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Introduction

“My mother was a beautiful person, I was almost four when she died. I remember things about her and my father. My siblings and I were split up among different families, so I grew up without them too.”

**Becky Michelin, Board member, Pauktuutit Inuit
Women of Canada, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador**

From February 9-12, 2016, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada held a consultation on the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls¹. The objectives of the pre-inquiry meeting were to:

- ◇ provide an opportunity for Inuit families to meet, share their experiences, provide mutual support, and offer input to the scope, mandate/priorities and structure of the national inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women;
- ◇ consult national, regional, urban and other representative Inuit organizations on recommendations for the national inquiry;
- ◇ discuss roles, responsibilities, mandates and interests of Inuit organizations before and during the national inquiry; and
- ◇ determine Inuit priorities for action to address violence prevention in Inuit communities across Canada.

For the first two days, members of the Pauktuutit Board of Directors and staff met with family members of missing and murdered Inuit women and girls from across the country. These sisters, mothers, daughters, grandmothers, aunts, nieces and cousins travelled from the four Inuit regions and urban Inuit communities to honour their loved ones and tell their stories.

They described the circumstances of their loved ones’ deaths and disappearances, the police investigations that followed and the outcomes of the criminal justice process. They talked about their grief and sorrow but also celebrated the lives of those who had been taken through happy memories and pictures. Participants also discussed the nature of national inquiries and began to consider what was needed to make a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls relevant and beneficial for Inuit. Family members talked about what would help them to participate fully in the proceedings and what outcomes they were looking for.

Then on February 11 and 12, the families and Pauktuutit Board members were joined by representatives of Inuit organizations and governments to further explore issues and priorities, and begin to formulate recommendations for the inquiry. Families of the missing and murdered continued to share their stories and experiences and had a powerful impact on the discussion. Organizational delegates also contributed their personal experiences of being touched by violence and their advice for making the inquiry relevant and meaningful for Inuit.

¹ www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1448633299414/1448633350146

Organizations and Governments Participating in the Meeting

AnânuKatiget Tuningit Regional Inuit Women's Association (Nunatsiavut)

Department of Family Services, Government of Nunavut

Department of Justice, Government of Nunavut

Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Government of Canada

Intergovernmental Affairs, Government of Nunavut

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

Mamisarvik Healing Centre and Transition House, Ottawa, Ontario

Makivik Corporation (Nunavik)

Native Women's Association of the NWT

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada

Saturviit Inuit Women's Association (Nunavik)

Status of Women Office, Nunatsiavut Government

Tungasuvvingat Inuit

Recommendations for the Inquiry

“We know of 27 Labrador women missing and murdered, in a population of a few thousand.”

Charlotte Wolfrey, Rigolet, Nunatsiavut

This report focuses on the experiences and concerns of the families of missing and murdered Inuit women and girls, and of representatives of Inuit organizations and governments. It speaks to how a national inquiry could address the urgent and compelling need to prevent violence against women and girls, and to provide justice to those who are missing and murdered.

It is strongly recommended that prior to any final announcement of the mandate, scope, structure and process of the national inquiry that the federal government apply the principles of ethics in indigenous research methodologies and validate their interpretation of Inuit pre-consultation recommendations with participants to ensure Inuit needs and priorities will be incorporated and addressed.

Addressing Inuit Needs

A sentiment that echoed throughout the meeting was “we want our voices to be heard, our people remembered, and on our terms.” Meeting delegates were clear on several points concerning the nature of the inquiry and how it can meet Inuit needs. There is concern that because Inuit are a small population their issues and concerns will be overshadowed in a pan-Aboriginal process. Therefore, it is very important that the inquiry be set up to reflect Inuit as well as First Nations and Métis values and principles, and that each population has a parallel and equal process within the overall inquiry. In keeping with Inuit leadership approaches, the selection of commissioners will be critical, and the inquiry needs to carefully develop its approach, tone and process in ongoing partnership with Inuit representative organizations.

The Qikiqtani Truth Commission² provides an example of an Inuit-led inquiry that is seen to have genuinely reflected Inuit principles and practices, thoroughly investigate an important issue, and contribute to better institutional relationships and community healing. Madeleine Redfern, who was executive director of the Commission, described its design and operation from 2011 to 2015.

