









## Positive images and health influences

When prompted to discuss some positive aspects of women's health, participants mentioned the importance of using beautiful imagery of the land and water in disseminating health messages, and said messages with a positive approach to health promotion activities were important. Women not only identified problems, but also suggested solutions.

We sometimes concentrate on the negative side of things. When we see a beautiful flower, we feel better . . . even though we may be depressed . . . . When you go out in the sunshine and see beautiful flowers, beautiful people, beautiful things, you feel better . . . . In our traditional saying, "If we dwell on negative aspects of certain things, then these negative things come alive, and they become being." So the moral is not to let that happen. Let's concentrate on the positive things so that the positive things can grow and come alive. (study participant, interview, October 2005)

Participants suggested that a positive approach to health was better for one's confidence and sense of self. They said that people are far more likely to pay attention to positive messages than messages that are hurtful or that imply blame.

Some women referred to family planning and the availability of contraceptives as positive health resources that existed for women in the community. They felt, however, that many women in Nunavut did not take advantage of these resources or chose not to use them. The participants did not understand why this was often the case.

## Identity and the "old ways"

Identity was tied to notions of culture for the women interviewed. Women felt they were caught between wanting to respect their cultural traditions and awareness that they live in a changing world where formal education, gainful employment and growing communities have changed the way of life for Nunavummiut.

What I've been realizing a lot is that for Nunavut, or for any part of the Arctic, it's a cultural shock. Things are going so fast, like this is like a rat race to us. Now, back then [it] wasn't a rat race. It was like the . . . community used to mingle more . . . . There used to be more activities . . . . There's [a] lack of communication between elders and the younger generation and when we listen to our parents talking about how it was back then, I say "Wow." It makes me want to be in that life and see, actually see it myself. (study participant, interview, August 2005)

Some Inuit women are facing internal struggles to figure out where they belong and how they can be true to the two cultures (Inuit and non-Inuit) that are coming together in Nunavut. In some cases, the tension between the cultures comes from having one parent who is Inuk and another who is non-Inuk. In other cases, the tension is brought out by the growing population of non-Inuit in the territory or the fact that many Inuit today have more education and travel experiences in the South.

Knowing your culture, it'll affect your health mentally and knowing who you are. And if you know who you are, then . . . you'll have more confidence in yourself . . . . I know with me, I went [away for high school] . . . which I'm happy about, but . . . I had a lot of struggles in finding out who I am . . . . I'd say I'm an Inuk, but I'm living in a Qallunaat [white person] world. Where does that leave me? Am I betraying my Inuk culture or what am I doing? I had a lot of personal struggles [in the course of] finding out who I really am. (study participant, interview, August 2005)

Women also strongly associated the ability to speak Inuktitut with the strength of their cultural identity. Oftentimes, language skills were considered a measure of the extent to which they "are an Inuk."

I knew how to speak Inuktitut but . . . not really good, so that really affected my confidence in being considered an Inuk . . . . I felt kind of stupid for not being able to speak Inuktitut . . . and kind of shy. Younger people . . . they don't really know their language. They do, but they don't really know how to speak it properly in full sentences and it does affect them . . . . I've seen many teenagers trying to speak and then they get frustrated and give up and just start speaking English and . . . that has a real impact because they're considered Inuk but can't speak the language . . . . I'm supposed to be Inuk and I can't speak my language fully. It kind of, I kind of got lost. (study participant, interview, August 2005)

Women acknowledged the importance passing on teachings of the "old ways," including teachings about hunting, sewing and traditional activities. They said that these traditions are not being passed on from elders to the younger generation. They described how this lack of knowledge sharing leaves a feeling of disconnect among the younger generation. While some women felt very strongly about this issue, others felt that relying on some old ways









