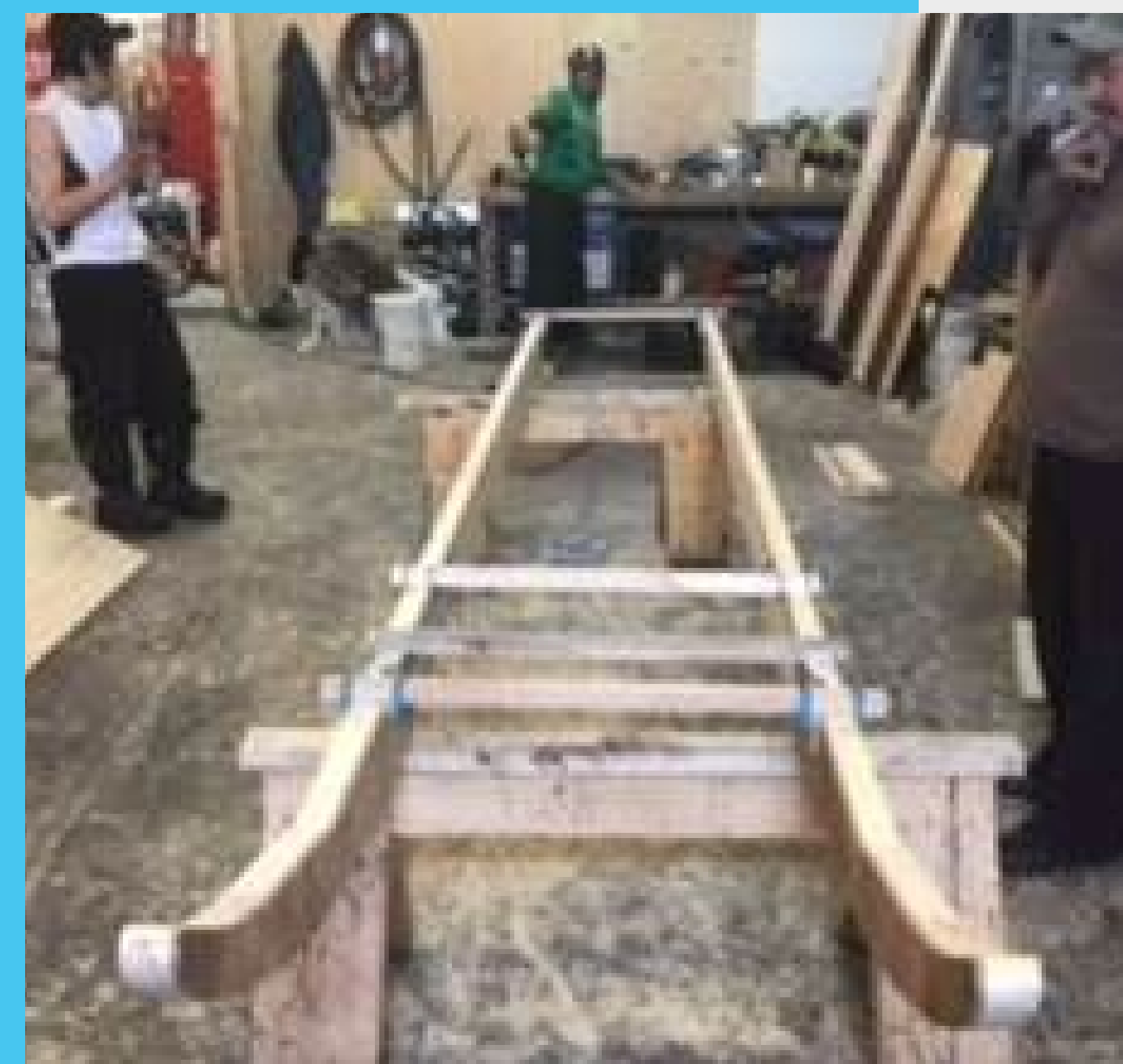




# Impact Report 2019

# Saqijjuq—ACCESS Open Minds Puvirnituq, Nunavik

## Transforming Youth Mental Health Care



**SPOOR**  
*Putting Patients First* 







# INNOVATION IN ACTION

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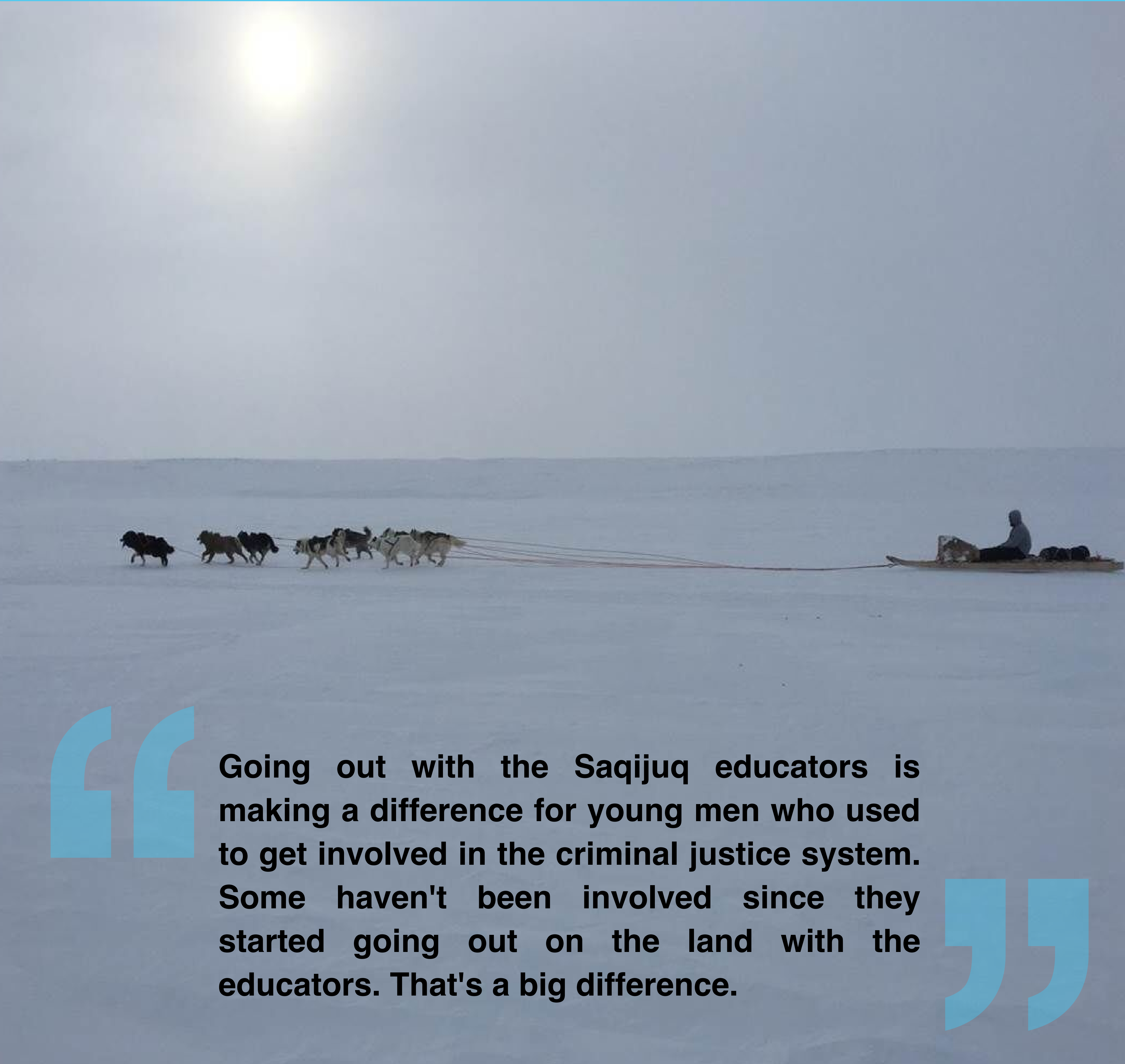
**ACCESS Open Minds is changing youth mental health care in Canada by transforming and improving services, generating new knowledge, and forging connections across the country.**

**Saqijuq is a project in Nunavik that is working to reconstruct social regulation through a coordinated set of actions, interventions, and programs – making efficient use of existing resources, and creating new, needed resources.**

**Saqijuq and ACCESS OM have joined forces to work towards the common goal of supporting youth in the community of Puvirnituk and connecting them with resources that will help them thrive and be well.**

**This report highlights key site activities, approaches to delivering services, and successes stories from the Saqijuq-ACCESS Open Minds team in Puvirnituk, Nunavik.**

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“

**Going out with the Saqijuq educators is making a difference for young men who used to get involved in the criminal justice system. Some haven't been involved since they started going out on the land with the educators. That's a big difference.**

”

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# About ACCESS Open Minds

Initiated in 2015, ACCESS Open Minds (ACCESS OM) is a **pan-Canadian service transformation and research project**, jointly funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Graham Boeckh Foundation under CIHR's Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research.