The Commission was set up by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association in the Baffin region of Nunavut. It was originally intended to investigate the slaughter of Inuit sled dogs in communities. It evolved into a broad inquiry into traumatic experiences in the transition years 1950 to 1975 when Inuit were settled into permanent communities and their way of life changed dramatically. Some of the strengths of the Commission that she identified were:

- ◇ selecting of a retired Inuk judge as Commissioner – he brought broad cultural knowledge, legal expertise, and a compassionate and flexible approach;
- ◇ developing institutional relationships (e.g., with the RCMP) early on which developed into longer-term partnerships;
- ◇ promoting and sharing information about the process well in advance of community tours;
- ◇ holding hearings where witnesses could speak freely and without time limits, and allowing some to give testimony in their homes;
- ◇ having a parallel research process that created a balanced, detailed record of the time period; and
- ◇ returning the findings to community members, and developing the recommendations with them.

“Inquiries can be valuable but the mandate, who is involved, how it’s done, the commitment of agencies, all that is important. [This inquiry] needs to be directed by Indigenous people.”

**Madeleine Redfern, former Executive Director,
Qikiqtani Truth Commission, Iqaluit, Nunavut**

² www.qtcommission.ca

In the national inquiry on murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, Inuit want as much involvement in and control over the process as possible, following the principle of “about our people, by our people, for our people.”

Inuit needs for the inquiry can be addressed by:

- A parallel and equal process within the overall inquiry with appropriate financial and human resources;
- ensuring there is Inuit-specific: 1) research, 2) funding and 3) structure;
- the nomination, by Inuit, of an Inuk/Inuit commissioners that are well known and respected by Inuit; and
- continuing to design and implement the inquiry in close partnership with national and regional Inuit representative organizations.

“A key to the future for Inuit is stopping violence against women. Pauktuutit has done great work on this issue over time. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is here to stand beside you. Together we will have an amplified voice.”

**Natan Obed, President,
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Ottawa, Ontario**

Commissioners

Meeting participants felt that the inquiry should have at least one, but preferably two Inuit commissioners, however, they also want to limit the number of commissioners overall. With equal numbers of First Nations, Inuit and Métis commissioners, this would mean three to six commissioners in total. However, to minimize travel costs, not all commissioners would need to attend all hearings – regional travel could be apportioned to teams of two to three commissioners.

If there is one Inuit commissioner, the group stated it should be a woman; if there are two, then a woman and a man. Inuit commissioners should be respected leaders and one should be a lawyer. The role and involvement of elders must be considered.

Inquiry commissioners should:

- equally represent Inuit, Métis and First Nations and;
- be small in number and not necessarily travel to all hearings;
- include either one Inuk woman or an Inuk man and woman, one of whom is a lawyer; and
- be respected leaders who are approachable and are good listeners.

Mandate

The recommended mandate for the inquiry arose out of discussions of priority issues related to violence in Inuit communities. Family representatives and organization delegates believe that the inquiry should investigate the circumstances, systems responses, impacts and outcomes on missing and murdered Inuit women in all four Inuit regions and urban communities. Violence against Inuit women and girls has far-

reaching implications for victims, their families and communities and is contributing to multi-generational and inter-generational trauma. Adequate policing; community safety measures; a culturally responsive, racism-free criminal justice system; individual and family counselling; and trauma-informed therapy and treatment must be part of the solution.

The inquiry also needs to examine root causes and the social and economic conditions that lead to family violence, child abuse and intimate partner violence. The inquiry should highlight effective crime prevention, victim services, offender rehabilitation and reintegration methods for Indigenous populations, including those that are appropriate for the unique conditions in small, remote, northern communities and in urban Aboriginal environments.

“I keep telling my story because I want things to be better for Inuit women.”

Charlotte Wolfrey, Rigolet, Nunatsiavut

The inquiry should investigate:

- the circumstances, systems responses, broad impacts and outcomes of missing and murdered Inuit women in all four Inuit regions and urban centres;
- the far-reaching implications for victims, their families and communities, including multi-generational and inter-generational trauma;
- the problems and solutions related policing, safety, the criminal justice system, and counselling therapy services;
- root causes and the social and economic conditions that lead to family violence, child abuse and intimate partner violence; and
- effective crime prevention, victims services, offender rehabilitation and reintegration methods.

