnics; getting ready for winter; and respecting each other, regardless of whether or not they are family.

Contributions for happiness and feeling good and what takes away this happiness and feeling good

Most of the participants mentioned family and felt that family harmony ; getting along; all being sober; celebrating, having dinners together; going out as a family on picnics or doing subsistence activities; children respecting and acknowledging parents and parents doing the same for children; family is doing fine as well as self; going to church; family, friends attending community events, especially cultural events, socializing; and contributing to the community contributed to happiness and feeling good.

Others mentioned: being young again and doing hard work for wife and family; going to college and getting a degree; knowing who you are and succeeding; getting and keeping a job; caring for Inupiat people; getting along in all relationships; letting go of resentments and not arguing; being sober and substance abuse free; being content with what you have; being sheltered from problems when young; relating to all kinds of people which opens up to new things; participating in activities, like sports and not being isolated; writing about life; letting go of past by praying; being joyful and “like the sun is shining on your face with warmth.”

One said, “it hurts when someone takes issue or feel you didn’t treat them right. It hurts me when others do not treat my family right.” One said they are happy when there are successes in the Borough while another complained about conflicts in the community but didn’t go into it.

Another complained about the leadership and said:

Ultimately, having a purpose is having something to do such as a job, having a family. The Inupiat leaders are not providing 1. Opportunities for young people. Example Over past 20 years day care has shut down. School Districts are being downsized of libraries and teacher aids and youth programs have been on and off for years. 2. Adults do not have things that other countries have such as energy jobs, wind-power, community services, public works kind of jobs, focusing on educating local community and employing them which is all a part of community economic development.

One person talked about suicides and said:

A sixteen year old relative who set her standards too high and didn’t meet them takes away from happiness. It was expected of her and caused too much pressure and eventually she tried to commit suicide. She got the idea from a friend , so she took pills. She told of other school friends who scratched and cut their wrists as a group thing.

An other mention that turning one's life around from drug abuse and admitting that one had a problem by turning to God for help. Others did not have family problems but were hurt seeing parents drink and smoke substances, "especially in front of their children." Others were grateful for that everything was available and another loved spreading the Word.

What word would you like to use during this interview for happiness or feeling good? What Inupiaq word?

a. The following is what participants used:

Fifteen said *aaregaa*; Two said *taku*; two said *nakurrunga*; other words used: *Quvianagniq*, *Quviasuk*, *Kii*, *Namaniq* (everything is available, nothing missing), *Uhvissugaksi*, *Qunnuinniq*, *Quiana IlKuveasakti*, *Quvainaq* (joy), *Quvaisuk*, *Aanaviivaavay*, *Uvlilluatagumantin* (have a great day) .

b. Point Hope people use the word Aaregaa, would you feel comfortable with this word?

Participants responded to this question by saying: Twenty-eight said *yes*, that they felt comfortable with *Aaregaa* while two said *Taku*, one said *Ahiyгаа* (Barrow way to pronounce) and two had no response.

What do you remember about your youth that made you happy and feel good?

Participants had a list to share, many evolved around subsistence activities such as: sharing; hunting; whaling and getting quota; preparation for winter; berry picking; camping and fishing; and doing it together with family and friends. One said that he was taught to give 90% of what he caught and if you do it will come back to you.

Family was mentioned by most of the participants as being important which included the extended family especially grandparents and even extending to the community so there was unity and harmony. Pleasing family members was important as well as family praising the children while growing up and families helping families. Closeness with family members by hugging, laughter and kisses was important and a Christian family was important as well as a sober family. One woman said it was fun to do chores together with other woman as they laughed and

had fun together. She said, “In this traditional way there was more teaching demonstration, and fun which made it so much complete” She felt that the Western culture was trying to say, “They tricked you”. By this she felt that they were saying “that this was only a way to pass on their culture which is more verbal and structured.”

One young man felt that “his path was full of optimism and not worrying about everything. For him , everything had seemed normal when growing up, even the dysfunction and the drinking. He did not know until he was older that his family was not whole.

Playing, competing, participating in school activities and playing outside with peers were also very important to make one feel happy. Athletic activities; reading; hanging out; being a class leader and role model; was also very important. Church going, praying, singing and going to Sunday school was important, especially for those who had dysfunction families and drinking was present.

One mentioned that it was important “to have a stable upbringing, love in house, forgiveness, no violence in home and community service such as making cakes and picking up trash.”

What do you remember about your youth that took away this happiness or feeling good?

Most mentioned drinking that tore the family and extended family apart with divorce, arguments, fights, conflict, sexual abuse, and other abuses and lack of parental guidance. One mentioned that alcohol and drugs were a problem in their village but they were able to take control by talking on the VHS and asking them why they were bringing alcohol and drugs to the village and they followed them around and finally they left.

There were many who remembered the deaths in their family and felt this really took away happiness and feeling good. This could be parents, grandparents, and other family members. Some felt that going to Boarding School and coming home from school and no one was in the house. Television and Bingo caused problems because there were no socializing and kept people separate. One was scared of White people when they gathered together, another mentioned

being needy and didn't have enough food. One was violated and because of this turned to drinking and even tried to commit suicide. Some mentioned that it was the devils work that tried to destroy the family through drinking even though this person was a strong Church member. Another mentioned they had problems and couldn't find a solution and not knowing where or who to ask for help. Also when people were jealous or they try to make you angry as well as confrontations.

A few didn't have much to say about this because they came from a good and happy family and this took them through life to feeling good and they felt blessed and came from a good Christian family.

What takes away happiness or feeling good today?

Substance abuse takes away happiness and feeling good for many as well as when there were deaths in the family, suicide, suicide ideation, and all of this because of mostly alcohol abuse. . One person was bothered when family could not cope with his sobering up and changing life and especially when the daughter said hurtful things about him. This bothered parents and elders seeing young people abusing substances as well as friends who were drinking too much and thinking of suicide. Some did take their lives. Some remembered parents dying and this still bothered them.

One young man said:

All the drama like people in school back stabbing you and going to four funerals a year. I could not get use to this. If something is missing in your life, you substitute it ... like people who have a great loss of death substitute it with a sense of being happy that person is in a good place but some don't do that. Also stress, and having a false sense of direction, being alone, secluded, being constantly asked, "What are you doing here?" Big question is where do I go and who do I best trust.

Another said, "Today too much alcohol use. Too much TV all night and sleep all day. My father got up at 4 a.m. every day to provide for us and this set an example for me."

Work was a place of stress too. One said, it was the present work environment and felt a need for Inupiat counselors and having open lines of communications with natives in counseling and crisis centers. “It is lacking here and no staff to counsel. Need counselors to understand Inupiat worldview, and search for culturally meaningful ways to explain things to clients presenting problems and also healing methods.” One was bothered because co-workers brought negativity to work another because they were not appreciated for the work done and one person felt that work caused pain seeing young children suffer.