The ACCESS OM network is made up of over 300 individuals including youth, family members and carers, service providers, researchers, and policymakers from across Canada, all working together to **transform youth mental health services**.

At the 14 ACCESS Open Minds service sites located across the country, youth and their families and carers are able to get **rapid and barrier-free access to mental health support** based on their own goals and needs, where and when they want it. By implementing a common research program and evaluation toolkit, all ACCESS Open Minds sites provide evidence-based care, and are generating **evidence** that will inform policy makers and ultimately improve mental health care across the country.

## We are at 14 diverse sites across Canada...



Puvirnituk,  
Nunavik, QC

Ulukhaktok, NT

Edmonton, AB

University of Alberta, AB

Sturgeon Lake First Nation,  
SK

Chatham-Kent, ON

Cree Nation of Mistissini,  
Eeyou Istchee, QC

Dorval-Lachine-LaSalle, QC

Parc-Extension, QC

RIPAJ-Montréal, QC

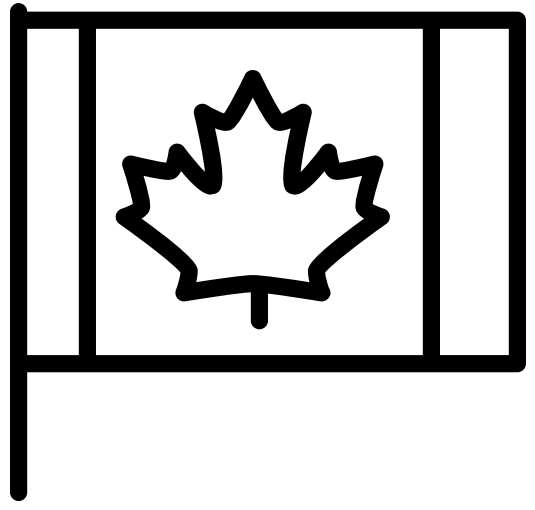
Province of New Brunswick:  
P.E.E.R SJ in Saint John,  
Péninsule Acadienne,  
Elsipogtog First Nation

Eskasoni First Nation, NS

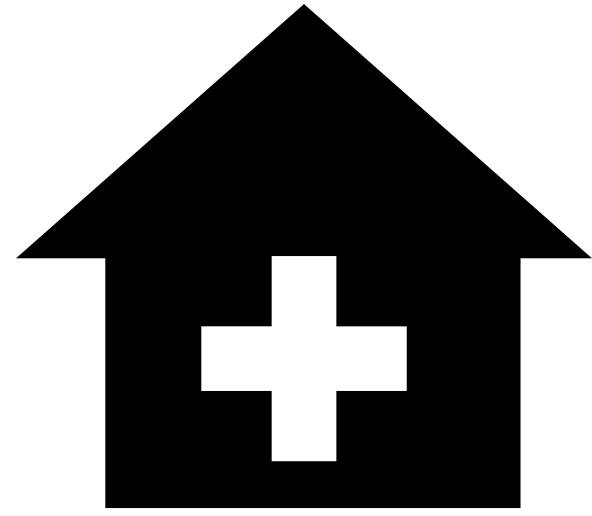


# Project outcomes:

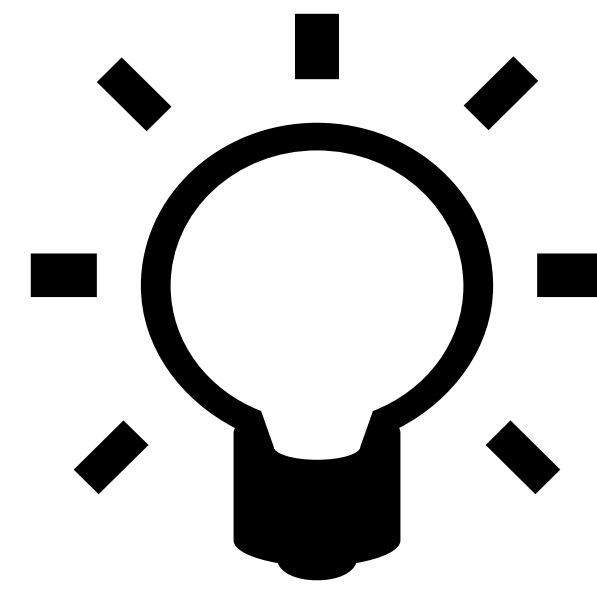
ACCESS Open Minds is working towards...