Participants

It was clear from this pre-inquiry consultation that families and survivors of missing and murdered Indigenous women should be front and centre in the fact finding mission of the inquiry. Their voices and testimony are critical to the substance and the credibility of the process. Only by listening to and documenting real life experiences can the inquiry hope to understand the nature of these crimes, the long-term effects on family and community members, and the changes needs to prevent violence against Indigenous women and girls. There should be equal representation of families from each of the Inuit regions involved in the inquiry.

However, the families involved in the pre-inquiry consultation had differing opinions on who else should participate. Some felt that commissioners should only hear from families while others would include testimony or submissions from Inuit organizations, community groups and services, governments and anyone impacted by the issues identified in the inquiry’s mandate. Some participants saw the involvement of the provinces and territories as essential so the inquiry could make recommendations directed to them (e.g., in the areas of policing, and health and social services).

The inquiry:

- should have families and survivors front and centre of the fact finding process;
- might also include testimony or submissions from Inuit organizations, community groups and services, governments and anyone impacted; and
- involve provinces and territories so that recommendations can be directed toward them.

“I have had four young women close blood relatives that have been murdered, all outside of our community. Their children are still suffering because of their untimely death and the brutal way they were killed... I was 22years old when I started speaking out for women and children against violence and I will continue to do so as long as I shall live.”

Annie Buchan, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut

“My sister was murdered, her body was thrown into a lake and has never been recovered.”

Anna Angutigirk, Salluit, Nunavik

Involving and Supporting Families

After four days of discussion on these very painful and tragic occurrences, families and organization delegates acknowledged the value in telling these stories publicly and making sure Canadians are aware of the full effects of violence and trauma in Indigenous communities. Equally important is that no further harm is done to families and survivors of violence. While the truth-telling process can be healing, it also can reignite memories and cause pain.

At the least, meeting participants stated that it is not enough for the inquiry to “do no harm and not re-victimize,” but should do everything possible to support families and survivors, before, during and long after their involvement. They advised the inquiry to set up support services such as local trauma-informed counselling and regional or national help lines (available in the regional Inuit language dialect) well ahead of hearings and publicize these well. Counselling supports needs to address immediate and long-term trauma, or as one participant put it, “don’t open wounds and leave.”

Participants tried to imagine what an inquiry whose aim was healing would look like. Ideas included holding hearings on the land, and providing a wide variety of means for participants to tell their stories and be supported by traditional healers and counsellors.

Another way to support families is to minimize travel distances and difficulties. Examples were provided of the rushed nature of travel to some of the pre-inquiry consultations, long layovers and difficulties in changing travel bookings. The inquiry needs to be aware that air travel in the North is very different from that in the south: plan well in advance working with people experienced with coordinating northern travel,

hold regional meetings so participants do not need to travel long distances from home, and fund at least two family members to travel together.

In addition to making presentations and testifying at the inquiry, meeting participants suggested that an advisory committee of family representatives be created to provide ongoing direction and advice to commissioners.

The inquiry can support and involve family members by:

- providing local, trauma-informed counselling before, during and long after the hearings;
- supporting counselling that addresses short- and longer-term trauma, in regional Inuit language dialects;
- developing other ways for the inquiry process to promote healing;
- minimizing travel distances and difficulties for families; and
- setting up an advisory committee of family representatives to provide ongoing direction and advice.

Hearings

“Inuit treat everybody the same. We help everybody. My sister loved children, she helped people, homeless people, and others.”

Sarah Nowrakudluk, Inukjuaq, Nunavik

Pre-inquiry meeting participants had several suggestions for setting up the hearings where testimony could be given. Firstly, the inquiry needs to use multiple methods of communicating about the inquiry and the hearings well in advance of scheduled appearances. It should enlist communicators who are trusted by Inuit, e.g., regional or provincial/territorial Inuit organizations. These organizations also should take responsibility for coordinating regional hearings.

