



National Inuit Midwifery Forum Report Summary

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, as the national voice of Inuit women, is leading advocacy and service support for the revitalization of Inuit midwifery.

Access to midwifery is recognized as a primary health and cultural right, and efforts should be met with clear legislative and funding commitments. This aligns with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which protects Inuit rights to maintain and transmit their culture and to be protected from assimilation.

In March 2023, Pauktuutit partnered with the National Council of Indigenous Midwives to host a virtual gathering funded by Indigenous Services Canada. A report of the proceedings and outcomes of the National Inuit Midwifery Forum is now available. You can view the full report here: pauktuutit.ca/midwifery

WHAT WE HEARD:

During the National Inuit Midwifery Forum, participants heard:

- Inuit mothers, fathers, grandparents, and Elders shared their experiences with childbirth evacuation policies and their hopes for closer-to-home access to culturally safe care.
- Perspectives from national and regional Inuit representative organizations on the importance of reclaiming birth sovereignty and strengthening traditional Inuit knowledge related to midwifery.
- The role of key international human rights instruments and national guidance tools, such as UNDRIP, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action, and the Calls for Justice in the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, in advancing this effort.
- The contributions of Inuit midwives to the health and wellness of Inuit families and communities.
- Various challenges, including language barriers, impacts of colonial policies, and gaps in community health resources, that affect access to Inuit midwifery services.
- Legal barriers to expanding access to Inuit midwifery services and training, and resistance from national and jurisdictional midwifery regulators to engage Inuit partners to effect change.
- Support for strengthening Inuit midwifery education and training, as well as returning birthing to Inuit communities.



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The forum reaffirmed Pauktuutit’s commitment to enhancing Inuit midwifery services and establishing an Inuit-led national framework, crucial for decolonization, Inuit self-determination, and Reconciliation. Pauktuutit stresses the need for collective vision, cross-sector collaboration, and **substantial ongoing investment** to transform oppressive colonial systems controlling Inuit sexual and reproductive health rights.

Urgent government support is required for Inuit-centered health models and services.

Recognizing UNDRIP’s protection of Inuit culture, Pauktuutit aims to close health outcome gaps, restore cultural birthing practices, and prevent forced relocations for birthing, which lead to assimilation and harm to Inuit women. We believe the creation of a National Inuit Midwifery Framework is a crucial first step in preserving Inuit culture and rights.

NEXT STEPS:

To achieve our goals, Pauktuutit will:

- Formalize partnerships with key organizations to promote collaboration.
- Engage with the Inuulitsivik Inuit Midwifery Service and Training Program to support scale-up in other Inuit regions.
- Describe current reproductive health care pathways for Inuit birthers across Inuit Nunangat and in key urban centers.
- Engage with Inuit Regional and community levels, as well as urban Inuit organizations, to advance the National Framework and incorporate culturally informed birthing practices into maternal and child health care plans.



Download the full report and
“Inuit Midwifery: Irnisuksijit - Our Right” Poster