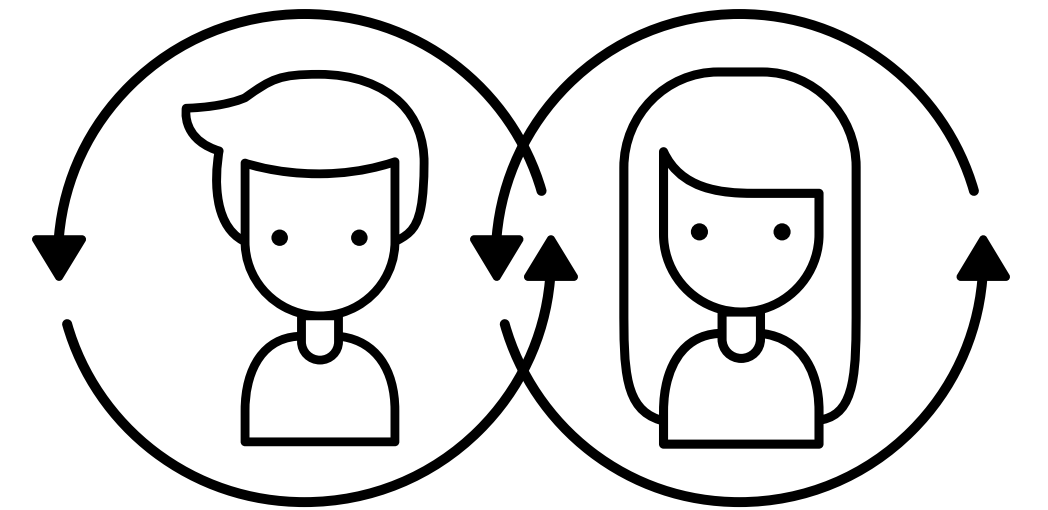
Creating a pan-Canadian network



Transforming services, making mental health care systems into *learning* health care systems



Generating new knowledge and evidence through research



Involving youth and families/carers

# Core values at all ACCESS Open Minds services:



## CORE VALUES



**1 PERSONAL GOALS:** Care is recovery-oriented and evidence-informed, with the aim of working towards personally meaningful goals for the youth.

**2 WHOLE PERSON:** Recognition that a youth in distress is a “whole person,” not just their “disorder” or “symptoms”. Care focuses on all aspects of a young person’s well-being: psychological, physical, social, functional, spiritual/existential, etc.

**3 STRENGTHS AND RESILIENCE:** Services are delivered from a philosophy of hope, resilience, empowerment and respect for personal agency. The approach draws from the young person’s own strengths, their network and community.

**4 COMPASSION:** Services are delivered from a place of caring, empathy, transparency, respect and patience.

**5 DIVERSITY:** Care values all expressions of diversity including gender, ethnicity, cultural and historical background, and personal preferences.

**6 SHARED DECISION MAKING:** The young person is informed and shares decision making about their care. Service is in the language in which the young person can express themselves.

**7 ACCESS:** Youth access services when and where they want.

**8 FAMILIES AND CARERS:** The services value the involvement and contribution of families, carers and others who may be significantly engaged in the lives of a young person, recognizing their role in the recovery of young person.



# Background and history



## Puvirnituk, Nunavik

**Meaning:** Place where there is a smell of rotten meat

Located 4 km from Povungnituk Bay, on the north shore of the major river by the same name, this Inuit village is surrounded by an expansive plateau. It is a mixture of countless lakes and rivers, rich wildlife and precious arctic plants and flowers. Puvirnituk also witnesses every year the migration of the Leaf River caribou herd.

