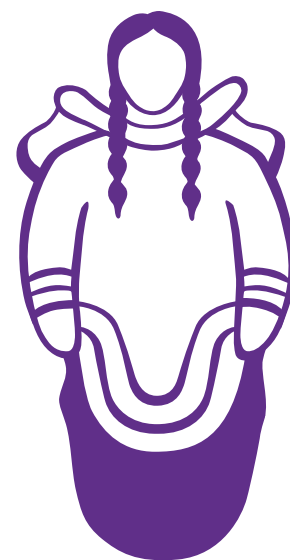


Improving Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Service across Inuit Nunangat

National Inuit Midwifery Forum Report



April 2024



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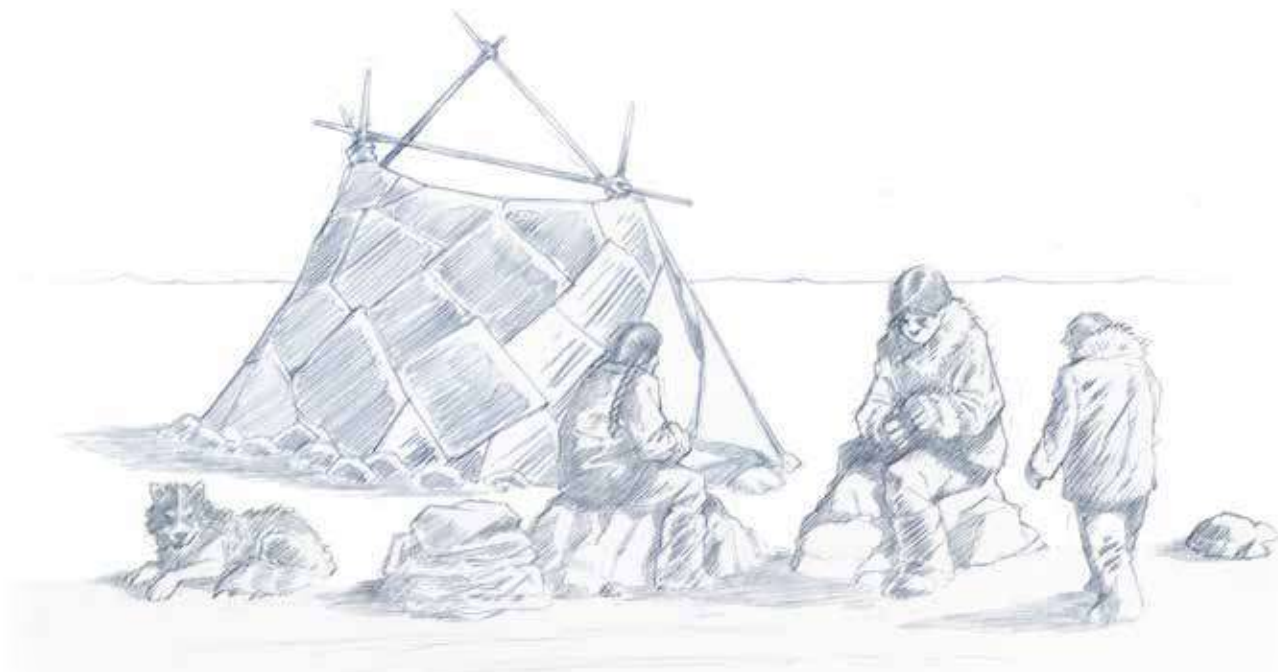
Acknowledgements

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- Members of the **Pauktuutit Board of Directors** who were able to join and contribute.

We extend a special and heartfelt thank you to the **Inuit panelists and participants** who bravely shared their experiences and aspirations for the future. Pauktuutit is dedicated to amplifying their voices and advocating for the changes needed to better support Inuit, our families and communities.

Funding for this project was generously provided by Indigenous Services Canada, and a contribution from NCIM.



Executive Summary

The members of the Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (Pauktuutit) Board of Directors identified the expansion of Inuit midwifery services as a key priority for Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit. Pauktuutit's first step toward creating necessary systemic change was to convene a gathering of stakeholders. In partnership with the National Council of Indigenous Midwives and with support from funding provided by Indigenous Services Canada, Pauktuutit hosted a virtual National Inuit Midwifery Forum on the afternoons of March 28-30, 2023. The goal was to raise awareness and understanding of the current challenges faced by Inuit, the role of Inuit midwives, the importance of access to culturally informed midwifery services to health and wellness, and the need for a rights-based framework to facilitate the return and reintegration of Inuit midwifery.

This report summarizes the proceedings and outcomes of the National Inuit Midwifery Forum. The forum, this report and future efforts aimed at developing National Inuit Midwifery Framework are rooted in the belief that sexual and reproductive health are inherent and fundamental human rights, and that Inuit are entitled to receive high-quality, evidence-informed, and culturally safe care.

Throughout the forum, participants heard from Inuit mothers, fathers, grandparents, and Elders regarding how childbirth evacuation policies have affected them, their families, and their communities. They also learned of hopes and dreams for a future with more social supports for expectant Inuit and their families, closer-to-home access to the high-quality, culturally safe care to which Inuit are entitled, and environments that are safer, more welcoming, and better-suited to Inuit and Inuit families when they must leave their communities for care.



The forum covered various key topics, including:

- Perspectives from national and regional Inuit representative organizations concerning the importance of reclaiming birth sovereignty and strengthening of traditional Inuit knowledge, language and practices related to sexuality, reproduction, childbirth, and midwifery.
- Key International Human Rights instruments and national guidance tools that can be leveraged to advance this effort, such as the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action*; and the Calls for Justice included in the final report of the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*.
- Numerous ways Inuit midwives contribute to the health and wellness of Inuit families and communities.
- Origins and ongoing practices of routine birth evacuation, long-standing gaps in community health human resources and infrastructure, paternalistic Western medical models, impacts of language barriers on safe care and informed consent, and experiences with Anti-Indigenous racism, and how these are symptoms and consequences of social and economic inequities perpetuated by government policies rooted in colonialism, racism, and indifference.
- Benefits of returning birthing to Inuit communities and strengthening supports for Inuit birthers and families in southern urban centres from Indigenous midwives and midwifery educators, women's rights advocates, and midwifery researchers.
- Outstanding results achieved through the Inuulitsivik Midwifery Service and Training Program in Nunavik, and opportunities to partner toward expanding training for Inuit midwives.
- Current legal barriers and other challenges related to expanding access to Inuit midwifery services and training, and the willingness of national and jurisdictional midwifery regulators to engage with Pauktuutit and Inuit partners to effect change.
- Overwhelming support for strengthening Inuit midwifery education and training, as well as birthing knowledge, language, practices, and customs, and for returning birthing to Inuit communities.

The forum reaffirmed Pauktuutit's commitment to increasing Inuit midwifery services and developing an Inuit-led national framework to guide these efforts. The pursuit of returning and re-integrating Inuit midwifery is an act of decolonization and Inuit self-determination, and a pathway to reconciliation. Pauktuutit recognizes that transforming oppressive colonial systems that control Inuit sexual and reproductive health rights will require a collective vision supported by cross-sector commitments and collaboration, and substantive ongoing investment. To be successful, the work ahead must be guided by processes that uphold the rights of Inuit to inform and lead development of policies relevant to Inuit health and wellness, and to incorporate Inuit traditional values, knowledge, and practices in how those policies are enacted.

