CANADIAN VirtualHospice

# *Supporting healthy ways of living through grief & loss*

## A guide to support Inuit

CANADIAN VirtualHospice

This document was prepared by the Canadian Virtual Hospice. It is intended to provide general information only. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information. The contents do not constitute medical advice and should not be relied upon as such. If you have questions about your health or medical issues, speak with a healthcare provider.

Production of this resource has been made possible through collaboration and financial support from the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer Corporation and Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada or the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer.

The butterfly on the cover features colours to celebrate, honour, and welcome our Two-Spirit/ Indigenous LGBTQI+ people on their paths toward healing and wellness.

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**Please share your feedback on this guide by scanning/clicking the QR code. The purpose of the short survey is to learn from your experience engaging with the Canadian Virtual Hospice Indigenous Voices project. Your feedback will help us strengthen future resource development. Findings will be summarized in aggregate form and may also be used to support future funding applications for Indigenous-led initiatives hosted by Canadian Virtual Hospice. We are committed to using this information respectfully and in ways that reflect the collective experiences shared with us. The survey is anonymous, which means we will not know who has participated.**

**Supporting healthy ways of living through grief & loss: A guide for Inuit**

**https://questionnaire.simplesurvey.com/f/r/GriefGuides-Inuit**

# Acknowledgements

*Supporting healthy ways of living through grief & loss: A guide to support Inuit* is part of a project titled *Indigenous voices 3: Supporting healthy ways of living through grief & loss*. The Canadian Virtual Hospice (CVH) started this project. It received funding from the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC).

The main goal of this project is to develop Indigenous-led and culturally informed resources and education on grief. It builds on earlier work by CVH in two projects: *Indigenous voices: Stories of serious illness and loss I* and *II,* funded by CPAC from 2016 to 2022.

We gratefully acknowledge Thunderbird Partnership Foundation, whose Indigenous Wellness Framework has informed and shaped the development of this guide. With permission, elements of this model have been integrated throughout the document. We recognize and appreciate Thunderbird Partnership Foundation's leadership and contributions to advancing this work.

Thunderbird Partnership Foundation would like to thank all the individuals, families, and communities who donated several hours of their time to participate in the regional focus groups. The insight, advice, knowledge, and recommendations generously offered during the discussions are invaluable for the development of public health tools and recommendations focused on supporting the existing strengths and needs of First Nations communities across Canada.

The Canadian Virtual Hospice thanks everyone who gave their time, knowledge, and effort to develop this guide. We acknowledge the guidance from the members of the Elders and Knowledge Carriers Circle (EKCC). Their insights were key to creating this resource. We also thank the Inuit contributors who helped create this resource.

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# Introduction

### Tunngasugit

Thank you for engaging with *Supporting healthy ways of living through grief & loss: A guide to support Inuit*. This guide helps you explore teachings and wellness activities. It offers meaningful and gentle ways to deal with grief.

Recognizing and reflecting on grief can be a powerful yet challenging experience. It is important to be kind and gentle with yourself as you walk this path.

Choosing to begin is a brave and healing act, especially when facing painful emotions. Allow these teachings and activities to support you as you go on your journey.

The *Supporting healthy ways of living through grief & loss* guide is made to move with you. Some sections may feel heavier, while others may feel more open. There is no single 'right' way to grieve or heal, only the way that feels true for you. Return to this guide as needed, even after a week, a month, or a year, and notice what has shifted. Healing takes time, but like the seasons, it always comes back around.

Trust in your Spirit, your ancestors, and the Land beneath you. You already carry everything you need to heal.

## Basic teachings of this guide

The following resource guide is based on Indigenous Knowledges grounded in the Indigenous Wellness Framework[1] which is developed by Thunderbird Partnership Foundation. Thunderbird Partnership Foundation, a division of the National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation Inc., is a leading culturally centred voice advocating for collaborative, integrated, and wholistic approaches to healing and wellness. The framework shows that health and wellness are a balance between your Spirit, heart, mind, and body. All of this is grounded in connection to culture.

As part of this wholistic focus, the guide highlights the importance of reconnecting with our Spirit. It understands Spirit as key to Inuit ways of knowing, being, and doing. On your journey, feel free to use any healing practices that support your spiritual healing. These practices may be grounded in Inuit spirituality or any religious belief system. You may choose to combine these belief systems and adapt them to meet your needs.

1 *Thunderbird Partnership Foundation (2015).*

The guide shares Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) values of:

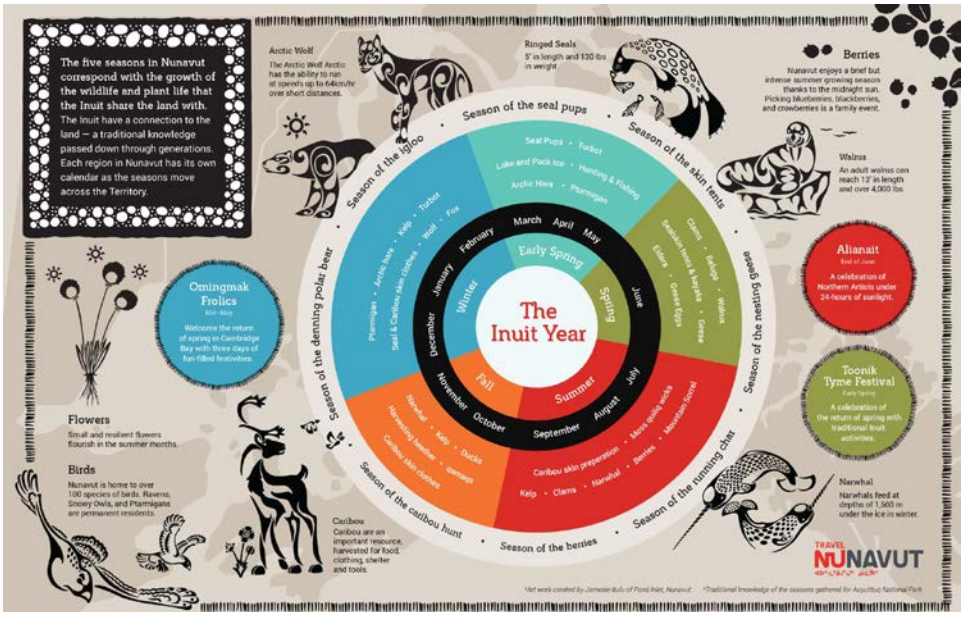
- ✓ **Inuuqatigiitsiarniq:** Respect.
- ✓ **Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq:** Care for Land.
- ✓ **Piliriqatigiinniq:** Work together.
- ✓ **Qanuqtuurniq:** Be resourceful.

It shows the rhythm of Inuit Nunangat. It highlights how life, loss, and healing flow together with the Land, water, ice, and sky. For Inuit, healing does not happen in a straight line; it moves with the seasons, the light, and the Spirit of Sila. Our breath, our weather, and our way of being in the world are interconnected.

# How to use this guide: Walking with the seasons of Inuit healing and grief

To help you picture this journey, the guide reflects the changing seasons. Just as the seasons change, grief is also a natural part of life that transforms. We cannot control or fix both the seasons and grief. Instead, we must acknowledge, honour, and witness them. The guide is divided into four sections that follow the Inuit seasons listed below in Figure 1. For the first section, we have combined early spring with spring.

Figure 1: Traditional Knowledge of the seasons[2]




2 *Travel Nunavut. (n.d.). [Inuit year seasonal infographic].* https://travelnunavut.ca/story/a-plan-for-all-seasons

Each section shares a key outcome from the Indigenous Wellness Framework. It shows life and healing cycles. It starts with an **affirmation** and an **Inuit practice.** This could be lighting the *qulliq,* throat singing, drum dancing, building, or just being on the Land. These are not just activities, but ways to honour your body, mind, heart, and Spirit through each phase of healing.

The four sections are as follows:

### Early spring/spring—spiritual wellness creates hope: An invitation to begin healing

As early spring shifts into spring, the first thaw reminds us that healing begins when the Land starts to move again. Light returns slowly, snow softens, and we feel life stirring beneath the surface. This section invites you to start your journey. Reconnect with your ancestors and enjoy the warmth and longer days. Spring is like lighting the qulliq. It is a time of renewal. Hope returns, spirits grow stronger, and we get ready for what lies ahead.

### Summer—emotional wellness creates belonging: Understanding your grief

When the Land opens, and the waters flow, we gather with others and remember that we are not alone in our grief. This section shares stories and builds community. It offers release with tears, laughter, and song.

### Fall—mental wellness creates meaning: Going on your healing journey

As the tundra turns red and gold, we reflect on what we have learned. This section helps you make meaning through language, stories, and Pisiit (traditional Inuit songs). These are the songs we create to carry memory, love, and resilience.

### Winter—physical wellness creates purpose: Following up with support

In the quiet season, we rest, build, and prepare for what is to come. The winter section emphasizes caring for the body and Spirit. It highlights rest, food, movement, and connection to the Land. Like building an iglu, these steps take patience, balance, and care.

## Honouring diversity

The *Supporting healthy ways of living through grief & loss* guide was written by an Inuk. Inuit Knowledge Carriers helped with its development. It is shaped by lived experience, community teachings, and relationships.

This guide acknowledges the diversity within and among Inuit. Inuit come from many places in the circumpolar Arctic region. They live in Inuit Nunangat in Canada, Greenland, Alaska, and Chukotka (Russia). In Canada, Inuit live in different areas. These are Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut. Nunavut has three parts: Kivalliq, Kitikmeot, and Qikiqtaaluk.

Each region has its own dialects, histories, and cultural practices. The people in each region also have unique ways of seeing and experiencing the world. This includes how they represent the seasons. We have strong ties through Land, language, and worldview. Our lived experiences are different. Our cultural practices vary, too. This variation can be seen in the Inuit year, which is referenced in five seasons. We acknowledge that the Inuit season may differ from region to region.

Readers should use this guide in ways that suit their regions. They can also make it fit their families and cultures. Grief shows in many ways. Healing is different for everyone. Inuit care practices vary widely. They also change over time. Inuit have always adapted. They carry knowledge in many ways and respond to change with strength and resilience.

# Support services and counselling resources

### 2 Spirited
Interligne
Provides 24-hour helpline and information service to LGBTQ+ people, their loved ones, and professionals from various backgrounds.
1-888-505-1010

### First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line
Service languages: Ojibway, Cree, Inuktitut, English, French
Provides 24/7 culturally grounded assessment, referrals, support in times of crisis, and suicide intervention.
1-855-242-3310

### MMIW Crisis Line
Service languages: English, French
Provides 24/7 support to those who are being impacted by the loss of a missing or murdered Indigenous woman, girl, or Two-Spirit person.
1-844-413-6649

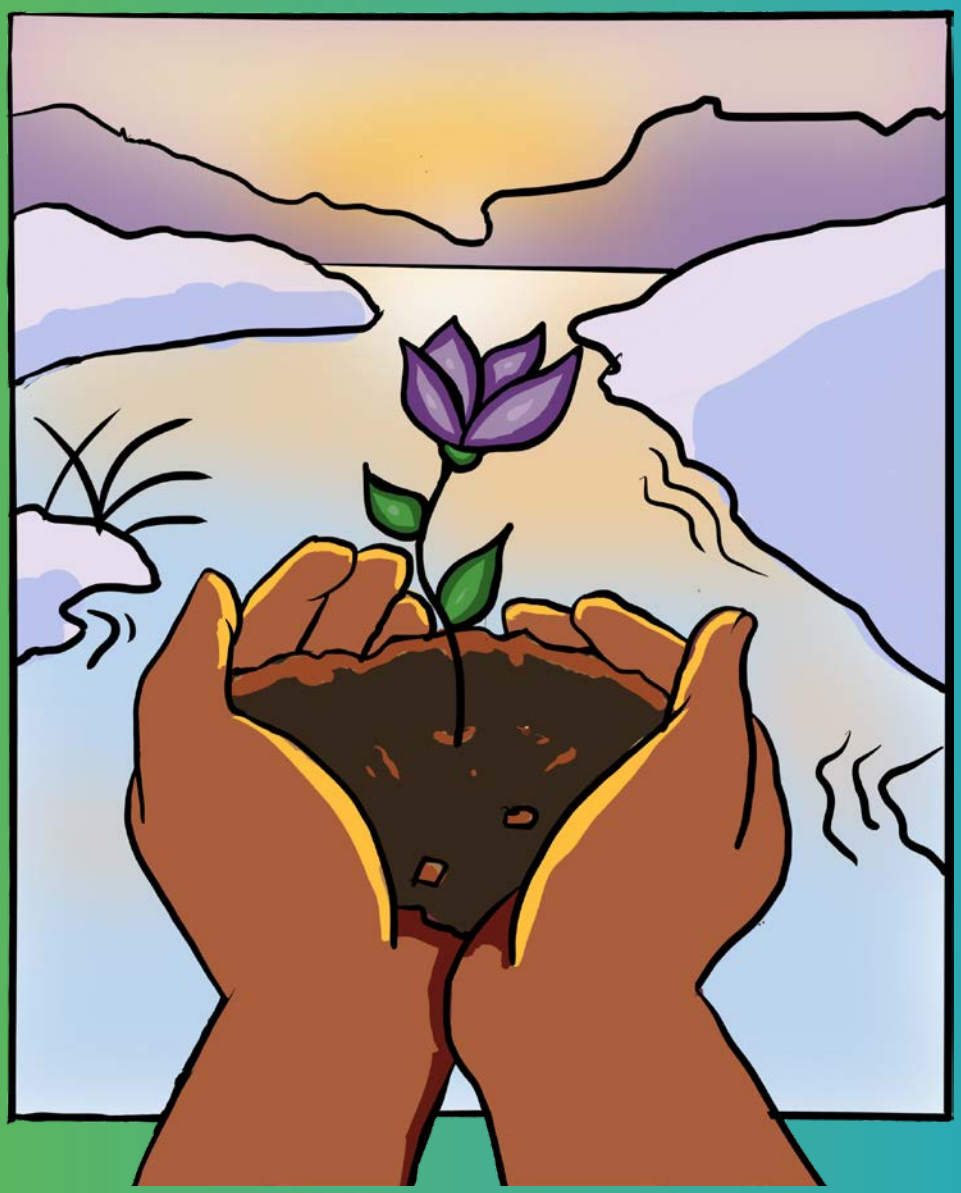
### NWAC Elder Support Line | Canada-Wide
Available Monday–Friday 9:00–11:00 a.m. EST & 1:00–3:00 p.m. EST
Call 888-664-7808

### Talk 4 Healing
Service languages: Ojibway, Oji-Cree, Cree, English, French
Provides 24/7 culturally sensitive counselling and support to Indigenous women.
1-855-554-4325
Online service at www.Talk4Healing.com

### The Indian Residential School Survivors Society
1-800-721-0066

### The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Residential School 24-hour Crisis Line
1-866-925-4419

# Spiritual wellness creates hope: An invitation to begin healing



*In early spring in the Inuit year, the Land begins to awaken after long darkness. Under the snow crust, new life stirs. The ice softens; small streams run. Just as these first signs of thaw bring renewal, hope can too emerge from grief.*

# Early spring

In Inuit regions, seasons are often understood differently from southern calendars. The spring thaw is a pivotal time. As ice begins to melt, rivers open, and animals start moving again. This transition has deep spiritual meaning. It is a time for renewal, listening, and getting ready for growth. The healing journey can follow this cycle. First, it slowly thaws. Then, it opens up. Next, it shifts. Finally, it emerges anew. The spring section invites you to start your journey.