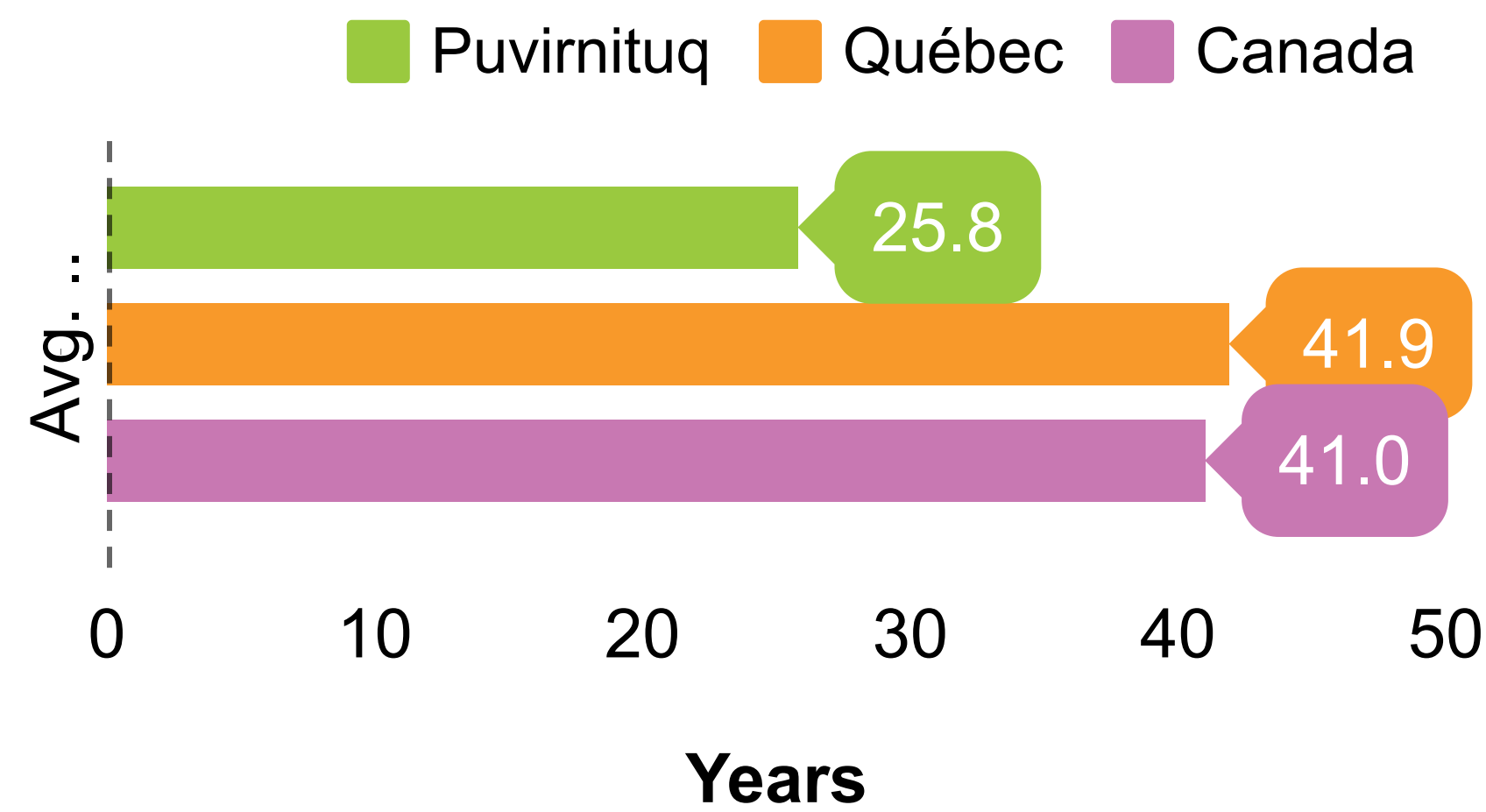


Two explanations are commonly given for the peculiar name of this village. The first recounts, that many years ago when migrating caribou attempted to cross the river many were swept downstream and drowned. Their carcasses, it seems, were washed up on shore where they began to rot, producing a putrid odour. The other explanation of the site's name tells how everyone living in the area were once the victims of a deadly epidemic.

Saqijuq-ACCESS is community based, meaning the activities come from community members. A lot of work is done on the land, as it is vital for youth to know their history, their culture, and to learn how to provide for their families, such as by hunting or fishing. Those involved learn from elders about their past, and while on the land they learn survival skills, which is crucial if going on the land. They learn how to properly hunt, cut, and store their catch, as well as the importance of sharing with the community and those unable to go on the land.

