

UNDERSTANDING INUIT AND CANNABIS



Many factors influence a person's decision to use substances, like cannabis. Due to our unique past and culture, Inuit experience a combination of different social factors that affect our choice to use cannabis that other Canadians do not. These aspects can be grouped into Protective and Risk factors, both of which influence our decisions about and relationship with cannabis. Interactions between the individual, the family, and the wider community all affect an individual's choices and development.

*There's More To This Than
Cannabis*

Learn more at [LetsTalkAboutUjarak.com](https://www.LetsTalkAboutUjarak.com)

The information below references both past and current sources of trauma and can be a sensitive topic for many. The Kamatsiaqtut Help Line is available by phone at 867-979-3333 or online at nunavuthelpline.ca. You can also reach the First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line by phone at **1-855-242-3310**, or through the online chat counselling service at www.hopeforwellness.ca

Risk factors are parts of life that may contribute to a person using or overusing a substance. For Inuit, some risk factors may include:

- **Colonialism and continuing intergenerational trauma**

Residential schools and the Sixties Scoop removed our children from their families, who grew up without their culture, traditions and family love and values. This violently disrupted family ties and traumatized our people, the legacy of which continues today.

- **Lack of access to physical and mental health services**

There are less healthcare professionals serving Inuit communities and a relatively higher need for supports due to intergenerational trauma and the suicide crisis. Services that are available are rarely offered in Inuktitut, by Inuit, or are culturally

grounded and informed. Therefore, Inuit lack the essential support from services when they need help.

- **Housing insecurity and living conditions**

Many Inuit experience housing insecurity in the North and South, or live in overcrowded or unhealthy conditions. Given high crime rates and the suicide crisis in the North, many Inuit have directly or indirectly experienced violence. Poor housing conditions, violence and crime are all risk factors that may play a role in substance use.

- **Challenges in communication and mental health**

Trauma, challenges in communication, family

dysfunction and mental health challenges of parents or guardians are all risk factors that can contribute to the choice to use substances like cannabis, to cope with problems in life.

- **Normalization of substance use**

Cannabis use is perceived by many Inuit to be commonplace. The normalization of cannabis use can act as a risk factor because when we perceive something to be normal, we are more likely to participate in it, especially youth.



Protective factors are positive influences that support people in dealing with challenges in life. When we have this support we are less likely to use substances.

- **Strong connection to culture and identity**

While colonization tried to take away Inuit culture and identity, we are constantly reclaiming and rebuilding our traditions and skills through learning and mastering new skills through observation, mentoring, practice and effort.

- **Strong connection with family and community**

While isolation, which can result from trauma, is a risk factor, the ability of Inuit to maintain

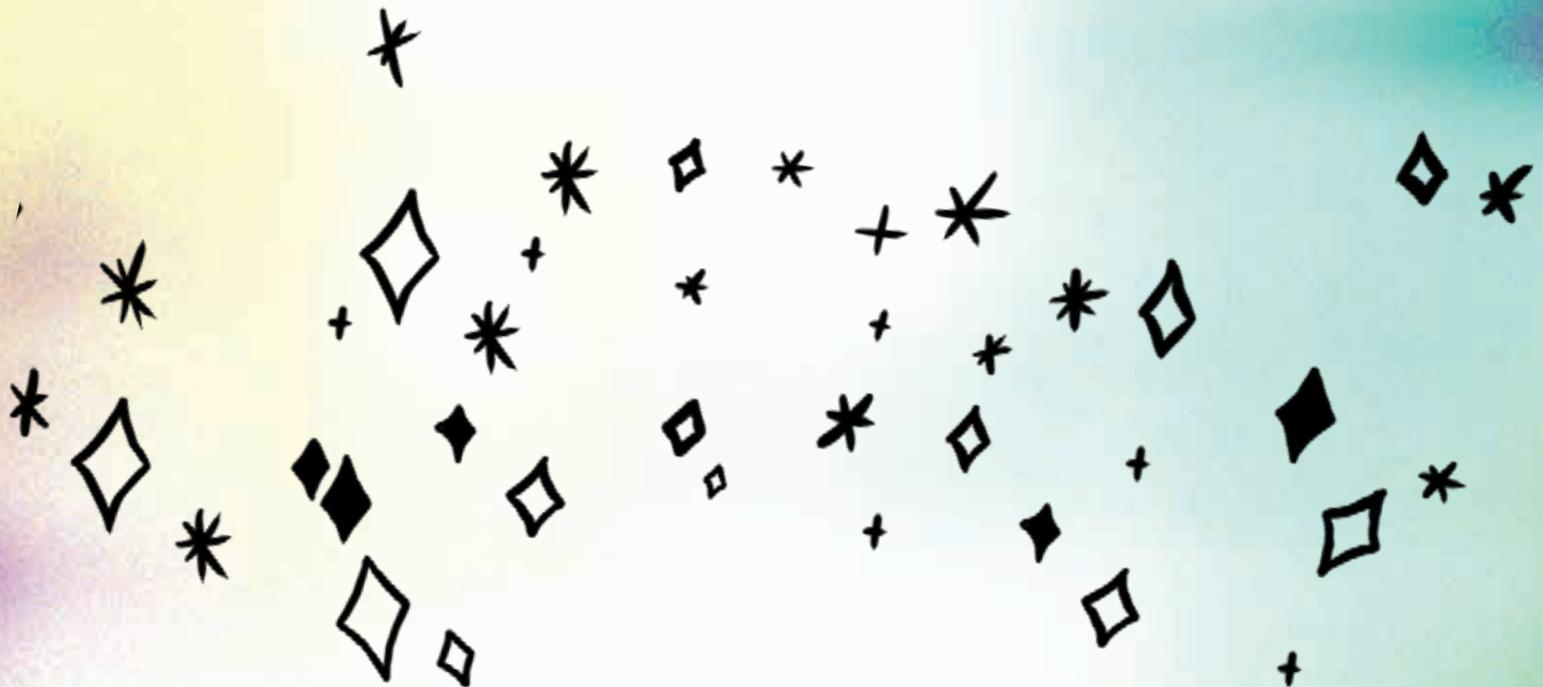
their connectedness as families and communities, are protective factors that can reduce substance misuse or reliance.

- **Relationship with the land and animals**

Time on the land is essential and protective, as it physically removes us from circumstances that may encourage substance seeking while strengthening our connection to the land, our ancestors and our culture. Through caring for the land

and animals and serving and providing for family and/or community from the land, we are also caring for ourselves.

Inuit are more than our trauma, and while trauma may influence us, it is not who we are. Inuit are resilient, welcoming, innovative, hardworking, emotional and connected to the earth. By letting Inuit Values continue to guide our actions, we can make responsible choices about cannabis while staying true to who we are.



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For a list of references please contact info@pauktuutit.ca

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