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# A Community-driven Approach to Supporting Youth Mental Wellness in Nunavut: The I-SPARX and Virtual Qaggiq Projects



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The presenters do not intend to discuss an unapproved/investigative use of a commercial product/device in this presentation.



# Self-disclosure > "L/C" Tunngahugit



Accountability of our research team
Striving for a decolonizing approach to research

# Project Partners

The NUNAVUT communities of: Arctic Bay, Baker Lake, Cambridge Bay, Kimmirut, Kinngait, Pangnirtung, Pond Inlet, and Taloyoak.

#### The NUWellnessGames Team



Mental health researchers from York University









Inuusiq Embrace Life Council

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#### **LaMarsh Centre for Child and Youth Research**

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Gordon Flett Jonathan Weiss

Jennine Rawana Jennifer Jenson



# Learning Objective

Describe the process of developing 2 Inuit-specific mental wellness e-tools and share the inherent strengths and challenges of co-creative research with multiple, diverse communities, across Nunavut.

# The NUWellnessGames Projects

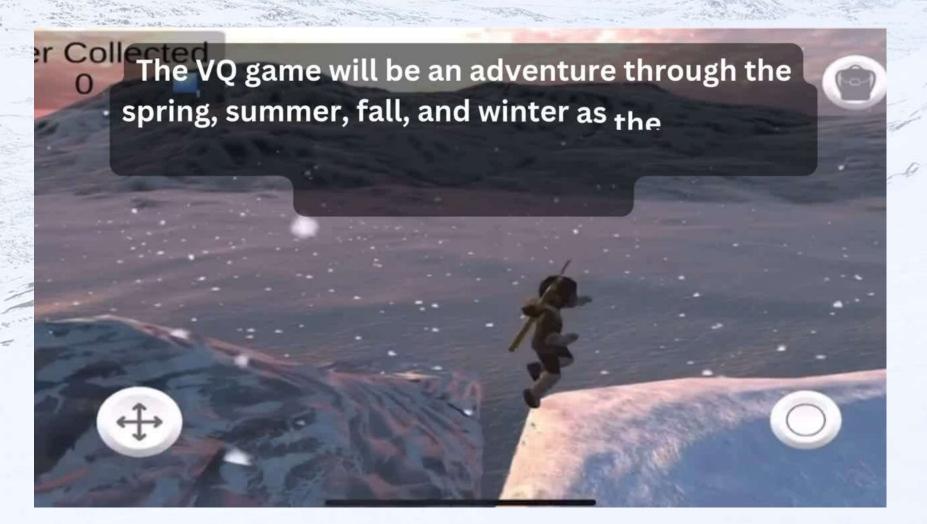
Develop and evaluate virtual tools to support the mental health and resilience of Inuit youth