Pauktuutit is confident this transformation can be realized. The next steps include:

1. Formalizing partnerships with key organizations to promote and support collaborations across federal/provincial/territorial jurisdictions with education/training and regulatory bodies, private partners, and national and international Indigenous midwifery organizations.
2. Engaging with Inuulitsivik Inuit Midwifery Service and Training Program to identify key gaps and opportunities to support scale-up in other Inuit Regions.
3. Describing current reproductive health care pathways for Inuit birthers across Inuit Nunangat and in key urban centres in Southern Canada, incorporating previous work done on care pathways.
4. Engaging at Inuit Regional and community levels, and with urban Inuit and the organizations that support them, to advance and inform the development and implementation of the National Framework and the creation of resources that can be utilized by Inuit and their health care providers to incorporate culturally informed birthing practices into maternal and child health care plans.

About Pauktuutit

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (Pauktuutit) is the national representative organization of Inuit women in Canada and is governed by a 15-member Board of Directors from across Canada. It advocates for the social, cultural, political, and economic betterment of Inuit women and their families.

The majority of Inuit in Canada live in 53 communities across the northern regions of Canada in Inuit Nunangat, which means “the place where Inuit live.”

Inuit Nunangat is comprised of four regions:

- 1. Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories and Yukon)
- 2. Nunavik (Northern Quebec)
- 3. Nunatsiavut (Labrador)
- 4. Nunavut

Figure 1, Map of the regions of Inuit Nunangat ¹



¹ Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, Inuit Nunangat, available at: <https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/inuit-nunangat>

Introduction

Members of the Pauktuutit Board of Directors identified the need to increase Inuit midwifery services across Inuit Nunangat as a key priority of Inuit women and gender-diverse Inuit. A systematic plan was developed to achieve concrete progress on this goal through the development and implementation of a national framework on Inuit midwifery.

The goals of the national framework proposed in the plan are to:

- Address the education and training program needs of Inuit to become midwives. This is critical to increasing the availability of Inuit midwives to ensure that Inuit have access to safe and compassionate pregnancy, birth, and postpartum care.
- Create a roadmap for the integration of traditional midwifery services into the delivery of health care through community clinics and hospitals.
- Reduce anti-Indigenous racism experienced by Inuit in Canada's health care system when they are forced to travel to regional or southern hospitals to give birth.
- Prevent child abuse and child food insecurity often perpetuated when expectant Inuit are forced to leave their children behind for basic reproductive health services.
- Close the gap in sexual and reproductive health outcomes experienced by expectant Inuit compared to other expectant Canadians.
- Reduce the current strain on the maternity departments in regional and southern hospitals.
- Reduce the exorbitant costs of maternal evacuations and length of stays in regional and southern regional hospitals related to pregnancy and childbirth.



- Provide good jobs for Inuit who choose midwifery as a career and contribute to economic prosperity in remote communities in the North.
- Achieve concrete, meaningful, and lasting change to improve the safety and well-being of expectant Inuit and their families.
- Contribute to the path toward reconciliation with Inuit.

Funding to implement the plan was generously provided by Indigenous Services Canada.

Pauktuutit's initial focus was to enhance awareness and understanding of:

- Current challenges faced by Inuit.
- The role of Inuit midwives.
- The importance of access to culturally informed midwifery services to Inuit health and wellness.
- The need for a rights-based framework to facilitate the return and reintegration of Inuit midwifery.

A virtual gathering of stakeholders, the National Inuit Midwifery Forum, was held over the afternoons of March 28-30, 2023.

The first afternoon of the virtual forum, on March 28, was a public information session open to anyone interested in Indigenous and Inuit midwifery. To protect space for Inuit-led solutions and ideas, participation on the afternoons of March 29 and 30 was targeted to Inuit and other individuals and organizations with the knowledge, experience or capacity to contribute to informed and action-oriented discussions on advancing the restoration and reintegration of Inuit midwifery services across Inuit Nunangat and in southern urban centres where Inuit reside or are sent to for health care.

The virtual national forum allowed for sharing of lived experiences and opportunities for participants to view long-standing gaps and often-repeated issues and challenges through new lenses. It helped participants to understand more clearly how important it is to move forward together to co-create a plan to resolve this health inequity.

Five activities were prioritized for the remainder of the 2023-24 fiscal year, including additional engagement sessions.



Background

“ For generations, Inuit have relied on local midwives who traditionally filled the role of providing reproductive health care to expectant mothers. Giving birth to a child was essentially a family- and community-centred event based on long-standing traditional birthing practices. Today, Inuit-led midwifery services have been removed from our communities and replaced by a Western system of medicalized birthing practices imposed on Inuit. ”

– Gerri Sharpe, President – Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada

The lack of access to Inuit midwifery services is harming Inuit children, families, and communities. Legislation and regulation controlling midwifery is failing to keep Inuit safe culturally, physically, and emotionally. Governments are not providing Inuit access to equitable, high-quality and culturally safe maternal and newborn care.

Currently, health system policies and practices in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, and Nunatsiavut require expectant Inuit to temporarily relocate to regional hubs or southern urban centres for at least the last month of their pregnancies to await the birth of their children (see Figure 2). This practice is known as maternal evacuation. The duration of relocation can be much longer, depending on the reason it was required.

Figure 2, Inuit medical travel map²



² ITK, March 20, 2023

Nunavik is the only Inuit Region that offers consistent access to Inuit midwifery services and an Inuit midwifery training program: Inulitsivik. Inulitsivik began in response to efforts by local Elders, who in 1985, wanted to bring birth back to Nunavik. They persuaded a hospital in the region to begin a training program to certify Inuit midwives. Today, there are three maternity clinics led by Inuit midwives on the Hudson Coast, that deliver almost 200 babies each year.³

To date, attempts to establish consistent access to Inuit midwives in Nunavut, the largest and most populous Inuit Region, have been unsuccessful.⁴

For Inuit living in regions without Inuit midwives, evacuation for birthing usually requires living in a congregate living facility with other Inuit traveling for medical reasons or in a hotel room without a kitchen or laundry facilities for three to six weeks, and sometimes longer. Neither arrangement meets the needs of expectant Inuit or their families. The length of time away from home can make it impractical, and prohibitively expensive, for partners and small or school-aged children to come along. Family separations create substantial stresses and risks during a time when the focus should be on preparing to welcome a new family member.

The mandatory requirement to travel to southern health centres is also expensive, and exponentially so given the high birth rates in Inuit communities.⁵ Not only is the birth evacuation policy financially unsustainable, it also diverts staggering amounts of potential healthcare funding away from building adequate and appropriate reproductive health and neonatal care infrastructure and health human resourcing within Inuit communities: funding that could be used to grow and sustain access to Inuit midwifery and better support Inuit during pregnancy, childbirth and post-partum.

Despite this, forced maternal evacuation policies have been in place for Inuit for decades. Consequently, Inuit babies are born in regional or southern health care centres instead of in Inuit homeland and home communities. Expectant Inuit give birth without enough support from family and friends. Growing Inuit families experience unnecessary emotional and financial stress, and Inuit children separated from their parents may be vulnerable to food insecurity, sexual and/or physical abuse. Inuit knowledge, language and birthing traditions are not acknowledged, and Inuit are exposed to anti-Indigenous racism. Inuit are being denied sovereignty over their birth and birthing experiences.

Birth sovereignty has been described as physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, cultural, and ancestral ownership of oneself, physiology, sexuality, and the birth process.⁶ The concept of birth sovereignty is supported by multiple Articles within the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*⁷ which passed into law in Canada through Bill C-15 on June 16, 2020.⁸

Pauktuutit recognizes efforts and investments that enhance access to Inuit midwifery practices and improve cultural safety for Inuit, for whom maternal evacuation to southern health centres remains necessary, will have collateral benefits for Inuit that reside in those cities.

