



Family Violence in the Canadian Arctic



Photo courtesy of Avataq Institute

Working Group on Aboriginal Family Violence

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada

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About Pauktuutit

MISSION

Pauktuutit leads and supports Canadian Inuit women in policy development and community projects in all areas of interest to them, for the social, cultural, political and economic betterment of the women, their families and communities.

Pauktuutit fosters greater awareness of the needs of Inuit women, advocates for equity and social improvements, and encourages their participation in the community, regional and national life of Canada.



VISION

Pauktuutit's vision is to be dynamic, visible and influential, independently representing Inuit women and providing leadership, voice and excellence for the betterment of Inuit women, their families and communities.



Courtesy Avataq Institute – 1920

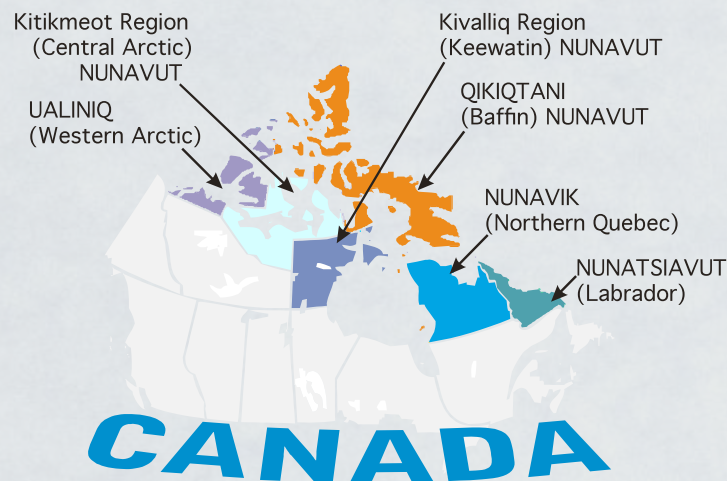
Pauktuutit's Activities

- Diabetes
- Early Childhood Development
- Economic Development
- Environment
- Family Violence
- Housing Crisis
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder
- Gender in Decision Making
- Home and Community Caregivers
- International issues and the United Nations
- Injury Prevention
- Justice and Corrections
- Teen Pregnancy
- Tobacco Reduction
- Sexual Health
- Youth Rights and Issues



Inuit in Canada

- The Six Inuit Regions



- Approximately 47,000 Inuit live in Canada, primarily in six Arctic regions.
- Inuit live in 53 isolated and remote communities.
- One half of Inuit live in Nunavut.
- Up to 85% of Nunavut's population are Inuit.
- Many communities offer limited economic opportunities.
- The majority of Arctic Inuit speak or understand Inuktitut.

Inuit Demographics

- Inuit population growth rate: 12% between 1996 and 2001.
- The Inuit population is young. In 2001, 57% of Inuit were under the age of 25; 39% under 15 years of age.
- In 2000, the pregnancy rate for young women aged 15-19 years was up to four times higher than the rest of Canada.
- In 2000, the age of first birth in the Baffin Region fell below 16 years.



Pond Inlet, N.W.T., 1922. National Archives PA-170151

Inuit Housing Crisis

- In 2001, more than one-half (53%) of Inuit lived in crowded conditions.
- A substantial proportion of Inuit households contain more than one family.



National Archives PA-099624; Belcher Islands, N.W.T. 1927 LTB

- Poor conditions foster ill health and undermine the safety of Inuit women and their children.
- House designs are culturally inappropriate and do not reflect Inuit needs.

Family Violence



- In Nunavut, only 29% of spousal abuse cases are reported.
- Nunavut has 6.5 times the national reported spousal abuse rate.
- There are a few safe shelters and little in the way of alternative housing.
- There are increasing numbers of "hidden homeless" or "couch surfers" in northern communities.
- Women often depend on relatives to put them up for the short-term.
- Many must leave their communities to access a regional shelter in order to escape domestic violence.
- Inuit women may lose custody of their children when they leave abusive relationships.

Mental Wellness and Suicide

- Inuit youth commit suicide at rates six times the national average.
- Issues related to violence and unresolved sexual abuse can be the root causes that can drive youth to take their lives.
- Data from the 1990's show the following suicide rates:
 - Canada – 13 per 100,000 population;
 - Nunavik – 82 per 100,000 population;
 - Nunatsiavut – 80 per 100,000 population;
 - Nunavut – 77 per 100,000 population;
 - Inuvialuit – 18 per 100,000 population.
- Suicide deaths in Nunavut and Nunavik have more than doubled in the past decade.



