

The Kiglik Family's Story



As a young child, Justin Kiglik had a spirit that took him places his body wouldn't allow. Born with clubfoot, running, playing, and other activities with friends used to be intensely painful. "At one point, he wasn't even walking anymore," Justin's mom, Maureen, recalls. "He was in tears of pain, and he would need me to massage out his feet multiple times a day."



When OHSNI connected Maureen and Justin to the Inuit Child First Initiative (CFI), they flew from Iqaluit for consultations with pediatric specialists in Ottawa. Justin was fitted for new shoes that would have cost the family \$400 every six months. That's money the family of eight just didn't have. Maureen says having CFI cover those costs made all the difference for Justin, who will turn 14 later this year. "He's now able to do activities with friends, to run and play without pain. He can even ride his bike."

CFI has since supported the Kiglik family in other ways, too. Four of Maureen's six children require some sort of specialized care. Omar, 6, has seizures that are controlled with medication. CFI has covered the costs of a specialized therapeutic bar which would have otherwise been out of reach at a cost of \$10,000. Suhaid, 2, was born with an extra bone in his forehead that has prompted specialist consults and will require surgery eventually.

And 4-year-old, Nahda, also requires specialist treatment for suspected vision loss. All of it means a lot of trips south for the necessary care. And Maureen was most relieved to learn that CFI will cover the costs of having the family travel together.

"At all times, I have my kids with me. Growing up, I was left with people who hurt me. I'm not going to let anything happen to my children," says Maureen. "My kids are my world." "I'm the kind of mother that will do anything for her kids, but I can't read or write well. So (OHSNI's) help to make the case for the medical travel supports was especially appreciated. It removed a lot of stress."

Maureen encourages other parents, friends, and family, who may be facing similar choices to apply to CFI via OHSNI. "I trust the people there enough to take care of my children. Before, I was struggling. We have been given a second chance as a family. And if I need something, CFI is only a phone call away. I can call anytime." "I'm so happy and thankful."

OHSNI looks forward to co-creating many more success stories in the months and years to come. Stay tuned.



Visit www.ohsni.com for more information.



OHSNI + ICFI:

An impactful first year benefitting Inuit children and youth

June 2021



29

Applications approved*

97%

Approval rate

OHSNI is a proud activation partner for the Inuit Child First Initiative (ICFI).

As we head into our second year as an ICFI activation partner, we look forward to building on these successes.