3 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/05/world/canada/nunavik-midwives-indigenous.html?smid=url-share>

4 "It's 2021": Nunavut mothers say it's high time the territory gets more birthing services | CBC News

5 <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nunavut-birthing-services-mothers-midwives-rankin-inlet-1.6188351>

6 BIRTH SOVEREIGNTY - THE TAPROOT DOULA PROJECT accessed July 30, 23

7 https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

8 [The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\) | CAPP](#)

National Inuit Midwifery Forum

March 28, 2023 – Public Information Session, 12 - 4 pm EST

Objectives and Intended Audience

The objectives were to enhance public awareness and understanding of:

- Current gaps and challenges faced by Inuit birthers, infants, families, and their communities.
- The roles of Inuit midwives, and importance of access to culturally informed midwifery services for the health and wellness of Inuit and their communities.
- The urgent need for a rights-based framework to facilitate the return and reintegration of Inuit midwifery services across Inuit Nunangat.

The intended audience included:

- Community members
- Inuit Elders
- Community-based organizations working to improve Inuit health and wellness
- Former, current, and student Inuit midwives
- Inuulitsivik midwifery training program
- Federal/Provincial/Territorial and Inuit government representatives
- Associated Pauktuutit file leads
- Health and midwifery representatives from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), Regional Inuit Association (RIAs) and Land Claim Organizations (LCOs)
- Inuit Regional women's organizations
- Health care providers to Inuit birthers and newborns
- Midwifery educators and education programs
- Representatives and members of Canadian midwifery associations, including the National Council of Indigenous Midwives (NCIM) and Canadian Association of Midwives (CAM)
- Canadian elected officials whose portfolios include health, midwifery, or maternal childcare



- Societies, professional associations and regulatory body representatives for physicians, obstetricians and gynecologists, and nurses and midwives, including the Society of Rural and Remote Physicians of Canada (RRPC); Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, Canadian Nurses Association, Registered Nurses' Associations for Nunavut/Northwest Territories, Quebec, Newfoundland/Labrador, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, the Association of Ontario Midwives, and Registrars involved in professional licensing for midwives practicing in Inuit Regions
- Inuit researchers and researchers engaged in the study of cultural midwifery practices and/or sexual and reproductive health service inequities experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada
- Others with an interest in Inuit midwifery

In recognition of the potential for triggering strong emotions and past traumatic experiences, information on options for accessing mental health support was provided multiple times over the three afternoons of the forum.

Participants were also encouraged to visit Pauktuutit's website to learn more about the organization and to access additional information and resources on Inuit midwifery, including the '*Irnisuksijjiit – Our Right*' video. A virtual feedback board or 'Jamboard' was developed and demonstrated each day as a way for participants to share information with each other and with Pauktuutit.

Marketing, Registration and Representation

Marketing for the information session was executed primarily through professional networks and social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, on March 13 (English) and March 17 (Inuktitut - South Baffin dialect, English, French) with graphics created for the event (**Appendix 1**). Screenshots of the participant agendas (**Appendix 2**) were posted on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn on March 24. The event was also promoted by NCIM during their half-day online symposium on addressing colonialism, [Uproot](#), on February 28, 2023, and in an email circulated to their membership.

Registration was facilitated through the online SurveyMonkey platform. Registrants were asked to share their geographic location, their subject matter expertise or job title, organization(s) they were affiliated with, why they were interested in registering for the forum and whether they are Inuk or represented Inuit, which was clarified to include Inuit Midwives, Inuit participants, Inuit Elders, and those who work for Land Claim Organizations (Inuit and non-Inuit) or Inuit Women's Organizations.

Fifty-nine registration requests were received, including presenters, panelists, and organizations with multiple individuals participating via one registration. The majority of registrations were from within Canada. International registrations included Mexico, Peru, and the United States. Backgrounds and affiliations included midwives, doulas, and birth assistants, midwifery educators, midwifery regulators, lactation consultants, women's rights advocates, researchers, and journalists. Others were representatives from government and non-government organizations, including elected officials, directors, policy and program advisors, and analysts.

Agenda and Speakers

An agenda was circulated to registered participants in advance of the session (**Appendix 2**). Information on speakers and panelists is included as **Appendix 3**.

March 28, 2023		
Welcome and Opening Remarks Video: Social~1 Social Media Promo	Gerri Sharpe	President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
Virtual Qaggiq: Why is Access to Inuit Midwifery Important? Video: Day 1 Part 1 Video	Gerri Sharpe 0:09:50 – 0:17:58	President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
	Natan Obed 0:21:40 – 0:27:10	President, Inuit Tapiirit Kanatami
	Alisha Julien Reid Registered Midwife (RM) 0:27:20 – 0:33:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mi'kmaq Midwife • Co-Chair, National Council of Indigenous Midwives
What is Inuit Midwifery? Video: Day 1 Part 2 Timestamp: 0:00:00-0:21:33 Video	Irnisuksijit – Our Right A 16-minute video on Inuit midwifery produced by Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, available to view online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBAilCDU0vQ	
Virtual Qaggiq: How are Inuit Affected by Gaps in Access to Inuit Midwifery? Video: Day 1 Part 2 Timestamp: 0:21:33-1:05:15 Video	A discussion panel to share individual experiences and perspectives on how Inuit are affected by gaps in access to Inuit midwifery	
	Kimberly Moorhouse, RM and colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inuk Midwife • Coordinator of Midwifery Services, Inuulitsivik Midwifery Service
	Paasa Lemire	Community Member, Nunavik
	Samson Tutanuak	Community Member, Nunavut
Mandatory Evacuation Video: Day 1 Part 3 Timestamp: 0:00:05 - 0:19:45 Video	A review of the origins, history and impacts of Indigenous and Inuit maternity evacuation policies and practices	
	Dr. Karen Lawford, RM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anishinaabeg Midwife (Namegosibiing, Lac Seul First Nation, Treaty 3) • Registered Midwife (Ontario) • Associate Professor, Department of Midwifery, Obstetrics & Gynecology, McMaster University
Midwifery Regulation Video: Day 1 Part 3 Timestamp: 0:19:45 – 0:35:16 Video	An overview of the regulations that influence the licensing and practice of Indigenous midwifery in Canada	
	Claire Dion Fletcher, RM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered Midwife • Assistant Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University Midwifery Education Program
Reconcili-ACTION: Reclaiming Midwifery is an Act of Inuit Self-Determination Video: Day 1 Part 3 Timestamp: 0:35:17 – 0:53:29 Video	Information and reflections on the colonial origin of jurisdictional control over midwifery regulation and legislation, and the importance of keeping birth, education, knowledge in communities to growing and sustaining Indigenous midwifery	
	Nathalie Pambrun, RM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Métis Registered Midwife • Advocacy and Policy Advisor, National Council of Indigenous Midwives
Inuulitsivik Inuit Midwifery Service and Training Program Video: Day 1 Part 3 Timestamp: 0:53:30 – 1:09:50 Video	An introduction to Inuulitsivik Inuit midwifery service and training program in Nunavik	
	Kimberly Moorhouse, RM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inuk Midwife • Coordinator of Midwifery Services, Inuulitsivik Midwifery Service

March 29 - 30, 2023 – Targeted Engagement Sessions, 12 - 4 pm EST

Objectives and Intended Audience

The objectives for the sessions on March 29 and 30 were as follows:

1. Engage with organizations and individuals involved in the planning, delivery, and research and evaluation of maternal-child services for Inuit to better understand current challenges and opportunities to providing culturally informed midwifery services to Inuit women in their communities.
2. Nurture support for the development of human rights-based framework for Inuit midwifery care.
3. Gather contributions and identify sources of information and data for a national Inuit midwifery framework to advance access to culturally informed midwifery services for Inuit women in their communities.
4. Establish an advisory group of Inuit midwives to guide the development and validate the content of the national framework.
5. Establish and/or strengthen partnerships to support the development of the national framework.