One person wished “people would dream or imagine a better life to strive for’ so one can feel worthy and not feel hopeless. Another wished that in her daily life she could be still and have time to reflect on things that can “attach to a person.” She needed time to see if a feeling is her feeling or someone else’s. She said she “then can give back and lighten up and get rid of things not working anymore. Along these spiritual thoughts another said that negative thoughts caused unhappiness and “we as a spiritual people try to weight out and balance and try to understand good and bad and what we can do. What we do in present leads to a better lives.” Another said that not praising and giving thanksgiving to the Lord and not giving people hugs led to unhappiness. It was important to not wake up with bad moods and if so one needed to pray and get rid of it through the Word of God. “If you are in oppression or depression it takes away happiness and feeling good due to a problem that you can’t challenge self with.” One said that “When there is no love of God, you go in circles.”

Another shared a vision that had a great impact on his life and said:

Not much, except if anything happen to my daughter and grandchildren. When I was younger, I was in a pit of darkness through alcohol abuse. I had a vision as I looked in the mirror and saw my personal pit of darkness surrounding me – I was kind of mid-way and either way I looked, I saw the up and down of it with no end. The third time I looked I the 2-inch measurement and I knew that was the end of me if I chose to go in the direction of alcohol. After I saw the measurement, the vision went away from the mirror. I became very frightened of what I saw. All of a sudden, a colorful memory came to mind of me hanging on my mother’s handbag strap and

walking to church. After that I looked up to God and said “Lord Jesus, I can’t do this on my own. I never had a drink since then. He took desire away and the fear I would drink again. He did a divine healing and deliverance because I cried out to Him that morning. I was how close I was to going to hell because of alcohol.

Some were bothered by the way their elder parents were treated by siblings as well as differences between family members which caused arguments. Others complained that parents were neglectful of their children and were not setting limits or disciplining them. One was worrying about his wife and her pregnancy. He felt all this responsibility for family members, and worries about them and can’t spend as much time as he would like and this hurts. He mentioned that aging relatives can be difficult.

Relationship problems bothered some especially when there was vindictiveness, uncaring and disrespect. Relationship problems extended to the community as mentioned earlier and some were bothered by the conflicts in the community, especially the fact that there were no counselors. Others were bothered by other community problems as one said, “Seeing community situations not dealt with, people not happy, lack of cleanliness of town, job situations and economic problems. Things are not dealt with by Community Officials.

One person said, “I have mixed feelings and not able to answer that now.

How can the churches help or take away happiness and feeling good?

Many felt that churches helped one to pray and this was important to not only pray for self but for others since prayer is powerful. Prayer is “our best too today to guide you and give you wisdom.” One person said that God is “On It when one trusts God. He even helps those who pray for not good things (she noticed). One man came to God after he prayed for marijuana and all of a sudden it was on his steps because someone came for him to sell it. They became scared because God heard his prayers. This is encouraging.” The churches provided a place to pray and serve God. Church members could also pray with a person over the phone and give support by e-mail to lift one up.

Churches helped in the following ways: Good relationships to the pastor; reading the Bible and spreading the Word; channel for one's belief; good activities; an open place for people to talk; teaching the family; Sing- Along; understanding of Faith; bringing back spirituality; hearing positive things like "God loves you"; helping parents get involved with their children; place to find good people; place to lift burdens, praising, learning, , or repent. It is also a place that makes one "feel welcomed and not questioning where I have been or I have to act a certain way for God to help me."

Another loved church because it was a place to being with others and "being faithful and helpful....We walk out of our comfort zone and reach out on a daily bases to others so Lord can continue using you."

Another liked the positive messages they got from Church. It also helps the people to help themselves without "sugarcoating and helps parents to get involved with their children. Feelings are uplifted as well when attending church. Church elders tries to encourage others and are good to a person." One person said: " the church is the critical role in my life for joy and happiness." The person almost died but was saved and said, "the enemy doesn't want me around, but the Lord has more work for me to do."

One person said, "All the answers are in God, not the church. The churches are there to help guide us to God." Another felt the churches took the place of *quargi* "so one can talk and can go there and doors are wide open." Another warned that "those who go to church be careful what you say because many think these words can affect their very nature. One felt it is important to have gatherings at school and tell young people how proud you are of them.

Churches hinder in the following ways: Belittling other religions (like theirs is the only one or the best one; not involved with youth and community; no spiritual posters around town; not involved with elders and youth together; shouldn't force things on people; division and a need to bring different churches together, forgive each other and forgive past; no youth programs like in the past (West Minister); need more hands on situations, community services,; instill guilt and

fear and have close minds. “Some people are bisexual or homosexual and this is frowned upon”; and “it should be more organized, have volunteers to get things done. They should have a food bank, a bakery, a greenhouse, a clothing store to make things more affordable since prices are outrageous”.

Another suggested that there are more home visits to elders and youth and open the doors and be able to call the churches any time of day or night . Yet pastors were worn out when the suicides happened and they were called on all hours of the night to help counsel those who were grieving. One said, “If pastor can’t be available, have your elders or appointed members available.”

Another was bothered when the church didn’t have a welcoming spirit to those that don’t go to church. One person didn’t like it when people tell you, “Go to church or you will regret things.” Another thought it hinders when “things are talked about in church or a subject that is discomforting at a service.”

There is a need for more outreach to 18-35 year olds. Many do not go to church and are the “middleman” of the community so a “part of this community is missing.” One felt that the judgmental attitude was not good and wonders if the sermons really touch a person or does it go out the ear especially when people ask, “Where were you?” if you did not go to church. “Expectations are strong if you miss church.” Another didn’t like the judgmental looks and lack of forgiveness as well. Another was bothered by people making joke at a funeral and didn’t like it when some one committed suicide and the preacher said, “Where were you God when he committed suicide?” One felt the Church should be supportive to community and more available. Another said that because one doesn’t feel accepted by church people they believe that they will not go to heaven because of this mind set.

Lastly, one person had this insight. White people can’t impose their westernized world view. Some professionals mock Christian beliefs of Inupiat community. Once more White culture is trying to “guide” and influence the people’s belief system. Whites led them to churches, now they make fun of churches and classify these beliefs as “hell and damn fire evangelical fanaticism. Not good!”

Is there anything that the schools can do to help with this happiness and feeling good?

Respondents gave a variety of needs that went beyond just teaching the child but taking care of the child's physical, mental, emotional, social, cultural and even spiritual needs. There was a strong emphasis on providing good counselors, good teachers, and good programs to especially address the alcohol/drug problems.

The following are the requests: More groups and classes like prevention classes on teen pregnancy; dating violence; and "Youth Against Drugs and Alcohol and other alcohol/drug classes two believed that prayer would help with the personal problems of youth and wanted prayer meetings and prayer before breakfast and lunch. One said, "Allow freedom of speech with whatever religious beliefs". She was upset because when she tried to hand out some books at lunch hour on religion, she was stopped. She felt she was never helped by Inupiat counselors who shared her values and faith in the school.

