



**The Honourable Nellie T. Kusugak
Commissioner of Nunavut**

**Speaking Notes
on the occasion of
the CASP Conference**

**October 28, 2016
Iqaluit**

Thank you Franco Buscemi, Throat singers Becky Kilabuk and Celina Kalluk.

As Commissioner of Nunavut I would like to welcome distinguished guests – Mayor Madeline Redfern, Travis Price, Carol Todd, Cathy Towtongie, Elders, youth, conference organizers, community leaders, sponsors and all attendees and teachers and school counsellors and youth leaders, thank you.

Welcome to all the visitors! and I hope your stay have been welcoming. Welcome to day two of CASP 2016. I'm sure you have heard some incredibly powerful things so far, I have, and I hope the insight of the panels, sessions and keynote speakers has been inspiring.

This conference is an opportunity to better understand the complex issue of suicide prevention, to grow as a community and to learn from one another. Like our Premier said education is so

important. The children have to be taught at an early age in order for them to good life as life is precious.

The theme – hope, help, and healing, is so fitting. We need to have hope, we have to help one another and heal together, as Mr. Joanasie Akumalik said yesterday. My father have not told his story of being a special constable as they were too painful. If we have not healed from our past, whatever it may be either relocation, TB treatment, having lost a loved one to suicide, these are affecting us in all ways.

Nunavummiut have seen too many friends and family lost to suicide. The effects of suicide are devastating, and the void left by these tragic loses never fully heals.

As you have likely heard, Nunavut declared suicide a crisis in October of last year. Many partners, organizations and dedicated individuals in the territory are working tirelessly to address this urgent situation. Thank you for taking for taking the initiative on our behalf to move forward to giving us hope, so we can get help, and to heal ourselves.

And while we face numerous challenges relating to the causes of suicide, Nunavut is a place of great potential, cultural strength and possibility. Nunavummiut are powerful, hopeful and most of all, fiercely resilient. Our cultural identity as an Inuk, we must not forget where we come from as it is our identity.

We have an impressive network of support. We are working hard to find community-based solutions to prevent and curb suicide in our territory. By working together you will be making changes and you will reach out to one another to help each other.

Community members, families and friends supporting one another, building each up, and enabling hope and resiliency are essential to preventing suicide. Creating the space to understand one another without judgment, and providing tools to cope and overcome life's difficulties are equally important. Remember the people around you are proud of you, and love you and they are willing to help you.

It is critical that we focus on the overall wellness of Nunavut communities. I encourage everyone here, and especially our youth, to focus on community-driven successes and interventions. We need to have hope as our ancestors had hope in our future and never gave up and here we are today.

I wish you all the very best during the remainder of this conference. I am honoured to be here. And I'm certain we can find a way to hope, help and heal one another, as life is precious.

Thank you everyone as you are all instrumental in providing care to those who are struggling, Thank you. Please enjoy the conference.