To support informed and action oriented discussions and to protect space for Inuit-led participation in solutions and ideas, invitations were targeted toward:

- Former, current, and future Inuit midwives
- Current and former members of Canadian midwifery associations (CAM, NICM)
- Midwifery educators and education programs, including Inuulitsivik midwifery training program
- ITK and regional Inuit Association midwifery file leads
- Representatives from Federal, Provincial, Territorial, and Regional health departments and programs that serve Inuit communities
- Health care and service providers, particularly those involved in midwifery and maternal/childcare for Inuit
- Societies, professional associations and regulatory body representatives for physicians, obstetricians and gynecologists, and nurses and midwives, including the Society of Rural and Remote Physicians of Canada (RRPC), Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, Canadian Nurses Association, Registered Nurses' Associations for Nunavut/Northwest Territories, Quebec, Newfoundland/Labrador, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, the Association of Ontario Midwives, and Registrars involved in professional licensing for midwives practicing in Inuit Regions
- Inuit researchers and researchers engaged in the study of cultural midwifery practices and training and sexual and reproductive health service inequities experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada



Marketing, Registration and Representation

Invitations were targeted to specific organizations and individuals so detailed information on interest and affiliation was not collected during the registration process.

Registration was facilitated through an online platform. Eighty-eight registration requests were received, including presenters, panelists, and organizations with multiple individuals participating under a single registration. All registrants indicated they were in Canada, with many having registered for sessions in the previous day's forum.

Agenda and Speakers

Agendas were circulated to registered participants in advance of the sessions (**Appendix 2**). Information on speakers and panelists is included as **Appendix 3**.

March 29, 2023		
Virtual Qaggiq: The Lived Experience of Inuit Midwifery	A discussion panel to share personal experiences of becoming and being an Inuk midwife as a way of highlighting challenges, circumstances that reduce the risks for negative outcomes (protective factors), and opportunities	
	Kimberly Moorhouse, Registered Midwife (RM) with colleagues and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inuk Midwife • Coordinator of Midwifery Services, Inuulitsivik Midwifery Service
Perinatal Outcomes for the Hudson Coast Villages of Nunavik, 2000-2015	A review of findings and outcomes data from Inuulitsivik midwifery service that provides evidence to support the return of birth to remote communities and centres without caesarean section delivery capacity	
	Kimberly Moorhouse, RM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inuk Midwife • Coordinator of Midwifery Services, Inuulitsivik Midwifery Service
	Vicki Van Wagner, RM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered Midwife (Ontario and Quebec) • Founding Director and Associate Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University Midwifery Education Program • Inuulitsivik Midwifery Service, Midwife and Educator
Reimagining Indigenous Midwifery Training	An overview of current approaches to Indigenous midwifery training in Canada and introduction to the National Council of Indigenous Midwives' 3-year community-driven midwifery education pilot project: Indigenous Midwifery Education Initiative (IME)	
	Carol Couchie, RM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Council of Indigenous Midwives
Learning to Become a Midwife in Nunavik	An overview of the principles and methodology of the Inuulitsivik Inuit Midwifery training program where Inuit culture is the foundation and learning is supported through doing, storytelling, oral teaching, and case reviews	
	Kimberly Moorhouse, RM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inuk Midwife • Coordinator of Midwifery Services, Inuulitsivik Midwifery Service
Inuit Midwifery Training Question and Answer Period		
Virtual Small Group Discussions (5 groups)	Explorations of the role of an Inuk midwife in the community and how Inuit midwifery is distinct from non-Indigenous midwifery, and First Nations midwifery and Métis midwifery. See Findings from Small Group Discussions	
	Evgeniia (Jen) Sidorova	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Research Analyst, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada

March 30, 2023		
Reconcili-ACTION: Midwifery Advocacy	An introduction to the concept of midwifery advocacy which requires: establishment of trusting relationships; decolonizing approaches; an understanding of the work ecosystems; thinking about what needs to happen between and across levels to create change; supportive collaborations; and self-care	
	Nathalie Pambrun, Registered Midwife (RM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Métis Registered Midwife • Advocacy and Policy Advisor, National Council of Indigenous Midwives
Midwifery Regulation	Reflections on the colonial origins of midwifery regulations in Canada, the consequences for Indigenous midwifery and Indigenous birth sovereignty, and the need for a collaboration with regulators and jurisdictions to ensure regulations, practice standards and competencies, policies related to childbirth evacuation, and legislation on midwifery serve Indigenous people	
	Claire Dion Fletcher, RM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered Midwife • Assistant Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University Midwifery Education Program
Panel Discussion: Legislative and Regulatory Barriers	Presentations from representatives from jurisdictions and organizations that oversee and/or influence Indigenous midwifery legislation or regulation. Moderated by Claire Dion Fletcher, RM.	
	Ravan Bedingfield	Registrar, Chief of Professional Regulation, Department of Health and Social Services, Government of the Northwest Territories
	Julie Pelletier	Presidente, Ordre des Sages-Femmes du Québec
	Gisela Becker	Innu Midwifery Implementation Coordinator, Innu Round Table Secretariat
	Louise Aerts	Board Chair, Canadian Midwifery Regulators Council Chief Officer of Strategy, Governance and Reconciliation, British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives
Virtual Small Group Discussions (4 groups)	Explorations of access to and advocacy for Inuit midwifery as a human right, and visioning on the reintegration of Inuit midwifery. See <i>Findings from Small Group Discussions</i>	
	Evgeniia (Jen) Sidorova	Policy and Research Analyst, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
What We Heard and Next Steps Video: Day 3 closing remarks See also Appendix 5 Video	Shylah Elliott	Manager, Health Policy and Research, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada

Findings from Virtual Small Group Discussions

Participants were divided into virtual breakout groups to consider questions posed by Pauktuutit session moderator, Evgeniia (Jen) Sidorova. Each group had a facilitator, and findings were reported back at the end of the session. A high-level summary of information from the reports is presented next.

March 29, 2023

Discussion Questions:

1. What is an Inuk Midwife's role in the community?
2. How is Inuit Midwifery distinct from Non-Indigenous Midwifery?
3. What about Inuit Midwifery is distinct from First Nations and Métis Midwifery?

Summary of Responses:

- Inuit midwives play a much broader role in the community than Western midwives.
- Inuit midwives are leaders in their communities, and they maintain intrinsic long-term connections with their clients.
- Inuit midwives are deeply involved in the birthing process, playing multiple roles including counselling, prenatal caregiving, and interpretation.
- Inuit communities hold strong respect for Inuit midwives.
- Becoming an Inuit midwife is an inherent birthright, reclaiming this will require lobbying at territorial, provincial and federal levels.
- The existence of medical risks should not dissuade efforts to bring Inuit midwifery back to Inuit Nunangat.
- There are cultural, social, and economic risks associated with the lack of Inuit midwives, including family separation, anti-Indigenous racism, and the lack of community support in southern hospitals.
- Inuit midwives are custodians of Inuit culture and values and provide care in Inuktitut (note: dialects of the Inuit language of Inuktitut are collectively referred to as 'Inuktitut')
- Travelling Inuit midwives would support urban Inuit in southern hospitals.
- Urban Inuit need Inuit midwifery services to overcome issues such as obstetrical racism.
- Midwives from southern Canada who serve Inuit communities rotate in and out, so they do not serve the communities on a permanent basis. In comparison, Inuit midwives remain in the communities.
- The concept of Western midwifery is quite diverse. As one participant pointed out, unlike Canadian midwives, midwives in Sweden have deeper connections with their clients and are at the centre of prenatal care.
- Inuit midwives share Inuit values that are distinct from Euro-Canadian. Inuit values are core and intrinsic to Inuit midwives. These values determine how they feel, practice, and care for their clients.
- Pan-Indigenous approaches do not apply to Inuit midwifery; legislative and regulatory frameworks for First Nations and Métis midwifery differ significantly from Inuit midwifery, and Inuit cultural teachings are also distinct from First Nations and Métis. Thus, the terminology around Indigenous midwifery must reflect these differences.
- Provincial, regional, and territorial regulations limit Inuit cultural midwifery practices.