Some wanted emotional support and have teachers support youth to succeed by having pep rallies that link/knowledge youth and their families, preparing youth for life after they graduation; teach responsibility for when they are on their own; help youth get over shyness; and evaluate youth to make sure they are ok and loved. One remembered when a teacher who scolded the student for bad behavior but that helped to think about this bad behavior. The teacher also encouraged and helped person graduate. Some felt there were problems with teachers not having a positive attitude, "If teachers are not happy, the students are not happy. Kids I talk to are not real enthusiastic about school. Teacher turnover is a problem. When teachers return each year, this has an impact on school, kids, community." Another hoped the teachers would be dedicated and said, "It is important for the schools to find the right teachers". One felt that there should be *teacher aides* because the "Outside staff and teacher's values are too different than others." One hoped that teachers would be more compassionate and not judge child because family is dysfunctional or alcoholic.

One complained and said:

System is so messed up. Teachers should realize it is not about the pay but the students. We need to have music as before and forget our problems and it is our way to shrug off our problems. As a youth I was not accepted because I was Inupiat and he felt lonely. The teachers laughed at me for my proud statement of being Inupiat. The teachers should understand what an impact they have on young people. When someone labels you, it is burned to one's core.

Some did not blame the teachers but felt that the teachers are providing cultural orientation to understand the youth and not labeling them "lazy" but are trying to find out why they are having a bad day. She wished parents would get involved instead of punishing them, but "feed them and let them rest, and get homework done but teachers must also stay humane and get a complete picture of the family." Some families are affected by alcoholism and have children who have Fetal Alcohol Syndrome problems. She went on to say, "Parents should not expect the school to discipline their children; this should be done at home." She recommended that counselors are needed at the 4th and 5th grade level who are contemplating suicide. She also complained that teachers/counselors do not stay in Barrow and there was a need to have their own counselors and doctors for support services.

Some wanted teachers to teach government and home economics and teach about all cultures, not just the Inupiat culture. One wanted more programs after school and better staffing with aids and librarians while another said, "Schools are already doing a lot of things, but they need more involvement by parents/community and be more open to student needs." Some felt teachers were there to teach classes and not change the lives of a person it was the parents responsibility to take care of the children and "it is up to the community to take care of the parents." Others agreed and wanted parents to get involved in PTA (there is not one) and have more interaction between parents and families. This person also wanted to have "Grievance debriefing to stronger for emergency status, especially if someone dies in high school or middle school." Thus having more counselors is needed since schools are an important place "for things to happen where kids spend so much time." The counselors were needed especially in cases of emergency.

Some suggested the importance of having culture supported by schools especially through immersion classes (had but funds dried up; provide a healthy environment so community could meet and come together; continue with the dances and supporting family values and Inupiat values; and make use of elders and outside people to talk to them and provide directions since some children may resent teachers for giving them direction. “Elders can change the child’s feeling without being a policeman or counselor. We can talk to them from the heart, not just in school, but in church too,” was mentioned by one elder. One mentioned that children need to be educated on making right choices about life and cultural beliefs and these teachings should be by Inupiat elders who can teach about culture.

One said:

Teach about environment, importance of elders, traditional ways, camps where teen learn subsistence skills, language classes that are interesting and relevant, more Inupiat teachers, teachers who are sensitive to the dynamics of the children’s social world, local youth groups, elders teaching parenting skills, community engaging young people , have community members feel accepted, supported and empowered. Assessing risk factors for suicide in culturally sensitive manner, peer group in schools talking about suicide prevention and mentoring youth. Being more open and form youth groups and encouraging youth and traditional activities for self identity and let youth be proud of who they are as Inupiat.

Lastly one person remembered how the BIA schools use to meet children’s needs by giving hearing test, eye test and helped young people get their glasses or go to the dentist. According to this person, “lots of kids need these services but are embarrassed to ask. Have recesses and more outings and not so much book work. Have fun at school, go sliding, and activities for all, not just athletics. Some are artists.”

3. Clarifying the issue of spirituality...more insights

a. Please tell me more about how you understand spirituality?

Spirituality was mostly understood in relationship to Christianity which is the major belief system among the Inupiat which was being closer to God and His Presence and righteousness, believing in God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus with His life, suffering, and resurrection. Other Christian beliefs were that if one accepts Jesus within one's heart, he will do the rest of the work; reading the Word and God will help ones spirit; one can be born again in the Spirit; teaches one to live a good and positive life; and guidance and wisdom from the Holy Spirit as one prays and spends more time with God on a one to one relationship. Prayer was very important at church and before meals,

One person said that she was a "Jesus Freak" but she didn't push her beliefs on others who don't want to hear it. She said, "I don't need no preachers talking to me about heaven and hell," she mentioned this quote was from a song. Another viewed spirituality as requesting for understanding, conviction, direction and strength in the Lord. On said, "I was raised as a Christian and could not have made it without Christianity in Barrow." Another felt grateful for "our special creation and the gift of reasoning and choice and ability to do the right thing." Another said, "It is many things like feeling very good and expressing spirit through high praise. It can be positive or negative in form. It can bring you up or down within the core of the body which enables individual to be alive."

Others saw spirituality in terms of culture. Other remarks were "It is powerful and is part of our culture; binds the people together;" "It gives me a sense of self and belief in self;" "When there is harmony in the community, the whale will come", uplifts you and keeps you from coming down and makes you confident; "and "helping and making positive changes in life. One said, "Ancestors knew there was a Higher Being and we knew how to treat animals and the environment which is with respect and treat others the same." Another viewed spirituality as how one feels which is "happy or sad or contented with themselves. It is not angry all the time, but happy and seeing good in all people." Spirituality was also "well being, harmony, being in

balance with environment and respect for all living things and power of good and how to access this but all do not see the spiritual world.”

One young person didn't understand spirituality yet. Another saw it as a philosophy since “no one can know what happens after you die.” He didn't think that spirituality was an answer to suicide but rather it was the responsibility of the government, the city and local community where one could get finances to help with prevention. He didn't feel that having faith in God made a person less depressed. “The job of government is to improve a person's lives in a healthy way. Maybe Government should make sure people are healthy, wealthy and wise, which are basic tiers of government.”

One person saw spirituality as going beyond Christianity and cultural spirituality to real experiences. She talked about houses that were haunted while growing up and even heard doors closing, babies crying, people yelling and “freaky stuff”. Her brother saw a dog with a human head and told brother to get out of the house. At another house that was haunted there were evil spirits that laughed and talked. She remembered when a whole town blacked out and there was no electricity and the stereo played evil Metallic music. She mentioned that this was the same place that a person had killed himself in.

Lastly one man talked about the existence of evil spirits as his mother had told him. He said, “God really exists and evil spirits exist.” His two brothers were told when they would pass away and both had said goodbye to him before they died of an accident. This man was in an accident and had literally died. He saw his two brothers but they said he was to go back “You have family and must lead a long life to take care of the children” and his work was not done. He heard from God, “Thou shall return.” He was back at the scene of the accident. Being his mother's favorite, it was important to be there when she died but he could not get there. He dreamt that night that he was holding his mother's hand and was once more in the beautiful light. He saw his grandmother too and God on His Throne ...”Son, go back home “ was said, and he woke up. He delivered his mother to Heaven , he said, and knows “there is a God.”

What Inupiat word best describes this spirituality for you?