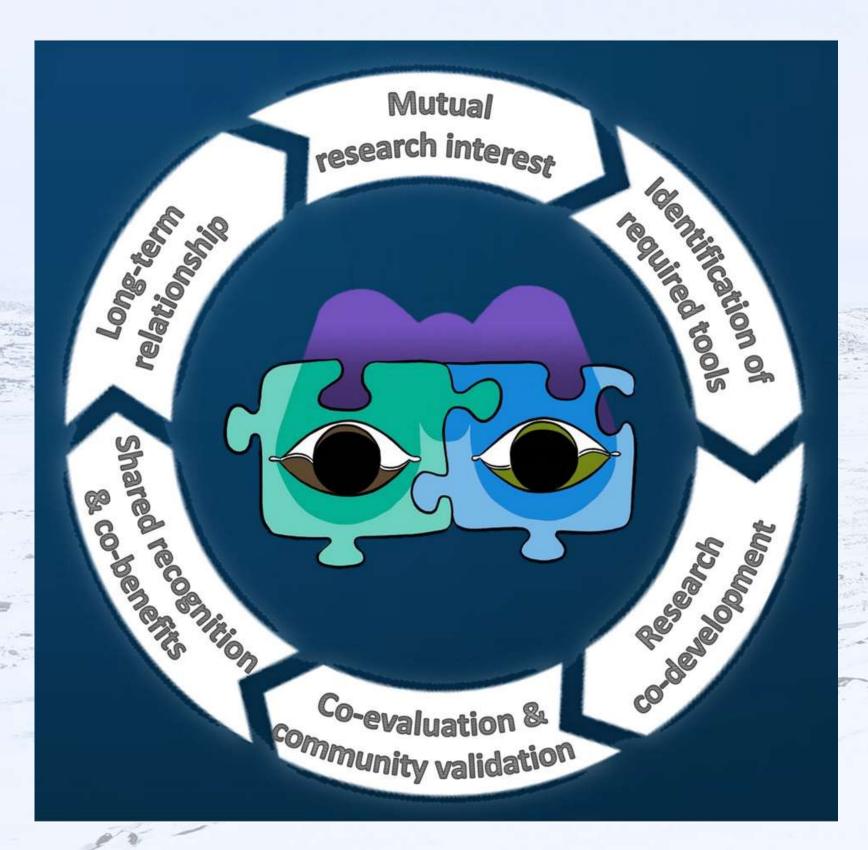
2018-2022







## Framework for I-SPARX and VQ



Etuaptmumk/Two-Eyed Seeing:

The gift of multiple perspectives for a better approach to research (Mi'kmaq Elder Marshall)



ΔοΔ° %>>L>D%°C'/Inuit
Qaujimajatuqangit



Cognitive Behavioural (CBT) approach to prevention





# The I(nuit)-SPARX Project



I-SPARX is a game that teaches strategies to deal with stress, anxiety and depression using cognitive behavioural therapy

The I-SPARX project was a territory-wide initiative designed to:

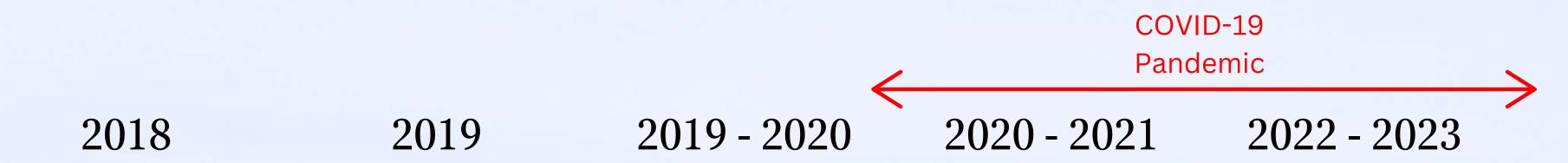
- 1) culturally adapt SPARX, the original game built for Māori youth in Aotearoa (New Zealand) for Inuit culture
- 2) evaluate this adapted fantasy CBT-based video game





### I-SPARX Process Timeline





Consult

Develop

Review

Evaluate

Share

5 communities N = 30

N = 22

N = 12

5 communities 6 communities 17 communities N = 121

25 communities









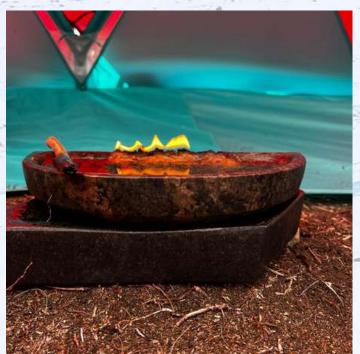
#### Co-creative Development of I-SPARX





Youth engagement in the cultural adaptation of:

- 1) SPARX to I-SPARX
- 2) Collaborative development of the I-SPARX Wellness Questionnaire used for the evaluation of I-SPARX's impact on players











### Who tested I-SPARX?



N=121

Youth 13-24

F: 68. M: 48. TGM: 2 missing: 3



#### 121 youth from 16 different communities tested I-SPARX!

Sankiluaq Kangiqtiniq / Rankin Inlet Arctic Bay Kugluktuk Ottawa Iqaluit Pond Inlet
Hall Beach / Sanirajak Gjoa Haven / Uqsuqtuuq Kugaaruk Naujaat / Repulse Bay Igloolik
Tikirarjuaq / Whale Cove Taloyoak Iqaluktuuttiaq / Cambridge Bay Qamani'tuaq / Baker Lake

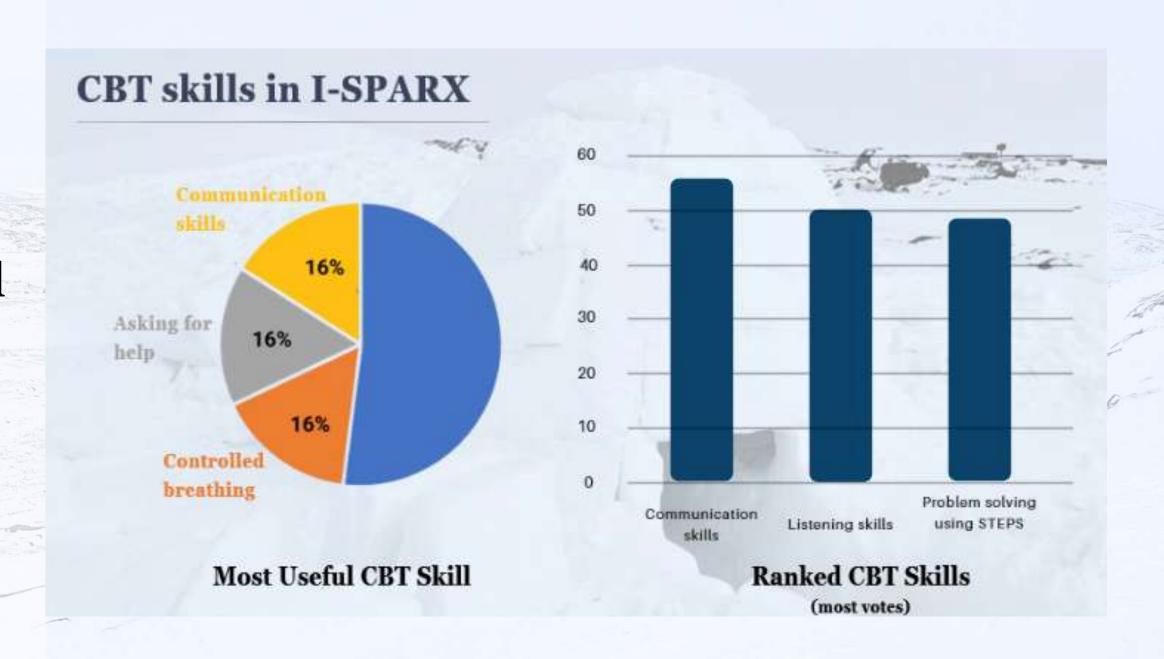
And 81 youth completed the game!!



# Findings from I-SPARX



Psychoeducational e-games built on cognitive behavioral strategies, developed in collaboration with Inuit communities to ensure cultural specificity, may be a useful option for supporting psychological wellness in Northern communities where mental health resources are scarce.





# The Virtual Qaggiq (VQ) Project



Building on the success of I-SPARX, The Virtual Qaggiq relied on youth and community collaboration to develop an Inuit-specific, resilience-enhancing mobile e-intervention from the ground up.