Presenters should be given choices about how they will give evidence – in an open meeting, in a private meeting with commissioners, by written submission, video conferencing or videotape. Hearings should be set up as a circle, with families/presenters and commissioners in the inner circle and supporters/organizations behind them. Ideally, families should be able to choose where they appear – they may not want to give testimony in their home community.

Family representatives and organizational delegates had mixed opinions on whether media should be present at hearings. Some thought that media can bring needed attention and recognition to the issues, while others felt that it also can distort stories, infringe on privacy and inhibit presenters.

Finally, concern was expressed for commissioners and inquiry staff present at the hearings. Practices should be developed to reduce vicarious trauma and to promote self and mutual care, especially while travelling.

Hearings should:

- use multiple methods to communicate about the inquiry and its hearings;
- enlist Inuit organizations to communicate about and coordinate regional hearings;

- provide choices to participants in where and how they provide their evidence, including open and closed meetings and written or audiovisual formats;
- set up the hearings in a circle;
- give further thought as to whether media should be present at hearings; and
- develop practices to minimize vicarious trauma among commissioners and staff.

Research and Submissions

Meeting participants identified the need for a research component to the inquiry with adequate resources to investigate and document issues identified by the commissioners in collaboration with Indigenous organizations.

They also supported an open call for written or audio-visual submissions from interested parties.

The inquiry should include:

- an adequately resourced research component;
- identification of research topics in collaboration with Inuit partners; and
- an open call for submissions from interested parties.

“I go to many First Nations, Inuit and Métis gatherings. I respect their ceremonies and they respect mine. We need to use our symbols [like the qulliq] and educate others about them.”

Sally Webster, Elder, Ottawa

Cultural Practices and Ceremonies

There was broad agreement that Inuit symbols and ceremonies be incorporated into the inquiry’s work in general, and all public gatherings, no matter what location (Inuit live throughout Canada). They suggested that the *qulliq* – the Inuit soapstone lamp, representing the female – be lit at each hearing. Another appropriate symbol is the Inuit drum, representing the male. Each hearing should incorporate an opening and closing prayer by an Inuk elder. Inuit values and principles such as mutual respect and treating everyone equally (including commissioners) also should be applied in inquiry activities.

Ways to include Inuit symbols and ceremonies in inquiry activities include:

- lighting a qulliq and displaying an Inuit drum, and have an Inuk elder say an opening and closing prayer at all public gatherings; and
- applying Inuit values such as mutual respect and treating everyone equally.

Commitment to Change

“[The inquiry process] can be central to discovering new information. But we can’t let recommendations sit on a shelf. It is very positive that we are active in the preparation phase of the inquiry so as to ensure that the end result is action.”

**Qajaq Robinson, Vice-President,
Tungasuvvingat Inuit, and lawyer, Ottawa, Ontario**

Family members and organization delegates felt very strongly that the inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls must result in change. There was open discussion about the amount of resources it will take to conduct a high quality and thorough inquiry. There is some concern that the use of resources for this purpose instead of investing directly in community initiatives to reduce violence may result in little change.

In order for these resources to be well spent, the inquiry must result in concrete, measurable change at the systemic, community and family levels. One way to increase prospects for success is to include key institutions and organizations (e.g., RCMP and other police services; federal criminal justice representatives; and Indigenous, federal, provincial and territorial governments) in the process, as full partners in change. A commitment to jointly creating solutions is one way to ensure that this inquiry creates lasting change.

This inquiry can increase its impact and opportunities for lasting change by:

- involving key institutions and organizations as partners in the process from the beginning.

Communicating Results

**“I understand what it is to lose a mother and a child. We need to help others understand this.”
Micah Arreak, Igloodik, Nunavut**

Public communications about the inquiry should be ongoing throughout and after its tenure. Meeting participants spoke of the importance of reporting regional/community hearing results back to communities and participants, as well as “forward” to the national inquiry.

Inuit inquiries and commissions have shared results and further engaged communities by broadcasting testimony on the radio, and sending out reports on CDs to be played on community radio. Similarly, the final report and recommendations of the inquiry should be broadly promoted and made available to relevant bodies and the Canadian public. Summaries should be translated into Inuit language dialects.

