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Context

- The year 2020 has been a difficult one for many people. The arrival of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has shaken up ways of living all around the world and has brought stress to people and to relationships, not sparing Canada, Quebec and the communities of Nunavik.
- The pandemic and its consequences bring another challenge to communities already facing their load of difficult issues.

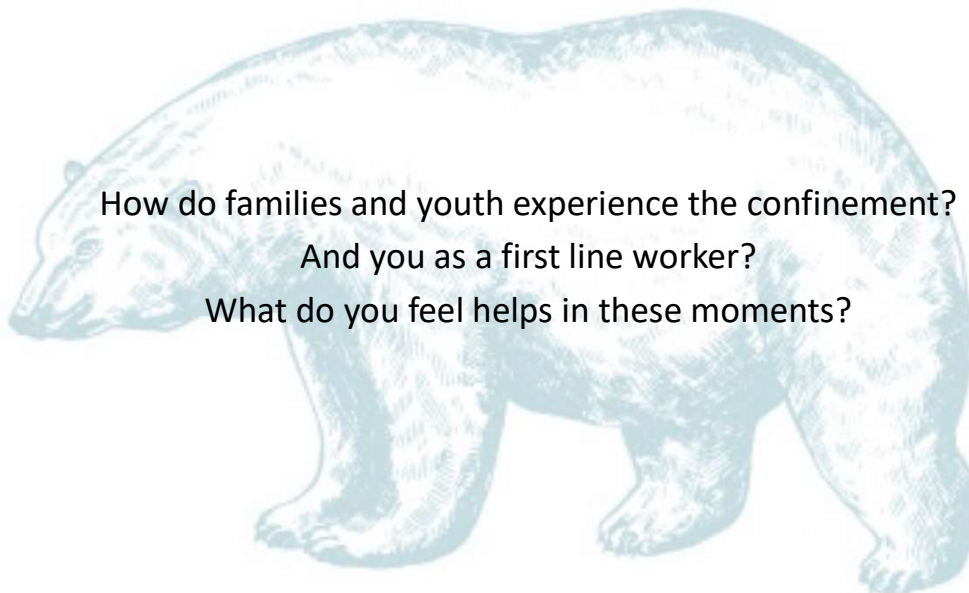


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Context

- Confinement, a condition now recognized as stressful for many people who experience it, can be especially difficult for households already facing challenging family dynamics prior to the start of the pandemic.
- Isolation and social distancing can also take a toll on mental health, as well as other sources of stress brought about by the pandemic, such as fear, boredom, frustration and stigmatization.
- Despite these challenges, people show strength and resilience, and at times innovative coping strategies in front of this situation which is new to everyone.
- As well, there have been accounts of people finding positive aspects to confinement, such as enjoyable circumstances or occasions to devote more time to resourcing activities for themselves or for the family.

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Using art and culture to cope (adapt) and heal

- Different strategies exist to cope during stressful times. Among these, art as an act of creation and expression has shown to be capable of soothing the experience of people going through hardship.
- Art can evoke emotions and experiences and can make us feel connected to others through this sharing of emotions and experiences. It may also stimulate creativity and have a soothing effect on its audience.

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Using art and culture to cope (adapt) and heal

- For Inuit people, traditional arts, culture, spirituality, and healing are interconnected. Indigenous approaches for healing include arts and culture in a holistic model of healing that encompasses the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual world.
- Art has been a therapeutic tool used by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people since a long time. Arts and crafts have always been an intrinsic part of the Inuit culture. Art is used in many aspects of the daily lives; from making clothing to decorating ceremonial objects.

Art is its own language which speaks to us in ways words cannot.

Castellano, 2010

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Using art and culture to cope and heal

The goal is to create a safe environment,
a sense of internal and external safety

- Art is also culture: Using art allows the person to connect with his or her culture;
- Opportunity for storytelling, providing a voice;
- Building resiliency, focusing on strengths;
- Appropriate role modeling to help with re-establishing trust and learn indulgence toward self:
 - Art can be relational and help connecting with others;
 - Role modeling: learning from others/elders;
 - It can help communicating when words don't work or are not sufficient.
- Distance painful experiences from self/externalizes the internal.

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In your opinion,
what are the benefits
of using art in intervention?

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Using art and culture to cope and heal

Benefits



- Helps processing trauma/stress in a non-threatening, tangible way;
- Improve personal well-being: Intrinsic pleasures of art making;
- Artistic creativity is a shared human experience that transcends disability or environment;
- Validation of experience;
- Learn to express and release feelings;
- Permission and acceptance of emotions (fear, worry, anger, guilt, humiliation, sadness, betrayal);
- Create and envision a future;
- Increase self-esteem/sense of pride;
- Encourage appropriate risk taking;
- Allows self-exploration;
- Focus on the process instead of the results: Slowly and safely release these experiences;
- Art involves a sense of play: benefit for children/youth AND adults.