Family Violence and Pauktuutit

Despite severely inadequate resources, Pauktuutit has a tireless commitment to stopping family violence. Projects and publications include:



- *Taimainnut: An Introduction to Basic Counselling Skills* (1995; Booklet);
- *Inuit Women - The Housing Crisis and Violence* (1995; Report prepared for CMHC);
- *No More Secrets* (1991 and 2001; Booklet about child sexual abuse);
- *What To Do If You Are Abused and/or Battered* (2000; Safety Plan for Women);
- *Abuse Is Wrong In Any Culture* (adapted from the DOJ's *Abuse Is Wrong In Any Language*);

More Pauktuutit Initiatives on Violence

- Participant: *Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women*;
- *More Than They Say* (Unreported crime in three Labrador communities);
- AWAVE (Aboriginal Women Against Violence Everywhere);
- *Nuluaq Project* (National Inuit Strategy for Abuse Prevention);
- *Inuit Healing in Contemporary Inuit Society* (2004; Analysis of Inuit healing);
- *Abuse Prevention Services in Inuit Communities* (2004; Report on Abuse in Inuit Communities);
- *There Is A Need So We Help: Services For Survivors Of Child Sexual Abuse*: (2004; Report and listing of services);



Family Violence: Pauktuutit's Current Activities

The *Nuluaq Project* is central to our on-going abuse reduction commitment.

Front-line workers have identified the following root causes of abuse among Inuit:

- Trauma and abuse (usually suffered as children);
- The continuing cycle of abuse;
- Parenting and family problems;
- Lack of community-based intervention;
- Lack of healing and counselling support services in communities;
- Lack of recruitment and training of Inuit for front-line work;
- Substance abuse.



The Nuluaq Project

Accomplishments of the *Nuluaq Project* to date:

- Conducted in-depth interviews with service providers and Inuit healers and counsellors.
- Created a searchable database of about 600 services and programs.
- Prepared three reports:
 - *Inuit Healing in Contemporary Inuit Society*
 - *Abuse Prevention Services in Inuit Communities and*
 - *Applying Inuit Cultural Approaches in the Prevention of F and Abuse.*
- Created a Network of committed agencies, groups and individuals, and
- Developed means to support information sharing and increased collaboration among them.



Nuluaq Project: Strategic Priorities

The goal of the *Nuluaq Project* strategy is a steady reduction in the incidents of violence and abuse in Inuit communities, and to eventually return to caring and respectful relationships.



1. Make abuse in Inuit communities a priority issue.
2. Raise awareness and reduce tolerance of abuse.
3. Invest in training and capacity development.
4. Sustain front-line workers and community services.
5. Deliver culturally relevant services that heal.
6. Expand programs that build on Inuit strengths and prevent abuse.

The Future: Envisioned Programs

Possible directions for future work on family violence in Canada's Arctic:

- Establish more shelters for women fleeing violence;
- Create of a National Inuit Women's Shelter Association;
- Establish counselling programs for Inuit male abusers;
- Develop culturally appropriate family and couple counselling — by Inuit for Inuit;
- Develop school curriculum that builds self esteem and teaches alternatives to violence;
- Invest in capacity-building at the community level;
- Establish after-hours emergency call services where they do not exist — most lack 911 service;
- Provide sufficient, dedicated, appropriate housing.



National Archives e002213334;
Pond Inlet, N.W.T., 1949

Partnerships: The Possibilities

- CMHC:
 - Address overcrowding and the need for culturally appropriate housing.
- Public Health Agency of Canada
 - Address poor housing conditions that foster ill health and undermine family safety and mental-wellness.
- Correctional Services of Canada:
 - Promote Inuit-specific prison programs for Inuit abusers from small isolated communities.
- INAC
 - Provide support for shelters in Inuit communities.
- Department of Canadian Heritage
 - Develop culturally appropriate youth programs that discourage violence and school bullying.
- Department of Justice and RCMP
 - Promote programs and staffing that allows program delivery in Inuktitut.
 - Create alternatives to corrections and increase community-based justice initiatives.
- Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada
 - Ensure access to emergency services in Inuit regions.
 - Develop Inuit-specific public awareness programs.
- Statistics Canada and RCMP
 - Determine rates of unreported abuse within Inuit communities.
- Status of Women Canada
 - Support equity for Pauktuutit - the national voice of Inuit women (Recognition as a NAO).

Pauktuutit's Vision for Inuit Society

Our vision is an Inuit society of healthy individuals who respect the past and embrace the future as Inuit, and who live in supportive families and caring communities. In our vision, violence and abuse are rare occurrences that are dealt with swiftly and justly according to Inuit ways. Abusers are held accountable for their actions, and both victims and abusers are supported in their healing process.



Thank You



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