Words and phrases are as follow that describes spirituality: olipibudid (I truly believe); “I pugla you” or “I greet you;” Jesus; word for sharing and hard work and commitment; aaregaa; Uqpiguide (belief), Nakuagutaa (God is love); “Be strong, be positive and a role model in your beliefs;” Angaiyn (prayer);

Upignayodi; Ukpigutiqagniq (to have faith); nakuuruq (Its fine); Only Jesus- kisimii Jesus, quiviasunmiq, aachuguruq; kuveasakti, ilitgusihidsuw (Holy Spirit); taikuu (thank you); Amen; ukpigutiqagniq; ayayu (dancing); and quyanaq ataniiq (thank you Jesus. Thirteen people either did not have responses or didn’t know.

How is spirituality related to happiness and feeling good?

Spirituality was related to happiness and feeling good through a natural spirituality found in the subsistence activities and nature and also through the Christian belief system. The Inupiat were able to integrate their spiritual beliefs found in nature and with Christianity as can be seen from the following remark made by an Inupiat man:

When we were taught to hunt and be respectful (to land and animals) Aaregaa – feeling proud. If you don’t talk, tension will build up. Whole village should get together. My seven year old son and I lost at sea. Son said “The Lord will guide us home”. I followed son’s directions and found the shore.

Spirituality helped because it made one: “Feel good inside;” “replaces my anger and stress;” “helps me to keep going”; “participate in activities with other people;” “camping and being with family on your own camp;” “having a spiritual family that is calm and caring making one feel safe;” “camping and being with family and getting what you need;” “ hunt and feed people in the community one’s catch; and being alcohol free.” One person said, “I feel good letting people know about quitting drugs and alcohol and getting spiritual. My life is so much better since I quit alcohol and evil doings.”

Spirituality helped in person ways as one person said, “When you carry something and finally let it go, my spirituality helped me do this, it lifted the weight off my shoulders.” Another found that

it was “the main reason why we feel good. It is the most important part of our being.” One man said, “If I’m not happy spiritually, then I’m not happy physically. I have never been spiritually happy since my mother died” was mentioned by another. One person said, “It changed my life. Before, I thought I was having a good time, but was only hurting myself.” Another joyfully said, “When we find truth, you can laugh, dance, be full of joy, it is addicting!”

One person provided a definition of spirituality by saying: “Spirituality is wholeness. Even I’m not happy all the time, but when I’m whole, I know there is happiness. Mind, body, soul, spirit are all there.” One said that spirituality and happiness is related because when you have a strong spirituality “then you have balance and in harmony with the environment.”

Having a belief in God, and His Son, Jesus was of major importance: It is a big deal to me to have a belief in God. He doesn’t give you more than you can handle: was said as well as “It brings joy. All goodness and light comes from Christ Jesus, faith, hope, and love.” Jesus is important: “Everyone needs Jesus, whoever they are;” believing that Jesus will do the work, but be very patient;” and one remembered that our sins killed Jesus and with that came grace and mercy and then one “can forgive people and forgive yourself.” Praying supported one’s spirituality and so “as I get older, I appreciate things more and not take things for granted by praying and being thankful;” and another said, “having others pray for me. I owe many in my journey who inspired me to reach out to others and understand others and those that came before me.” One said, “Without prayer, I wouldn’t be strong enough to do all the things I have to do during the day. Two found praise important, “Praising within spiritual self and the whole self. To refrain from negativity and live in the positive;” And “Going to church every day and fishing and boating. Enjoy life and praise God and listen to tapes.”

Christian spirituality helps one overcome depression: “It’s a relief that just overcomes. Saying Grace, it is a release of something that is depression.” Spirituality means “Forgiveness and God is love.... It brings the meaning of being happy and with meaning; you become content with being happy.” Another said, “What God instills in you and keep family in God. It makes me feel good to advertise God. It enlivens me.” Spirituality helps one become “more aware of what one

is doing. It was said that spirituality “Feeds me and I am alive in the Word. It is like a tree growing from a little mustard seed and you notice the change in yourself.” One said, “It does make you feel happy and good. Spirituality and life are *very close*; through the Bible and through a personal walk and relationship with the Lord.”

One non-Inupiat male did not feel there was a relationship between happiness and spirituality and said:

Freedom to ask questions contributes to happiness. With spirituality or Christianity, faith in a Creator; well, it is a rare person who can change their life. Most persons have to be forced out of bed to do something with their day.

Another believed that there was a strong relationship and said:

Yes, that’s where your Spirit is and it is fueled with goodness, love and support, and faith. You have Spirit and it leads to goodness and a stronger Spirit and a bigger heart. People are good, not goody-goody but accept who you are. You must be honest to be clear. Having a strong faith and spirit, you will have more heart.

4. Personal Strengths and Community Strengths

a. Personal Strengths

Personal strengths were cited in these areas: Religious, church, Christianity; Inupiat values and culture; Family; Personal attributes; Respect for elders; and Nature and Environment

1. Religious, church, Christianity such as: teaching youth about church; personal prayer; “God first; I have a higher power to depend on and I am not alone;” “My belief in Jesus and His help when I need it.” “Holy Spirit comes to help me, especially nowadays;” “Being able to pray and believe there is a God out there;” “Look toward word of God and song and the best;” “Believing in God keeps me going and knowing where my mother is;” “Faith and His fruits; God shows me what to do and I am obedient and also listening to the Gospel on Sundays helps me;” “My faith and hope; My spirituality;” “ I look at the Lord for my strength;” “ I know I am loved and accepted by Christ and no-one can take that away and this helps me stay focused on Jesus when

anything comes my way;” “ My faith; Just being who you are and praying;” Praying; “Prayer and having faith in God – God is the focal point in my life. Also, He is above all and I worship Him – Shamanism is black-magic and connected to the ‘other realm’;” “ My faith and I also have deep insights into spiritual matters;” “ I pray I;” “ Being spiritual and having a lot of faith.”

2. Inupiaq values and culture such as: living the Inupiaq values; “Trying to understand both the Western and the Inupiaq cultures;” “My desire and efforts to identify with the Native people;” “ My connections to my culture; Participating in cultural activities.”

3. Family such as:” my brothers, sisters and grandmother;” “great husband and our children;” “ taking of family relatives and myself;” “ my family;” “My family and children and enjoying watching them do what I taught them.”

4. Personal attributes such as: “feeling good;” “ keeping away from alcohol;” “ It’s like a seed planted in me by learning new things each day;” “ I do what I say I will do and I like order and not clutter and I like to be prepared and be strong inside;” “ Self-awareness and being happy with oneself – you have to know yourself and what you want;” “ I feel like I have to do something to benefit community and have a good work ethic;” “ I like to make the right decisions, being independent, my good and happy nature and being outgoing; “ “My ability to teach others; My ability to listen;” “ My ability to gather people together who can encourage each other;” “ My family; Faith and love most of all; Pushing myself to reach out to kids – I ask myself each morning ‘Who and what will I do to reach out to needy kids, especially young boys? How can I start a young hunter’s program?’” “Being positive; Being dependable, “listening to others and communicating in my family, being personable, getting my work done and I tell young people I work with how my life was and how my life is now;” “ My dedication and my intensity;” “My enthusiasm; I listen to people and give advice if asked;” “ I am an active listener, and have compassion and commitment and am flexible;” “ Am humble, honest, and never give up until I find a solution.”