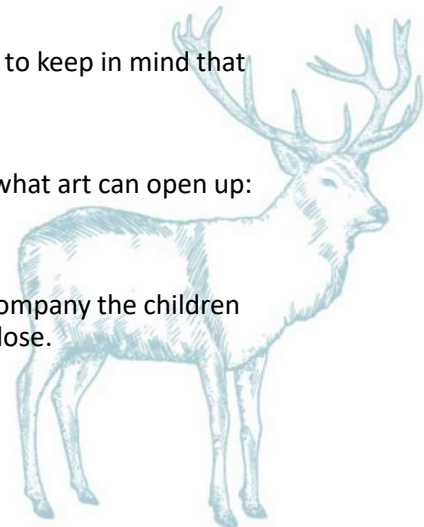
Malchiodi, C., 1997, 2005, 2008

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Using art and culture to cope and heal

Caution

- While art is a powerful tool to help people coping, we have to keep in mind that images, like words, are powerful and can hurt;
- We are not art therapists and we have to be careful about what art can open up: people can be stuck with some images;
- We have to be able to offer a safe space and be able to accompany the children or the youth. Don't open something you won't be able to close.



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Using art and culture to cope and heal

Archibald, 2006; Archibald, Dewar, Reid & Stevens, 2012

- Culture protects individuals and communities during times of crisis;
- The inclusion of **arts and culture** can counter some of the damage associated with Canada's history of outlawing and suppressing traditional arts, ceremonies, dances, and rituals;
- Creating arts (music, carving, storytelling, dance, drawing, etc.) rather than speaking about a disturbing problem can provide a measure of control, allowing individuals to choose if, when, and how they will deal with the meanings contained in the images they make;
- Art helps taking care of the different dimensions of the person's life:



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Can you think about occasions when you experienced the use of art in difficult times?

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Using art with children and youth

- Art can assist children with processing trauma through images.

"Art expression is one way to communicate what is unspoken and unspeakable... By providing these children with the chance to express their inner worlds through art, we inevitably offer them the opportunity to release the inner monsters that torment them and ultimately rob them of trust, safety, happiness and a sense of wholeness."

—Cathy Malchiodi

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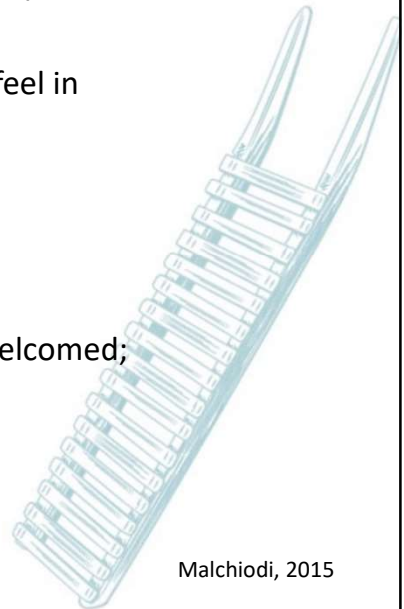
Using art with children and youth

- Art provides the opportunity for children and youth to feel in control of the therapeutic environment.

To be helped, they need to feel that:

- 1- They are physically safe;
- 2- Their feelings are safe and can be welcomed;
- 3- Their thoughts, words and ideas are safe and can be welcomed;
- 4- The things they make/create are safe.

How do you usually do that?



Malchiodi, 2015

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Using art with children and youth

Tips to do it

Directive

- Ex. Draw a picture of your family

Non-Directive

- Ex. Draw a picture of whatever you like

- Depending on the purpose of the session, treatment goals, and ultimate comfort of the child or youth, either approach is warranted.
 - However, non-directive approach can help children express other topics, not just difficult topics, and open about what is important FOR THEM (not you).
- Sometimes using images to self soothe and create positive sensations is warranted
- Provides the opportunity to dialogue with your art (what is it trying to communicate?)

Children often want to please adults and don't want to hurt them: they can be afraid to talk because they don't want to hurt you or their parents.
It is important to be able to welcome what they feel and say.

Malchiodi, 2015

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Using art with children and youth

Tips to do it

- Provide an environment without judgement;
- Show interest;
- Don't assume what the image/sculpture represents; reserve interpretation or assumptions;
- Actively listen;
 - "What would you like to share", "Tell me about your creation/image"...
- Do not provide good or bad labels;
- Praise effort and notice specifics: colors, lines, perspective.