March 30, 2023

Discussion Questions:

1. Why should we protect Inuit midwifery as a human right?
2. How might we advocate for Inuit midwifery as a human right?
3. What would the reintegration of Inuit midwifery into the health care system look like?

Summary of Responses:

- Inuit midwifery is an inherent birthright that existed before colonialism, so having access to Inuit midwifery services is a fundamental sexual and reproductive health right.
- Access to Inuit midwifery services is a means to ensure that the human rights of Inuit, such as linguistic and cultural rights, are upheld.
- Inuit midwifery services revitalize Inuit *Gaujimajatuqangit*⁹ and the use of Inuktuk
- The reintegration of Inuit midwifery should be Inuit-led and guided by self-determination.
- Inuit are capable healthcare providers.
- From a policy perspective, reintegration should not be a difficult task that requires a lot of capacity; it is a matter of government willpower.
- Inuit land claims agreements must include Inuit midwifery.
- The reintegration of Inuit midwifery will require strong Inuit agency to reclaim the midwifery right.



⁹ Inuit *Gaujimajatuqangit* (IQ) is the term used to describe Inuit epistemology or the Indigenous knowledge of the Inuit.

Feedback on the Forum

SurveyMonkey Analysis

The post-forum survey received 17 responses. The survey questions were related to the following topics:

- What was the most useful component of the forum? (Question 1)
- What respondents learned from the forum? (Questions 2-4)
- What respondents did not like about the forum? (Question 3)
- How would reintegration of Inuit midwifery look? (Question 5).

Forum Components

Most respondents indicated that they found the presentations (88.24%) and the group discussions (58.82%) the most valuable elements of the forum. Forty-one of them, or 18% of respondents said the videos were helpful, and 23 of them, or 53% stated that the chat box in Zoom was useful to them.

Most Valuable Learning Insights from the Forum

- **Support and commitment:** Respondents expressed that they learned the importance of better supporting Inuit women. The forum also allowed them to learn about the current state of Inuit midwifery and Indigenous education programs for midwives. It was clear to the respondents that Pauktuutit is committed to bringing Inuit midwifery back to Inuit Nunangat.
- **Connection with others:** Respondents indicated they were glad to connect with other people, particularly midwifery advocates. They also reported that seeing everyone together was powerful, and that they better understood Inuit women's experiences in health care.
- **Hearing others' perspectives:** Respondents valued the insights from midwives across Canada, personal birthing stories and everyone's points of view.
- **Importance:** Respondents learned about Inuit midwifery as a vital occupation for Inuit women. They also understood how essential midwifery revitalization is. There was also an emphasis on the health benefits of midwifery services and receiving care in Inuktitut.
- **Inspiration:** Respondents were inspired by the successes of midwifery and birth centres in Nunavik. Some responses addressed the need to strike a balance between medicalization and honouring traditional culture and practices.
- **Midwifery is an inherent human right:** Respondents emphasized the reclaiming of Inuit birthrights and the potential for midwives to operate independently. Additionally, there was a call for trauma-informed practices in Inuit midwifery.

Reintegration of Inuit Midwifery

The survey responses were summarized into the following topics:

- **Cultural safety:** Respondents emphasized the importance of honouring Inuit culture and traditions. Midwifery must be culturally safe and close to home. Sharing precolonial birth stories should be part of reintegration.
- **Community leadership:** Respondents argued that Inuit midwifery services are community-led. The communities should identify individuals suitable for midwifery. The communities should be paired with midwives, and together they could start taking steps toward reintegration.
- **Cooperation:** Respondents stated that it is essential to work with many stakeholders without competition or contest. For example, many Inuit organizations currently work on promoting Inuit midwifery services. There are other stakeholders, including health care providers and First Nations and Métis, who could also support Inuit midwives.
- **Access to Inuit midwifery services:** Respondents stated returning to empowered birth is a positive move toward reconciliation. Inuit women must have a choice between Inuit midwifery services and Western health care. A return to Inuit midwifery means access to safe and sustainable maternity care.
- **Funding and training:** Respondents stated governmental agencies should provide funding for midwifery reintegration. Midwifery training should be available across Inuit Nunangat and in urban centres. There should be financial incentives to attend training sessions, and Inuit youth should be encouraged to participate.

What Did Attendees Not Like about the Forum?

A few respondents indicated that there was nothing they did not like about the forum - everything was great. Others said they did not like some of the forum's components, including quiet break-out rooms, the participants, the fact that only certain people were allowed to speak, and the lack of time for discussions at the end of each day of the forum. Some respondents suggested they needed more reading material. A few respondents wished they could attend the Forum in person rather than during the workday. An unstable Internet connection was also discouraging for the attendees.

Post Forum Follow-Up

On May 2, 2023, a follow-up email was sent to all registered participants, speakers, and panelists to express our gratitude for their attendance at the event, to solicit additional feedback and share links to Pauktuutit resources on Inuit midwifery (**Appendix 4**).

Multilingual acknowledgement graphics (**Appendix 1**) were posted on Pauktuutit's social media accounts; Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, on April 6, 2023.

Next Steps

The following activities have been prioritized for Fiscal 2023-24.

1. **Formalize partnerships with key organizations to promote and support collaborations across federal, provincial, territorial jurisdictions, education, training and regulatory bodies, private partners, and national and international Indigenous midwifery organizations.**
2. **Engage with Inuulitsivik Inuit Midwifery Service and Training Program to identify key gaps and/or opportunities to support scaling up in other Inuit Regions.**
3. **Describe current reproductive health care pathways for Inuit birthers across Inuit Regions and in key urban centres in southern Canada, incorporating previous work by Pauktuutit on care pathways.**
4. **Engage at Inuit Regional and community levels, as well as with urban Inuit and the organizations that support them, to advance and inform the development and implementation of the National Framework. This includes the creation of resources that may be utilized by Inuit and their health care providers to incorporate culturally informed birthing practices into maternal and child health care plans.**

Conclusion

“ The lack of Inuit midwifery services in Inuit communities infringes on Inuit and denies their reproductive human rights. ”

~ Gerri Sharpe, President – Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada

Throughout the National Inuit Midwifery Forum, participants learned how mandatory childbirth evacuation policies have significant negative consequences.

