

On behalf of the youth in the Netsilik Constituency, we hope you consider prioritizing youth needs and challenges to strengthen individuals, families, and communities.

Youth delegation, October 8, 2026:

Faran Greenley of Cambridge Bay; Chloe Hokanak of Kugluktuk; Kaila McCallum of Gjoa Haven; & Allegra Oleekatalik of Taloyoak.

Introduction

Each of the five communities in the Kitikmeot Region all have their own set of strengths and needs that are unique and distinct from one another, yet collective positive and negative occurrences are half a shared experience. In this report, we share the unparalleled everyday activities in each community followed by shared ideas and overlapping values and concerns - showing that even though each community is different, they share the same challenges and demands that affect their everyday lives. Youth from each of the communities have shared their values, ideas, and visions for Kitikmeot youth and are enthusiastic about making a positive step to making lives better for themselves, their peers, families, and fellow community members.

Youth under 29 years old make up more than half of the population in the Kitikmeot region, and desire to see more programming and activities that will give them space and a role in their home communities. Youth want to see their peers, families, and communities thrive, but obstacles on a societal level pose a threat to making that change. Children and youth experience life different from others, with the goal of finding their identities and individual and collective roles by experimenting with new things in the world. Changes are happening within and outside of themselves, from rapid brain development and social circles widening, it is crucial to create healthy, stimulating, and nurturing environments that will help them create a solid foundation that will set them up for life. Youth seek mentors and role models that will help them reach this

fulfillment. We hope that with this report, KIA and other organizations that exist around Inuit youth will help make lives better for young people. Through advocacy and empowerment, it is possible to create positive change with existing and new wraparound supports.

1. Positive Youth Activities and Programs in each Community

Kugaaruk

Positive activities and programs for youth in Kugaaruk include food programs such as CPNP for young moms and school lunch programs. Youth enjoy recreational activities such as afterschool programs, playing pool with friends, hanging out at the playground, hiking, and sliding, and walking around the community with friends.

Taloyoak

The youth in Taloyoak enjoy the Ilitaqsiniq program- “a culture-based literacy, language, and essential skills program rooted in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.”

Common Positive Activities in all (or most) Communities

Common positive programs and activities that exist in all Kitikmeot communities include hands-on activities like sewing programs, tool making, and other arts-based programs, recreational activities by Recreation and Parks Association of Nunavut (RPAN) or summer day camps, sports programs including baseball, soccer, volleyball, hockey, and basketball (indoor and outdoor), and regional tournaments. Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven, and Kugluktuk have a youth center (or like space) where people can spend time together with their peers. Youth also appreciate breakfast and lunch programs when offered in the communities.

2. Youth Program Needs in each Community

Kugaaruk

Youth in Kugaaruk want to see more students succeed in school, post-secondary preparation, and basic life skills training (cooking, reading, writing, computer skills, babysitting, budgeting). Youth in Kugaaruk need mental health programs - “just someone to talk to” and places to decompress, self-care nights, peer navigators, harm reduction programs, and active food banks. Youth want to be able to do fun activities with peers such as attending open houses and game nights, arts programs, music festivals, and need new school sports equipment and speaker equipment for dances and community gatherings. Youth in Kugaaruk especially want to see a new hockey arena in the community.

Taloyoak

Youth in Taloyoak has a need for more educational material for children and youth and skills programs such as resume writing. Taloyoak youth also want to see an indoor playground and other indoor activities. The Taloyoak youth delegate also emphasizes the need for more opportunities for younger children under 15, including sports, hunting and activities outside school. While youth enjoy many aspects of community life, the delegate notes that there are fewer organized programs for this age group and asks for more chances for young people to participate, learn and develop skills.

Common Program Needs in all Kitikmeot Communities

Youth in all the communities has shown collective interest in seeing more “learn how to” cultural programs, such as Inuit games, tool and ulu making, hunting, butchering, skinning, sewing programs to learn how to make kamiit, pualuit, kalikok, atigi and moccasins, and throat

singing lessons for all ages (including young children and pre/post-natal parents in and out of school). Youth want to learn how to cook by having baking/cooking classes for youth and all ages. Youth have a desire to have language/Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun classes that will help them connect with elders in the community and participate in on the land programs such as overnight camping, fishing, and hunting. Kitikmeot youth also want to see more arctic sports, sports training and regional sports tournaments that will help support their physical, mental, and emotional health, have more chances to meet new people and hang out with their friends. Youth have also expressed the need to provide programs for victims of sexual, physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse.

3. Youth Challenges and Concerns in the Communities

Kugaaruk

Kugaaruk youth are concerned with lateral violence (such as bullying, shaming, gossiping), abuse, rising suicide rates, and suicide attempts. Barriers include inadequate medical, dental, and mental health care and lack of resources, not talking about problems and feelings, and having no safe spaces. Young people struggle with gambling addictions and have little or no harm reduction programs, lack of mentors, and youth not being able to go on the land with elders. Youth are especially concerned with safety hazards such as the existing arena and its infrastructure, housing, beaten up playground, and no community transportation when many wild animals come into the community. Kugaaruk youth have also expressed the lack of teen/nighttime activities.