> *"Grief is also a sense of recognizing the loss of a loved one. The more you love a person, the more you take in, and once they have passed on, your grief is going to be heavier because you learned to love that person so much, and the grief has nowhere to go."*
>
> Naulaq LeDrew, member of the EKCC

Reconnect with your ancestors. Feel the comfort of returning light, just like the qulliq's warmth. The early thaw reminds us healing begins when the Land starts to move again.

Hope lives in our Spirit, in the belief that healing is possible. It reminds us we are never truly alone. Our ancestors, Sila (weather/Spirit), and all creatures walk with us. The animals, the ice, and future generations are also here. Hope can be found in our dreams, during ceremonies, in prayers, or when we spend time on the Land. It is also in stories, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, and through connection and creativity.

Even when grief feels heavy, hope offers a spark of light and love, reminding us our life and Spirit continue.

AFFIRMATION

## "My Spirit carries the wisdom of my ancestors and the strength of the Land."

*We encourage you to reflect on this affirmation through this section. When your healing feels heavy or confusing, repeat it to help kindle hope.*

# Edible & medicinal Arctic plants

We focus on Arctic plants found in Inuit areas of Canada and Greenland. These plants are edible, medicinal, or hold spiritual significance. Consult local Elders or Knowledge Carriers to adapt to your specific region.

Here are a few examples:

### Arctic willow (Salix arctica) ᐅᖅᐱ ᓱᐳᑎᓪᓗ uqpi suputillut

Inuit practices used twigs or flowers as a mild pain reliever. They helped with toothaches, bleeding, and were also applied as poultices on wounds. Young shoots have vitamin C and are eaten.

### Labrador tea (Rhododendron / Ledum) ᕿᔪᒃᑖᖅᐸᐃᑦ qijuktaaqpait

Brewed as a tea, it helps with colds and respiratory issues. But be careful, as too much can be toxic.

### Berry species (e.g. Vaccinium vitis-idaea / lingonberry / lowbush cranberry) ᐸᐅᕐᖓᐃᑦ paungait

Edible berries are popular. In some Inuit regions, people value the berries and their juice for medicine and food.

Note: These are examples from various regions. Check which plants are found in your area. Confirm their traditional uses locally.

In Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, people learn about plants. This knowledge is tied to Land. It also relates to seasons. Respect and careful harvesting are important, too. We come together with thanks and mindfulness. We honour the plant's Spirit and its role in the ecosystem.

# Taking the first step toward healing: Ceremonies, messages, prayers, and activities

Taking the first step toward healing is sacred. Consider using one or more of the following ceremonies, prayers, and activities to help you on your journey.

## Indigenous voices: Exploring our loss

Grief is a unique experience for each individual and for each loss. Everyone experiences loss differently. Listening to others and learning from their journeys can help us navigate our own grief. Looking to Elders and Knowledge Carriers for support can help you feel connected and rooted in ancestral knowledge on your journey.

"Indigenous Voices: Exploring Our Loss" shares the views and stories of Elders and Knowledge Carriers from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nations. Watch the video using the QR code. After watching, you are encouraged to reflect on the following questions:

1. What did the Elders and Knowledge Carriers share that stood out to you? Why do you think it impacted you?
2. How does grief impact your body, mind, heart, and Spirit? What have the Elders and Knowledge Carriers in the video shared to help you?
3. How can Land, culture, community, and Traditional Knowledge support healing?
4. What is one lesson from the Elders and Knowledge Carriers you will take with you on your grieving journey?
5. What responsibility do we have to carry these teachings forward in a good way, for ourselves and for future generations?

> *"We have to work harder by talking to each other more, to help our young people to meet their needs."*
>
> Piita Irniq, member of the EKCC

# Spending time on the Land (grounding / survival connection)

In Inuit life, time on the Land is both spiritual and vital. It includes hunting, fishing, travelling, observing weather, and building shelters. This connection grounds us physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Consider doing one or more of the following on the Land:

- ✓ Go for a walk and feel the shifting snow and ice in the Spring.
- ✓ Practise an Inuit game outside, like sitorqtaq, seal skin skipping, or high kick. These activities engage body, Land, and Spirit together. You can do a Google search to find Inuit games.
- ✓ Build an inuksuk (stone landmark) as a ceremony and marker of your journey. Inuit have used inuksuit for many purposes. They help with navigation, communication, and marking places. They also guide travel and mark sacred spots.
- ✓ Hunt, fish, or travel (when possible) as a way of connecting with ancestors, Land, and the cycle of life.
- ✓ Sit quietly near water or a thawing stream. Then listen to the ice shifting, the wind, the trickle of meltwater and listen to the Land speak.
- ✓ Learn how to throat sing out on the Land or by water.

**Activity suggestion:** Outside, place your feet firmly on the ground or snow. Notice:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Reflect on how each sense anchors you to this moment and to the Land.

## Connecting with the Land (Nuna): Reflection activity

There is no right or wrong way to spend time on the Land. Spending time on the Land in your own way is a meaningful way to connect with yourself and all of Creation.

Think about how you can incorporate time on the Land into your everyday life.

Draw a line from each idea to one of the circles that show: I have tried this, I want to try this, I do not want to try this, or I do not know if I want to try this.

> *"We want to keep passing down our heritage, our values, our culture from one generation to another."*
>
> Naulaq LeDrew, member of the EKCC

Taking breaks outside

Harvesting food or traditional plant medicines

Spending time hunting or fishing

Going on a hike

Listening to waves or moving water

Trying a grounding activity

Opening a window

Taking a walk barefoot or using your kamiit

Saying a message of gratitude (thank Sila/ Creator/Nuliajuk aloud)

| YES | TO TRY | No | ? |
|---|---|---|---|
| I have tried this | I want to try this | I do not want to try this | I do not know if I want to try this |

# Building an inuksuk

Inuksuk (Singular)

Inuksuit (Plural)

Build an inuksuk as your symbolic offering. In many Inuit traditions, inuksuit serve several purposes. They mark paths, signal presence, send messages, or act as guardians.

## Make your own inuksuk

Draw one below or make different shapes of rocks and cut them out to form your own inuksuk. You can colour them and use different kinds of paper. You might add Styrofoam or anything else you have, glue them to paper, or arrange them on a table.

Instead of drawing, you could go outside and find different-shaped rocks. Use hot glue or any other type of glue to stick them together. You can also try the traditional way, stacking them freely with smaller rocks for stability.

1. Think about your intention or message and what you want to share (grief, remembrance, hope, asking for guidance).
2. Select stones (or rocks) from the Land respectfully and mindfully.
3. Arrange the stones into a form that can be simply stacking rocks on top of each other or make a human-like figure (depending on tradition).
4. For each time you place a stone, speak your intention, prayer, or message.
5. Sit or stay with the inuksuk for a moment, offering thanks to Land, ancestors, and the Spirits.
6. Leave the inuksuk standing as a marker of your journey; revisit it when you need to return to the Land.

# Activity: Create your own Inuit-inspired grief support plan

This activity offers a place to support your healing journey. It is most helpful when grief and loss feel too heavy. Nurturing the balance and connection of all parts of life can help ground you in times of stress.

> *"Just walking on the Land, seeing the Land helps me. What am I listening for?"*
>
> Naulaq LeDrew, member of the EKCC

Use this worksheet to find your strengths, resources, and strategies. It will help you through the tough or complex parts of your journey. You can edit or add to this plan at any time. Feel free to leave sections blank. Be as specific as you can and keep this resource in a safe place, so it is ready when needed.

## Physical supports

Activities that help me feel grounded and safe (e.g. walking on ice or snow, inuksuk building, Inuit games)

Places where I feel safe and connected (e.g. home, cabin, shoreline)

.....

.....

## Emotional supports

Ways to express emotions safely (e.g. talking with Elders, journaling in Inuktitut or English, throat singing, drumming)

People who provide emotional support (e.g. Elders, Inuit speakers, family, Inuit counsellors)

Comforting objects or activities (e.g. seal fur, stone, qulliq flame, Inuit carvings)

.....

.....

## Mental supports

Positive thoughts or affirmations (e.g. “I am guided by my ancestors and the Land.”)

Strategies to manage stress and anxiety (e.g. breathing, throat singing, playing Inuit games, walking outside, sea-ice listening)

People who guide me (e.g. Elders, family/friends, Inuit teachers, community Knowledge Carriers)

## Spiritual supports

Spiritual practices that bring me peace (e.g. prayers, lighting the qulliq, storytelling by Elders, Inuit songs)

Spiritual guides I can connect with (e.g. Elders, religious leaders, cultural organizations)

Ways to honour ancestors and traditions (e.g. building an inuksuk, telling their stories, throat singing, sewing or art activities, practicing Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit)

## Emergency contacts / resources

People I can contact in an emergency (e.g. family/friends, crisis hotlines)

Places, resources, and services I can access in an emergency (e.g. Inuit organizations, land-based wellness programs, online support, mental health supports in your region)

# Personal reflection activity

My strength & resilience:

My personal qualities from Inuit survival and past experiences that are helping me with challenges are:

My goals for healing and well-being:

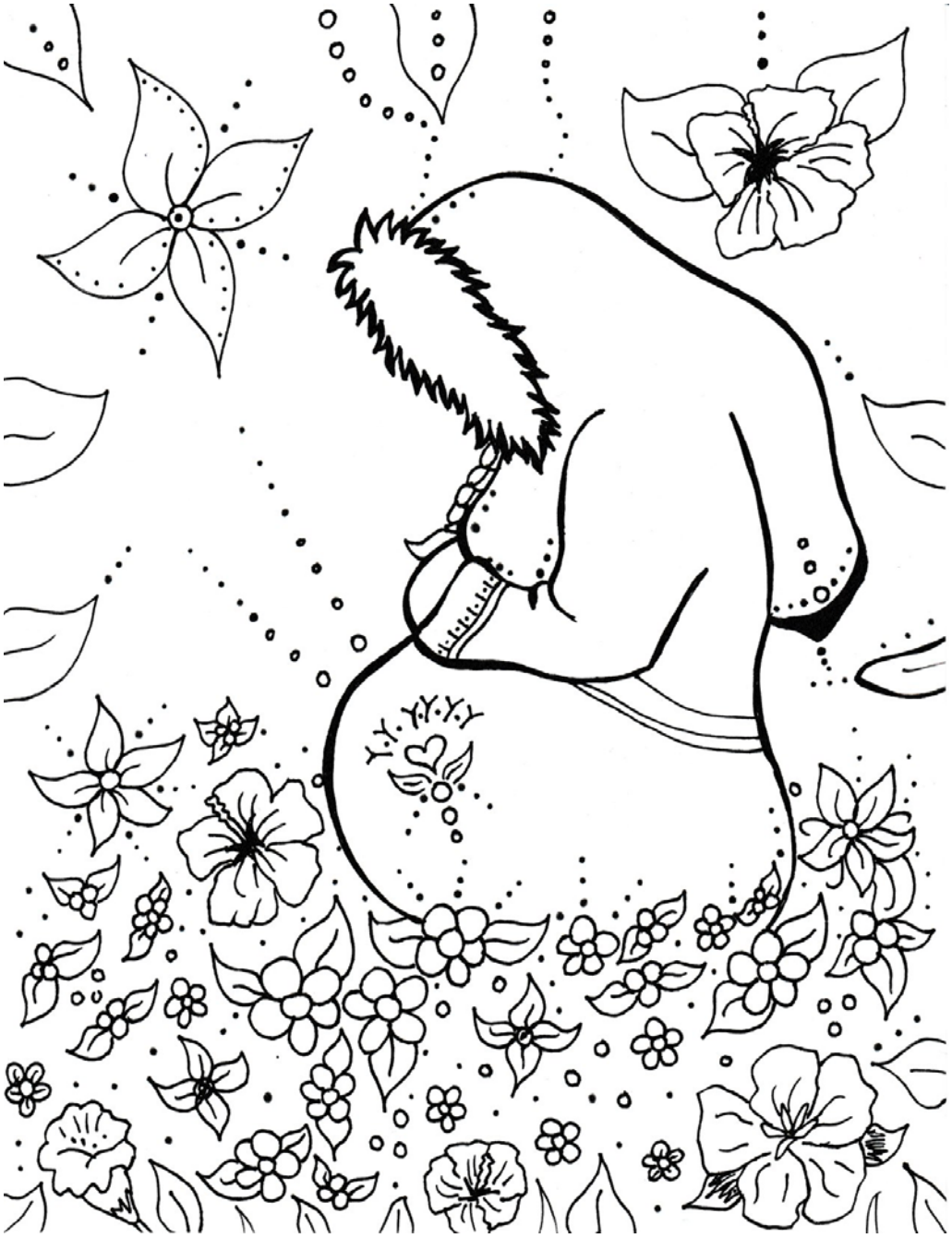
- ✓ Short-term goals
- ✓ Long-term goals

Feel free to customize this worksheet to better fit your needs and cultural practices. Remember, it is important to reach out for support and take care of yourself as you journey with grief.