The inquiry should communicate results:

- throughout and after the inquiry and through a variety of means including northern radio;
- both back to communities and participants, and forward to the national inquiry;
- broadly to relevant bodies and the Canadian public; and
- through summaries translated in Inuit language dialects.

Roles and Responsibilities

Those participating in the pre-inquiry meeting urged the three Inuit organizations - Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (representing the four Inuit regions), Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (representing Inuit women) and Tungasuvvingat Inuit (representing urban Inuit) - to work closely together in providing joint recommendations on the composition, mandate and structure of the inquiry. They also made suggestions for roles and responsibilities of Inuit organizations during the inquiry.

“This meeting has been a long time coming. It is an important step in addressing the issues of violence against Inuit women and girls.”

**Rebecca Kudloo, President, Pauktuutit Inuit
Women of Canada, Baker Lake, Nunavut**

There was general agreement that Pauktuutit maintain a central role during the inquiry as it has a long history of working on violence against women issues and a broad network of women and women’s organizations throughout the North. It can ensure that Inuit women’s voices continue to be heard. The organization also intends to maintain a website honouring missing and murdered Inuit women and girls, providing a means for families and loved ones to tell their stories and to support each other.

Participants also suggested that Pauktuutit have a role in recommending commissioners, providing support to those presenting at the hearings, coordinating logistics and resources related to the hearings and testimonies, liaising with governments and Inuit organizations, sharing information, and continuing to advocate on the issue.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the national representative organization, should continue to work with the four Inuit land claim organizations/governments to provide input before and during the inquiry process. Similarly, Tungasuvvingat Inuit should continue to represent the needs and concerns of urban Inuit, and ensure that urban Inuit communities across the country participate fully in the inquiry.

Organizational delegates and family representatives believe that regional Inuit women’s and other organizations should be given the authority and resources to communicate about and coordinate inquiry hearings and presentations by Inuit in their areas.

Priority Issues

Family representatives and organization delegates spent some time discussing priority issues for Inuit that the national inquiry should address. The issues have been grouped into these themes:

1. policing and safety;
2. criminal investigations;
3. the justice system;
4. offender reintegration;
5. health and social services; and
6. crime prevention.

Policing and Safety

The adequacy of policing resources in small northern communities was a major concern among meeting participants. They believe that the lack of safety and personal security of northern residents would not be acceptable in southern communities, leaving them to think that northerners are “out of sight, out of mind” and treated as “second class.”

In smaller communities, RCMP understaffing is a problem. After hours, emergency calls are redirected to detachments in another community. People are at risk because of a lack of police presence, and the absence of other emergency responders. As one delegate put it, “can you imagine calling the police and no one comes? There is no safety in the small communities.”

A strong message from the group is that women need to be taken seriously when they are fearful for their safety. Many Inuit communities do not have emergency shelters and women and children do not have the option of leave the community, and therefore live in fear. (Almost all communities are fly in with infrequent and expensive service). However, meeting participants also asked: “Why should women and their children have to leave their home or community, why can’t the offender be removed?”

“My niece was murdered at age 19. They found her body on a golf course. The murder was never solved.”

Christine Porter, Gjoa Haven, Nunavut

Meeting participants described situations where women did report violent incidents to the police and said they were in danger and the police took no action. In at least one case they knew of, this resulted in a murder.

Police don’t always enforce safety orders (e.g., Emergency Protection Orders in Nunavut – EPOs). The EPOs don’t work at all in the small communities because of the proximity of offenders and victims, and the lack of personnel to enforce the orders. There is also a very low level of awareness of legislation intended to protect victims of violence such as Nunavut’s *Family Abuse Intervention Act*.

Police and safety issues for the inquiry to address include the need for:

- community resources that reflect the realities of the North;
- 24-hour policing and faster responses;
- trained, local first responders;
- emergency shelters and “safe homes” in each community; and
- enforcement of safety orders.

Criminal Investigations

“When my sister went missing in Montreal, my parents couldn’t find out anything about the investigation. They only spoke Inuktitut and they couldn’t afford to travel from their community in the North. They didn’t have any contacts in the city. No one really helped them.”