5. Respect for elders: two mentioned this.

6. Nature and environment such as: Taking kids out hunting, camping fishing, boat rides, and ATV rides to keep them busy.

Barrow Strengths

Barrow strengths were cited in these areas: Family; Community; Elders; Leadership; Inupiat culture and values; Religion; and Other.

1. Family such as: “Families working together;” “ Family connection is still very important. They like to get together and have fun and they like to get together and serve each other well;” “ Have seen many families involved with their children. When I worked at the library, many of the youth hung out there because there was no place else to go and some people there did not like that.”

2. Community such as: “Working together and community in prayer;” “ So many entities that can help;” “ We can work on our issues together; Backs you up and does not criticize when doing something wrong; comes together for a good cause;” “ Working together; Family oriented and open-minded, we work together for common good. We also believe the poor, weak, widowed, abused, orphans need to be taken care of;” “ People helping each other out like one crew helping another. The whole community brings comfort to a family who has had a death. A tight-knit community;” “ By gathering together when there is a problem, people come together; Community activities, meetings, church, cultural activities, coming together and being with each other;” “ Need more men to take interest in needy youth and teach them subsistence activities – we also need a ‘War on Drugs’;” “Community activities, meetings, church, cultural activities, coming together and being with each other;” “ Coming together over issues such as the liquor store issue; If someone asks for help, community responds. Also feeds people;” “ Community is not prejudiced and adopts so many cultures;” “ Community strength varies on what part of town you are in. We never forget where we come from, never stop caring. There are so many classes in this town though. We really don’t hesitate when something goes bad to change it to good.”

3. Elders: “They have resiliency and created the many things we now have, however Borough has less money than in 80’s so things are going down;” “ maintain respect for elders and the land;” “ always being courteous and having strong wisdom and respect for people and elders.”

4. Participants said the following: “ Strong leaders and young leaders as well;” “ Good leadership that strives to make better activities for the community;” “ Some community members are passionate and strong in what they do;” “ Why is their alcohol in Barrow? I think leaders drink and don’t want to stop. We used to have young people patrol and help the elders and also help other youth. We need that again;” “ Have less conferences. There is lots of talk, but no action by leaders. They need a good commitment to really help. Leaders have the strength, but are doing nothing. Who is willing to get down and dirty at the low grass-roots level. Those of us who are trying to do something need the help of our leaders to take responsibility and help us out;” “ biggest hindrance is sober leaders and leaders who will walk their talk – remember that you are servants of the people and not serving just yourselves.”

5. Inupiat culture and values such as: “By getting back the language and cultural activities;” “Barrow is multi-cultural with different cultures working together – this provides many cross-cultural experiences;” “Incorporating Inupiaq way of life to modern ways and recognizing importance of preserving culture;” “Unified as Inupiat people and still have culture that we actually live and participate, which give us an identity;” “ Gatherings like Naluktaq or Eskimo dancing; Eskimo dancing; and Traditional culture still alive and is passed on.”

6. Religion : “ Prays together at church – start over and get together;” “ It would be nice to have all churches as one;” “ Their faith; The fact we all believe in Jesus Christ;” “ Coming together to pray;” “I would like to see the churches get along without politics. We only come together when something is happening;” “ Lots of churches to pick from;” “ Sing-spiration, woman’s ministry, and fellowship;”

7. Other: “Need to have counselors come to Barrow not for gain, prestige, or personal needs but to really delve in the Inupiaq ways and ways of thinking and that they serve with a true desire and compassionate nature to help our people and stay here – I feel personally deceived;” “Community potlucks, Working, hunting, camping together, being positive and unity;” “Lots of hunting and subsistence living;” “Sense of connection and kinship, love and respect for the environment and land, humor, hope, acceptance and tolerance.”

Discussion

As in the Reimer study (2002), reasons given for suicide are complex, historical, and holistic in nature. Two different worldviews clashed when the Europeans and Euro-Americans arrived in Northern Alaska and began interacting with the Inupiat. The Inupiat values and spirituality were tribal and collective whereas the Europeans values were individualistic and possession-oriented. The Inupiat culture was completely transformed when the Europeans first colonized this region and brought with them their religion, education, social systems, economics, legalities and law, subsistence regulations, and language (Reimer, 2002). In the Reimer study (2002), participants mentioned that the Inupiat people were looked down upon, degraded, and the culture was not valued it was judged to be inferior. One male elder said that the high rate of “suicide is a spiritual problem and a collective problem causing Traumatic Shock for over a hundred years.” Barrow participants did not voice this trauma of cultural change as many Inupiat villages in Alaska have but they did give indication that there was a relationship between suicide, alcoholism, and spirituality.

The participants who were interviewed or talked with informally generously and sincerely shared their views about why there were so many suicides recently in Barrow. Each of the participants were genuinely concerned and wanted to help alleviate the pain for others as well as for themselves. Many cried and most needed time to just voice their feelings and concerns and have someone to talk to. Some asked if they could continue the discussion and some came for counseling afterwards/ they were relieved that they could speak to an Inupiaq counselor. The results of what they shared speak a volume on why there are so many suicides. On the surface, the reactions to the question of: *why so many suicides* seem to indicate that they were all

relationship problems. Yet, as the interviews progressed and open-ended questions were asked in relationship to alcoholism and spirituality, participants gave a wealth of information on the relationship between alcoholism and spirituality and the erosion of their culture and values within the person as well as in the community. Also integrated in this discussion are informal discussions from the activities planned (Talking Circles, discussion with elders at the Senior Center, youth meeting, Community Prevention meetings, and informal discussion with community members at gatherings and church meetings) to give a holistic approach to discussing the results. See Appendix C for all activities that helped researchers gain an understanding of the community by formal and informal discussions.

The strengths of the person as well as the community were discussed and there were many. It is our purpose to stay focus on these; since it is important to build on the strengths of the community and the person. However, in respecting the participants' comments and concerns, the complaints and negative issues within the Barrow Community also need to be addressed, faced, and hopefully changed to help build healthy families and a healthy community.

The fact that there have not been suicides in all these years in this community compared to other Inupiat communities (Reimer, 2002) testifies to the fact that the strengths, both personal and community, have been in operation and helped in the past. However, with the recent suicides, the resiliency factors need to be examined and questions on *what has changed* and *what is needed* needs to be addressed.

Research does support strengths or resiliency to be important in helping Indian communities cope with all the problems they have inherited throughout the years (Graham, 2001; Long & Nelson, 1999). The term has been defined in many ways. It is seen as a way to adapt in spite of adverse circumstances or obstacles (Klarreich, 1998). Resiliency is not a state of being but rather a process (Masten, 2001). Others mention it as a protective mechanism in relationship to risk situations (Newcomb, 1992); when used person becomes stronger and develops creative ways of coping (Luthar & Zelazo, 2003). "All of their experiences are viewed as educational because they contribute to one's growth in ability to deal with future problems (LaFromboise,

Hoyt, Oliver, & Whitbeck) p. 194, 2006,).” The three factors that influence the individual are the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and the community with culture influencing all three of these factors (Delgado, 1995). LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver, & Whitbeck (2006) mentioned that the three protective factors to promote resiliency for American Indian youth was enculturation, maternal warmth, and community support. La Fromboise, Hoyt, Oliver, and Whitbeck (p.205) reports that “making improvements in any one of these three areas would foster resilience , making additional progress in the other domains (discrimination being one) would add to the cumulative benefit.”