# Connecting with our physical being: Colouring & art for grounding

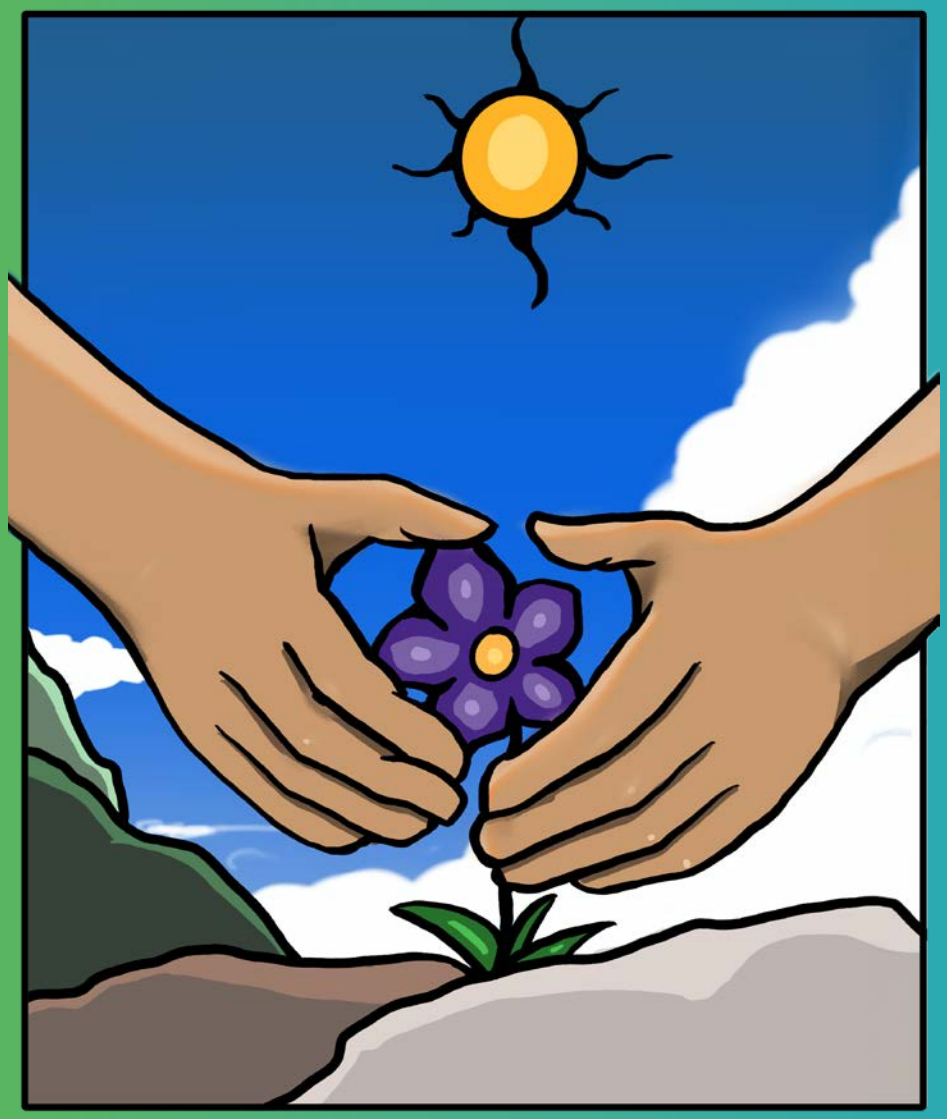
The colouring page below can help centre and ground you as you reflect on your grief. Use it to connect with your physical self and appreciate the beauty of what your hands can create.

Colouring offers a quick break from having too many thoughts. It creates a calm, relaxing space to help you process your feelings. It also offers a way to express emotions that may be hard to put into words.



We gratefully acknowledge Raeann Brown for permission to include this artwork.

# Emotional wellness creates belonging: Understanding your grief



*When the Land opens, and the waters flow, we gather with others and remember we are not alone in our grief. This section focuses on stories, community, and release through tears, laughter, and song.*

# Summer

In Inuit Nunangat, summer is a season of abundance and motion. The Land and sea overflow with life. Birds come back. Fish swim upstream. Berries start to ripen. Families go to camps to harvest and share stories. Long days of light bring laughter, learning, and connections. The warmth helps both people and the Land to breathe freely again.

> *"No matter where you are as Inuit, we are always united because we speak one language."*
>
> Piita Irniq, member of the EKCC

Spiritually, summer reminds us of the importance of gratitude and reciprocity. It is a time to give thanks to the animals, water, and wind that sustain us. It is a time to strengthen the bonds that hold community together. In the healing journey, summer reflects a moment of fullness.  Growth takes root and joy is remembered. It calls you to rest in your strength, to celebrate what has blossomed, and to share your light with others.

Emotional wellness is deeply rooted in a sense of belonging. Belonging to family, community, culture, language, Land, sea, and the web of relations. As Inuit, we experience grief not only as individuals, but as families and communities shaped by generations of experience, including disruption by colonial policies. The loss of our language, Land use, traditions, and family through forced relocations, assimilation policies, and assimilationist institutions has layered grief across generations. What we feel and how we feel grief is shaped by these historical and ongoing harms.

AFFIRMATION

## I honour and value all of my emotions.

*When your healing journey becomes heavy or confusing. Say this affirmation. It reminds you that you are connected to your family, ancestors, the sea, the Land, and the Spirit world.*

# Plant / material guide: Using purple saxifrage or Arctic willow

**Purple saxifrage** and **Arctic willow** are plants found in Inuit areas. They can be used as wicks for lighting a qulliq. They may also have medicinal or symbolic meanings.

- ✓ **Purple saxifrage** *(Saxifraga oppositifolia)* is among the earliest blooming Arctic flowers in spring. It is hardy and symbolizes renewal. In some traditions, it is used as a delicate plant for offerings or decorations.
- ✓ **Arctic willow's** twigs and buds have value. You can dry small branches for ritual smoke or use them as wicks in a qulliq (oil lamp).

These plants can hold your grief or prayers. Their strength in harsh conditions shows what we feel inside.

## Understanding grief

Grief is a deeply human response to loss. It is both individual and collective. It shows up emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually. Each person is unique. Each community is unique, too. They have their own identities, cultures, languages, and histories. There is no 'one' way to grieve.

People usually associate grief with death. This is known as bereavement grief. It happens when a person, family, or community has to live without someone or something they valued a lot. During that time, people often feel grief inside and mourn outside. However, grief can last long after the first phase.

Mourning shows our grief. It includes telling stories, crying, ceremonies, gathering, art, and song. Such actions are ways to name and release feelings. Inuit mourning practices can include communal ceremony, supportive presence, storytelling, and spiritual rites. In Inuit communities, families get help from everyone when there is a loss. Communal care is a long-held practice. It helps people cope together.

We grieve many kinds of loss, not just death. This includes losing a place. It also includes the loss of language, culture, relationships, health, dreams, or safety. Each loss is valid, especially in contexts of colonization and displacement.

# Types of grief

Grief comes in many forms. But several factors shape how we experience it. You do not need to fit your grief into a specific box. The following definitions can help you put words to what you feel. Be kind to yourself as you reflect on your grief.

### When grief is hard to define, it might be:

- ✓ Ambiguous grief
  - Refers to the added pain, sorrow, or confusion that comes from a loss which is unclear, undefined, or without closure. It stops us from attending to our feelings. An example of this is when someone goes missing and is not found.
- ✓ Anticipatory grief
  - Involves the grief experienced before the full loss happens. Anticipatory grief comes up in situations where a person knows a loss is coming. For example, it can happen when moving away or due to death from old age or Medical Assistance in Dying.
- ✓ Collective grief
  - Reflects the shared loss of a group, community, or society. Collective grief can be related to events such as natural disasters, mass violence, losing language or culture, or the death of a public figure who was very important to a community.
- ✓ Secondary losses
  - Refers to the additional losses that happen because of a death or other primary loss. These indirect or hidden losses may not be acknowledged in the same way as primary losses, but they still affect our well-being.

### We can be impacted by losses outside of human relationships, such as:

- ✓ Cultural loss
  - Involves the loss, limitations, and changes in a community's cultural practices. Cultural losses include ceremonies, language, and traditions. It is often caused by colonization. Colonization is when mainstream cultures overshadow or control other cultures.
- ✓ Ecological grief
  - Refers to the sadness we feel when we see the Land, water, animals, and plants being harmed or gone forever.

- ✓ Spiritual grief
  - Happens when someone feels unsure, challenged, or hurt in their beliefs, faith, or sense of purpose. It can make someone feel disconnected from who they are.

### Grief can become more challenging through:

- ✓ Delayed grief
  - Occurs when someone experiences grief long after a loss rather than right after the event. It may happen because the person cannot process the emotions at the time of the loss due to shock, feeling numb, or other factors.
- ✓ Disenfranchised grief
  - Includes grief that is not as openly shared, discussed, or given the same social support as other experiences of grief. It might make someone feel alone or confused if others do not understand their feelings.
- ✓ Stigmatized grief
  - Refers to grief that is related to circumstances that are not accepted by the community. It often takes place during losses related to drug use or deaths by suicide. It can leave people feeling isolated, judged, or unsupported while they grieve.
- ✓ Traumatic grief
  - Involves grief mixed with strong emotions from the trauma of how or when a loss occurs. Traumatic grief happens when someone loses a person in an upsetting or scary way, like witnessing an unexpected death. This pain can be very strong and stay for a long time.
- ✓ Cumulative grief
  - Cumulative grief happens when someone faces many losses over time. Repeated losses can make the grieving process feel heavier and more of a burden. Cumulative grief losses might happen all at once or build up over weeks, years, or even generations.
  - Cumulative grief can include historical and intergenerational trauma. It impacts not just individuals, but whole communities over time. This includes the loss of culture, Land, language, and community.
- ✓ Complicated and prolonged Grief
  - Complicated grief is when someone's grief is very intense and lasts a long time. It makes it hard to manage daily life. Grief is personal and unique. If it disrupts daily life for more than 12 months after the loss, it may be called complicated grief.

- If someone is struggling with complicated grief, it is a good idea to get support. A counsellor, healthcare provider, Elder, or Knowledge Carrier can help.

Inuit communities often carry intergenerational and systemic loss through colonization, relocation, and suppression of culture. Because of this, grief can be heavier and more complicated.

# Colonization and grief

> *"We're products of colonialism that caused a lot of trauma, and we're products of residential school abuses and the rapid changes we went through."*
>
> Jack Anawak
> *Anawak (n.d).*

Colonial policies have deeply affected how Inuit grieve, cope, and heal. Forced relocation, language and cultural suppression, and loss of Land have disrupted intergenerational knowledge. Many faced land claims disputes attended residential institutions (in some regions), and experienced cultural erasure. It has harmed community structures, and Land relationships. The harms create **intergenerational grief/trauma,** a collective wound.

- ✓ **Mentally,** grief shows up when we lose teachings, language, stories, and how we name ourselves.
- ✓ **Physically,** grief feels like a disconnection. It cuts people off from the Land, ice, sea, animals, and environment vital to Inuit life.
- ✓ **Spiritually,** assimilation policies have disrupted spiritual practices, ceremonies, and worldviews.
- ✓ **Emotionally,** grief appears in broken relationships, fractured belonging, and disconnection from community.

Despite this, Inuit communities have shown tremendous resilience. We resist and rebuild with culture and art. Language revitalization helps us, too. Storytelling is important. Land-based healing matters as well. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit means traditional Inuit knowledge and values. It plays a key role.

# Understanding loss and your journey forward: Ceremonies, messages, prayers, & activities

The next section is for reflection. It is a space for ceremony and meaning. Use it as you explore your grief. Use what resonates with you, adapt to your community, and seek guidance from Elders.

## Guided reflection: Understanding grief

Grief is something we all feel at different times in our lives. It can show up in our thoughts, bodies, hearts, and relationships. Sometimes we know right away we are grieving, and other times we do not notice it until later.

The next activity helps you reflect on the grief you may be holding. This grief may be your own or that of others. There are no right or wrong answers. Take your time, be honest with yourself, and remember: your feelings matter.

Take time to reflect:

✓ What grief am I carrying in my body, mind, heart, Spirit, or relations?

✓ Have I noticed grief in others around me—family, community, youth, Elders?

✓ Are there kinds of grief I did not name yet?

✓ Are there griefs I only now begin to understand?

## Thinking about loss: Reflection activity

Think about one loss you are learning to grow with. It does not have to be your biggest or most recent loss—just one you feel ready to think about during this journey.

Using words or drawing, use the space below to begin identifying a loss. You may also want to reflect on this loss by sharing it with a trusted person.

## Recognizing my grief activity

Grief affects everyone differently. Quiet moments let you see how grief feels, moves, or settles in your life. It can help you understand what is happening inside you.

This activity will help you explore the emotions and reactions that come with grief. Consider the following factors in your experience of grief and reflect on them. If it feels right, consider sharing your reflections with a trusted person in your life.

## Emotions in grief

Grief brings up many emotions, not just sadness. You might feel angry, numb, relieved, or even happy at times. All of these are okay. There is no right way to feel. Honouring your emotions is a brave and healthy part of the healing process.

## Times of mourning

Some days or events can make grief feel stronger. These might include:

- ✓ Birthdays
- ✓ Holidays
- ✓ Anniversaries
- ✓ Community days of remembrance (like Red Dress Day or Orange Shirt Day)

These moments can bring back memories or feelings of loss, and it is normal to feel more emotional during these times.

## Responses to grief

Everyone responds to grief in their own way. Your reactions can be:

- ✓ **Natural** (like crying, shutting down, or feeling tired)
- ✓ **Intentional** (like journaling, talking to someone)

Sometimes our reactions surprise us or feel unlike 'us'–that is okay. Recognizing your response is the first step to changing it, if that is your goal. Being honest with yourself is a powerful and essential tool in the healing process. Acceptance is a huge step toward healing.