- **They prevent culturally meaningful birthing experiences, traditional ceremonies and rights of passage.**
- **They separate women and gender diverse Inuit from their support networks for weeks or months** during one of the most vulnerable times in their lives.
- **They require Inuit to travel long distances by air**, even when other pregnant women are advised against doing so.
- **They interfere with bonding between parents, infants and siblings.**

- **They exacerbate poverty and stress within homes** by reducing household income and requiring lengthy supports to assist with childcare and other roles and tasks typically attended to by those sent away for care.
- **They perpetuate intergenerational trauma by placing children left behind at risk** of food insecurity and physical and/or sexual abuse.
- **They expose Inuit to culturally unsafe health care, anti-Indigenous racist practices, and violence**, that negatively impact mental health and wellbeing, increase risk for postpartum depression, and foster distrust of the health care system.
- **They can lead to tragic outcomes.** In 2021, Silatik Qavvik, a 35-year-old wife and mother of five, died from COVID-19 in Winnipeg after she traveled from Sanikiluaq, Nunavut for childbirth.¹⁰
- **They deny Inuit the right to give birth and to be born in their homeland.**
- **They undermine Inuit culture and lead to the loss of traditional Inuit knowledge, language and practices related to sexuality, reproduction, childbirth, and midwifery.**
- **They disregard key international Human Rights instruments and national guidance tools** including the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP - Articles 24.1 and 24.2); the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC - Calls to Action 22, 23); and the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (Right to Culture, Right to Health).
- **They divert a staggering amount of health care funding** away from creating and sustaining adequate and appropriate reproductive health and neonatal care infrastructure, as well as health human resourcing and education within Inuit Nunangat.
- **They result in ineffective communication between Inuit and their health care providers**, endangering mothers and infants, impacting the quality of care, and reducing capacity to knowingly provide informed consent to medical treatments including forced and coerced sterilization.
- **They are not evidence-based, do not consider cultural, emotional, and financial risks to neonates, mothers, families, and communities, and have not led** to improvements in maternal health outcomes and infant mortality rates.

The National Inuit Midwifery Forum reaffirmed Pauktuutit's commitment to bringing birth back to Inuit communities, revitalizing Inuit culture, language and traditional Inuit birth practices, and reclaiming Inuit sovereignty over reproductive health and birthing.



¹⁰ [Nunavut woman dies weeks after contracting COVID-19 following childbirth in Winnipeg hospital](#) | CBC News accessed July 1, 2023

Appendices










Appendix 1

Social Media Marketing and Acknowledgement Graphics

Advance Promotion

Instagram		
Inuktitut – South Baffin dialect	French	English
Not Produced	Not Produced	<p>March 31, 2023</p>
		<p>March 17, 2023</p>

Appendix 1

Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn	
March 31, 2023	
 <p> <D>JN<D>C<D> r<D>L<D>C<D>Z<D>F b<D>a<D>C<D>F <D>4<D>9<D>a<D>C<D> Δ<D>σ<D>ρ<D>γ<D>σ<D>Γ<D> bN<D>L<D>N<D>C<D>N<D>C<D>L<D>γ<D>D<D>C<D>C<D>6<D> 28<D>-<D>F<D> - 30<D>-<D>J<D>C<D> Λ<D>C<D>α<D>D<D>N<D>γ<D>N<D>J<D>C<D> <D>4<D>J<D>γ<D>N<D>C<D> Λ<D>γ<D>b<D>C<D>D<D>C<D>α<D>γ<D>σ<D>Γ<D>C<D> Δ<D>σ<D>ρ<D>γ<D>σ<D>Γ<D>C<D> </p> <p> 496-877-6000 888-6 pauktuutit.ca </p> <p>   </p>	Inuktitut – South Baffin dialect
 <p> PAUKTUUTIT TIENDRA LE PREMIER FORUM NATIONAL DES SAGES-FEMMES INUITES DU 28 AU 30 MARS L'accès aux services de sages-femmes est un droit à la santé gènesique </p> <p> Inscription à pauktuutit.ca </p> <p>   </p>	French
 <p> PAUKTUUTIT'S NATIONAL INUIT MIDWIFERY VIRTUAL FORUM Access to Midwifery Services is a Reproductive Health Right </p> <p> March 28, 2023 From 12 pm - 4 pm ET Hosted on Zoom </p> <p> Register on our website pauktuutit.ca </p> <p>   </p>	English

Post Forum Acknowledgements – April 6, 2023

Instagram	Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn
 <p> a.d'f' Nakurmiik Ujannamiik Merci Thank You National Inuit Midwifery Forum 2023 </p> <p> Gelling Lighting Natou Kangas Janice Orlaya </p> <p> Facilitator Malaya Chapman </p> <p> NCIM Claire Dion Fletcher Natalie Rankin Carol Ouellet </p> <p> Presenters Dr. Karen Louford Louise Aerts, CMBC </p> <p> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami Karen Obed, ITK President </p> <p> Inaallitavik Eva Washhouse Vusi Van Megen Whole Inuititavik team </p> <p> Panelists Julia Pallares Raven Beddingfield Gisela Becker Sam Iatanuak Pausa Lemire </p> <p>  </p>	 <p> a.d'f' Nakurmiik Ujannamiik Merci Thank You National Inuit Midwifery Forum 2023 </p> <p> Gelling Lighting Natou Kangas Janice Orlaya </p> <p> Facilitator Malaya Chapman </p> <p> NCIM Claire Dion Fletcher Natalie Rankin Carol Ouellet </p> <p> Presenters Dr. Karen Louford Louise Aerts, CMBC </p> <p> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami Karen Obed, ITK President </p> <p> Inaallitavik Eva Washhouse Vusi Van Megen Whole Inuititavik team </p> <p> Panelists Julia Pallares Raven Beddingfield Gisela Becker Sam Iatanuak Pausa Lemire </p> <p>  </p>

Appendix 2

Participant Agendas



National Inuit Midwifery Virtual Forum: Access to Midwifery Services is a Reproductive Health Right

Day 1: March 28, 2023, 12 pm - 4 pm EST

To enhance your awareness and understanding of:

- Current gaps and challenges faced by Inuit birthers, infants, families, and their communities.
- The roles of Inuit midwives, and importance of access to culturally informed midwifery services to the health and wellness of Inuit and Inuit communities.
- The urgent need for a rights-based framework to facilitate the return and re-integration of Inuit midwifery services across Inuit Nunangat.

Agenda

12:05 PM	Qulliq lighting and opening prayer	Natsiq Kango
12:25 PM	Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada	Gerri Sharpe, Pauktuutit President
12:40 PM	Virtual Qaggiq: <i>Why is Access to Inuit Midwifery Important?</i>	Organizational Representatives
1:20 PM	What is Inuit Midwifery?	Irrisuksiijit Video
1:40 PM	Virtual Qaggiq: <i>How are Inuit Affected by Gaps in Access to Inuit Midwifery?</i>	Community Representatives
2:25 PM	National Aboriginal Council of Midwives (NACM) & The Impacts of Colonization on Indigenous Midwifery	Evelyn George, NACM
2:35 PM	Mandatory Evacuation	Dr. Karen Lawford
2:50 PM	Midwifery Regulation	Claire Dion Fletcher, NACM
3:05 PM	Reconcili-ACTION: Reclaiming Midwifery is an Act of Inuit Self Determination	Nathalie Pambrun, NACM
3:15 PM	Inuulitisivik	Kimberly Moorhouse and Vicky Van Wagner, Inuulitisivit Inuit Midwifery Program
3:45 PM	Closing Remarks & Door Prize Draw	Malaya Chapman
4:00 PM	Adjourn	

Appendix 2



National Inuit Midwifery Virtual Forum: Access to Midwifery Services is a Reproductive Health Right

Day 2: March 29, 2023, 12 pm - 4 pm EST

To enhance your awareness and understanding of:

- The current challenges and opportunities to providing culturally informed midwifery services to Inuit women in their communities.