The overwhelming contribution, collaboration, and support from the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) has been vital in the success of this project.

### Average age: Comparison

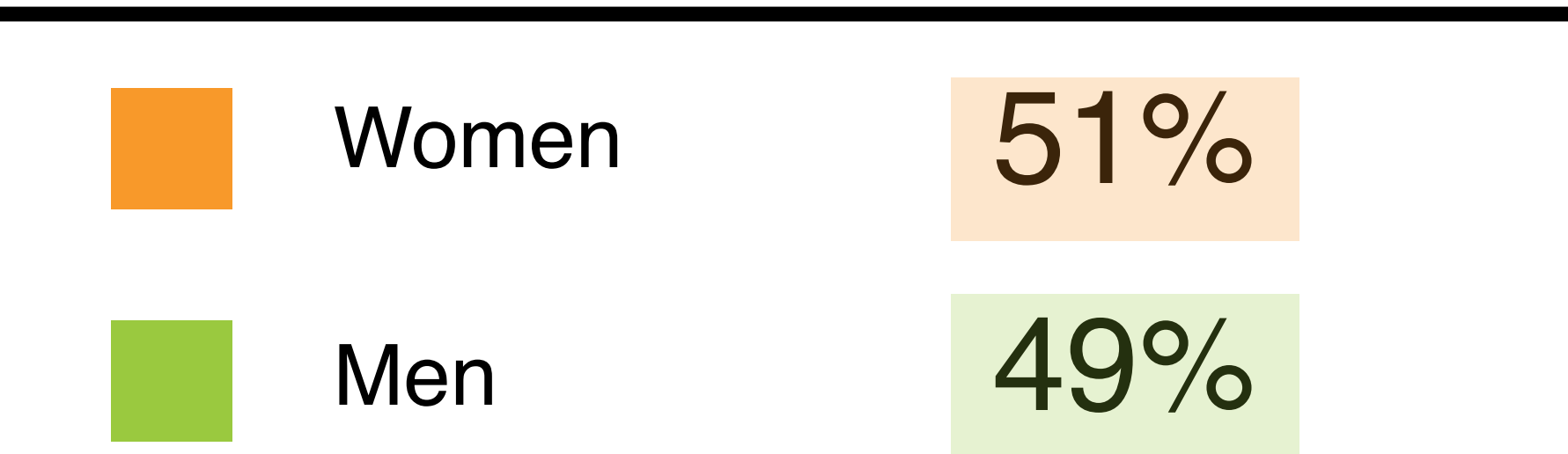


The average age in Puvirnituk (25.8 years) is 15.2 years younger than the Canadian average (41 years).

### Age breakdown



### Total population: 1,780



Inuktitut is the mother tongue of 93% of the population, and 92% of the population speaks that language at home.



# Project timeline

Puvirnituk, Nunavik

## TRAM

- Transformational Research in Adolescent Mental Health (TRAM) grant competition is held
- Representatives from the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) and local Puvirnituk social services participate in submitting application within the ACCESS (OM) network

## Boots on the ground

- Partnership Agreement signed between ACCESS OM and the NRBHSS (who oversee the project in Puvirnituk)
- Initial meetings with Saqijuq and ACCESS Open Minds, as well as community representatives

## We have lift-off!

- Saqijuq-ACCESS team is staffed with Educators who animate programming with youth in the community
- Emphasis is placed on land-based programming; participating youth have the opportunity to learn hunting, camping, survival skills
- Site team begins collecting data with community-appropriate protocol
- Site team attends the ACCESS Open Minds network meeting in Montreal, and shares the unique nature of the project as it is rolling out in the community

2014

2015

## Getting started

- ACCESS OM is announced as the successful TRAM network
- Representatives from the Puvirnituk site team participate in the first network meeting in Montréal, QC

2016

2017

## Growing momentum

- All-Organization meeting held in Puvirnituk, hosted by Saqijuq and ACCESS Open Minds, bringing together organizations from the community and across Nunavik who serve youth and community members
- Office space in the community opens for the site team
- Local workers identified to spearhead the project