Remember, this activity is just a starting point. Be proud of yourself for reflecting and know you are doing the best you can with what you know now. You are growing, learning, and healing one step at a time.

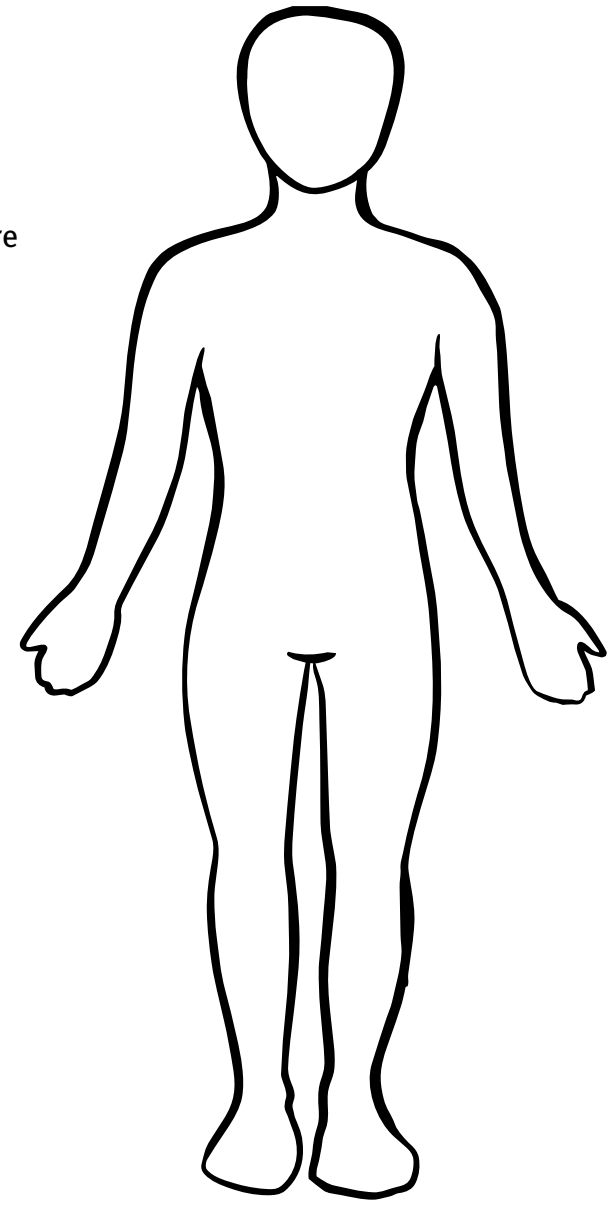
## Structure

| I feel (Emotion in Grief) | When (Time of mourning) | When this happens, (My response right now) |
|---|---|---|
| Mad | It is my family member's birthday | I talk about it with a friend |
| Lonely | I braid my daughter's hair | I am sad and think about my mom |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

# Body mapping activity

Using colours, words, lines, and symbols, body mapping is a practice that can help us see what we are experiencing and how we experience it. Body mapping lets us reflect on how grief affects us. It allows us to explore without any pressure to capture everything we think, feel, and experience. How the body map looks is not important—the process is what matters.

To create a body map, think about your grief. Add colours, words, or symbols to the body shape and nearby areas to represent what you experience and where it is located.



Your body map only needs to make sense to you—there are no rules in body mapping! Expressing yourself through this activity's visual elements is easier or harder than other types of reflection. Either way, you are taking meaningful, brave steps.

Grief is unique to every person. Reflecting on an experience of grief, consider:

- ✓ What do I experience in my body?
- ✓ What emotions does grief cause?
- ✓ How is my Spirit and spirituality affected?
- ✓ How has my mental well-being changed?

You do not need to have all the answers! Adding a colour, symbol, or blank spaces to show confusion or lack of feelings is a great addition to a body map. Seeing this in yourself is just as meaningful as any other experience.

Use the body shape to express your experience with grief. Add words, colours, lines, and symbols. Show how it affects you and where you feel it in, on, or around your body.

# Community supports build cultural revitalization: Reflection activity

Inuit ways of healing from grief connect to community and culture. It also involves relationships with the Land, the sea, and the Spirit world, called Sila. Healing means finding balance. It helps us, our communities, and our ties to Sila, our ancestors, and the living world.

> *"Inuit are very patient people; we survived and are the most resilient people. Society has a lot to learn from Inuit about patience, survival, and resiliency."*
>
> Piita Irniq, member of the EKCC

Each Inuit community has its own teachings. They honour important life transitions. These can be both joyful and sad. Traditionally, when someone passed on, it was a community event. People came together for care, storytelling, song, and remembrance. Inuit teachings hold that life and death are part of the same circle. When someone leaves this world, their Spirit stays alive. It lives on in names, memories, and the Land where they walked.

In many parts of Inuit Nunangat, when a child is born, they are often named after someone who has passed. This helps keep that person's Spirit alive in the community. This naming practice builds bonds across generations. It helps families hold onto their grief as a part of love, continuity, and belonging.

Healing after loss in Inuit culture often takes place through communal acts. Eating together. Lighting the qulliq. Sharing stories. Spending time outside. These acts strengthen our connections and show that grief is shared. It belongs to everyone, not just one person, but to the community as a whole.

Think about how being Inuk affects your grief. How does your community's history shape it? What about your family's experiences? How do these things change how you carry, understand, and express grief? Write words, symbols, or draw images that show your thoughts.

## Indigenous voices: Reclaiming our ceremonies for grieving

Ceremonies and traditions have carried generations of communities through grief. By doing these practices again, we help our own individual grief. We also help our Peoples and the Land heal since colonization interrupted our traditional ways. Elders and Knowledge Carriers connect us to our traditional ways. They show us how we can carry on these ways of knowing and being.

"Indigenous Voices: Reclaiming our ceremonies for grieving" shares the views and stories of Elders and Knowledge Carriers from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nations. Watch the video through the QR code to the right. After watching, you are encouraged to reflect on the following questions:

1. What did the Elders and Knowledge Carriers share that stood out to you? Why do you think it impacted you?
2. How does hearing about the use of traditional practices in grief impact your body, mind, heart or Spirit?
3. How does your relationship to the Land impact how you grieve? How might this connection help your healing?
4. What is one lesson from the Elders and Knowledge Carriers you will take with you on your grieving journey?
5. What responsibility do we have to carry these teachings forward in a good way, for ourselves and for future generations?

# Conversations in grief: Reflection activity

Grief need not be carried alone.

Traditional Inuit ways emphasize caring relationships, shared stories, and presence. Talking about grief in a circle, on the Land, by fire, or near water helps lighten its load. Doing this during travel or while working with your hands can also aid in the release. Consider starting with:

> *"Grief is love with nowhere to go."*
>
> Naulaq LeDrew, member of the EKCC

- ✓ "I have been carrying something I lost, and I want to share…"
- ✓ "It is hard to name this grief. Would you sit with me?"
- ✓ "I feel this way…I do not expect solutions, only listening."
- ✓ "Can we have a gathering or ceremony for what is lost?"

Everyone's pace is different.

Remember: It does not matter how you start the conversation—what matters is that you are doing it.

It can be challenging to put our feelings into words. As you move through this guide, consider the following feeling words and how they may fit with your experience.[1]

| Pleasant Feelings | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| OPEN | HAPPY | ALIVE | GOOD | LOVE | INTERESTED | POSITIVE | STRONG |
| understanding | great | playful | calm | loving | concerned | eager | impulsive |
| confident | gay | courageous | peaceful | considerate | affected | keen | free |
| reliable | joyous | energetic | at ease | affectionate | fascinated | earnest | sure |
| easy | lucky | liberated | comfortable | sensitive | intrigued | intent | certain |
| amazed | fortunate | optimistic | pleased | tender | absorbed | anxious | rebellious |
| free | delighted | provocative | encouraged | devoted | inquisitive | inspired | unique |
| sympathetic | overjoyed | impulsive | clever | attracted | nosy | determined | dynamic |
| interested | gleeful | free | surprised | passionate | snoopy | excited | tenacious |
| satisfied | thankful | frisky | content | admiration | engrossed | enthusiastic | hardy |
| receptive | important | animated | quiet | warm | curious | bold | secure |
| accepting | festive | spirited | certain | touched | | brave | |
| kind | ecstatic | thrilled | relaxed | sympathy | | daring | |
| | satisfied | wonderful | serene | close | | challenged | |
| | glad | | free and easy | loved | | optimistic | |
| | cheerful | | bright | comforted | | re-enforced | |
| | sunny | | blessed | drawn toward | | confident | |
| | merry | | reassured | | | hopeful | |

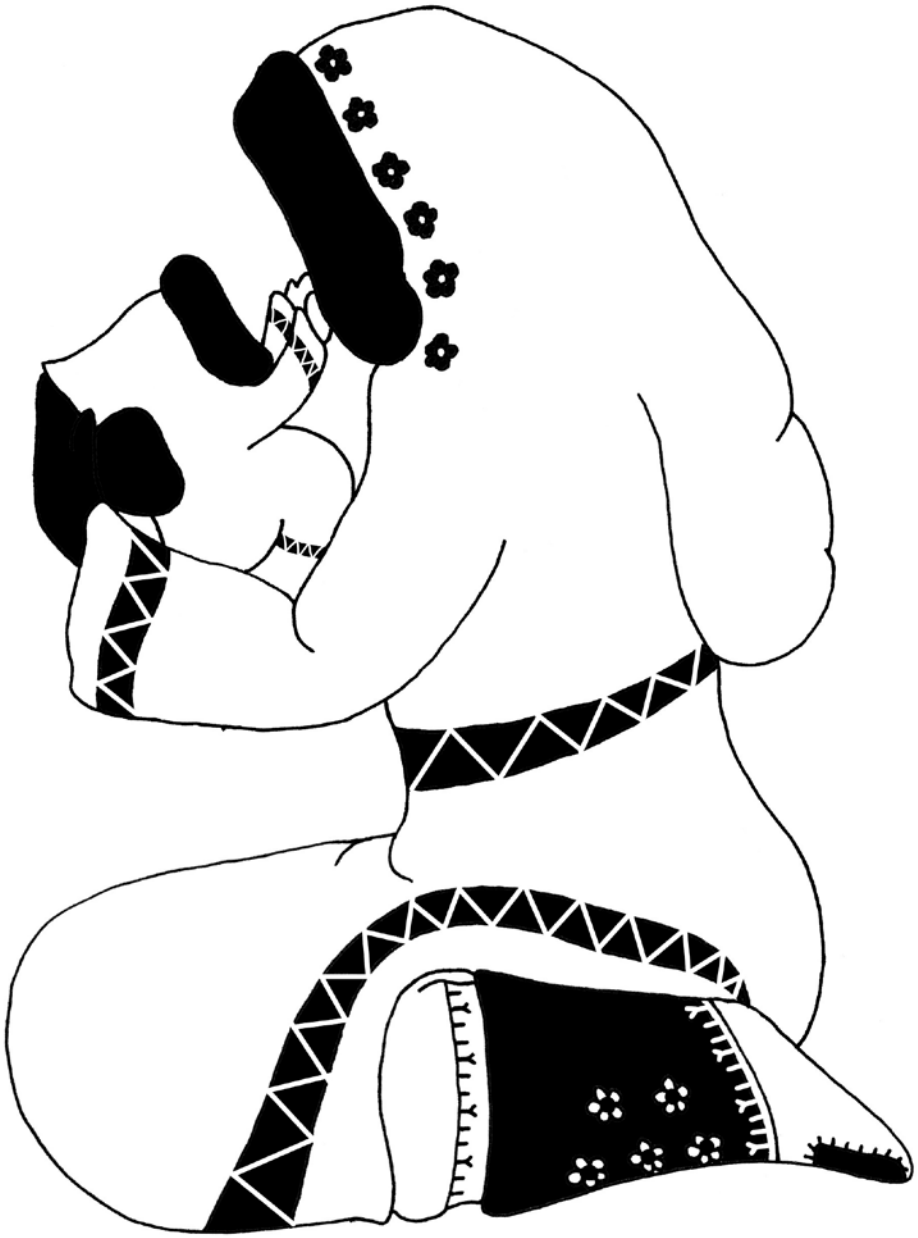
| Difficult/Unpleasant Feelings | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ANGRY | DEPRESSED | CONFUSED | HELPLESS | INDIFFERENT | AFRAID | HURT | SAD |
| irritated | lousy | upset | incapable | insensitive | fearful | crushed | tearful |
| enraged | disappointed | doubtful | alone | dull | terrified | tormented | sorrowful |
| hostile | discouraged | uncertain | paralyzed | nonchalant | suspicious | deprived | pained |
| insulting | ashamed | indecisive | fatigued | neutral | anxious | pained | grief |
| sore | powerless | perplexed | useless | reserved | alarmed | tortured | anguish |
| annoyed | diminished | embarrassed | inferior | weary | panic | dejected | desolate |
| upset | guilty | hesitant | vulnerable | bored | nervous | rejected | desperate |
| hateful | dissatisfied | shy | empty | preoccupied | scared | injured | pessimistic |
| unpleasant | miserable | stupefied | forced | cold | worried | offended | unhappy |
| offensive | detestable | disillusioned | hesitant | disinterested | frightened | afflicted | lonely |
| bitter | repugnant | unbelieving | despair | lifeless | timid | aching | grieved |
| aggressive | despicable | skeptical | frustrated | | shaky | victimized | mournful |
| resentful | disgusting | distrustful | distressed | | restless | heartbroken | dismayed |
| inflamed | abominable | misgiving | woeful | | doubtful | agonized | |
| provoked | terrible | lost | pathetic | | threatened | appalled | |
| incensed | in despair | unsure | tragic | | cowardly | humiliated | |
| infuriated | sulky | uneasy | in a stew | | quaking | wronged | |
| cross | bad | pessimistic | dominated | | menaced | alienated | |
| worked up | a sense of loss | tense | | | wary | | |

1 *Psychpage (n.d).*

# Connecting with our physical being: Colouring & art for grounding

The colouring page below can help centre and ground you as you reflect on your grief. Use it to connect with your physical self and appreciate the beauty of what your hands can create.