Number of eligible children served by support type

20

Travel

1

Therapy

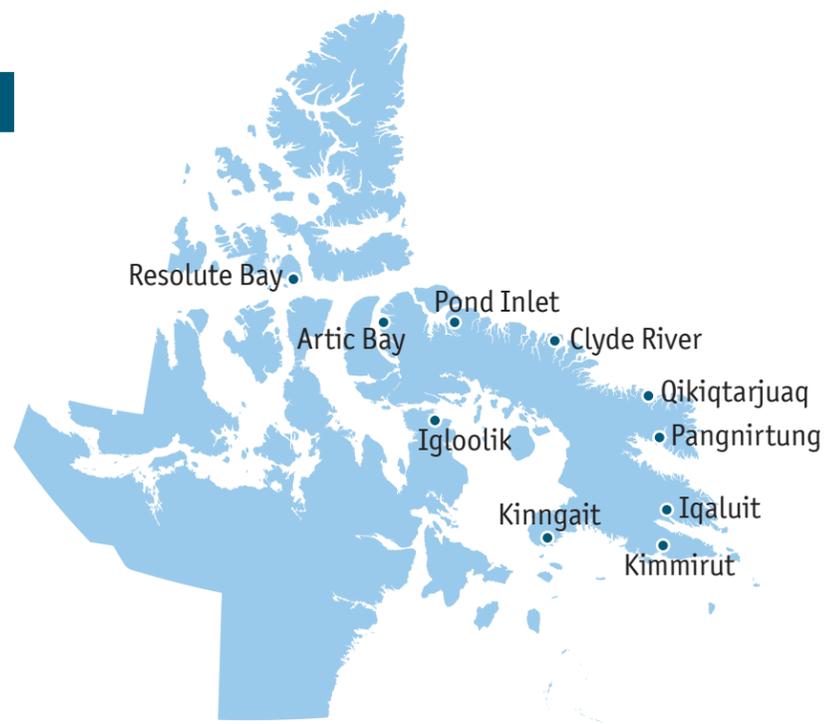
2

Education

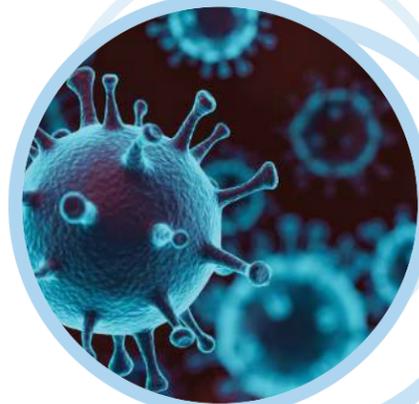
6

Supplies
(food, diapers, batteries, etc.)

Communities Served:



Despite the COVID pandemic, only 1 of our applications was cancelled. We appreciate the diligence and partnership of all involved to ensure that life-enhancing customized supports continued to be provided to children and families during this unprecedented time.



Meet Dheeksha Reddy

OHSNI's ICFI Coordinator

Dheeksha Reddy is OHSNI's tireless ICFI coordinator. She helps families ensure their applications are the best they can be, then champions these cases to federal employees. Families deeply appreciate Dheeksha's supportive, collaborative approach. We caught up with her recently for a quick conversation about her first year in this role.

What's been most rewarding about your first year in this role?

By far, it's the feeling of satisfaction that I am there for people when they need me. I miss being home up North - a lot. This role has kept me connected and given me the closure I was missing. Every time when I get approval for a child or family's needs, their sense of happiness and excitement brings immense joy and fulfillment. And I know my nursing case manager colleagues feel the same way.

What has most struck you about your casework?

Attention to minute details is very important for every case to be approved. And the deeper I go into a family's details, including family dynamics, socio-economic status, etc., the deeper my appreciation gets for the myriad issues Northerners are facing. I lived up North for years, and I am still learning every day about Inuit lived realities.



Tijay's Story

Tina Kuniliusie is just under five feet tall. But she is a mighty warrior when it comes to fighting for her daughter, Tijay.

Tijay was born in Clyde River, Nunavut with conditions that prevent her from walking and talking. She also has issues with her sight and hearing. Because her family could not afford specialized transport equipment, Tina was forced to carry Tijay on her back everywhere she went.

As Tijay grew, this became less and less practical. Tina didn't know where to turn. And then she heard about the Inuit Child First Initiative (CFI). She applied via Ottawa Health Services Network, Inc. in April 2020 with help from a CFI coordinator and interpreter. By June, her application for a wheelchair-accessible van had arrived in the tiny Arctic hamlet and was insured for the family to use. It was a total gamechanger. "Tijay's happier," says Tina. "She doesn't talk, but communicates with gestures. Her eyes light up when we can go outside...her face, too, with a smile."

Tina turned to CFI again for specialized physiotherapy shoes and a walker for Tijay. Those, too, were approved. And the entire family's life has been improved. "Dealing with doctors and sickness is so hard. It's very difficult, very stressful. But things are so much better now." Tina says other Inuit families whose youngest members are living with medical conditions that could benefit from individualized care should not hesitate to ask for CFI assistance. "Look for support. Ask questions. There are organizations that want to support Aboriginal people. You get. It's very easy. Please reach out."

Tijay turns 13 on October 2, and Tina says she is already looking forward to being able to get back to school.



What has most struck you about your interactions with ICFI fed gov employees?

I have appreciated my interactions with ICFI employees very much. I get the sense they are genuinely want to find solutions where possible, and are deeply committed to the Northerners we are trying to serve.

How has Jordan's Principle taken on new meaning for you in the last year?

I am honestly so thankful for the Principle as a statement, and for ICFI as a program. We absolutely can, as a country, ensure that every child has what she or he needs to live her or his best life. Every child truly matters. And being a part of bringing Jordan's Principle to life over the past year has been a truly rewarding experience - professionally and personally.

How do you hope to assist and support more Inuit families in the year to come?

This first year gave me good exposure on different aspects of the program and a clear idea of what's needed to ensure applicants have their best chance at being successful. This year, I will focus on getting even more families approved and on creating more awareness up North. Every child who can, should benefit from the ICFI. And I'm staying focused on making sure that's the case.