The impact of alcoholism on spirituality and the dysfunctional rules on person, family, and community

The fact that there are so many suicides *now* indicates that the balance between strengths and weaknesses are no longer serving the community to prevent suicide. The erosion of culture, spirituality, and the introduction of substance abuse (mainly alcohol) have slowly harmed the strong family ties and support system that once was prevalent in this community. Slowly, the alcoholic family system has replaced the wholeness of family and the strong spirituality for some families and community members. Rules from the alcoholic family system (Ackerman, 1987) of *don't talk, don't feel, don't trust, and stay in denial* seem to have replaced the family that would share feelings, talk, trust, and take responsibility for one's life. From what the participants said about the community, these dysfunctional rules were not only applicable to the person but to the community and its organizations as well.

The alcoholic family system that was first impacted years ago due to previous members of the community drinking; left their legacy of dysfunction to the current families which have little of the support of times past through the cultural teachings, activities, and community support system. The fact that there were no support system or suicide prevention teams during this time of grief and support from the outside had to be flown in for a short period testifies to the fact that there was not an on-going support system to help with the stages of grief that takes time and on-going sharing of feelings and other struggles.

The Talking Circles (3 of them) and the Suicide Prevention Meeting (people could not plan at the first meeting because of the need to talk and share feelings) testifies to the fact that people need to *talk, feel, trust and get out of denial*. In fact, in the literature treatment for those raised in an alcoholic home recommends that these children of alcoholics develop stable and consistent relationships with significant others that are outside of the family (Bennett, Noonan, Teitebaum, Wolin, 1980) There is a need for more support systems be developed to prevent more suicides.

The interviews with people requesting personal psychological help from an outsider (me) again testifies to the need for support services, especially in times of crisis and after a crisis has happened since grief comes in stages. Thirdly, in the interviews it was mentioned that there was a need for more support services. Lastly, during the initial Core Group meetings, participants who attended needed the first meeting to just vent, cry, and talk about how the suicides affected them. For some, it was more important to share these feelings than talk about prevention and to plan. Thus, the goal of planning was abandoned for the first two meetings so people could share their feelings and express their grief and confusion over the suicides.

The churches were praised for all the good that they have done throughout the years and without the firm belief that participants had because of the churches, there could have been more suicides. The literature supports this by recommending moderate to high religious observances for those growing up in an alcoholic home (Bennett, Noonan, Teitebaum, Wolin, 1980) But, because of some of the teachings of the churches on suicide, there were those who once more followed the dysfunctional rules of not *talking, feeling, trusting, and staying in denial* because of the guilt they had experienced through the Church's teachings. Like in the Reimer study (2002), people wanted to talk about their dead relative but feared that they were already in Hell and so *what was the use*. Unfortunately, without talking, this leads to unresolved grief and thus depression often follows. For the Inupiat, it is important to express feelings less they become explosive while drinking and creating violence against oneself or others as participants mentioned.

Schools were praised and also criticized. Teachers coming in from the outside are not prepared to offer support to students who were crippled because of the ongoing abuse, neglect, and lack of parental support and guidance due to drinking and other family problems. Again, the literature supports maintaining healthy families with their traditions and activities (Bennett, Noonan, Teitebaum, Wolin, 1980). Many teachers are not able to offer or to integrate culture and ways of believing into the learning environment and teaching. One student had been cutting herself for years and this was not ever noticed by any teachers. Other students showed indications that they were contemplating suicide but again they were not noticed by the school staff. School was not a safe place *to talk, to trust, to feel, and get out of denial*. Other schools have adopted after school programs to have group sharing in both culture and prevention which have helped many students through their personal problems while growing into adulthood; unfortunately, respondents complained that there were not support programs in the school.

The major complaint against the leadership of Barrow and other organizations was that there is not an open communication system within the community. Participants complained there was fear in communicating community concerns (*don't talk rule; don't feel; don't trust and let's all stay in denial*). Community members (5) were really stressed (mentioned in the interviews and also in personal conversation during our two week stay) because of the tension of not working in an *open system* where one can express personal thoughts and not be reprimanded for doing so. Others complained of the lack of leadership to help alleviate all the personal, emotional, family, community problems due to the erosion of culture because of alcoholism. Even though Barrow allows permits for bringing alcohol in; bootlegging still takes place, and some mentioned that leaders, who, as soon as they leave Barrow start drinking and are not good examples of sobriety. One wished that people could follow the example of one community which followed the bootleggers around until they left the community and the community could remain dry.

The problem of alcoholism also created a series of problems as cited in the results that affected the whole family stages of development from pre-natal, infancy, early childhood, childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, adulthood, middle age, and late age. This is summarized in the results and continues to point its finger at the family dysfunction due to loss of culture and a

major player in creating this destruction of the family as alcoholism and the family dysfunctional rules that are passed down from one generation to the next. A healthy family is able to discharge painful events that all families experience, be it a death in the family, sickness, accidents, relationship problems and personal problems through communication and expressing the emotions of fear, anger, hurt, or pain. In a dysfunctional family system, these feelings are not discussed and repressed, leading to depression and violent behavior.

In the old days, the *quargi* provided a place where men could come together and talk and share feelings and have a support system to share personal feelings. In this research, many complained that it was the men who did not have a place to share their feelings and some were never taught communication skills and did not know how to communicate personal thoughts and feelings. Their own families did not provide the place where they learned to share their intimate thoughts and feelings and it was alcohol that allowed them to break a family dysfunctional rule and *talk, share, feel, trust and get out of denial*. Women, on the other hand, matured earlier and were able to share feelings with one another. Most of the suicides were males who took their lives. In the Talking Circle's that were experienced, both men and women requested that this method of sharing to continue. This method fitted into the cultural norm which is by nature, personal, truthful, and sharing if one is given the right environment to do so.

Participants, during the interviews, had a plethora of information on the relationship between alcoholism and suicide. There was much information on the relationship between alcoholism and spirituality that also caused a person to take one's life. Like the Reimer study (2002) participants firmly believed that there is a spiritual world where good and evil are in war against each other and the evil can come and deliberately come and entice a person through thoughts and sometimes visual or auditory infiltration of the person's senses; and especially if one is under the influence of alcohol or other substances. Most saw even mental health problems such as depression coming from a negative source. One young lady described the process: One drinks, gets depressed, then oppressed, and then finally tempted to take one's life.

Some believed that “familiar spirits” may come and haunt a person to take one’s life. The majority felt that the influence of the dark spirits were more subtle and came in the form of depressing thoughts, mixed with alcohol’s influence, caused a person to take one’s life. Some wondered if the person who was under the influence would have chosen if sober not to “pull the trigger.”