Colouring offers a quick break from having too many thoughts. It creates a calm, relaxing space to help you process your feelings. It also offers a way to express emotions that may be hard to put into words.



We gratefully acknowledge Raeann Brown for permission to include this artwork.

# Mental wellness creates meaning: Going on your healing journey

*On the healing journey, fall invites you to reflect on what you have learned and gathered along the way. It asks you to acknowledge your strength, release what no longer serves you, and prepare your Spirit for the stillness of winter.*

# Fall

In Inuit Nunangat, fall is a season of preparation and reflection. The air sharpens, daylight shortens, and the Land begins to quiet down. Families collect the harvest. They store dried meat and fish. Also, they repair tools for the cold ahead. It is a time to share stories. We teach the young. We honour the animals and Spirits that give life through the seasons.

It is important to give back to the Land that has provided for us. A season of balance: standing between light and darkness, movement and rest. On the healing journey, fall invites you to reflect on what you have learned and gathered along the way. Acknowledge your strength. Let go of what no longer serves you. Prepare your Spirit for the stillness of winter.

In late summer and early fall, the Land begins to shift. The tundra glows with deep reds, golden moss, and soft greys of stone and lichen. The sea ice has long melted, and hunters prepare once more for colder days ahead. Change reminds us that transformation is natural. Even as the light begins to fade, the Land holds beauty, strength, and renewal.

As the tundra turns red and gold, we reflect on what we have learned. This section helps you make meaning through language, stories, and Pisiit. These traditional Inuit songs carry memory, love, and resilience.

To learn to navigate grief as Inuit, we walk our own paths. We find guidance from the Land, our ancestors, and our teachings. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit teaches us that healing is ongoing. It is shaped by our relationships, community, and the environment that supports us.

This section gives you space to think about your journey. You can deepen your understanding and find ways to strengthen your wellness. We can heal in new ways. We can do this by telling stories, connecting with the Land and water, and being creative. These actions build resilience, belonging, and purpose. They show us that even in grief, we can find meaning.

AFFIRMATION

**I am growing like the Nuna (Land) that surrounds me—resilient, rooted, and radiant.**

*When your healing journey feels tough, repeat this affirmation. Let it remind you that you are growing, adapting, and learning, just as the Land and seasons change around you.*

# Land-based practice: Throat singing for connection and healing

This section focuses on the strength and healing within our voices through Inuit throat singing (katajjaniq).

Go outside, near the water, or to a favourite spot where you feel close to your ancestors. Begin throat-singing, letting your breath and sound flow naturally. If you do not know how to throat sing, you can hum, mimicking the wind, the sea, or the rhythmic sounds of nature around you.

While you sing or hum, think of your ancestors and imagine how they once called out across the tundra or water. They imitated the sounds of animals to attract them. They communicated through the Land's echoes. These songs helped people survive. They also connected them to each other, to Sila (the life force and Spirit), and to Nuliajuk, the Sea Goddess who protects the animals and waters.

In many Inuit stories, people would go to the water to pray to Sila, their ancestors, or Nuliajuk. They asked for guidance, forgiveness, or strength. Stories vary by region, but the message is the same: singing connects us to the Land, to each other, and to ourselves.

Take a few deep breaths after singing. Notice how your body feels. Let the air, the water, and your voice carry your thoughts into balance.

# Taking care and building our bundles: Ceremonies, messages, prayers, and activities

> *"It's not a weakness to cry, to ask for help and to say you're going through mental hardships."*
>
> Jack Anawak
> *Anawak (n.d).*

The healing activities in this section engage your senses: sight, taste, touch, smell, and sound. Our senses help us experience the world in powerful ways. These activities help you connect with yourself. They also help you reach out to those in the Spirit world, and the Land and sea that sustain us. Each activity builds your personal collection of knowledge, practices, and tools for wellness.

There is no right or wrong way to use these activities. If you approach them with good intentions, your Spirit will guide you through what is right for you.

You can try these practices in any order and at your own pace. Everyone's healing journey is unique. Listen to your heart, follow your intuition, and choose what feels right.

## Healing activity: Writing affirmations

### What are affirmations?

Affirmations are positive statements that help remind us of our strengths, values, and the kind of person we want to be. They can help us build confidence, stay focused, and feel supported, especially when we are going through something hard or need to hear something positive.

Affirmations are kind, powerful words we offer ourselves, like a pep talk. They remind us of who we are, what we stand for, and the person we are becoming.

### Part 1: 30 days of affirmations

Below are affirmations developed by the Elders, Knowledge Carriers, and team members who worked on this guide. These affirmations are meant to offer comfort, strength, and perspective as you move through your own journey.

Grief is a deeply personal process, but you are not alone. Many have walked this path before. The words and teachings of Elders and Knowledge Carriers shared here carry the wisdom of generations.

As you continue forward, consider choosing **one affirmation each day** to reflect on. Let it guide your thoughts, heart, body, and Spirit. It offers grounding, connection, and encouragement, no matter where you are in your healing. Consider repeating it aloud, in your head, or writing it somewhere you will see it during the day.

1. I am kind and gentle to myself.
2. I am an amazing Spirit.
3. I am loved unconditionally by my ancestors.
4. The memories we hold are gifts that can bring us peace.
5. Our ancestors will visit us in our dreams to remind us we are not alone in this life journey.
6. There are no do's or do nots about how I experience my loss.
7. Today, I hold your memories close to my heart; they will help me balance as I walk in grief.
8. I will honour you with my tears today.
9. The love and memories that I carry in my heart sustain me.
10. This Earth journey is a place of learning.
11. I will write the story of my life, weaving in the fantastic love I have for you.
12. Grief has no timeline; there is no pressure.
13. This feeling is painful, but it will pass.
14. Self-care is not selfish—it is essential.
15. Breathing in, I am calm. Breathing out, I am strong enough to care for these feelings.
16. I DO have the strength and resources to handle this time in my life.
17. I have a team of love and support around me. We take care of each other.
18. I am safe; I am loved; I am capable.
19. The stories are the medicine that fills in the gaps of the self and shows us who we are.
20. I carry a gentle heart and a strong mind.
21. My emotions are my strength.
22. I can trust my intuition.

23. I am everything my ancestors dreamed of.

24. I honour my body's need for rest.

25. It is okay to let go of emotions that do not serve me.

26. There is no right or wrong timeline for my grief.

27. Laughter is good medicine.

28. Grief does not need to be fixed; it is part of being human.

29. I am patient and kind to myself because I deserve it.

30. I carry the strength of all the generations before me.

## Part 2: Creating an affirmation

A simple way to start an affirmation is with the words:
**"I am..."**

Here are some examples:

- ✓ I am strong.
- ✓ I am enough.
- ✓ I am kind to myself and others.
- ✓ I am always learning and growing.
- ✓ I am connected to something greater than myself.

### Your turn: Build your own affirmation

Below is a list of powerful words. Circle the ones that speak to you—that describe who you are now, or who you wish to become. Then, write your own affirmation using those words or your own.

I am…

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ✓ Inuk | ✓ Caring | ✓ Creative | ✓ Open |
| ✓ Strong | ✓ Knowledgeable | ✓ Grounded | ✓ Kind |
| ✓ Capable | ✓ Intuitive | ✓ Resilient | ✓ Loved |
| ✓ Spiritual | ✓ Brave | ✓ Honest | ✓ Enough |

Now write your own affirmation below:

I am _____
I am _____
I am _____
I am _____
I am _____

## Healing activity: Water is life

Across Inuit Nunangat, **water is life.** It surrounds and sustains us in the rivers and lakes, the falling snow, the sea ice, and the mist in our breath. Inuit understand water as a living Spirit. It connects all beings through the cycles of snow, ice, fog, and ocean.

> *"What quiets the mind is to be out on the Land. Close your eyes, and your senses, your ear is sharper. You're listening. What am I listening for?"*
>
> Naulaq LeDrew, member of the EKCC

Water carries memory and movement. It is how we travel, hunt, and provide for our families. It gives life to animals and plants, and it holds the reflection of the sky and ancestors above. Our relationship with water is not only physical, but also spiritual. Water connects us with Sila, Nuliajuk (the Sea Goddess), and with the flow of life that sustains Inuit.

Try this:

- ✓ Go to the shoreline, riverbank, or even a small puddle after the rain. Sit quietly and listen to how water moves.
- ✓ Cry and release.
- ✓ As you breathe, remember water is within you, flowing in your blood, your tears, your breath.
- ✓ Offer a thought or word of gratitude to the water. You might whisper it, sing softly, or think it.
- ✓ Imagine your ancestors. They travelled by qajaq and depended on this same water. They prayed to Nuliajuk for safe passage and balance.
- ✓ When you return home, drink water slowly and with gratitude. Think of it as reconnecting with all that lives.

## Teachings

Water teaches us about movement, adaptation, and persistence. Even when frozen, it continues to exist, changing forms, yet never truly disappears. In this way, grief too can move and change. It may feel still or heavy for a time. Yet, beneath the surface, healing keeps flowing.

## Guided reflection

Take a quiet moment to reflect on the questions below. You may write, draw, or speak your answers aloud.

- ✓ What does water mean to you in your daily life?
- ✓ Where do you feel most connected to water—the sea, snow, rain, or ice?
- ✓ How does water remind you of the people and places you love?
- ✓ In what ways can you give thanks or care for the water in your community?

## Healing activity: Letting go with the wind and water

Inuit ceremonies and practices surrounding death and grief are deeply personal. They show our relationship with Sila, the air, wind, and weather that connect all living beings. Many Inuit believe that the Spirit stays nearby after death. It watches over family and friends until it is time to move on.

> *"The idea of naming our people after your relatives is that the deceased person lives again in the newborn."*
>
> Piita Irniq, member of the EKCC

To help both the living and the Spirit continue their journey, Inuit use acts of release that cleanse the heart and restore balance. Inuit also have naming traditions in which they name a newborn after someone who has passed on. This helps with grieving and letting go. The child takes on traits of the person they are named after. It helps us remember the person who has passed through a newborn.

Inuit turn to the elements, such as wind, water, snow, and breath, to release what is heavy. These natural forces have always been teachers and helpers, reminding us that nothing stays still forever.

Across Inuit Nunangat, people visit the graves of family and friends who have passed. They sit and share news and memories. They may seek guidance or offer prayers. These visits are acts of love and remembrance. They remind us that the bonds between the living and the Spirit world never disappear. Many find comfort in talking to those who have passed as if they are still here. They share unspoken words or emotions into the open air.

A common practice across the regions is to go outside and offer your grief or words to the wind. Some may go near the water or sea ice. They might speak quietly or release a small handful of snow or water back to the Land. Others may wash their hands, face, or chest in cold water. This act symbolizes letting go of pain, regret, or unfinished words. These gestures help both the living and the Spirit find peace.

This ceremony is not only for moments right after someone has passed. You can do it anytime, like when you feel a weight that needs releasing, when you are ready to forgive, or when you want to let go of what burdens your heart.

Try this:

- ✓ Find a safe and quiet space outside near the wind, water, or open Land.
- ✓ Take a slow breath. Feel the air move across your skin. This is Sila, the breath of life.
- ✓ Think about what you wish to release: pain, anger, guilt, or sadness.

- ✓ With your exhale, imagine those feelings carried away by the wind or the moving water.
- ✓ You may also visit the resting place of someone you love. Speak to them, share what is on your heart, and let the open air carry your words.
- ✓ When you are ready. You can thank Sila and the Land for taking what you no longer need and transforming it back into balance.

Doing this practice reminds us we are connected to everything around us. The wind, water, and snow hold the power to cleanse. Not by removing what happened, but by helping us release what no longer serves our Spirit.

## Guided reflection

Take a few moments to think about the teachings of letting go and renewal. You may wish to write, draw, or share your thoughts with someone you trust.

- ✓ What does it feel like to release something you have carried in your grief?
- ✓ Are there times you have found it hard to forgive someone who has died or left your life?
- ✓ How do the wind, water, or Land help you feel lighter or more at peace?
- ✓ Have you ever spoken to someone who has passed at their resting place? How did that make you feel?
- ✓ Is there something in your heart that you are ready to let go of today?

## Healing and cleansing through air, water, and Land

Inuit knowledge teaches that healing and cleansing are relational. Across Arctic regions, renewal has often been shown through connection to air, water, ice, and Land. Many Inuit teachings emphasize Sila. It is the life force expressed through breath, wind, and weather.

Land and water are not separate from us. Snow becomes drinking water. The sea sustains families. Ice carries memory. Being out on the Land, whether you're walking, sitting quietly, or just listening, supports emotional balance and reflection. Wind can help clear the mind. Water can soothe the body. Touching snow, earth, or seawater can feel like washing away heaviness.

Cleansing does not always have to be quiet. Some people may sit in stillness and breathe softly. Others may need to cry, call out, or release their grief loudly into the wind. The Land can hold quiet sorrow, and it can hold loud pain. Both are valid forms of healing.

If you have the strength and access, spending time near water or on the Land can support this process. If you do not have access or if your body feels too heavy to go outside, you may also choose to take a warm bath or shower. You can also light a candle. Water, whether from a river, the sea, snow, or your home, can be a source of cleansing. As you sit in the water, imagine it carrying away what feels overwhelming. Focus on your breathing. Allow your body to soften.

Because colonization disrupted access to Land and the transmission of knowledge, some practices may feel new. Healing today may include both traditional teachings and newer approaches to wellness. There is no single correct way to grieve or cleanse. You are invited to choose what feels right for you.

Try this:

- ✓ Step outside if you are able and take slow breaths. Notice the air moving across your skin.
- ✓ If you have access to clean snow or water, gently touch it and focus on your breathing.
- ✓ If you are near water, listen to its rhythm and let it steady you.
- ✓ If you feel the need, release your breath quietly or release loudly through tears or a cry into the wind.
- ✓ If staying indoors, take a warm bath or shower. As the water runs over you, imagine it washing away heaviness.
- ✓ Say quietly or aloud: "I release what I am ready to let go of. I welcome balance. I welcome breath."

When finished, take one steady breath and offer gratitude to the Land, the water, the air, and to yourself.

# Healing activity: Labrador tea and teachings

> *"The sustenance it brings you and the circulation that returns to your hands and your feet, it's a physical, mental and emotional comfort."*
>
> Rebecca Akulujuk
> *Akulujuk (n.d).*

Labrador tea is known in some Inuit dialects as Mamaittuqutik. It is a traditional plant medicine. It has long been vital for Inuit healing and well-being. Labrador tea grows in the tundra and rocky areas of Inuit Nunangat. For generations, people have used it to ease colds, comfort the body, and offer warmth in tough times. The act of preparing and drinking tea was more than nourishment. It was a moment of connection to the Land, to our ancestors, and to ourselves.

In Inuit teachings, the plants that survive in the Arctic are honoured for their strength, adaptability, and balance with the environment. When we make Labrador tea, we are reminded that even in harsh conditions, life and healing continue to flourish. Making tea can be a ceremony. It is a special time for reflection, memories, grief, and gratitude. This simple act allows warmth and calm to fill the body and Spirit.

### Labrador tea recipe (traditional style)

1. Gather a small handful of Labrador tea leaves *(Rhododendron groenlandicum)*. Take only what you need. Make sure it is from different plants each time. Do not forget to thank the Land.
2. Bring about 2 to 3 cups of clean water close to a boil.
3. Add the leaves and let them steep until the water takes on a light golden-brown colour.
4. Remove from heat and strain before drinking.
5. Enjoy the tea slowly as you sip, breathe deeply, and think of your ancestors, your community, and the healing power of the Land.

**Optional:** Add a little honey for sweetness if available.

**Reminder:** Labrador tea should always be made lightly. Oversteeping or drinking large amounts can cause dizziness. This is due to the plant's natural compounds. It is best enjoyed occasionally and with awareness.

### The teachings of Labrador tea

Just as cedar holds teachings of cleansing and protection in southern regions, Labrador tea carries teachings of endurance, grounding, and renewal in the North.
Each time we gather and brew the leaves, we are reminded that:

- ✓ Healing can happen slowly, through small and intentional acts.
- ✓ The warmth we create within ourselves also strengthens those around us.
- ✓ When we care for the Land, the Land continues to care for us.

In many Inuit homes, sharing tea is also sharing time, laughter, and stories. Sitting together around tea brings people back into relationships. It is an act of love and survival.

### Guided reflection

Take a few moments for stillness. Hold your cup and feel its warmth.

- ✓ What memories or stories come to you as you drink this tea?
- ✓ Who are you thinking of as you sip? An ancestor or a friend?
- ✓ How does this moment connect you to the Land and to your own healing?
- ✓ What teachings from your family or Elders guide you toward balance and care?

Let the scent of the leaves, the warmth of the tea, and your breath remind you that healing is ongoing. It lives in every small act of connection, care, and gratitude.

## Healing activities: Emotional release & grief release

In Inuit culture, healing and emotional release are deeply connected to our relationships with the Land, water, air, and Spirit. Emotions are not just something we feel inside. They move through our bodies and into our surroundings. The Sila (air, weather, and Spirit of the world) teaches us that everything breathes together. When our breath is heavy or blocked by grief, we can work with Sila. We can restore balance and release what weighs us down.

Angakkuit (spiritual healers or shamans) help people who carry heavy emotions, fear, or spiritual pain. They use breathwork, song, or movement to help restore harmony between body and Spirit. Today, Inuit still practice emotional release in many ways.

## When to use emotional release

When emotions feel overwhelming or stuck, it can help to find ways to release them. Try physical and spiritual methods to let them go. Inuit Elders often teach that grief and hardship can freeze us, like the sea ice in winter. To move again, we must breathe, speak, and move. It is like how the spring wind breaks open the ice and brings life back to the water.

An emotional release can be done through:

- ✓ Throat singing with a trusted friend or family member, or by yourself
- ✓ Drum dancing or moving your body to a steady rhythm
- ✓ Talking or singing to the wind (Sila), calling out your thoughts or pain
- ✓ Quiet storytelling with others about the one you have lost
- ✓ Taking deep breaths outdoors, allowing your breath to join with the wind

These acts are a form of ceremony even without formal tools or sacred items. The purpose is to let your Spirit breathe again.

## How to practice emotional release (on your own or guided)

1. **Find a safe and private space,** ideally outside. Try to go near the water, tundra, or in a quiet room with natural light.
2. **Ground yourself.** Stand or sit firmly. Feel your feet connecting with the Land beneath you.
3. **Breathe deeply** three times through your nose, holding briefly, then release slowly through your mouth.
4. **Imagine your breath carrying your grief** like wind blowing over snow, slowly softening what feels frozen inside.
5. If you feel called to, **vocalize your breath,** hum, sing, or mimic the sound of wind or waves. You may also choose to **drum softly** or **move your hands** in rhythm, as if brushing away heaviness.
6. When you feel the shift, **speak words of release** into the air. You might say:
   "Sila, carry this pain away. I let go so I may breathe again."
7. Sit quietly when you are done, letting the air move around you. Drink water or tea or eat something warm to gently bring your Spirit back into your body.

## Grief release

Inuit understand that death does not end the connection with the person who has passed. Many people still visit gravesites, speak to the ones who have passed, or bring food and stories as offerings. These actions help keep relationships strong. They turn grief into love and memory.

Emotional release helps families to share this transformation together. By releasing tears, sounds, and words, we make room for breath and renewal. Elders often remind us that expressing grief is a sign of strength and not weakness. Through release, we find clarity, peace, and the ability to rest.

## Guided reflection

Take a quiet moment after this practice. Reflect in writing, drawing, or through conversation with someone you trust.

- ✓ What does it feel like when you allow your breath and voice to move freely?
- ✓ Are there moments or memories that still feel 'frozen' inside you?
- ✓ How can you work with the Sila, the air and wind, to help you release them?
- ✓ How might visiting someone's grave or talking to their Spirit help you find comfort?

Remember, you can return to this practice anytime you feel heavy or disconnected. The breath of the Sila is always moving, and you are part of it.

# Healing activity: Drum dance

> *"They still have their drum dancing and their songs."*
>
> Aseneth Idlout
> *Idlout (n.d).*

In Inuit and Inuvialuit cultures, **drum dancing** is a deeply powerful practice. It is one that connects heart, voice, Land, and Spirit. Drums are traditionally made from caribou skin stretched over a wooden frame. The dancers move in step with the drumbeat, embodying songs that tell of the Land, life, and survival.

At celebrations, gatherings, or times of transition, drum dances bring people together. This is done through a circle of voice and movement. The beat of the drum is like a heartbeat, grounding, life-affirming, and full of memory.

If you wish, you can invite a drum dancer to perform, or you can drum dance for healing for yourself or someone else. You may offer a small gift or respectful words before the dance begins. Remember that you do not need to explain everything unless you want to.

### Guided reflection

- ✓ How might it feel to ask someone to dance for your healing or to carry your grief in song and movement?
- ✓ Why do you think a dancer might accept that request? What does that reflect about community and trust?

### History & significance of drum dancing (Inuit / Inuvialuit)

Drum dancing among Inuvialuit and Inuit has ancient roots. In Inuvialuit communities, it was used to recount legends, celebrate hunts, and tell stories of survival. The dance starts softly and builds in energy. Dancers use arm and body movements that echo the songs' language.

In Inuit Nunangat, drum dancing is part of the Inuit musical tradition. It plays an important role in ceremonies, celebrations, and community gatherings.

### Guided reflection

- ✓ Which parts of that story resonate with you? The drum? The movement? The stories?
- ✓ If you were to imagine a drum dance for your healing, what song would it tell?

# Healing activity: Crafting your Pisiq (your song of memory)

In Inuit tradition, **Pisiit** are ancient, chant-like songs. They represent survival, resilience, memory, and spiritual connection. They are traditionally accompanied by the qilaut (drum). These songs are created using poetic language, which has been passed down by memory. They often tell stories of the Land, ancestors, animals, and human experiences.

> *"Someday I will see you again, in another life. As Inuit, that's what we believe in."*
>
> Piita Irniq, member of the EKCC

Making your own **Pisiq** is a way to bring grief, love, memory, and hope into a creative voice. It becomes a vessel you carry in your heart, one you can sing when you feel the weight of loss.

## How to create your Pisiq

1. **Choose your inspiration**—a person, memory, or child you love.
2. **Imagine a refrain or chorus**—a few words or syllables that feel evocative (e.g. a name, a place, a feeling).
3. **Write in simple phrases**—short lines you can sing, chant, or hum. You might mimic natural sounds (such as wind, water, or animals) in your words or melody.
4. **Add one or two lines** that speak of feeling, gratitude, or release.
5. **Practice with a drum, hand clap, or soft beat**—sing the Pisiq aloud, letting your voice carry the memory.
6. **Share it when ready**—with someone you trust, or sing it quietly on the Land, in your home, or by water.

Follow the steps above and create your Pisiq below:

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Because Pisiit were once suppressed by missionary policies in many communities, rediscovery and bringing them back to life are part of their healing power. In Iqaluit, after decades of silence, Elders and youth worked together to bring Pisiit back into public performance.

### Guided reflection

- ✓ What words came to you easily in your Pisiq—names, places, feelings?
- ✓ Did singing or humming allow you to release something your mind could not fully name?
- ✓ How does your song connect your memory, sorrow, strength, and hopes?
- ✓ When might you return to sing this Pisiq—in ceremony, on the Land, with the drum, during quiet moments?

## Healing activity: Music as medicine

Grief is not a straight path. It has many layers of personal loss and intergenerational trauma. This grief also includes the ongoing impacts of colonization.

Music is a traditional medicine. Our communities use it to honour emotions, reflect, tell stories, and connect with one another.

This playlist can be a space to reflect, remember, relax, and connect with oneself. It features both traditional and contemporary music from Inuit artists. These songs may connect with you and your grief. We invite you to take some time to listen to this playlist or create your own and listen in a way that feels right for you.

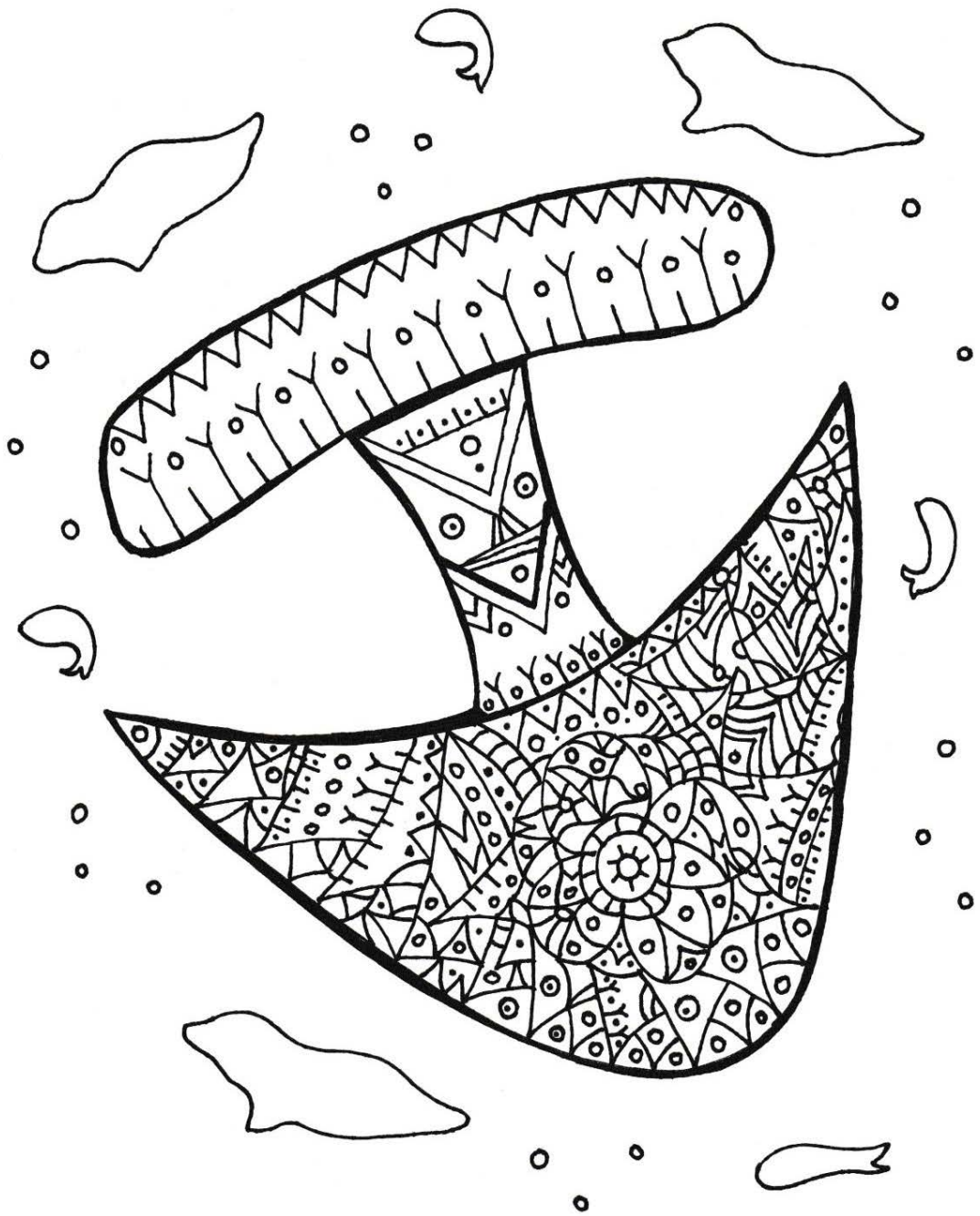
- ✓ Fly High by Jacon Okatsiak
- ✓ Ataataga by Riit
- ✓ Ungalirakki by Aasiva
- ✓ Nalligivagit by Beatrice Deer
- ✓ For You by Kelly Fraser
- ✓ Silatugami by Northern Haze
- ✓ Akkak by Jammaqsi Ungalaq
- ✓ O Siem by Susan Aglukark
- ✓ Sipiniit Love by Silla (featuring Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory)
- ✓ Tuktu Strut by Piqsiq
- ✓ Taimangalimaaq (Time After Time) by Elissapie
- ✓ Qaumariaq by The Trade-Offs

- ✓ Taannisirutik by Ivaluarjuk
- ✓ Immamiit by Kelly Fraser
- ✓ Imiqtaq by Riit
- ✓ Nukakuluga by Angela Amagoalik
- ✓ Sivunitsaq by Juurini
- ✓ Qujalivunga by Looee Arreak
- ✓ Inuit Nunangat by Terry Uyarak
- ✓ Quviasupunga by Joey Nowyuk
- ✓ Anaanaga by William Tagoona
- ✓ Nalligigakku (Because I Love Her) by Joey Nowyuk
- ✓ Ukiuq by The Jerry Cans
- ✓ Do not Give Up (Sapiliqtailigi) by Looee Arreak

# Connecting with our physical being: Colouring & art for grounding

The colouring page below can help centre and ground you as you reflect on your grief. Use it to connect with your physical self and appreciate the beauty of what your hands can create.

Colouring offers a quick break from having too many thoughts. It creates a calm, relaxing space to help you process your feelings. It also offers a way to express emotions that may be hard to put into words.



We gratefully acknowledge Raeann Brown for permission to include this artwork.

# Physical wellness creates purpose: Following up with support

*Inuit Nunangat winters are long, quiet, and powerful. The Land and sky are still, covered in snow, and time seems to slow down. This season of reflection reminds us that healing often happens in silence. Winter is a time to gather strength, give thanks for what we have built, and prepare for what is to come.*

# Winter

In the cold and stillness, we see how resilience is shaped and how every storm passes or how light returns.

In the quiet season, we rest, build, and prepare for what is to come. The winter section focuses on caring for the body and Spirit. Through rest, food, movement, and connection to Land. Like building an iglu, these steps take patience, balance, and care.

Grief never truly disappears. It changes shape and becomes an integral part of who we are. As Inuit, we learn to carry our grief the way we carry our stories. This means it is not something to bury, but something that walks beside us. Healing is not about forgetting. It is about transforming pain into purpose.

Physical wellness is one way we honour this transformation. The strength of our bodies connects to the strength of our Spirit. When we move, build, travel, or gather food, we continue the teachings of our ancestors. We are living in balance with the Land, and we can keep going even when conditions are hard.

Healing grows through connection to **family, language, Land, and community.** These relationships sustain us through all seasons, just as the warmth of the iglu shelters us from the cold. Taking care of our bodies and our surroundings helps us hold on to the healing we have already done.

AFFIRMATION

## I will move forward with purpose.

*When grief feels heavy, or life feels uncertain,*
*repeat this affirmation to remind yourself every step forward,*
*no matter how small, continues your healing journey.*

# Land-based healing activity: Building an iglu (Inuit snow house)

> *"I want to go home, I'm ready to go home."*
>
> Rosemarie Meyok
> *Meyok (n.d.b).*

For Inuit, the iglu is more than a shelter; it is a symbol of survival, balance, and the harmony between body, Land, and mind. Building an iglu teaches patience, problem-solving, and respect for the natural world. It is also a form of grounding and mindfulness. Building an iglu connects you directly with snow, breath, and rhythm.

Traditionally, igluit were built from hard-packed snow that was cut into blocks using a snow knife called a pana. The builder would move in circles, stacking each layer carefully. Next, they would seal the cracks with snow and leave a small air vent near the top. Each movement was deliberate, purposeful, and calm. A physical meditation in the middle of the cold.

Even a small snow house, snow bench, or shelter can be a healing practice today. It connects us to ancestral wisdom. It also shows us how to build warmth and safety with our own hands.

### Guided reflection: Building strength through the Land

Take some time to think about what you build in your life, your family, and your community when you face challenges.

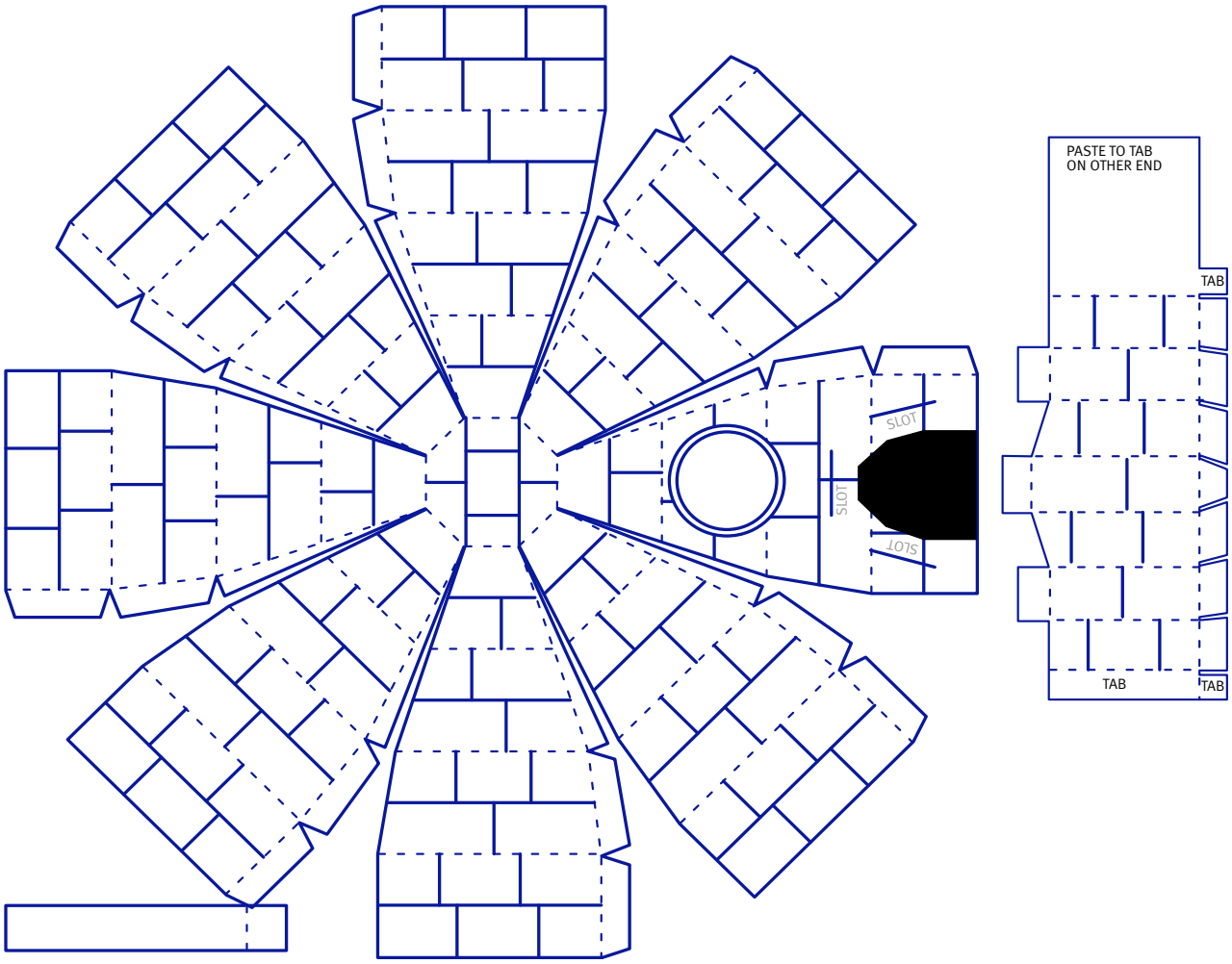
- ✓ What lessons from your ancestors guide the way you face hardship?
- ✓ How does the act of building, moving, or creating help you feel balanced?
- ✓ What does your 'iglu' represent in your own life, a place of rest, safety, or renewal?
- ✓ How can you continue to protect and nurture that space within yourself?

## Teachings of the iglu

- ✓ **Patience and Precision:** Each snow block must fit perfectly. Healing, like this, also needs time and care.
- ✓ **Interdependence:** An iglu stands because each block supports the next. Just as we stand strong when we lean on community.
- ✓ **Adaptability:** The iglu uses snow, air, and wind from the Land. It shows us how to find peace with our surroundings.
- ✓ **Warmth in the Cold:** Even in harsh conditions, there is warmth to be found when we use our knowledge and creativity.

Building an iglu or snow structure, no matter how small, can remind us. We can shape our environment. We can also influence our healing with good intentions.

If you like, try the iglu activity. You can cut out and fold along the dotted lines. Then, use tape or glue to assemble it all.



# Where do we go from here? Moving forward with grief: Ceremonies, messages, practices, & activities

We do not have to walk this path alone. Inuit Elders and Knowledge Carriers hold teachings, stories, and language carried across generations.

These gifts are meant to be shared, lived, and passed on. This way, future generations grow strong in their identity and sense of belonging. Wellness is collective. We find purpose together through relationships with family, community, Sila (air/weather/Spirit), Land, ice, and water.

> ***"We have to make sure we equip them with all the tools necessary for them to keep going. That's what we need to do to help the young people today."***
>
> Piita Irniq, member of the EKCC

## Honouring Inuktut in grief: My words, my dialect activity

> *"Just saying Qanuipit? How are you? In the language they're familiar with makes them feel so much more comfortable, and that's what they need."*
>
> Rosemarie Meyok
> *Meyok (n.d.a)*

Language is more than words. It carries worldview, memory, and the way we relate to the Land and one another. Revitalizing and using Inuktut strengthens identity and support healing. In some regions, atiit (names) are passed to newborns from those who have walked on. This keeps bonds alive across generations and shapes kinship and care.

### Why language now?

Nunavut's Inuit Language Protection Act recognizes the right to use Inuktut in public life. It encourages the growth of Inuktut in services, education, and jobs. These language rights that help communities heal and thrive.

Try this (adapt to your dialect):

- ✓ Write or record one feeling word about your grief in Inuktut (or the dialect you are learning).
- ✓ Say it aloud three times. Notice how speaking it changes how it sits in your body.
- ✓ Add a second word that means 'strength' or 'care.' Pair them in a short phrase you can return to.

Helpful starting places:

- ✓ **Inuktut Tusaalanga** (Pirurvik) free lessons, audio, grammar (Nunavut). https://tusaalanga.ca/
- ✓ **Tusâllanga** free **Nunatsiavut** Inuktitut lessons with audio & dialogues. https://nunatsiavut.tusaalanga.ca/
- ✓ **FirstVoices** community-led language archives & keyboards (search 'Inuktitut,' 'Inuinnaqtun,' etc.). https://www.fpcf.ca/

## Reflection doodle prompts

- ✓ What is one word or phrase in Inuktut I know (or want to learn)? Why does it matter to me?

- ✓ What is one small way I will use Inuktut daily (e.g., greeting, text, label items at home, sing a word in my Pisiq)?

## Knowledge circle activity

Elders and Knowledge Carriers guide language, ceremony, wellness, and grief practices. Some teachings are oral and shared in relationship. Approach with respect and follow local protocols (offer an honorarium or small gift when appropriate; ask about preferences).

How to ask for support (adapt locally):

- ✓ Introduce yourself (name, family/community/region).
- ✓ Be clear about your request (language help, grief guidance, history).
- ✓ Offer thanks and, where appropriate, a gift, even if it is a small gesture or service/acts of kindness.

If an Elder or Knowledge Carrier is not available, that is okay. You can find Traditional Knowledge in many places. These include community organizations, videos, books, and online resources from Elders or Knowledge Carriers. Or look to the people around you. Relearning helps us get back knowledge lost to colonization. It is an important step in reclaiming what was taken. Knowledge gained from different sources is just as valuable. We honour our ancestors and culture in the same way

We learn from many different people and places, especially over time. These people and places become a circle of support for our learning journey. Look at the image of the hands below and think about:

- ✓ Who or what has helped you learn about your culture, traditions, or history?
- ✓ Where would you go for questions about your language? What about ceremonies, culture, or history?
- ✓ People or places that help you learn (Elder, auntie/uncle, local cultural centre, school).
- ✓ Where would you go with questions (community organization, language website, library/archives).

### Instructions

On each of the hands, think of the name of a person or resource that could help. Resources might be a website, a book, or a place. It may be something that has already helped you learn more about your culture and traditions.

## Adapting Traditional Knowledge: Strong blocks, drawing your iglu activity

Adapting does not mean losing who we are; it means carrying forward values in new contexts. **Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ)** "that which Inuit have always known to be true." It guides our relationships, decisions, and care. Key ideas include Inuuqatigiitsiarniq, Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq, collaboration, and respect. Use Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit to help you plan ceremonies and use language. This applies to schools, clinics, workplaces, and community programs.

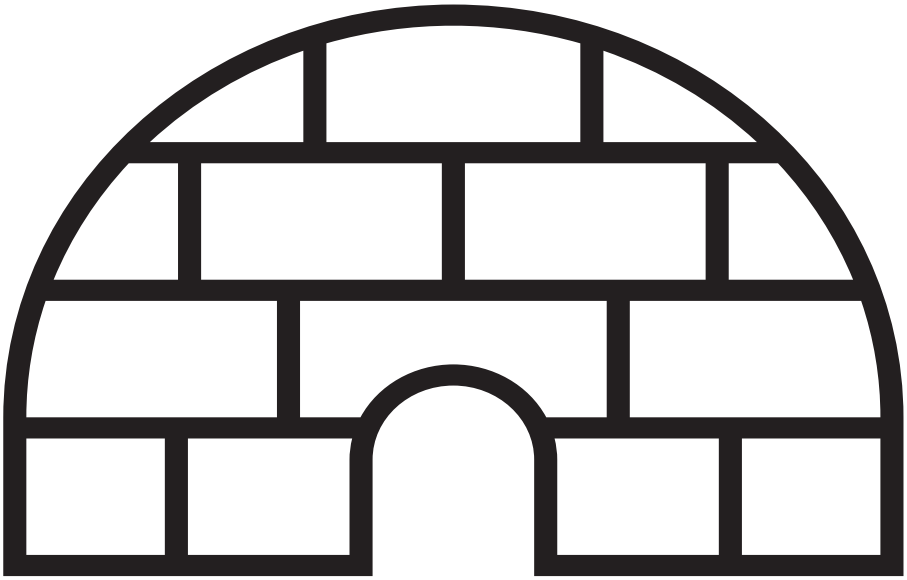
> *"Inuuqatigiitsiarniq is a case of love, compassion, care and respecting each other, which simply means living in peace and harmony with one another."*
>
> Piita Irniq, member of the EKCC

Real-world examples of adapting:

- ✓ **Qulliq** lighting and Inuit protocols are recognized and welcomed in public events and institutions.
- ✓ **Language rights** frameworks in Nunavut (ILPA) are expanding Inuktut in services and education.

### Iglu sketch activity

- ✓ Label 14 snow blocks (teachings/values you live by).
- ✓ Label 14 snow blocks (new ways you are using them—online language classes, inviting an Elder to open gatherings, land-based grief circles).



## Active decolonization & wellness activity

Decolonization asks if our systems help Inuit ways of living. Do they support their understanding and healing? In Inuit Nunangat and in urban Inuit spaces, that means centring **Inuit.**

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) values

- ✓ Inuuqatigiitsiarniq—Respecting others, relationships and caring for people.
- ✓ Tunnganarniq—Fostering good Spirits by being open, welcoming, and inclusive.
- ✓ Pijitsirniq—Serving and providing for family and/or community.
- ✓ Pilimmaksarniq / Pijariuqsarniq—Development of skills through observation, mentoring, practice, and effort.
- ✓ Aajiiqatigiinniq—Decision making through discussion and consensus.
- ✓ Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq—Respect and care for the Land, animals, and the environment.
- ✓ Piliriqatigiinniq / Ikajuqtigiinniq—Working together for a common cause.
- ✓ Qanuqtuurniq—Being innovative and resourceful.

## Two-level check-in

This is a quick self-reflection you can do anytime.

Me (the self)

- ✓ **Breath, voice, movement:** Am I using throat singing, Pisiit, or gentle drum rhythm to move emotions when I feel "stuck"?
- ✓ **Hands-on practices:** Am I sewing, repairing kamiit, carving, string-gaming, or even making a simple inuksuk to ground myself?
- ✓ **Language every day:** Did I use Inuktut today (a greeting, a label at home, a song lyric)? If I am learning, did I practice one word? (Your right to learn/use Inuktut is protected in Nunavut; urban Inuit can still set daily micro-goals.)
- ✓ **Land & water connection:** Did I step outside to **feel Sila,** wash with snow, listen to water/ice, or walk on Nuna, even briefly?
- ✓ **Country foods & routines:** When possible, am I choosing **country foods,** regular sleep, fresh air, and movement that fit the season?

Us (our spaces & systems)

- ✓ **Learn:** Learn to/or speaking your language yourself or with others.
- ✓ **Sing:** Sing a song in Inuktut to someone dear to you who has passed.
- ✓ **Find:** Find resources where you are (community centres, local halls, organizations).
- ✓ **Do:** Do something to help someone else (an act of kindness).
- ✓ **Look:** Look for what is needed where you are and create something.

## Mini activity: 'IQ in action' (15 minutes, solo or group)

Pick one Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit value (e.g., Piliriqatigiinniq).

IQ Value: _____

- ✓ **Me:** List one thing you will do this week that embodies it (e.g., sew with a relative, share a meal, co-write a Pisiq).

What I will do this week: _____

- ✓ **Us:** Name one space or system you would change. For example, think about using Inuktut signs in your clinic. You could add a qulliq protocol to your event checklists. Or consider scheduling monthly shoreline walks.

How can I help create change? _____

- ✓ Set a **date & ally** for follow-through (Pilimmaksarniq—learning by doing).

Keep a special date in mind and think about following through on what you have written.

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Why this matters:

- ✓ **Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is a living framework,** not just history. Using it to shape services and daily routines is a real act of decolonization.
- ✓ **Inuktut rights and visibility** normalize Inuit identity and belonging across settings.
- ✓ **Ceremony and performance (qulliq, drum dance, song)** are recognized as contemporary practices for wellness and justice processes.
- ✓ **Land-based healing** improves mental, emotional, and community wellness in both northern and urban areas.

## Sitting with the qulliq: A guided moment of rest

Find a quiet place where you can sit comfortably. If you have access to a qulliq, light it with intention. If you do not have one, you can light a candle or go on YouTube and search for 'Qulliq Inuit oil lamp New Year's Eve.' Regardless of how you choose to do this, it will work; what matters most is your presence.

Take a few deep breaths. Feel your body settle, your shoulders lowering, your heartbeat slowing, your mind softening.

Imagine the warmth of the qulliq before you. Its flame is gentle and steady. It does not rush. For generations, Inuit used the qulliq year-round, even during long winters. As you sit, let your thoughts move like snow drifting across the tundra. Passing, soft and weightless. You do not need to hold them. Let this moment be enough. You might whisper a quiet Qujjannamiik / Nakurmiik / Quyana / Thank you to your ancestors, to your body, or to the light itself. You might remember the hands that once tended the qulliq, like your ancestors. How they shaped the Arctic cotton, added rendered oils, and whispered prayers or gratitude into the flame. Know in this moment, you are doing the same. Tending to your light and nourishing your Spirit so it can continue to guide you.

When you are ready, close your eyes for your final deep breath. Feel the warmth linger, even after the flame fades. Carry warmth with you, a reminder that rest itself is a ceremony, and the light within you never truly goes out.

Cree Elder Albert McLeod shares that what often stays with us after someone is gone is how they helped prepare us for life without them. Their teachings, love, and presence remain with us in quiet but powerful ways.

Take some time to reflect on the loss you wrote about at the beginning of this guide. Grief can feel heavy, but it also brings important messages, lessons, or memories. These lessons can help us grow and change. Messages can be signs of strength, kindness, laughter, teachings, or simply the way someone made you feel safe and loved.

## Part 1: My loss' legacy

In the frames below, **draw, write,** or **describe** a message, lesson, or memory you will carry with you. It may be something that helps you feel connected to what was lost. Or, it may be something you have learned because of this experience. It does not have to be the biggest you have learned. Just let yourself follow whatever comes to mind.

*(You can use words, pictures, colours, or symbols—whatever feels right to you.)*

Frame 1:
A message or memory I carry from this loss

Frame 2:
How this message helps me move forward

## Part 2: Looking within

Sometimes grief brings up complicated or difficult feelings. That is okay. You can feel sadness and still find meaning. Take a moment to think about yourself and what you have learned through this experience.

- ✓ Is there a teaching, memory, or trait you want to be remembered for someday?
- ✓ Does this shape the way you act or treat others today?

Remember: Grief is not something we 'get over,' it is something we learn to grow with. And sometimes, the memories we carry become a medicine that helps us heal and keep going.

# Connecting with our physical being: Colouring & art for grounding

The colouring pages below can help centre and ground you as you reflect on your grief. Use it to connect with your physical self and appreciate the beauty of what your hands can create.

Colouring offers a quick break from having too many thoughts. It creates a calm, relaxing space to help you process your feelings. It also offers a way to express emotions that may be hard to put into words.

We gratefully acknowledge Raeann Brown for permission to include this artwork.

## Bonus: Inuit-specific colouring pages (to ground the hands & calm the mind)

Printable, Inuit-made options:

- ✓ **Qikiqtani Inuit Association** colouring pages by Inuk artist Martha Kyak. https://www.qia.ca/colouring-book-pages/?utm_source
- ✓ **ITK** free colouring pages for kids (Nunatsiaq coverage with link). https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/itk-shares-free-colouring-pages-for-kids/?utm_source
- ✓ **Inuusiq** activity and colouring book highlighting Inuit culture. https://inuusiq.com/resource/childrens-activity-colouring-book/?utm_source

# Conclusion: Carrying our bundles home

*Qujjannamiik for walking through this guide. Grief in Inuit Nunangat moves like the seasons. It thaws, flows, settles, and rests. It cannot be rushed or 'fixed.' We learn to carry it with courage and care. Our kinship, language, and ancestors shape us. The Nuna (Land), Sila (air/Spirit), and imaq (water) sustain us.*

*As you go on, remember this: healing happens in your relationship with yourself. It also grows through your family, community, ancestors, and the world around you.*

*Return to these pages in your own time. After a week, a season, or a year, notice what has softened, what remains, and what is ready to be tended. Like an inuksuk, these practices can mark your path and help you find your way again.*

*You are not alone.*

Inuit Nunangat and urban Inuit communities share a journey with you through drum, song, stories, and silence. They are guided by the steady light of the qulliq and the strength of IQ values:

- ✓ **Inuuqatigiitsiarniq** (relationships)
- ✓ **Piliriqatigiinniq** (working together)
- ✓ **Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq** (care for Land/animals)
- ✓ **Qanuqtuurniq** (resourcefulness).

Each small act matters. Speaking Inuktut, visiting water, building a tiny snow shelter, or crafting a Pisiq honours those before us. It also honours those who will come.

Be gentle with yourself. Honour your mind, body, Spirit, and heart. Rest when you need to. Step outside and breathe with Sila. Drink water with gratitude. Light a flame (or imagine the qulliq) and remember warmth returns, even in the depths of winter.

Trust your Spirit. It knows the route home.

Qujannamiik / Quana / Nakurmiik / Matna

# Appendix: Grief & loss support programs for Inuit

Many resources exist to help people dealing with grief and loss. Here is a list of some supports available to Inuit across Canada. You can use these as you move forward in your journey.

## Crisis support lines

Call 9-1-1 for help right away.

Canada-wide:

- ✓ National Suicide Crisis Helpline9-8-8 (call or text) from anywhere in Canada
- ✓ Hope for Wellness Help Line1-855-242-3310
- ✓ Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people (MMIWG) Crisis Line1-844-413-6649
- ✓ Kids Help Phone1-800-668-6868
- ✓ Indian Residential School Crisis Line 1-866-925-4419

## Canadian virtual hospice resources

- ✔ **Living My Culture: Inuit**
  A series of video and print resources that discuss many end-of-life, grief, and loss-related topics. It includes perspectives from many different knowledge carriers, including Elders, family members, and healthcare providers https://livingmyculture.ca/culture/inuit/.
- ✔ **Canadian Healing Quilt**
  An online space to honour, share, and remember the legacy of a person who has died. It allows anyone to add a memorial square to a Star quilt—a style of quilt that offers protection in life and honours memories in death. Stitching together life stories from across Turtle Island into the Healing Quilt can be a source of comfort and community https://healingquilt.ca/.

## Trauma-informed programs

- ✔ **Caring Hearts:**
  Offers support and education on grief, loss, trauma, and resilience through various programs, including support groups, counselling, educational resources, camps for children and youth, and mental health support for all. For more information, call 306-523-2780 or email contactus@caringheartssk.ca. https://www.caringheartssk.ca/.
- ✓ Grief & Loss Support Groups
- ✓ Healing Circles with Elders
- ✓ Suicide Loss Support Group
- ✓ Grief Support & Perinatal Loss Groups
- ✓ Loss of Child Group

- ✓ Anticipating Loss Support
- ✓ Art Therapy Workshops
- ✓ Death Café (Open Conversation Space)
- ✓ Grief Camps

Missing persons and MMIWG2S supports

- Healing circles
- Education sessions
- Trauma-informed care
- Self-care tools
- Family support groups
- Victim services partnerships

## Indigenous-specific counselling and supports

✔ **Manitoba: Medicine Bear Counselling, Support, and Elder Services**
Provides families of Missing and Murdered women, girls, and Two-Spirited Beings with support, as provided by Ni Kanichihk Inc., 'those who lead' in Winnipeg, Manitoba. https://kanikanichihk.ca/.

✔ **Medicine Bear Counselling**
Supports families of MMIWG2S with Elder services and counselling. Phone 1-888-953-KANI (5264).

✔ **Leading Black Wolf Program**
For youth connected to the child welfare system. Offers mentorship and support in building independence and reaching goals. Phone (204) 594-9525. https://kanikanichihk.ca/children-youth-and-family/leading-black-wolf/.

## 2SLGBTQ+ support

✔ **2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations: Crisis Response Team (Toronto)**
Provides mental health and crisis support rooted in Indigenous Knowledge and values https://2spirits.org/tcss/.

✔ **2 Spirits in Motion Society**
A national organization that supports 2S kin through community, ceremony, advocacy, and youth leadership across Turtle Island. https://www.2spiritsinmotion.com/.

✔ **Egale**
Canada-wide organization influencing public policy through education and advocacy. Resource topics include 2SLGBTQI experiences with dementia, mindfulness, and gender-based violence. https://egale.ca/.

✔ **Interligne**
Listening, intervention and awareness services for the LGBTQ+ community. Phone or text 1-888-505-1010. https://interligne.co/.

✔ **LGBT YouthLine (Ontario)**
Peer support via chat, text, and email for 2SLGBTQ+ youth aged 1629. Trained volunteers offer non-judgmental support *(YouthLine, 2025)*. Text 647-694-4275. https://www.youthline.ca/helpline/peer-support-helpline/.

✔ **Trans Lifeline**
Trans peer support run by and for trans people. Call 1-877-330-6366. https://translifeline.org/.

## Friendship centres & health centres

- ✔ **Friendship Centres (NAFC)**
  Over 100 centres across Canada offering culture, community, and wellness supports. Some centres support health, housing, justice, and youth programming. https://nafc.ca/.

- ✔ **Indigenous/Tribal health centres**
  Offer wholistic primary and mental health care, often with traditional healing, doctors, nurses, and counsellors.

## Training & education programs

- ✔ **Canadian Virtual Hospice: Indigenous Cultural Safety Training**
  A 5-module course focused on culturally safer experiences in Healthcare. It explores the importance of traditions, barriers to care, and how Indigenous people can be better supported through advanced illness, end-of-life care, and grief. https://www.virtualhospice.ca/learninghub.

- ✔ **Giwiidabindimin Certificate Program**
  Training in decolonized practices for grief and trauma, aimed at those working in Indigenous communities (healthcare, education, counselling, etc.). https://ctrinstitute.com/topic/certificate-program-in-responding-trauma-grief-indigenous/.

- ✔ **Sault College: Understanding Indigenous Grief and Loss**
  A 30-hour course exploring grief and loss in Indigenous communities, including coping and support methods. https://training.saultcollege.ca/courses/indigenousgriefandloss.

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