Agenda

12:05 PM	Qulliq lighting and opening prayer	Natsiq Kango
12:35 PM	Virtual Qaggiq: <i>The Lived Experience of Inuit Midwifery</i>	Inuit Midwives and Inuit Midwifery Students
1:35 PM	Reimagining Indigenous Midwifery Training	Carol Couchie, NACM
2:05 PM	Inuit Midwifery Training: Panel Discussion & Q&A	Panelists
3:05 PM	Breakout Room Discussions	Jen Sidorova, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
3:45 PM	Closing Remarks and Door Prize	Malaya Chapman
4:00 PM	Adjourn	

Appendix 2



National Inuit Midwifery Virtual Forum: Access to Midwifery Services is a Reproductive Health Right

Day 3: March 30, 2023, 12 pm - 4 pm EST

Presentations and discussions to:

- Nurture support for the development of a human rights-based framework for Inuit midwifery care.
- Gather contributions and identify sources of information/data for a National Inuit Midwifery Framework to advance access to culturally informed midwifery services for Inuit women in their communities.
- Establish an advisory group of Inuit midwives to guide development and validate content of the National Framework.
- Establish and/or strengthen partnerships to support development of the National Framework.
- Engage with Inuit and organizations/individuals involved in the planning, delivery, and research/evaluation of maternal-child services for Inuit to better understand current challenges and opportunities to providing culturally informed midwifery services to Inuit women in their communities.

Agenda

12:05 PM	Qulliq lighting and opening prayer	Janice Oolayou
12:35 PM	Influence and Impact of Colonization on Indigenous Midwifery Traditions and Practices	Evelyn George, NACM
1:20 PM	Midwifery Regulation	Claire Dion Fletcher, NACM
1:30 PM	Legislative and Regulatory Barriers: Panel Discussion & Q&A	Claire Dion Fletcher, NACM
2:35 PM	Breakout Room Discussions	Jen Sidorova, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
3:15 PM	Reconcili-ACTION Midwifery Advocacy	Nathalie Pambrun, NACM
3:40 PM	What We Heard, Next Steps & Door Prize Draw	Shylah Elliott, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
4:00 PM	Adjourn	

Appendix 3

Speakers and Panelists

Malaya Qaunirq Chapman	Forum Facilitator and Community Representative
Gerri Sharpe	President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
Natan Obed	President, Inuit Tapiirit Kanatami
Alisha Julien Reid	Mi'kmaq Midwife Co-Chair, National Council of Indigenous Midwives
Sam Tutanuak	Community Representative
Kimberley Moorhouse	Inuk Midwife and Coordinator of Midwifery Services, Inuulitsivik Midwifery Service
Paasa Lemire	Community Representative
Dr. Karen Lawford	Anishinaabeg Midwife (Namegosibiing, Lac Seul First Nation, Treaty 3) Registered Midwife (Ontario) Associate Professor, Department of Midwifery, Obstetrics & Gynecology, McMaster University
Claire Dion Fletcher	Registered Midwife Assistant Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University Midwifery Education Program
Nathalie Pambrun	Métis Registered Midwife Advocacy and Policy Advisor, National Council of Indigenous Midwives
Vicki Van Wagner	Registered Midwife (Ontario and Quebec) Founding Director and Associate Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University Midwifery Education Program Inuulitsivik Midwifery Service, Midwife and Educator
Carol Couchie	National Council of Indigenous Midwives
Mary Nalukturuk	Inuk Student Midwife (3rd year), Inuulitsivik Midwifery Service
Louise Aerts	Board Chair, Canadian Midwifery Regulators Council Chief Officer of Strategy, Governance and Reconciliation, British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives
Julie Pelletier	Presidente, Ordre des Sages-Femmes du Québec
Ravan Bedingfield	Registrar, Chief of Professional Regulation , Department of Health and Social Services, Government of the Northwest Territories
Gisela Becker	Innu Midwifery Implementation Coordinator, Innu Round Table Secretariat

Appendix 4

Post Forum Follow-up

The information below was circulated via email on May 2, 2023, to all registered forum participants, speakers and panelists.

Dear Forum Participants,

Thank you for your part in making our event a huge success.

Two hundred participants heard powerful stories and presentations over three days, and collectively we took another step to understanding and eliminating colonial barriers on the way to returning traditional Inuit midwifery to Inuit Nunangat and beyond.

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK...

and welcome your thoughts and insights about your experience during our National Inuit Midwifery Forum.

[CLICK HERE TO COMPLETE OUR SURVEY](#)

VISIT OUR ONLINE RESOURCES...

Click on the images below to read Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada's midwifery and reproductive health resources, and...

COMING SOON...

Inuktitut, English, and French language video recordings of the National Inuit Midwifery Forum. Watch for their launch on our social media platforms.



Once again, we appreciate you took time to join us. We look forward to being in touch soon.

Best regards,

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
pauktuutit.ca | @pauktuutit

Appendix 5

Closing Remarks, Shylah Elliott, Manager of Health Policy and Research, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada

Thank you all so very much for attending the forum this week and providing your invaluable insights. It is my role now to share with you what we intend to do with those insights and where we go from here.

We invited you all to this gathering for a specific purpose – with the shared goal of returning births to Inuit communities. We envisioned our meetings this week as the first step toward that goal.

We wanted to congregate our stakeholders to collect your ideas and stories, and advice on how we can achieve our goals together.

We wanted to fully understand the barriers and challenges that lay before us, so that we could strategize on solutions and pathways to tearing them all down.

We wanted health service decision-makers and politicians to see the value in reintegrating midwifery services. And we wanted to communicate with all of Canada the unacceptable impacts a lack of access to midwifery services has on reproductive outcomes for Inuit women.

Lastly, we wanted to ask for your help to identify people who are interested in working closely with Pauktuutit and our partners as we endeavor to create the transformational change, we all want to see.

On Day One of the forum, we opened it up to anyone and everyone who wished to attend. In addition to yourselves, there were politicians, researchers, and reporters in the audience. We wanted to be sure our collective voice resonated across the country and reached as many ears as possible. Such profound statements were made throughout the day that provided guidance and inspiration for this journey. On this slide, I've tried to capture some of the remarks that moved many of us, that will stay with us for a long time.

- Attack on Indigenous Midwifery was a deliberate part of colonization.
- Midwifery is an important aspect of cultural continuity for Inuit.
- We are far more vulnerable to experiencing racism and discrimination in the health care system.

These comments, in and of themselves, demand action. We heard some great presentations on mandatory evacuation and that it is not safe and sustainable, and learned more about how midwifery is regulated in Canada. We also spoke about what makes Inuit midwifery unique and special, and so ingrained into the cultural identity of Inuit families.

Days two and three of our forum were intended to be by invitation only, with the goal of protecting space for Inuit-led solutions and ideas. We talked a lot about pathways to becoming a midwife and what education and training programs are needed.

We heard from Kim Moorhouse and her amazing team of midwives in Nunavik. They are the gold standard for Inuit Midwifery Care and what other Inuit regions are striving toward. There have been over 900 births in Inukjuak since 1998 and midwives are involved in most births. This provides clear evidence to support the return of birth to remote communities.

Appendix 5

One aspect that stood out to me was the discussion around risk. There is a process to assess risk that will support medical transfers when needed, but it avoids and prevents unnecessary evacuation. This is key, as we know in some of our Inuit communities, everyone is flown out for childbirth, regardless of risk.

We also heard from NACM and the great work they are doing in the education and training space. They currently have a three-year pilot project called the Indigenous Midwifery Education Initiative that includes virtual learning, land-based learning, community involvement and leadership. NACM is a tremendous leader in this space and are doing so much to help educate and train new Indigenous midwives. I highly recommend having a look at their website and the amazing resources they've produced.

We have also heard that Inuit regions are at different lifecycles with midwifery, and that we should be mindful of how we define "Inuit communities" – as Inuit living in the south need and require access to midwifery training and services as well.

Today, we discussed a lot about how midwifery is regulated and identified key things that need to evolve to allow for the full scope of Inuit midwifery practice in all provinces and territories. We also heard an excellent presentation on advocacy and how we can use our voices to enact the change we want to see. That it's a process that requires a vision, which we have, persistence, which we have, leadership and collaboration.

So, what's next? Where do we go from here?