Many shared their strong spiritual beliefs that were both Christian and traditional that helped them to remain in the spirit of hope that whatever was bothering them would pass because of their firm conviction of obtaining spiritual help be it from God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit or from the strength of their traditions. Natural spirituality or traditional spirituality came from many sources such as activities, values, living the right way, singing, being happy, and the environment. Going to church was important but also following the subsistence lifestyle within the family and close community system. When these activities and family activities were absent, there was a huge vacuum which left a person feeling alienated and depressed. The schools and churches in the past supported these natural ways but some complained they no longer supported this kind of spirituality which also “fed the spirit.” When asked what brought happiness and feeling good in the past, most discussed the family gatherings, the subsistence activities with camping, hunting, berry picking, fishing, and playing outside.

Instead of these healthy activities being a part of daily life, people complained that they were spending too much time watching television, computing, and being isolated so parties and drinking became an outlet for frustrated feelings and boredom. Many wanted to see something done for young people so that they could experience a natural way of sharing and communicating and having fun without alcohol or substances. One person noted that many youth and their families have no money or equipment or supplies needed for camping, hunting, fishing; thus they do not go out. There is a need for the community to address this.

There was strong indication that the spiritual to be healthy needed to support the emotions, the physical, the social, the mental and the environmental activities once common among the Inupiat. Spirituality for the Inupiat is the fundamental principal that undergirds all these

components of a human being; when operating fully, a person is fully alive, happy, and a blessing to others. Prayer, reading the Bible, singing church songs, and ministering to one another was the engine that kept the spirituality of a person running smoothly. In this study as well in the Reimer study (2002), the Inupiat had embraced Christianity and were able to integrate what they considered spiritually important from their culture to live healthy and full lives. The churches needed to understand the traditional ways of a healthy spirituality according to some respondents and support the kind of activities that led back to supporting healthy families.

Children, who were caught in the dysfunction of alcoholic families, needed the churches to welcome them into some environmental natural activities so they too could experience the healthy Inupiat way of living. Schools could also integrate these activities into their teachings and provide activities that embraced the cultural environmental activities as well. The leadership of other organizations, needed to integrate the holistic approach to living which is considered by many, Spiritual.

The depth of spirituality among the Inupiat has just slightly been explored. Judging from the various Inupiat words that were discussed, much more can be learned. Respondents were at first perplexed by the question but soon began to engage in deep and thoughtful insights. What was evident from these conversations was that those who shared really believed and had spiritual experiences that were *real* and *life changing* and given the chance, wanted to share these feelings, insights, and teachings with others. Feeling good or *aaregaa* was caused not by material reasons but because of the basic spirituality that the Inupiat followed and shared within the family. This spirituality had its earlier origins in the natural world through subsistence activities and a belief system to support the subsistence; later this spirituality integrated the Christian way of living which supported their basic value structure of the importance of family, helping others, and being happy. Jesus replaced the Shamans who at times placed heavy burdens on the people. Jesus is a reality for the majority of the Inupiat in Barrow. If this is the basic worldview of the people then it is important that their worldview is supported by not just the churches but also counseling and the schools and the leadership of Barrow by providing

activities, teachings, and encouraging proper conduct based on the values expressed by these people.

Strengths of Individuals and Community

The final questions evolved around what were the strengths of the individual and the community. These are the resiliency factors that are important for suicide prevention that are in tact in Barrow. Such as, families and community working together to solve problems; having young leaders and strong leaders; possessing many cultures and being able to share them; strong churches; community working for the common good; and the “sense of connection, kinship, love and respect for the environment and landscape, humor, hope, acceptance and tolerance.” On person said, “Community strengths varies on what part of town you are in. We never forget where we come from, never stop caring; there are so many classes in this town though. Always being courteous, having strong wisdom and respect for people and elders. We really don’t hesitate when something goes bad to change it to good.”

Participants shared many personal strengths and community strengths. From what was said, it meant that there was much to build on within the community and support the person through the life span if the families and organizations will come together for the good of the members and let go of their personal agenda’s. However, some complained about leadership and having leaders “Walk their Talk.” This means role modeling for the families an open system where people can talk, trust, feel, let go of denial and expand on all the good that is within this community. The personal strengths and community strengths really show that the Inupiat values and lifestyle are still present and Barrow is strong as well as the people. Yet work must begin and some changes made; the spirituality that undergirds the life of the Inupiat needs to undergird the motivation and support of the organizations as well.

At this time, according to what was said by community members, the community needs healing and needs a direction to begin the process of healing and embracing the true Inupiat ways. The following are some recommendations.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations based on the results of this study, the activities participated in July, and the final discussion of this paper.

In late July of 2009, a community preventive leadership approach was well accepted by various organizations and community members. There was enthusiasm and willingness to help with the problem but leadership is needed to help these members in their initial year of working together. A planned and supportive effort is needed as this group begins to plan and make choices to support a healthy system of community healing and involvement. A Prevention Team (Core Group} was started with two meetings held and supported by John and Catherine Reimer.

This group is ready to take the leadership but they expressed a need to have some support from other community organizations. The Churches at this time have been very much involved. They have expressed a desire that this be a community involvement and not *led* by any particular agency. The elders were involved in the initial meetings and supported by their presence, enthusiasm, and teachings what they would like to see happen. Hopefully, they still will be informed and welcomed to come to each of the meetings held in the future. It is recommended that someone from the community or an outside person will come and help facilitate the meetings so that members stay on task and also helped financially to begin to plan activities to support suicide prevention. Members should include all ages so that the young can speak for the young and the old can speak their needs. A planned activity for suicide prevention should be implemented this year so that the community will know that there is a suicide prevention program that is encouraging life and support for the community of Barrow. This activity should be based on what the participants described in this research on *what makes one happy and feeling good*. Participants planning this event should study this particular result of this study to decide and vote on what the Prevention program wants to work on.

It is recommended that each of the sections of this paper be reviewed; particularly the results of what participants had to say. The solutions for the suicide issue is quite clear and it is within what the community members are saying and what they know; not based on someone else's suicide theory. Each of the sections can be discussed at the Suicide Prevention Core Group meetings that began in July, 2009. From these recommendations, planning and strategic development can be developed during the coming years to begin healing throughout all the stages of development of the human person. It took a long time to create this dysfunction within the community; there has to be a developmental plan to do something about it and not let it continue. In particular, the question for the Core Group is – “What can be done right away and what will take more planning and resources”.

All organizations need to be involved and study the suggestions that were given for each organization and listen to what the community has earnestly requested from them. Moreover, it is recommended that all agencies organizations be involved to begin healing the dysfunctional family rules of *don't talk, don't feel, don't trust, and stay in denial*. This means that healthy ways of communication are encouraged, especially in the family, school system and classes, churches, and all organizations and agencies. Since the Inupiat values and Christian values are very strong among individual members of the community; these need to not only be discussed but followed through in action. It is recommended also that spiritually based Native American work environment trainings be incorporated at Barrow to create creative and spiritual and healthy work environments. The Inupiat values can be incorporated into this training to be tailored made for Barrow.