2018

2019

## Next steps...

- The site team hosts members of ACCESS Open Minds - Eskasoni First Nation team in a knowledge exchange
- Qualitative data to be collected in June
- Move workshop and have the office built so everything is in one area
- Work to have a permanent on the land camp (Saqijuq)
- Mobile Intervention Team (MIT) has started (Saqijuq)



# Connection to land as key

Puvirnituk, Nunavik

Since the team came together, the Saqijuq-ACCESS Educators have been taking youth out on the land for hunting trips and survival skill-building activities, among other activities. Part of their purpose is to connect youth with the land, and in particular youth who might not otherwise have such an opportunity. The Saqijuq-ACCESS team tries to seek out youth who do not have access to hunting gear, or who might not have other opportunities to leave the community. They reach out to these youth, and to their parents or guardians, and invite them to participate. They make sure that everyone knows this will be no easy trip, though – everyone is expected to work, to hold their own, and to contribute fully to the day's activity.



The team of educators is in communication with the local senior school so as to identify school-aged youth who might be having trouble or who have been missing school, in order to get a sense of who to reach out to support. They also make an effort to reach out to young people who have been attending school and are applying themselves, inviting students on outings during a day off. The team wants to make sure to not privilege one group or another – but rather to strike a balance in supporting the community's youth in their connection to the land and wellness.

In the winter months, outings on the land can take place almost every single day. Springtime weather can limit the regularity of the excursions, because the weather might limit safe passage on water or land. This sort of weather can lead the team to leaving the community only half of the time. There is always work to be done, though, on these sorts of days: preparing and repairing equipment, taking care of dog teams, and activities at the new Saqijuq-ACCESS youth space/garage are regular now that it is up and running.