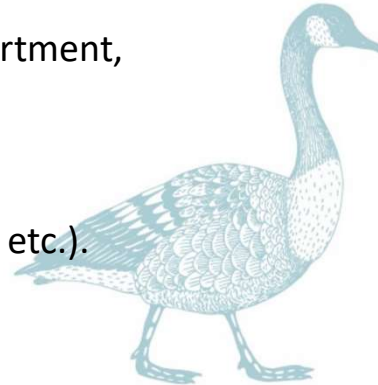
Playing is also a creative act! Sometimes, it is easier for children to "speak" through a character.

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Using art with children and youth

Tips to do it

- Try to provide
 - Comfortable and adapted space (small table or directly on the floor);
 - Puppets or dolls (if possible, an assortment, multicultural);
 - Children's books;
 - Building blocks (*Legos*);
 - Art material (glue, paper, pens, tape, etc.).



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The *Standing Together Through Art* Project

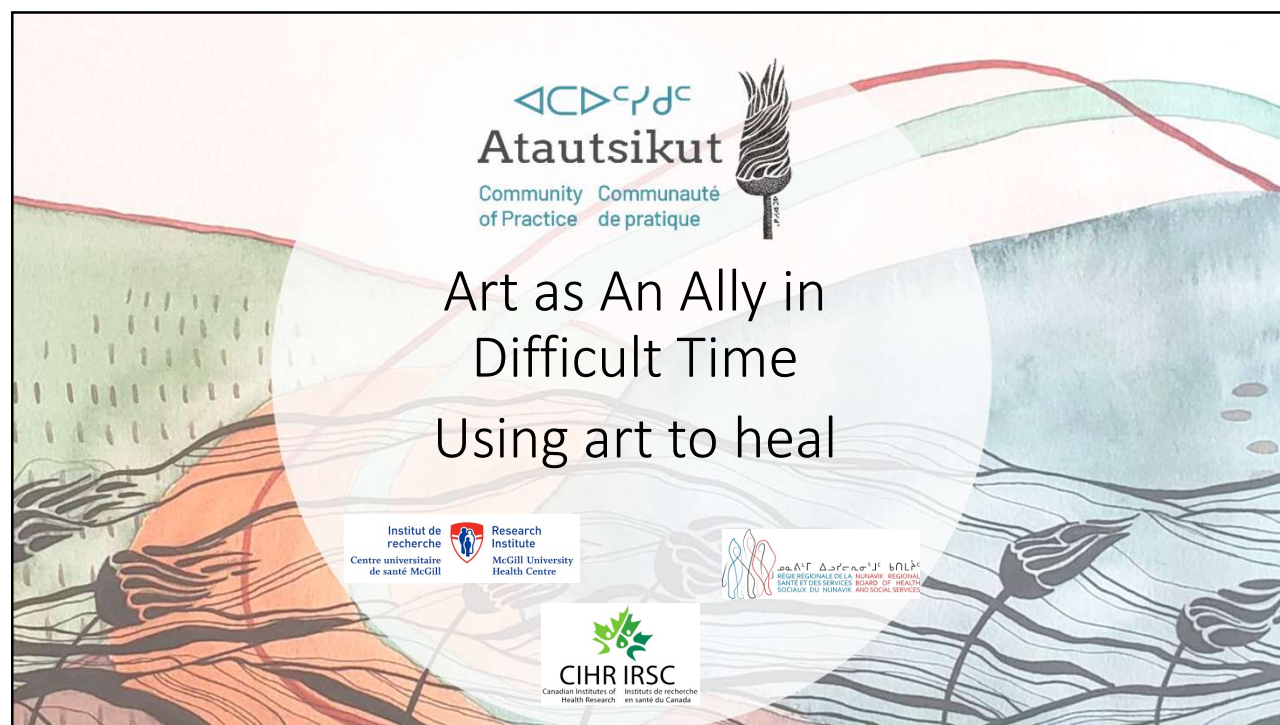
- The *Standing Together Through Art* project proposes to be a witness to the experience of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic among Inuit of Nunavik through artistic testimony, using the expressive and evocative power of art. Relying on creativity, the project wishes to foster personal and community wellness in the face of the pandemic.
- Nunavik artists involved in the project create works of art inspired by the multiple facets of the pandemic experience, such as events and emotions linked to the situation, and strategies used to cope during this period.
- If you wish to take a look at the project: <https://atautsikut.com/standing-together-through-art/>

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