Sarah Nowrakudluk, Inukjuaq, Nunavik

During missing persons and murder investigations, families may not know what information they have the right to have from police. Investigations often are incomplete as a result of detachments being under-capacity in northern communities, and racism and discrimination in the system. There are clear perceptions that criminal investigations and missing person’s cases are handled differently depending on the race of the victim. Several participants mentioned that suspected murders or suspicious deaths are too often deemed suicides or accidental deaths as a result of inadequate investigations or simply for expediency.

The Canadian *Victim’s Bill of Rights*, which came into force in 2015, guarantees five types of rights for victims of crime in criminal proceedings, the right to: 1) information, 2) protection, 3) participation in the process, 4) use of victim witness statements in sentencing and release, and 5) a complaint process. But delegates observed that most victims and their families don’t know these rights, and need plain language information and individual support to exercise them. The processes for achieving these rights need to be simplified, for example, completing victim witness statements can take a lot of time and are traumatic. One of the delegates commented “services (police, doctors) would be more helpful than paper [if what is on paper isn’t accessible to people].”

Issues related to criminal investigations include the need for:

- better information and support for families during criminal investigations;
- full investigations of all questionable disappearances and deaths, especially when families suspect murder; and
- reopening some past investigations and cases that might have wrongfully been declared accidents or suicides.

The Justice System

“When I was an RCMP officer, we would bring the accused forward to court, hearings would get delayed, spouses would often be present at court, still supportive of the accused. The case might be dismissed, or limited information would be heard in court. The couple would end up back together, then later there would be a murder. We need more supports in place early on in the process. We have no real victim services in the north.”

Yvonne Niego, Sergeant Rtd., Iqaluit, Nunavut

Meeting participants described the criminal justice system for Inuit as “broken.” Court processes, sentencing and incarceration are not seen as providing “justice” for victims and families or treatment/rehabilitation for offenders. There is little support for victim’s families during court processes

and sentences can seem inadequate for the severity of the crime. Circuit courts are understaffed, visit communities infrequently and a case can be postponed several times before being heard.

The 1999 Gladue Supreme Court decision, which says that a court must pay particular attention to a person's Aboriginal circumstances when passing sentence, was discussed at a few points in the meeting. While the intent of the decision was to take into account systemic reasons for the offence, there is also to be an accompanying restorative remedy that will address the underlying trauma and colonization impacts of the offender as part of the often shorter sentences. There is a perception among many victims that offenders are only receiving more lenient sentences, which doesn't seem just to victims and families. Wellness programs, substance abuse programs and mental health programs must be culturally and linguistically appropriate and must also simply be available. Without these resources, Gladue sentences are seen to be meaningless and ineffective in relation to Inuit offenders. Victims and their families also would like a bigger role in sentencing.

Justice issues for the inquiry to address include:

- the adequacy of court processes, sentencing, incarceration and offender rehabilitation;
- the nature and effects of racism and discrimination in the system;
- the lack of support for and direct involvement of victims of crime and their families in justice proceedings;
- the inadequacy of circuit courts in the North; and
- fairness in sentencing.

Offender Reintegration

The families of missing and murdered Inuit women expressed concern about offenders returning to the community after serving their sentences. Family members who testified in court against the offender fear retaliation. Victims and families are unaware of their right to be informed about the release of the offender before they leave prison. They also have the right to appear at parole hearings. Overall there is very little awareness of victims' and families' rights to information and to influence release location and parole conditions.

“I am afraid for my family for when the offender gets out of prison. I don't feel safe.”

Anna Angutigirk, Salluit, Nunavik

Offender reintegration also is a concern because offenders return from prison “worse than when they left” and at high risk of reoffending because they receive little or no rehabilitation. Often they are returned to the larger regional centres because the small communities don't have the services in place to support their parole conditions. Without adequate housing and services, they can be a risk to the community.

Issues related to reintegration and relocations include:

- the effectiveness of the prison system in preventing re-offending;
- the lack of adequate supervision, services and support for offenders returning to the community;
- options for victims staying safely in their homes and communities; and
- better approaches to relocating victims and offenders.