#### もらくひとりょう でんしゃ

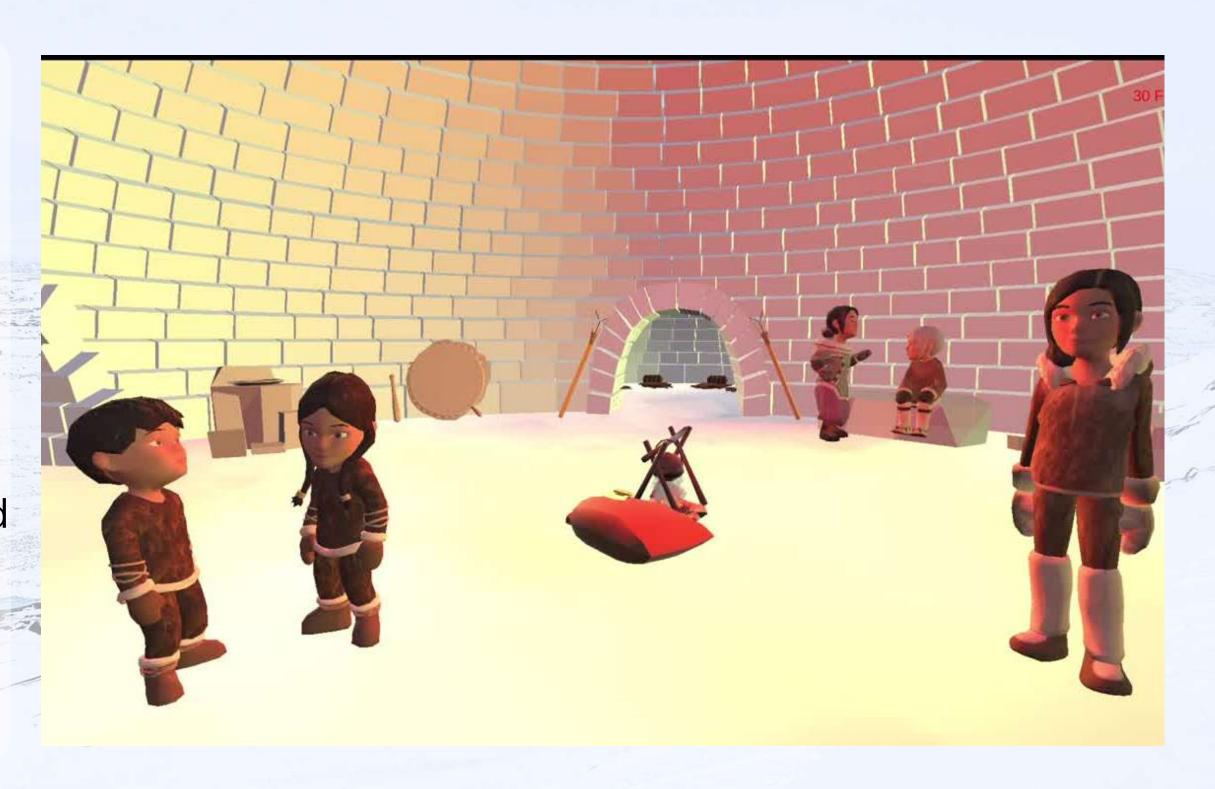
Virtual Qaggiq



2022-202

# The Virtual Qaggiq (VQ) Project

The Virtual Qaggiq (VQ) is a fantasy-based mobile game designed to be fun and also provide coping strategies for stress, anxiety and depression. The player journeys through seven levels, completing quests using Inuit traditional cultural ways to help the community and learning (southern) evidencebased strategies (ES) to deal with typical mental health challenges.





# VQ Project Timeline



2022 - 2023

2024 - 2025

2025

2025 - 2026

2026

Consult

Develop

Review

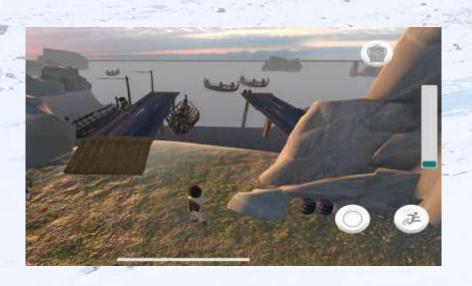
**Evaluate** 

Share

6 communities 8 communities

N = 13

N = 18









# Co-Creative Development of VQ















Inuit youth and cultural advisor engagement in VQ:

- 1) Identification of wellness challenges to address
- 2) Selection of Inuit wellness traditions and skills to include
- 3) Selection of western/southern empirically supported skills to include
- 4) Co-creative development of game script and style including original art and music
- 5) Co-creative development of study design

# Upcoming Launch of VQ Trials





The effects on mental wellness of playing the VQ game will be tested in the summer of 2025! We hope that this project will expand on the findings of I-SPARX and will lend further support for the effectiveness of community-developed, culture focused e-interventions in game form.

# Let's talk about it!..