First, our team will work to produce a report from this forum based on what you have shared with us. We have heard and understood the need for further engagement and will be exploring the possibility of hosting regional gatherings in the coming year.

We also recognize midwifery training and education are among the most significant aspects to re-integrating midwifery. Thus, Pauktuutit will complete some research in this area to see what may be possible for creating sustainable training programs where Inuit reside.

We are also aspiring to collect existing Inuit midwifery knowledge. Pauktuutit has collections of interviews with midwives from the early 1990's and it's so important we collect and protect these stories.

We are also looking for representatives to join a midwifery working group, or committee, that can help guide our work and ensure future planning in this space is Inuit-led and directed.

Lastly, our most aspirational goal is to complete a National Inuit Midwifery Framework.

What we are hoping to accomplish when we have collected all necessary information and direction, is to draft a National Inuit Midwifery Framework. This will essentially be a roadmap – laying out everything that must be done for Inuit-led midwifery services and education to be re-integrated into health service delivery.

We've estimated it will take approximately three years to complete this work, and we are very committed to seeing it through. Returning birth to Inuit communities is a top priority for Pauktuutit and we have a very dedicated and impassioned team eager to keep pushing forward.

We have learned through conversations with our partners to anticipate policy objections, barriers and or challenges, and prepare solutions in advance. We will not listen to anyone that says this can't be done. We know it can, and it will.

Appendix 5

We talked a lot over the past few days about midwifery being an inherent right. Everything we produce will be grounded in that perspective. We also asked our participants questions about what Inuit midwifery means to them, because we know the spiritual and cultural significance must be held up and honoured.

One completed, we believe a National Inuit Midwifery Framework could achieve and improve so many things.

- Create a roadmap for the integration of traditional midwifery services into the delivery of health care through community clinics and hospitals.
- Address the education and training program needs of Inuit to become midwives. This is critical to increasing the availability of Inuit midwives to help ensure Inuit have access to safe and compassionate pregnancy, birth, and postpartum care.
- Reduce anti-Indigenous racism experienced by Inuit in Canada's health care system when they are forced to travel to hospitals in the south to give birth.
- Close the gap in sexual and reproductive health outcomes experienced by Inuit women across Inuit Nunangat, compared to other women in Canada.
- Reduce the current strain on the maternity departments in southern regional hospitals.
- Reduce the exorbitant costs of medical evacuation and length of stays in southern regional hospitals due to childbirths.
- Provide good jobs for Inuit who wish to choose midwifery as a career and contribute to economic prosperity in remote communities in the North.
- Contribute to the path toward reconciliation with Inuit.

One thing I reflected on a lot over the past few days was how beautiful it could have been if we could have sat across the table from one another for these discussions. I think for a topic like this that means so much to all of us, the ability to connect with one another would really have taken us to the next level. So, we will work toward more of that as the work unfolds.

As with every event, there's a team of dedicated people behind them that have worked countless hours to make this possible. I quite mistakenly thought virtual forms might be a little easier to organize – but I was horribly wrong about that. The people I have listed on the screen here – thank you/Nakurmiik Natsiq and Janice, Keon from Baldwin, our interpreters, our community representatives, Sam and Paasa – Thank you so very much. Our team here at Pauktuutit - Fatima, Jen, Serena, Shauna – you are absolute rockstars and I'm humbled by your unwavering passion and commitment. I wish there were a better word because thank you hardly feels sufficient for everything you have given to this event. A big, massive thank you to NACM for your many contributions, presentations and wisdom, in particular Evelyn George, a special thanks for working alongside us and being such amazing partners in this journey. We look forward to strengthening our relationship and creating impactful change together.

Malaya, you are such a beautiful spirit – a special thanks to you for leading us through the meetings the past few days and sharing your time with us. And Linette McElroy, thank you for your patience, hard work, guidance and grace.

We will be sending out a post forum package in the coming weeks. In the interim, if you have any special requests regarding things you've heard over the past few days, please send us an email.

Inuit Midwifery: Irnisuksiijiit ~ Our Right



Integration of INUIT-LED midwifery services and education is an act of SELF-DETERMINATION and a pathway toward language and culture REVITALIZATION



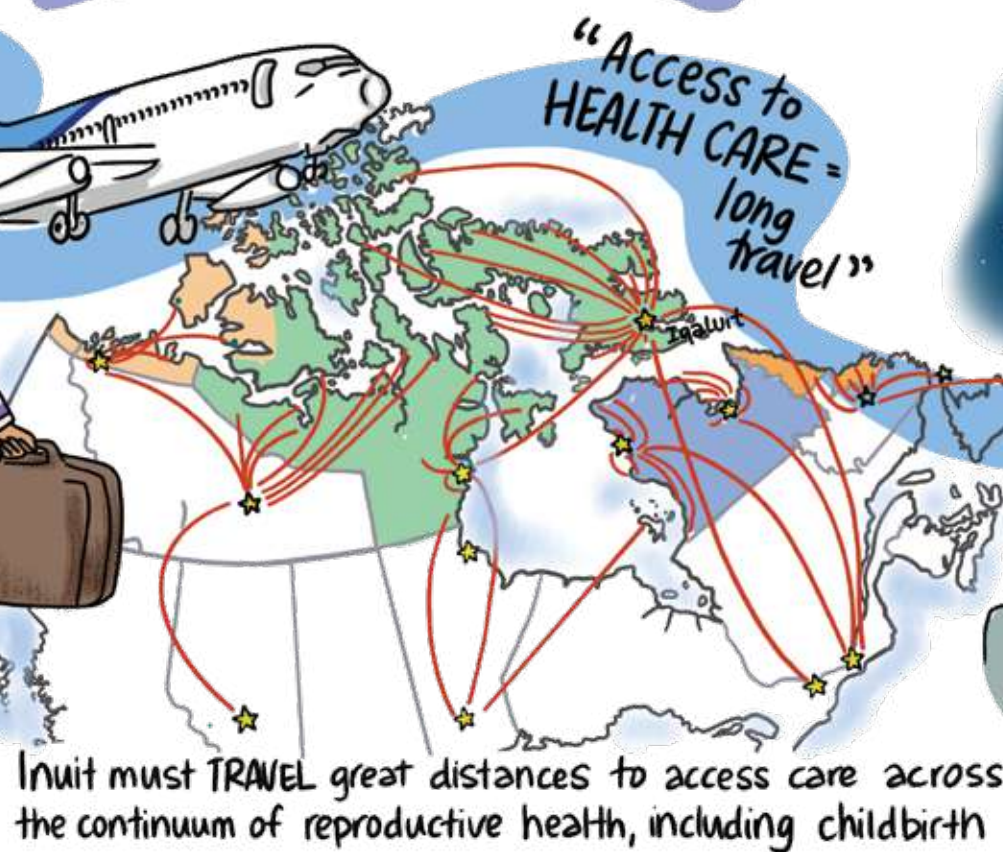
Inuit birthers have the RIGHT to choose their health care provider, location, and who is present during birth, regardless of where they live in Canada

RECLAIM & SUSTAIN INUIT MIDWIFERY
REPRODUCTIVE SOVEREIGNTY
STRENGTHEN INUIT FAMILIES and COMMUNITIES and REVITALIZE LANGUAGE and CULTURAL PRACTICES



Birth evacuation policies place UNJUST emotional and financial burdens on Inuit FAMILIES

Children may face food insecurity and physical or sexual abuse without their primary caregivers



"Access to HEALTH CARE = long travel"

Inuit must TRAVEL great distances to access care across the continuum of reproductive health, including childbirth



Inuit are exposed to anti-Indigenous RACISM and face language and cultural barriers to safe and appropriate health care



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