Saqijuq-ACCESS Workshop

Puvirnituk, Nunavik

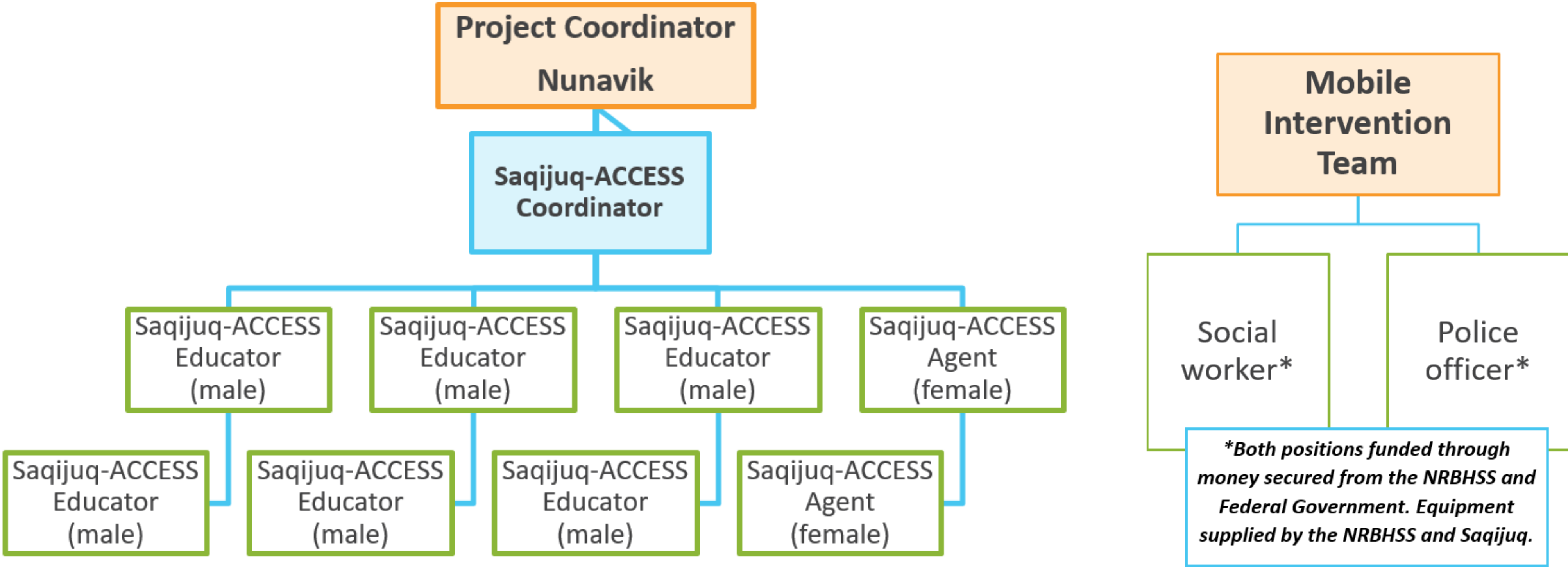


The workshop is a place where the educators work with youth to show them how to build or make various tools, such as a qumatik (sled), or do repairs to small vehicles, such as snowmobiles. To begin, the building was bare inside and the educators, along with the youth and clients, worked together to make it into an organized and safe workshop. Usually, unless out on the land, it is accessible during the day (Monday to Friday), but it's available other times if needed. Although the space is mainly used by Saqijuq-ACCESS, we are open to having others share if a request is made.



Staffing

Organizational chart for the Saqijuq-ACCESS team in Puvirnituk



A key part of the Saqijuq Educators' job is to support youth in their pathway towards wellness, and help get them the support they need if they are experiencing a difficult time.

In addition to facilitating on-the-land activities, the site team participates in other trainings such as Nunavik Arctic Survival Training Center (NASTC) training, and Community Addictions Worker training in conjunction with the regional health board.



# Approaches to wellness

Puvirnituk, Nunavik

In the first year of the Saqijuq-ACCESS project alone, there were some very special occurrences: for every single young person who participated in the winter of 2018, it was the first time seeing a seal's breathing hole, an important lesson in hunting. In the autumn of 2018, all but one of the male educators took a number of youth and other community members on a beluga hunting trip, which has immense cultural significance. This sort of trip is an important experience for the youth who attended.

Other activities include:

- Dog sledding
- Caring for dogs
- Net fishing
- Caribou hunting
- Skinning caribou
- Building a traditional sled
- Ptarmigan hunting
- Traditional skill-building



## Plans for the future

- Workshop/garage/maintaining the space
- Sewing
- Cooking
- Youth-elder partnerships/events
- Support groups
- On-the-land reintegration from incarceration



# Next steps

Puvirnituk, Nunavik

## Changing the status quo

The ACCESS-Saqijuq team of Educators is innovative in its connection with the traditional; the team acts as a means for youth to connect with their Inuit culture and heritage, and in doing so the ACCESS-Saqijuq Educators are promoting health and wellbeing of all youth.

The Educators are mindful of the realities of mental health and wellness in their community. They are working closely with their supervisors at the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services to ensure that they are equipped to meet the wellness needs of the youth with whom they work, attending various trainings and seminars.



## Data collection is ongoing

Data is being collected with youth who participate in activities facilitated by the ACCESS-Saqijuq Educators, to get a better understanding of who is participating, as well as some general characteristics of these youth (e.g. age, background, etc.). Data collection is scheduled to wrap up in September 2020, and the project results will be published in 2021. Information about the project in Puvirnituk will also include interviews with various stakeholders and involved individuals.

## Saqijuq into the future...

Saqijuq will continue to exist in Puvirnituk as it is one of our pilot communities. The goal is to continue to pay the educators' salaries, which ACCESS OM is partially covering now, to ensure the continuation of the project. Having on-the-land activities are one component of Saqijuq that have proved to be successful.





# CONCLUSION

The site team in Puvirnituk is implementing the ACCESS Open Minds framework in a completely unique manner, and one that best meets the needs of the youth of their community. The Saqijuq-ACCESS team is an example not just for other communities in Nunavik, but for all communities across Canada, in how connections to land and culture, and creative, community-based approaches to a pan-Canadian mental health project, can have huge impacts on the wellbeing of youth. This transformation is something that Puvirnituk can contribute towards the pan-Canadian ACCESS OM research and evaluation project, helping to build a robust framework for supporting youth wellness in any context across Canada.







The image is a composite. The main background is a wide-angle photograph of a sunset over a vast, flat, icy landscape, likely a frozen body of water or a tundra. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that reflects on the ice. The sky transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a pale blue at the top. In the bottom right corner, there is an inset photograph. This inset shows a man from the chest up, wearing a light blue hoodie and a black beanie with a colorful geometric pattern. He is looking down, possibly at some equipment. He is inside a vehicle or a small structure with wooden paneling. To his right, another person wearing a black cap and a fur-lined hood is partially visible. The overall scene suggests a field research or exploration activity in a cold, remote environment.



SPOR



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