Taloyoak

Taloyoak youth are concerned with bullying and lack of youth activities. There are concerns about having no men's and women's shelter. Taloyoak youth also seek basic cooking classes and skills development opportunities. Local food prices are higher than the territorial average and calls attention to the strain this puts on families across the community.

Common Concerns and Challenges for Kitikmeot Youth

All the youth were concerned with language loss and not being able to speak Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun and/or being shy or embarrassed to learn how to speak their mother tongue. Everyone has expressed that school truancy and not being prepared for post-secondary (or not knowing how to apply/go through the applications) is a challenge with inadequate education. Many youths expressed that they need new community equipment such as sports equipment and new speaker equipment for community gatherings. Prices of goods are too expensive and not being able to afford things like indoor shoes, school supplies and necessities is a challenge for all. There is vandalism to new shipping crates, community buildings, and homes (old and new). Bigger concerns are drug and alcohol abuse and/or addictions, and societal abuse, lack of mental health support and the stigma that comes with it – or not having safe spaces to talk about mental health and their feelings/emotions. The inflated costs of food and youth unemployment bring poverty to many so youths are having to live off social assistance. There are also concerns about theft.

Top 3 Priorities for Kitikmeot Youth in their Communities

Kugaaruk: 1) Mental health “just want someone to talk to”, 2) new and safe hockey arena building and sports equipment, and 3) youth and teen activities afterschool or in the evenings.

Taloyoak: 1) Shelter's and food bank, 2) Mental health support/healthy living, and 3) Inuktitut classes and learning languages.

Top Three Overall Kitikmeot Youth Priorities

1. Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing:

Youth seek collective self-care, mental health awareness, resource and information sharing, and promoting activities that enhance well-being. Youth have expressed uncomfortableness talking to mental health workers and would rather talk to their friends and other youth in the community. The preference to talk to friends about their mental health is because of staff turnovers – having to repeat stories and because it is more comfortable, easier, and familiar with friends as it creates mutual understanding, trust, and support to express their true feelings. Youth struggle privately, feel trapped or believe they have no one to turn to. Sometimes youth feel that they cannot turn to family as they look at things differently, and there may be tension between them due to intergenerational trauma.

Mental health awareness usually comes from friends or word of mouth, social media, posters at schools and school announcements, and community gatherings. Supporting natural helpers that can support mental and emotional health, coping, and strengthening youth resilience is a need. Youth are being bullied - not only by peers, but also by younger and older adults. Youth want everyone in the communities to promote lateral love.

2. Cultural, Teen and Nighttime/Afterschool Activities

Youth seek cultural, teen, and night time activities that include sports programs, language Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun evening classes, sewing circles and programs for all ages, and learning how to make traditional tools (kakivak, ulu, earrings, kamutik, tuuqs, embroidery). Youth would

like playrooms, movie nights, and art and crafts nights. Spaces like schools, gymnasiums, community halls, youth centers, makerspace, arenas, drop ins (Taloyoak) are best places to run programs. Teachers and instructors could include community members or people with experience and expertise like Elders and knowledge holders,

3. Education & Training Opportunities

Youth want to be prepared to have jobs and better education. Youth need help to succeed in high school and get ready for post-secondary education. We need to incorporate high school programs and classes such as chemistry, biology, and physics to be more prepared for post-secondary so that they don't need to apply for programs such as college foundations to get the credentials that they need to enroll in their preferred programs. Youth seek more summer student programs for those still in high school. Youth seek leadership training, basic life skills training, and Inuit mentorship – or step by step learning opportunities. Youth want to be prepared to apply for post-secondary out of high school, but they do not know the process of applying for college/university, housing, or funding. Youth especially enjoy trades programs and would like to see more of those in the schools.

Anything else Youth Would Like to Add in the Preparation Forms

- “Would like more travelling opportunities, many youths drive around nighttime, need transportation.”
- “Youth happiness.”
- “When will youth priorities be taken seriously.”

Conclusion

Youth have a vital role to play in the community and have a desire to participate as members, but societal and structural barriers pose a threat to achieving that goal and enhancing well-being. It is important to view children and youth as active and capable people that can contribute to the community. Youth have expressed strengths that can be used to overcome any challenges and satisfy needs. Youth are social beings that want to be able to do fun activities with their friends and participate in programs that will enhance their physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health. It is crucial to create safe spaces for youth in these areas so that we can increase their autonomy and feel that they have a role in the community. Spaces in education and academia, recreation, health, justice, culture, and environments should be made for youth to thrive in their homes. From the Kitikmeot children and youth, we thank you for giving us this time to speak and having you listen to our fellow peers, family, and communities.

Please contact Shantel Qirngnuq, Kitikmeot Inuit Youth Programs Coordinator if you have any questions at 