Since this has been reported as a spiritual problem, a united community effort must begin to support a strong Inupiat spirit of healing and lifestyle. Prayer from the churches and members is equally important to change the dynamic of the community which has been under stress and a strong atmosphere of “grief” as one person commented on in this report. Inupiat spirituality, which is Christian and natural, needs to be implemented in counseling and in the schools. Since Christianity cannot be part of the school system, then maybe the churches might want to begin their own school or have after school programs that are fun and creative for the youth in the

church buildings. Certainly, the schools can implement more cultural activities which are spiritual in nature into their programs so a healthy holistic model in the schools is adopted.

It is important for everyone to support all efforts to provide a safe atmosphere for open communication in all areas of Barrow, especially for young men must begin immediately to prevent future suicides among the younger men and women. Talking Circles and other ways of sharing is encouraged. Even beginning a traditional place (*quargi*) where men can gather and work together on some subsistence projects would be encouraged as was found in the Reimer study (2002). Elders from another community mentioned that some of these subsistence teachings and making traditional instruments for subsistence could be done at a church building. It was important that men could just begin to feel comfortable with each other. Women can do the same and have a time for talking and sharing.

Suicide Prevention, parenting classes and other classes to build up the family structure should begin immediately. *Children of Alcoholics* and *Adult Children of Alcoholics* should be taught and all members of the community encouraged attending since children of alcoholics are at a high risk for suicide (Treanor, 1988; Barnett, 2003). These classes should be fun and creative so that parents will want to come back and also support each other.

To support spirituality through the natural environment and family cohesiveness, it is important that there be more hunting and outing activities for the young people and those families who cannot afford or will not take their young ones out, it is recommended that other families do so. This could be organized and helped by the churches coming together and supporting these kinds of activities. As one person commented, “there are no suicides during whaling season.” Bringing back fun experiences are important as well as traditional activities such as teaching the young to dance and drum.

It is highly recommended that Inupiat counselors be hired. If they cannot be found, then a Counselor Aid program, with Inupiat counselors can be started and members of the community trained. It is important to have consistency because in treating a problem of children raised in

alcoholic homes, and even adult children of alcoholics, it is important to have a stable relationship with a significant other outside the family system. These aids should come from Barrow or the villages so that there is not such a high turn over of counselors in the Barrow.

Other recommendations would to develop job opportunities for the Natives of Barrow; helping those who have been incarcerated to find jobs and get rehabilitated; support families by teaching about culture and having Family Home Nights (as Mormons do each week), support the elders and give them a chance to use their wisdom and knowledge; provide culture training camps and learn about old leaders and values; and teach about spirituality and pray for those who have passed on and bless the places where a suicide has occurred. Research supports having practices that family are involved in such as traditions, family vacations, mealtimes and holidays (Bennett, Noonan, Teitelaum, Wolin (1980).

Moreover, talking about suicide, prevention on what to look for in potential suicide victims, a hot line, building on resiliency factors of the person and community are a must; but also important is to build a program on the recommendations of the participants of the community and on their insights on how to create healthy communities again is the most important way to prevent suicides in the future generations and begin to heal the community so that the *aaregaa spirit*, so important to the Inupiat, is everywhere. The Inupiat values of *caring, sharing, and respect* need to shine within all the organizations and agencies, and the organizations and agencies need to support each other to create a positive and healthy work environment and provide an example to family and individual members of the community.

Conclusion

The Inupiat have a strong instinct to survive and thrive in the harshest environment in the world. Some Inupiat have lost that instinct to live. Our task was to conduct interviews with community members to find out what they know, think and believe about this tragedy. The interviews completed here as well as informal discussions in Barrow provide clues as to why! The local people in Barrow know the reasons why and, in their answers to the interview questions and

informal discussions, provide clues about what to do about suicide, alcohol, drug abuse and other tragedies hitting this and other Native communities.

Suicide is a local tragedy that must be solved locally. There are no all-inclusive programs out there that can just be applied to Barrow. There are many causes and problems that need to be addressed one at a time. We highly recommend that the community support the Community Suicide Prevention Team (Core Group) to begin to study this document and begin working immediately to develop programs that build on the resiliency of the people but also eliminate the problems that are not supporting healthy and well families, organizations, and the community as a whole. Moreover, it is important to build skills for the whole community, throughout the lifespan, to support the Inupiat way, the values, and communication that supports *trust, feelings, talking about problems and finding solutions, and facing the truth, thus eliminating denial and ultimately, suicide.*

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APPENDIX A

Number of interviews – 36

Age Range – 18 to 86

Inupiaq	- 31
Other	- 5
Male	- 15
Female	- 21

Ages 18-24	- 5
25-35	- 3
36-45	- 10
46-55	- 14
56-65	- 2
66-86	- 2

APPENDIX B

Tasks Completed

Conduct 36 interviews with community members.

Compile the results of each interview into one document..

Met with the legal providers group on July 22, 2009.

Met with the Assistant Mayor of the Borough and the CEO of the Borough on July 22, 2009

Met with church leaders for core group involvement on July 24, 2009.

Establish and train the Core working group – July 27, 2009.

Called and notified members of community to attend the first core group meeting and potluck with the public on Tuesday, July 28.

Develop first agenda and prepare Core Group for potluck and meeting with community members – July 28, 2009.

Met with Allied Health College students.

One-on-one counseling of individual youth, staff, elders.

Conducted 3 Talking Circles (workers, community members, Church group).

Two meetings with elders at the senior center, during lunch.

Spent many hours identifying and calling community members for interviews and for meetings.

Voice Dialogue Training for suicide prevention.

Informal talks with individuals from the above list as well as community members at the store, at church services, and at airport.

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

Questions

There will be two general questions with probes used throughout the open-ended questions:

Questions

There will be two general questions with probes used throughout the open-ended questions:

1. Could you tell me some reasons why you think Inupiaq men (women) take their lives?

- Do you think alcohol plays a role in the suicides of Inupiaq men (women)? If so, how? If the following does not come out in the interview, then the participants should be asked the following:

- I've been told from my relatives that there may be spiritual forces that drive the person to suicide. What have you heard about this?

(If no experience) What do you think about this as a reason to commit suicide?

- Is there something in the Inupiat culture or spirituality that could help to prevent these suicides?

2. What makes you happy and feeling good? What takes away happiness and feeling good?

- What word would you like to use during this interview for happiness or feeling good? What is the Inupiaq word?

- Point Hope people used the word aarigaa, would you feel comfortable with this word?

- What do you remember about your youth that made you happy and feel good?

- What do you remember about your youth that took away this happiness or feeling good?

- What takes away happiness or feeling good today?

- How does the school help or take away happiness and feeling good?

- How does the community help or take away happiness and feeling good?

- How does the Churches help or take away happiness and feeling good?

If the issue of spirituality has not been raised and clarified for the participant, then one can use the following as probes to explore the issue.

- Please tell me more about how you understand spirituality?

- What Inupiaq word best describes this spirituality for you?

- How does spirituality help with happiness and feeling good?

3. What are your strengths?

4. What are the Community strengths?