Health and Social Services

“We know my sister was murdered but the case was closed. My family hasn’t healed because there are no services to help us.”

Sarah Nowrakudluk, Inukjuaq, Nunavik

Meeting participants spoke at length about the lack of basic health, mental health and social services in their communities. Geographical isolation, high service costs, high levels of distress and a lack of local capacity put considerable strains on limited health and social services. The absence of services has a huge impact on violence prevention, intervention, and treatment. Inuit communities are trying to build the capacity that will enable them to address local needs but they need help to do so. Community and regional Inuit associations often lack stable funding for violence prevention and advocacy for victims of crime.

“[In order to make a difference in women’s lives] regional Inuit women’s organizations need stable funding.”

Kim Campbell McLean, Executive Director

AnânuKatiget Tumingit Regional Inuit Women's Association, Nunatsiavut

Northern communities lack short-term counselling and longer-term, trauma-informed therapy to prevent further tragedies such as murder, suicide and extreme violence, and to support healing for all those affected. While not all victims of abuse and witnesses to violence go on to abuse others, breaking the pattern of multigenerational violence is seen as a key to healthier families and communities. Effective healing programs for women and men and for families are needed, and services should be provided in local dialects of the Inuit language.

The inquiry should investigate health and social services issues for Inuit communities that include:

- service gaps and needs in northern compared to southern communities;
- models for effective trauma-informed short-term counselling and longer-term therapy for Inuit;
- how to develop local capacity for service delivery; and
- proven methods for addressing multi-generational trauma.

Crime Prevention

“Loretta Saunders [an Inuk woman murdered in Nova Scotia] was my cousin and I started an awareness campaign in her honour. Indigenous people are reaching out internationally... We need to create a unified voice and involve more youth, they are our next leaders.”

Holly Jarrett, Ottawa, Ontario

According to meeting participants, crime prevention is about building awareness about violence against women, empowering youth, creating healthier environments for children and families, promoting healing from trauma, and ensuring northern residents and members of urban Inuit communities feel safe.

Effective prevention also requires an understanding of the historical and contemporary root causes of

violence and abuse, including social and economic conditions, racial discrimination, and cultural loss that lead to family violence, child abuse and intimate partner violence.

The inquiry should examine:

- root causes of and effective prevention and healing strategies related to family violence, child abuse and intimate partner abuse; and
- proven ways for Inuit communities to create awareness of violence against women, empower youth, and build healthier, safer communities.

Immediate Priorities for Inuit Violence Prevention and Healing

Participants in the pre-inquiry stressed the importance of immediate action to reduce violence against Inuit women and girls. There are measures that can be taken now to address the issue while the inquiry is taking place. Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada has completed research and consultations in the Inuit regions to create action plans for violence prevention. These regional plans were then consolidated into a national strategy which was presented at the pre-inquiry meeting for discussion and input. Meeting participants were in support of the plan (Appendix A), and offered these priorities for immediate action:

- increased police presence and crisis response teams in Inuit communities;
- funding for an emergency shelter in each community;
- enforcement of victim safety orders;
- translated, plain language materials on legal rights of victims and families;
- increased availability of short-term counselling and longer-term, in-depth trauma-informed therapy for Inuit;
- survivor support groups and a missing and murdered women and girls memorial day;
- funding for proven crime prevention initiatives;
- child sexual abuse prevention and treatment;
- poverty reduction strategies; and
- support for developing multi-sector partnerships.

Conclusion

In concluding the meeting, families of missing and murdered Inuit women expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to tell their stories and to remember and honour their loved ones. The participants collaboratively and collectively gave a name to inspire and guide to their work on missing and murdered Inuit women and girls: *Nipimit Nanisiniq* – Finding Voice.

Organizational delegates expressed gratitude to family representatives for being a part of the pre-inquiry process, and for wanting to make a difference in other people's lives by speaking out. Participants repeated their hope that the inquiry will truly address Inuit needs and result in concrete, meaningful action.

“[What happened to us] is tragic and we deal with the pain. We speak through the pain and try to make a difference.”

**Becky Michelin, Board member, Pauktutit Inuit
Women of Canada, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador**