



# PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

THE REALITY INUIT WOMEN FACE WHEN  
SEEKING SHELTER FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

April 2024



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**PAUKTUUTIT**  
INUIT WOMEN OF CANADA

**PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE:** THE REALITY INUIT WOMEN FACE  
WHEN SEEKING SHELTER FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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We would like to extend a sincere thank you to the many people who contributed to this project's success.

Primarily, we would like to thank the community members, including numerous service providers across Inuit Nunangat and in many southern urban centres, who took the time to share their knowledge with us through interviews and the national survey. This work could not have been completed without their participation. A special thank you to Casey Adlem at the Larga Kitikmeot Boarding Home who was instrumental in helping us complete the interview portion of this work.

COVER PHOTO: KUJJUARAPIK HUDSON BAY  
GRAPHIC DESIGN BY HANDS ON PUBLICATIONS



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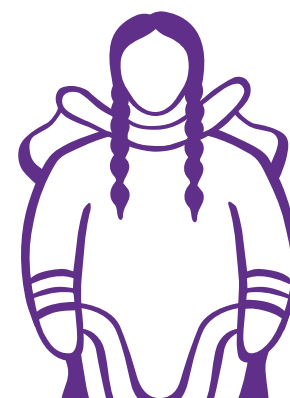
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A woman with glasses, wearing a bright green jacket and dark leggings, is walking on a dirt road. She is carrying a young child on her back using a traditional Inuit-style baby carrier. The child is wearing a purple hat. The background shows a village with several blue buildings, some with corrugated metal roofs. A large white water tank is visible on a wooden stand. In the distance, there are large, rugged mountains under a clear blue sky. The ground is dry and dusty, with some tire tracks visible.

While some shelters and safe spaces provide sensitive and robust cultural programming tailored for Inuit women and gender-diverse individuals, such as having elders regularly visit and serving country food like caribou, these shelters are few and far between.

# Executive Summary

This study reports key findings related to the availability of shelters and safe spaces for women and gender-diverse people and their children in Inuit Nunangat and in southern urban centres, including barriers that both clients and service providers regularly encounter, and opportunities to improve the quantity and quality of service. Through utilizing existing data, a survey, and key informant interviews, this project addresses significant gaps in knowledge around the realities in supports and services available for this vulnerable population.

To undertake this work, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (Pauktuutit) contracted to collect and analyse survey and discussion group data to provide a better understanding of the use and access to shelters, the specific experiences of Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children, and what their needs are with respect to shelter facilities, communities, and infrastructure.

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## Availability of Services

The survey and key interviews validated the findings of the literature review – that there are shelters and safe spaces, but that the services provided vary greatly by region. While some shelters and safe spaces provide sensitive and robust cultural programming tailored for Inuit women and gender-diverse individuals, such as having elders regularly visit and serving country food, these shelters are few and far between. Just as often, clients are inhibited by geographic and financial constraints: For rural communities especially, there may not be any services available for thousands of kilometres. This is especially true for the most northern and remote communities in Nunavut. Traveling to access services in another Inuit community or urban centre can also cost thousands of dollars. This can mean that people experiencing violence are less likely to leave; financially incapable of returning home if they do leave to access a safe

site; or forced to abandon their communities and support systems in order to access a 'safe site,' only to find that there are no staff with whom they share a language, or any resources to ease their transition to an urban context.

Survey and interview data also revealed that there are incredibly limited resources available for gender-diverse individuals. Indeed, some shelters are *exclusively* for women, creating additional barriers for this vulnerable demographic. Other shelters, meanwhile, are currently developing new policies in the hopes of attracting their first openly gender-diverse clientele.

## Barriers

This study identified barriers to clients and service providers. For clients, it was found that women and gender-diverse individuals are faced with institutional racism, poverty, shame, and other barriers when trying to access safety.

Common financial burdens faced by clients (or potential clients) include high cost of travel to access a shelter (often \$1,000 or more, especially when also traveling with children), inability to take time off work, and dependence on a violent partner or family member for stable housing — and housing shortages and high housing costs more generally. Additionally, many elders do not have bank accounts, making it even more difficult to travel. For clients trying to access housing upon leaving a shelter, many are shut down when they fail credit checks. In rural areas, there can be a lack of accessible food banks and other support systems.

Real or perceived racism can also create a barrier. Many shelters, especially in urban areas, have no supports designed for Inuit or Indigenous clients. Additionally, Inuit clients have often experienced institutional racism — for example, in a medical setting or at the hands of the police — and fear that racism will exist in shelters and prevent some from even accessing these sites. Patterns of police violence against women and Indigenous people are especially concerning for clients, as many shelters rely on RCMP to make up for gaps in training or capacity among service providers. Finally, many have no staff that speak Inuktitut or other Indigenous languages, which can act as a huge barrier to access for non-English speakers.

There are additional challenges related to substance use among clients. Some shelters that have strict sobriety policies rely on RCMP to enforce these rules, leading to homelessness or incarceration for those seeking support. For residents of remote areas that have traveled far from home, substance use may seem like the only coping mechanism available to them, highlighting the need for more fulsome mental health support at shelters — especially for their most vulnerable clientele.

For service providers, challenges include lack of supports like mental healthcare or childcare, long hours, under training, and systemic burnout. Many of these issues are compounded by inadequate funding; a lack of sufficient government funding was named as a chronic problem.

# Opportunities

Survey and interview respondents also identified best practices, ideas for reducing barriers and challenges, and other opportunities to improve the efficacy of the services they provide.

In addition to increased funding, survey respondents indicated that the most needed supports include trauma-informed training, more staff (especially licensed mental health workers), multi-agency partnerships to plan for joint outcomes, and more long-term safe housing options for clients, especially in the most rural and remote areas.

Some interview participants spoke about the impact that bringing elders into shelter sites has had on clients, and the need to make such programming more widely available. Knowledge sharing — like sewing parkas, powwows, or land-based activities — were highlighted as helpful practices to initiate healing and help integrate clients back into their communities and cultures.

More support for families is also needed. Interviewees spoke about the need for shelters and safe spaces that can keep mixed race families together, while providing meaningful cultural support. Some participants spoke of families being broken up when trying to access safe sites due to policies that prohibited non-Inuit from accessing services. Policies that keep families together — and supports like in-house childcare and educational programming — could improve outcomes for clients.

Other opportunities for improvement that were mentioned include resources for clients impacted by Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, having more application support for programs like Employment Insurance or free transportation passes.

Interview participants also spoke about the need for greater collaboration with, and learning from, other frontline organizations. Inuit community centres and programs can assist in developing culturally appropriate resources. Frontline organizations like medical boarding houses and programs for homeless populations do a better job of providing holistic care and conducting effective outreach; safe sites and shelters may benefit from following their example.



**In addition to increased funding, survey respondents indicated that the most needed supports include trauma-informed training, more staff (especially licensed mental health workers), multi-agency partnerships to plan for joint outcomes, and more long-term safe housing options for clients, especially in the most rural and remote areas.**

# 1 Introduction

## Purpose and Scope

This research and report, *Planning for the Future*, assesses the shelter and support needs of Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children, in order to provide a vivid picture of the experiences and challenges these communities face when seeking safety and security. This research aims to close the gap in knowledge around the realities of supports and services available for this vulnerable population. This is achieved through a mixed-methods approach combining a review of the literature, interviews, and surveys.

The key objectives of this research are to provide a portrait of the realities faced by Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals and their children, and the community needs for safe spaces in Inuit Nunangat and urban centres. As well, this research aims to advocate for shelters and services needed in each region through understanding the relationship between shelter needs and other community resources, capacity and infrastructure.

The final outcome of this work is to translate the gender-based violence research into “real life” snapshots that close the information gap and humanize the need for accessible and culturally relevant shelters and safe spaces. The findings will be used to inform Pauktuutit’s policy, advocacy, and to increase awareness.





# Approach to Research

An Inuit-guided, evidence-based, Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) approach was taken to research development, engagement, and communication to ensure that the study met the specific and unique needs of Inuit women and gender-diverse individuals.

The research team carefully set out the approach to the topic of shelter and support needs, with the aim of taking a trauma-informed approach, providing support to participants, and ensuring that participants were able to provide information in a culturally informed manner. Given the delicacy of the subject matter, the project was grounded in community-led research protocols, informed by four standards:

- The research process should be collaborative, inclusive, and community-based;
- The research methods should be culturally appropriate;
- The research process should be strengths-based; and
- The research process should be systematic, objective, and methodologically rigorous.

The project team ensured these standards were followed throughout. As a result of this approach, community and cultural protocols were adhered to and questions were framed in culturally meaningful ways. The approach taken was also utilised to ensure that participants felt safe and supported when discussing sensitive subjects.

## Context

Gender-based violence (GBV), understood as forms of violence that people experience because of their gender, how they express that gender identity, or how it is perceived, is a significant and growing problem in Inuit Nunangat and in southern urban centres (Women and Gender Equality Canada 2022).

Inuit women and girls living in the territories, and especially those who identify as gender diverse, experience disproportionate rates of violence compared to their cis-hetero and non-Indigenous counterparts living in Canadian provinces (Boyce 2016; Brennan 2011; Jaffray 2020; Perreault and Simpson 2016). Those who experience violence in remote or isolated areas also face additional challenges as many factors exacerbate the violence faced by those in the territories. This includes a lack of access to shelters, mental health services, legal services, and public transit, as well as economic difficulties and poverty, and barriers to maintaining the confidentiality of reports of abuse (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2019; Tungasuvvingat Inuit 2016). Notably, shelters are essential services for those who experience violence as they are often a first step to protecting victims of violence from further violence.

Research has also found that the programs, services, and supports available to Inuit women in urban areas vary greatly across the country. This is partly due to the discrepancy between the financial support received by provincial and municipal governments, the population of Inuit living in the city, and the prevalence of advocacy groups promoting the needs of urban Inuit (Pauktuutit 2021).

## Organization of the Report

This report is organized into the following key sections:

- Section 1— Introduction: (this section) Outlines the purpose, scope, context, and organization of the report.
- Section 2— Literature Review: Summarises what is known about the gaps and needs, and existing resources and services, based on publicly available information and grey literature.
- Section 3— Methods: Describes the methods used in this project, as well as limitations of the study.
- Section 4— Key Findings: Describes the key findings from this research, including the availability of services, barriers and challenges, and opportunities, for both service providers and clients.
- Section 5— Lessons Learned: Summarises the key findings of this research including lessons learned and next steps forward.



## 2 Literature Review

An early step of this study was the completion of a literature review that aimed to identify what is known about the gaps and needs of Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and youth in Inuit Nunangat and in select urban centres. This included demographic statistics, information about existing women's shelters and safe spaces that are available for victims of violence and abuse, and information about available transportation and flight services. A complete copy of this literature review is provided in Appendix G: Literature Review. In this section, highlights from that longer review are summarised in order to contextualize how the interview and survey tools that were developed for the study (as described in Section 3: Methods) were developed.

The literature review identified 18 shelters and safe spaces that exist in Inuit Nunangat, although there are limited services in smaller and more remote communities. There are several communities in Inuit Nunangat that do not seem to have emergency shelters or safe spaces available for Inuit women seeking safety and security, such as Sachs Harbour and Ivujivik, among other communities. However, work is underway to increase access to these services. For example, NTI has invested \$11 million into the development of shelters in Nunavut.

In many cases, Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children are required to travel to seek safety, whether to other communities in Inuit Nunangat or to urban centres in the south. Travelling to other communities also comes with prohibitively high costs, rendering shelters and safe spaces inaccessible. For Inuit living in remote areas of the Northwest Territories or Nunavut, one-way flights can cost as much as \$2,000. Tuktoyaktuk is the only community in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region that is connected to Inuvik by road, and which is only a two-hour drive. However, public transportation is not available, leaving many Inuit to hitchhike or be stranded in the absence of affordable transportation options which can put them at risk of danger. To demonstrate the impacts of these transportation barriers, see Figure 1.

**In many cases, Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children are required to travel to seek safety, whether to other communities in Inuit Nunangat or to urban centres in the south.**

For Inuit living outside of Inuit Nunangat (27.2% of the total population — Statistics Canada 2016), there are over 50 centres available, primarily located in urban areas, with more services available in the largest

urban centres, including Toronto and Montreal, while the fewest services exist in the maritime provinces. Many of these services cater to general (rather than Indigenous) populations; for example, in Calgary (a city with 41,645 Indigenous residents; Statistics Canada 2018), only one emergency shelter in Calgary — the Aweo Taan Healing Lodge — is tailored for Indigenous peoples and guided by Indigenous teachings.

Because many shelters are not Inuit-specific, some families also encounter language barriers when trying to access these services. For example, as Inuit women from Nunavik are likely to be referred to Montreal; possible frustrations they may encounter include not having Inuit supports because services are often in English or French, not Inuktitut. Only select urban areas have shelters and safe spaces that are designed to serve Inuit communities; notably Ottawa-Gatineau has services tailored to Inuit women and children that have experiences of sexual exploitation, violence, or homelessness, including culturally-specific counselling services that can connect Inuit of all genders to short- and long-term shelter options.

Very few services exist in Inuit Nunangat or in southern urban centres that are both Inuit-specific and tailored toward gender-diverse individuals, and many of the shelters and safe spaces identified during this literature review lack any resources that are tailored for gender-diverse individuals. A key gap includes the need for more resources and supports that are inclusive for people that identify as Inuit and gender diverse.



## 3 Methods

This section summarizes the approach and methods used to support the study objectives. All methods were developed in consultation with and subject to the approval of Pauktuutit staff. The intention of these methods was to form an accurate picture of the challenges Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals and their children face when fleeing violence.

Data was collected through several methods:

- A community survey that targeted women and gender-diverse individuals that may have accessed shelters and safe sites, as well as service providers (including shelter staff, police, etc.);
- Key informant interviews; and
- Background data collected in previous phases of the study, including comprehensive lists of existing women's emergency shelters and safe spaces that provide services for Inuit violence and abuse victims in Inuit Nunangat as well as in nine urban centres, plus demographic and transportation data.

Questions developed for the key informant interviews and the survey were based on the findings of the literature review, described in Section 2.

Questions in the interviews and survey focused on themes such as:

- Demographics and geographic regions served by organizations;
- Impact of cultural and linguistic barriers on quality and accessibility of service;
- Challenges faced by clientele face when trying to access services; and
- Challenges faced by service providers, and needed supports to overcome these.

# Key Informant Interviews

Four semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted virtually using telephone or teleconference software from May 2–16, 2023. Ten in-person interviews were conducted with service providers and clients at Larga Kitikmeot Boarding Home and the Yellowknife Women’s Society in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories on May 16–17, 2023.

During interviews, participants were asked about their knowledge and experience related to how Inuit clients are accessing and interacting with the shelter system. Service providers were also asked about availability of shelters and services. After interviews, informants were provided with the information for aftercare services including help and wellness lines.

A range of perspectives heard from during interviews, including Inuit women and clients, as well as service providers from urban and remote northern organizations.

# Survey

## Design

A survey was designed to engage with relevant organizations in and outside of Inuit Nunangat.

Survey questions included a series of yes/no and open-ended questions. Additionally, there were interactive components built into the survey, such as rating scales and ranking exercises, which were tailored to illustrate the observed barriers and needed supports for both clientele and service providers.

## Structure

The survey consisted of 29 questions. Survey questions were qualitative and quantitative in nature. The survey was hosted on the website Survey Monkey and participants submitted response forms online.

The survey also included consent processes that detailed the goals and purposes of the study, as well as data ownership and confidentiality surrounding participation, to adhere to the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent.

Participants were first asked demographic questions about their gender, and whether they were Inuit. They were then asked questions about the type of organization they work with, services provided by their organization, the geographic region and demographics served by their organization, and their role in the organization. Respondents were asked whether their organization provided resources specifically tailored for Inuit, Indigenous, or gender-diverse clients. The survey asked several questions about common

barriers these groups might face when trying to access services. Finally, they were asked what challenges they face as service providers, and which types of supports or resources are needed.

## Delivery

An online survey tool, SurveyMonkey, was used for delivering the survey which enabled participants to respond on their laptops, desktops, tablets, or mobile phones. Proven methods for survey participation were also used, including using a mix of survey methods such as online deployment as well as local contacts to coordinate and recruit participants where possible. The survey was open from February 2 to May 27, 2023.

## Survey Sample

After data cleaning, 20 responses fit the verification criteria and made up the sample relevant to this report. The cleaning methods used before analysis were relatively strict to ensure that all responses in the sample could be confidently considered reliable data.

The survey intended to solicit responses from organizations such as:

- Land claim organizations;
- Urban Inuit organizations;
- Provincial/territorial government organizations (Inuit Nunangat and gateway provinces/territories);
- Hamlets and towns in Inuit Nunangat;
- Shelters;
- Policing and child protection agencies;
- Community support programs and services; and
- Education and ELCC services.

Ultimately, the groups that participated in the survey were more limited. Because of the small sample size, there is inadequate data to group findings based on organization type. Similarly, there is inadequate data to group findings by region as there were few to no respondents for some regions (i.e., Inuvialuit Settlement Region). As such, survey data and interview data have been combined for a more fulsome analysis and presented according to key themes.



**The survey asked several questions about common barriers these groups might face when trying to access services. They were asked what challenges they face as service providers, and which types of supports or resources are needed.**

## Limitations

The survey's response rate was lower than anticipated. Only twenty individuals completed the survey. There were no respondents that identified as working for drop-in agencies, supportive homes, child protection services, or education/early learning/childcare services. Moreover, no respondents represented organizations in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. Only one respondent indicated that they worked within the Kivalliq and Qikiqtani Regions in Nunavut, as well as Nunatsiavut, respectively. Most survey respondents indicated that the organizations they worked in were in Nunavik, the Kitikmeot Region in Nunavut, or from a southern urban centre, or other. As such, information in this Report that is derived from the survey should not be understood as being reflective of these types of organizations or as specific to any region within Inuit Nunangat.

There are a variety of factors that may have led to low survey engagement. These include potential research burnout among participants: when community members are frequently invited to participate in research efforts, research fatigue can occur. This is a reality connected to the rise of community-based research. Moreover, as there were no financial incentives associated with the survey, community members may have been less likely to participate.

While key informant interviews provide meaningful information that can supplement the limitations of the survey, the findings of this report are limited due to the low number of respondents. Study findings should not be considered generalizable.

Additionally, due to the sample size and confidentiality concerns of participants, in-depth portraits illustrating the experiences of Inuit accessing shelters and safe spaces were not feasible. Instead, we have pulled forward short stories that illustrate key points, concerns, and opportunities in text boxes throughout Section 4.





## 4 Key Findings

In this section, findings from the survey and from key informant interviews about available services are described. This section also illustrates the realities women face when confronting violence and accessing safe spaces. A general discussion of the quantity of shelter services available both in Inuit Nunangat and in nine urban centres where many Inuit live is summarized in Section 2, above. A more comprehensive description of services available, disaggregated by region, can be found in the literature review; a table showing available services is provided in Appendix D: Women’s Shelters and Safe Spaces in Inuit Nunangat and Appendix E: Women’s Shelters and Safe Spaces in Select Urban Centres at the end of this report. While there are many types of supports available to people experiencing violence and instability — phone helplines, cooking circles, parent’s groups, drug and alcohol treatment centres, and so forth — the findings presented in this section focus on shelters and safe sites.

On the following page, see a map of shelters and safe spaces that are available for Inuit women and gender-diverse individuals (Figure 1). As the map shows, there are many communities throughout Inuit Nunangat that do not have established shelters or safe spaces for Inuit women and children seeking safety. Based on the time this research was conducted, 33<sup>1</sup> of 51 identified communities in Inuit Nunangat did not have shelters, meaning that over 60% of communities in Inuit Nunangat are without shelters. Many of these communities are isolated and have incredibly limited connectivity between village sites. For individuals that live in a community without shelters or safe spaces, transportation can be very limited. Flights out of these communities can cost over a thousand dollars, which is often out of reach or puts significant financial strain on Inuit women, especially if they are traveling with children (more on this in the Financial section on page 26). As such, those who cannot afford flights out of these communities are often forced to stay in unsafe situations.

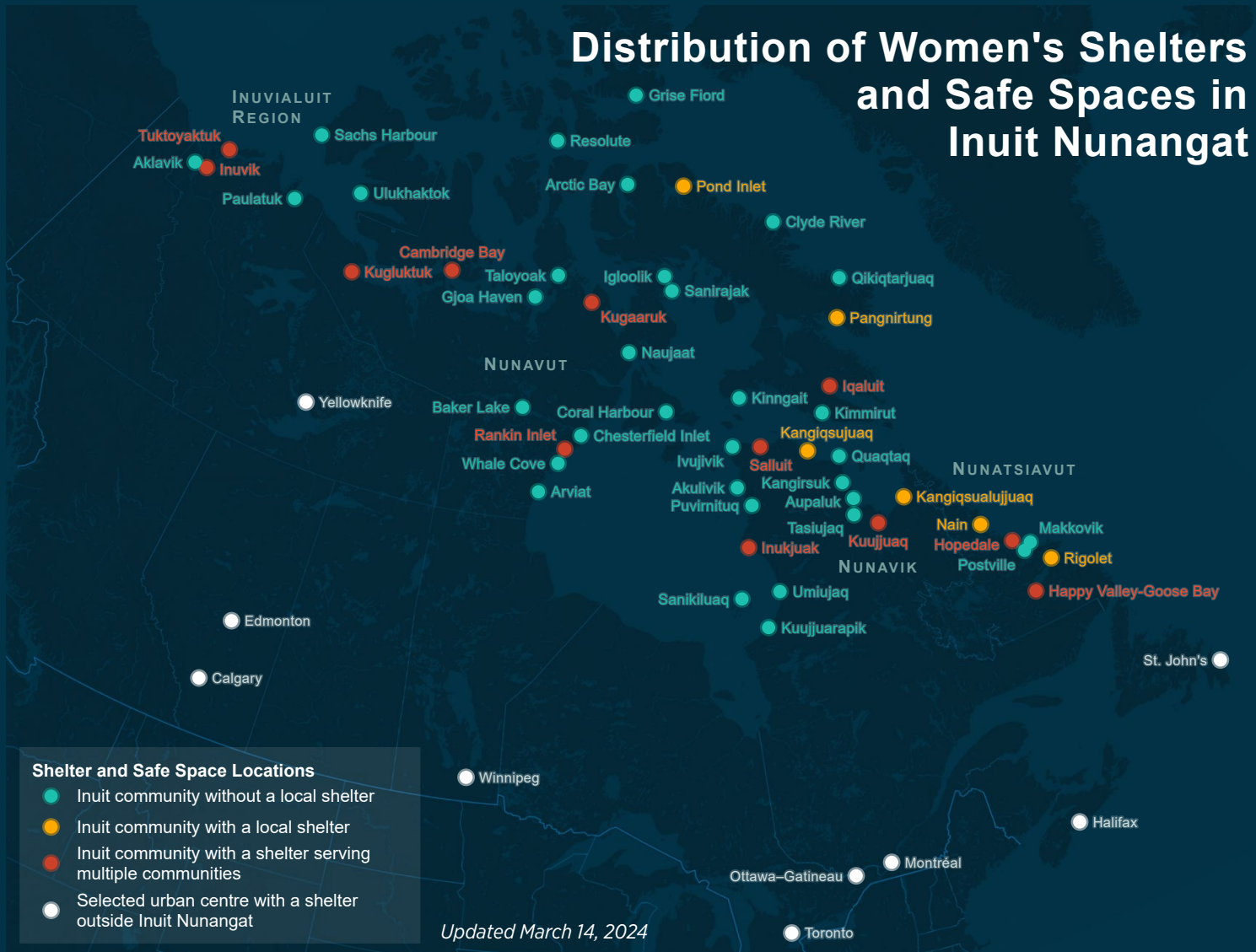
The map also shows urban centres that are used by Inuit women and gender-diverse individuals. The distance between these urban shelters and client’s home communities presents a variety of barriers, including cost and limited availability of flights, which are discussed in more detail among other barriers throughout this report’s findings.

Throughout this section, we provide brief anecdotes to personalize stories of Inuit women as they try to protect and care for themselves and their children while they are seeking shelter in times of family upheaval.

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1 There used to be local women’s shelters in Kinngait (Cape Dorset), Taloyoak, and Baker Lake. Researchers contacted Hamlets and local services to confirm that the shelters closed a long time ago and are no longer in operation.

Figure 1: Map of Inuit communities and the accessibility of safe spaces in Inuit Nunangat



As the map shows, there are many communities throughout Inuit Nunangat that do not have established shelters or safe spaces for Inuit women and children seeking safety. Based on the time this research was conducted, 31 of 51 identified communities in Inuit Nunangat did not have shelters, meaning that over 60% of communities in Inuit Nunangat are without shelters.

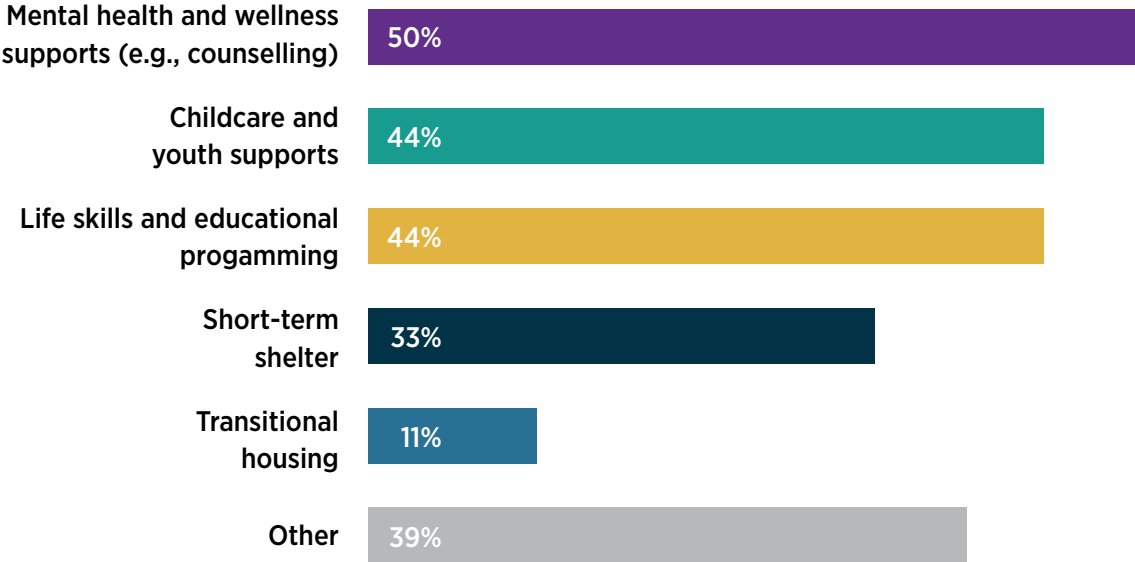
# Availability of Services

This section offers a summary of overall availability of culturally relevant services for women, children, and gender-diverse Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat and in southern urban areas. It also discusses whether services are gender-inclusive, child-inclusive, and/or trauma-informed.

Survey data indicates a wide array of service availability depending largely on geography. In the end, only twenty people responded to the survey. Of these, 60% identify as Inuit ( $n=12$ ) and 40% are not Inuit. Five respondents work for an emergency shelter, four work for a community support service, and one is employed by a police service. The remaining half of respondents ( $n=10$ ) work for other types of organizations. There were no respondents that identified as working for drop-in agencies, supportive homes, child protection services, or education/early learning/childcare services. As such, information in this study that is derived from the survey should not be understood as being reflective of these types of organizations. The service types provided by organizations represented in the survey is shown below, in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Type of service provided**

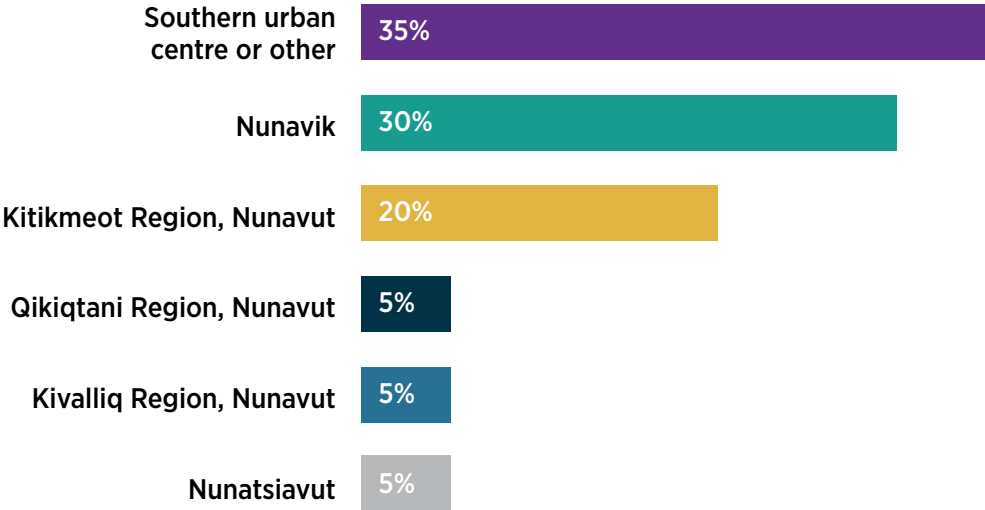
*What type of service does your organization provide? Please select all that apply. (n=18)*



Sixty-five per cent ( $n=13$ ) of survey respondents worked with organizations that are located in Inuit Nunangat, while 35% ( $n=7$ ) are located in southern urban centres or other areas. Notably, no respondents represented organizations in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. Only one respondent indicated that they worked within the Kivalliq and Qikiqtani Regions in Nunavut, as well as Nunatsiavut, respectively. Because of the small sample size, there is inadequate data to group findings by region. As such, information that is derived from the survey should not be understood as generalizable to any specific region. More information about the location of survey respondents' organizations is shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Location of survey respondents' service organizations**

*Where is the organization that you work with located? (n=20)*



During the interviews, respondents discussed shelters in the context of greater support networks. Shelters provide a key role but are supplemented by transitional housing programs — many of which are federally run. These programs can be invaluable to women and gender-diverse Inuit who feel as though they may face further violence via racism or gendered discrimination at shelter sites.



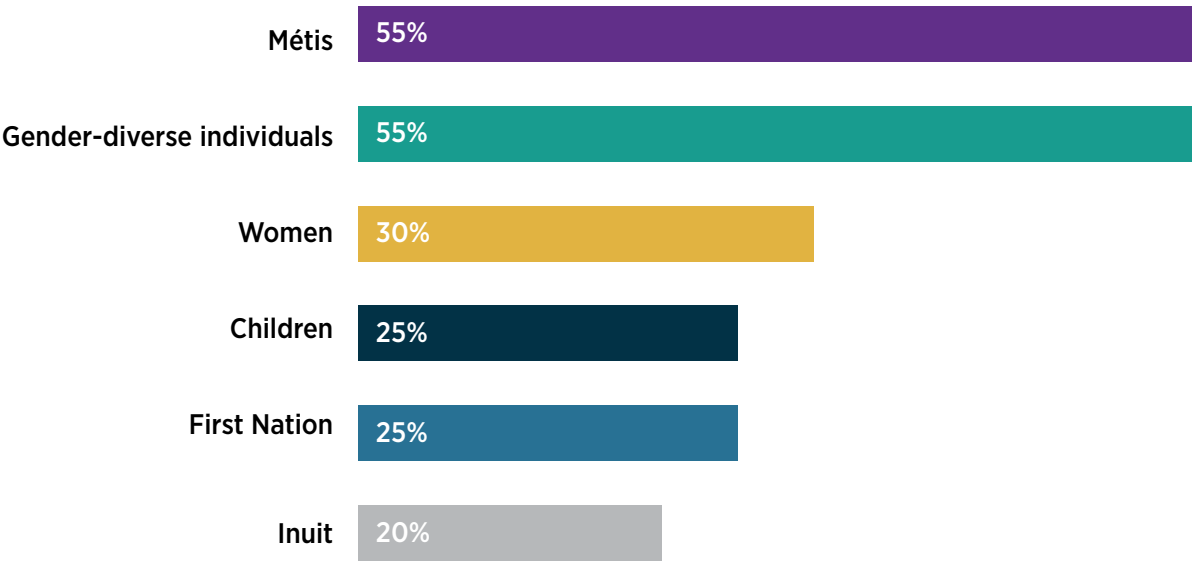
Interviewees also mentioned the existence of drop-in counselling services, including in rural areas, that can be accessed by people fleeing violence regardless of whether or not they are staying in a shelter.

### Service Availability by Demographic

The survey also asked questions about the demographic groups that each respondent’s organization aims to serve. These responses are shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Demographic groups served by organizations**

*What demographic does your organization aim to serve? Please select all that apply. (n=20)*



Of the service providers that responded to the survey, 85% (n=17) of the represented organizations aim to serve Inuit specifically – although only 75% of respondents said that their organization has resources or supports available that are Inuit-specific. Of those that did provide Inuit-specific resources, 20% (n=3) of respondents said less than a quarter of resources available were Inuit specific; 13% (n=2) said up to half were Inuit-specific; and 40% (n=6) said more than three-quarters of resources were Inuit-specific.

A similar question asked whether Indigenous-specific resources were available and if so, what percentage of resources were focused toward Indigenous peoples. Fifty-eight per cent (n=11) of organizations provide Indigenous-specific resources and 42% (n=9) do not (although, of note, three of these nine respondents said that they responded ‘no’ because their resources are Inuit-specific). Nearly half (45%; n=5) of respondents whose organizations do provide Indigenous-specific resources said that more than three-quarters of total resources provided were Indigenous-specific, although 9% (n=1) said less than 25% of available resources were Indigenous-specific.

One quarter ( $n=5$ ) of service providers responded that they are fluent in Inuktitut. An additional five respondent said they can speak some words or phrases, while one respondent said they are fairly proficient.

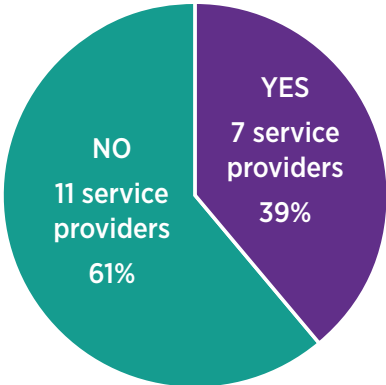
During interviews, one service provider noted that their employee demographics intentionally match their target clientele. In addition to having many Inuit-speaking staff, they also serve primarily culturally-appropriate country foods (Interview participant, 2023).

### Service Availability for Gender-Diverse Individuals

Of the shelters represented in the survey, 55% ( $n=11$ ) aim to serve women, while 30% aim to serve gender-diverse individuals ( $n=6$ ). Respondents were also asked if their organizations provide services specifically for gender-diverse individuals. Seven respondents replied that their organization does, but most survey participants do not (Figure 5). Two respondents skipped the question.

**Figure 5: Service availability for gender-diverse individuals**

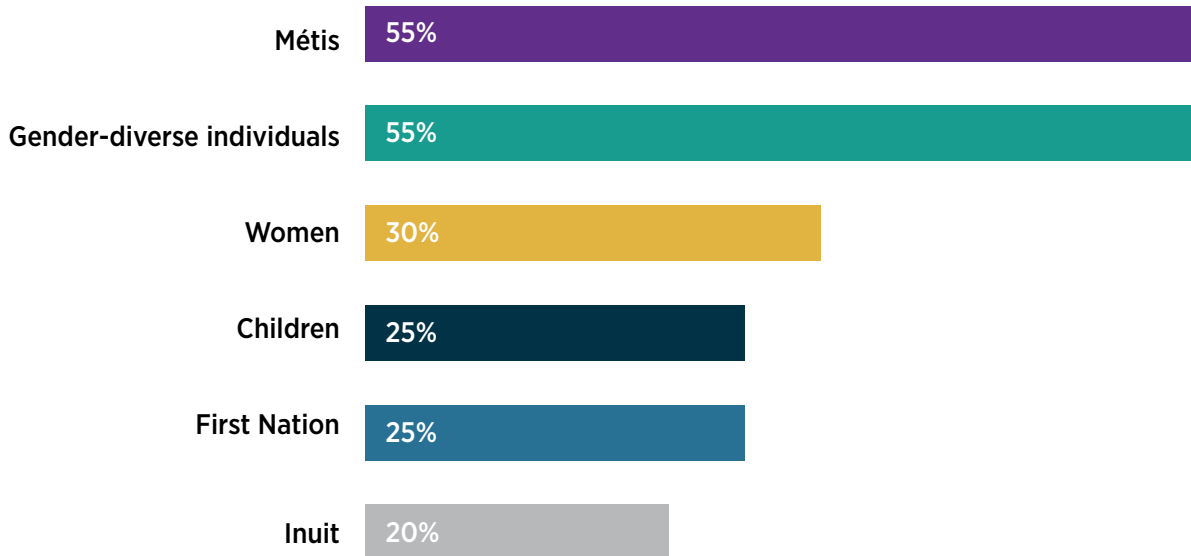
*Does your organization provide services specifically for gender-diverse individuals? (n=18)*



Of service providers that responded affirmatively to the survey question that asked whether specific resources for gender-diverse individuals were available, a subsequent question asked approximately what proportion of resources were tailored to the needs of gender-diverse individuals. Of the seven respondents that answered the question, only one respondent replied that a majority of supports were tailored for this demographic (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Proportion of resources tailored to gender-diverse individuals**

*If yes, approximately what proportion of resources and supports are tailored to the needs of gender-diverse individuals?*



One survey respondent wrote in that, while their organization has historically served women specifically, they are currently developing a policy to support the inclusion of gender-diverse clients. Another respondent wrote in that while they do not have targeted resources for this demographic, they aim to serve Qikiqtani Inuit of all genders.

## Barriers and Challenges

### For Clients

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Service providers that responded to the survey were asked what they understood to be the most common barriers facing Inuit women and gender-diverse people that were seeking safety and security (Figure 7). Several of the most popular answers focused on the inaccessibility of shelters for Inuit specifically, e.g., due to a lack of culturally relevant programs and services, language barriers, or because of institutional and systemic racism. Financial inaccessibility (often due to high flight costs between communities when travel is required), lack of local services in remote areas, and fear of negative repercussions were also very highly rated answers (all receiving scores of 50% or higher). Many interview participants also spoke of the fear that men or abusers will easily identify where people fleeing violence have gone and may try to break in

or otherwise act violently. In some northern hamlets, interview participants said that these risks, and the lack of RCMP support or other protective measures, can keep safe spaces from being constructed at all.

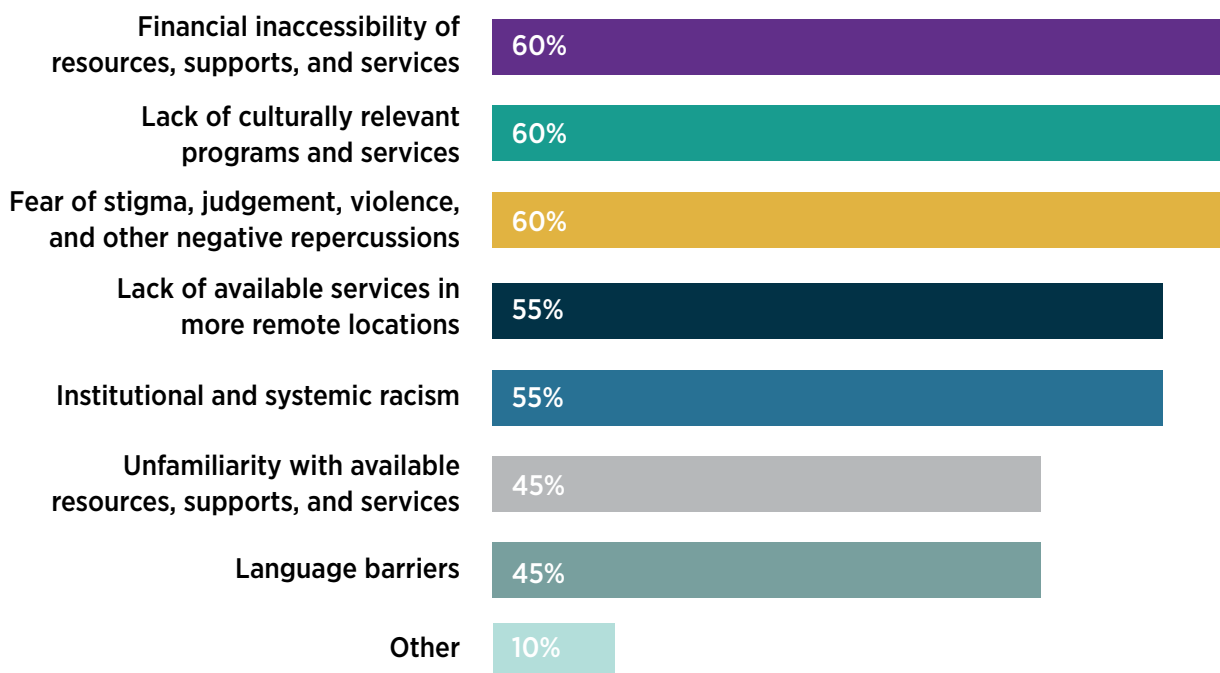
Service providers that filled in the survey also identified barriers related to the quality of relationships established between clients and providers. In a question that allowed survey respondents to write in additional barriers not represented in Figure 7, responses included:

- Fear of confidentiality;
- Fear that clients will not be respected by local workers (i.e., for those travelling from other areas to access services); and
- High staff turnover can limit trust-building between service providers and users.

For those travelling long distances to access services, there are also questions about how they might ever afford to make it back home—and whether they would find safety there if they did. As one interview participant stated, “the reality is that once you go that far south, sadly, you may not come back north... You may not come back home. A lot of them may end up on the streets,” (Interview participant, May 18, 2023). Interviewers spoke of clients they had worked with who had left their home communities to access services in other provinces, only to be left bouncing from shelter to shelter with no way to return home—although, as one noted, if they could return home, they would be homeless there, too.

**Figure 7: Most common barriers for Inuit clients accessing services**

*From your perspective, what are the most common barriers that Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children face when seeking safety and security? (select up to three)(n=20)*





## Story 1

### Hearing Impairment in a Shelter Context

A woman from Gjoa Haven came into a shelter after fleeing an abusive relationship. She was hearing impaired, and had difficulties connecting verbally with shelter staff. Unfortunately, none of the shelter staff were fluent in sign language. While the shelter staff tried to assist the woman navigating her court case, connecting her to adult services, and so forth, the woman was unable to communicate with any staff about how she was feeling, or what her needs were. Her five children are all in foster care.

*[W]e have our phones with us all the time. And all she [hearing impaired Inuk woman] could do was text us. You know, so you don't always hear the phone at 2 am when it's like a "Ping," like you don't hear that...You know, so then we're waking up the next morning to start our days, while looks at our phones and we're just — oh no, like she was brutally assaulted. (Interview participant, May 18, 2023)*

Even when people experiencing language barriers manage to access shelters or are put in transitional housing, their problems may continue—and may be exacerbated by language barriers, disability, or because of other forms of marginalization. Of the same hearing-impaired client, the interview participant said:

*We walked into her apartment a year and a half ago, her tooth had been knocked out, there was blood on the walls. You know, and she's hysterically crying. But she's hearing-impaired so you can't even talk to her. In that moment you're not going to pull out your pad and pen and make her write out what happened to her. But we had to do that because we needed to have an understanding of what was happening and how we could support her. How could we help you? You know, we were on the phone with the police, the hospital, everything. She had been raped and beaten and dragged around her apartment for hours and no body called us, nobody called for help because one, they can't even hear her. (Interview participant, May 18, 2023)*



## Financial

Of the service organizations that were represented in the survey, more than half ( $n=12$ ) indicated that transportation was a barrier to Inuit accessing services. Similarly, nine respondents indicated that money was a barrier for Inuit women and gender-diverse people seeking services. Survey respondents also noted that elders can have additional financial barriers when trying to access shelters and safe sites, as many Inuit elders do not have a bank account. Another barrier is the distance that many people must travel when accessing shelters or safe spaces. While traveling to another, larger Inuit community can mean that clients have increased access to services that are culturally relevant, these flights cost thousands of dollars; flights to urban areas are often similarly priced. Inuit living in Grise Fiord, Nunavut, for example, may travel to access services in Iqaluit. A one-way flight between these communities operates only once per week and can cost upward of \$2,000. This number can also double, triple, or more when traveling with children or other family members.

Overall, the most northern and remote communities in Nunavut pose the most significant transportation and cost barriers for Inuit women that may need to travel from these communities to access services (e.g., Grise Fiord, Resolute Bay, Arctic Bay, Igloolik, Sanirajak, Gjoa Haven, Clyde River). Flights from these communities regularly cost between

The most northern and remote communities in Nunavut pose the most significant transportation and cost barriers for Inuit women that may need to travel from these communities to access services.



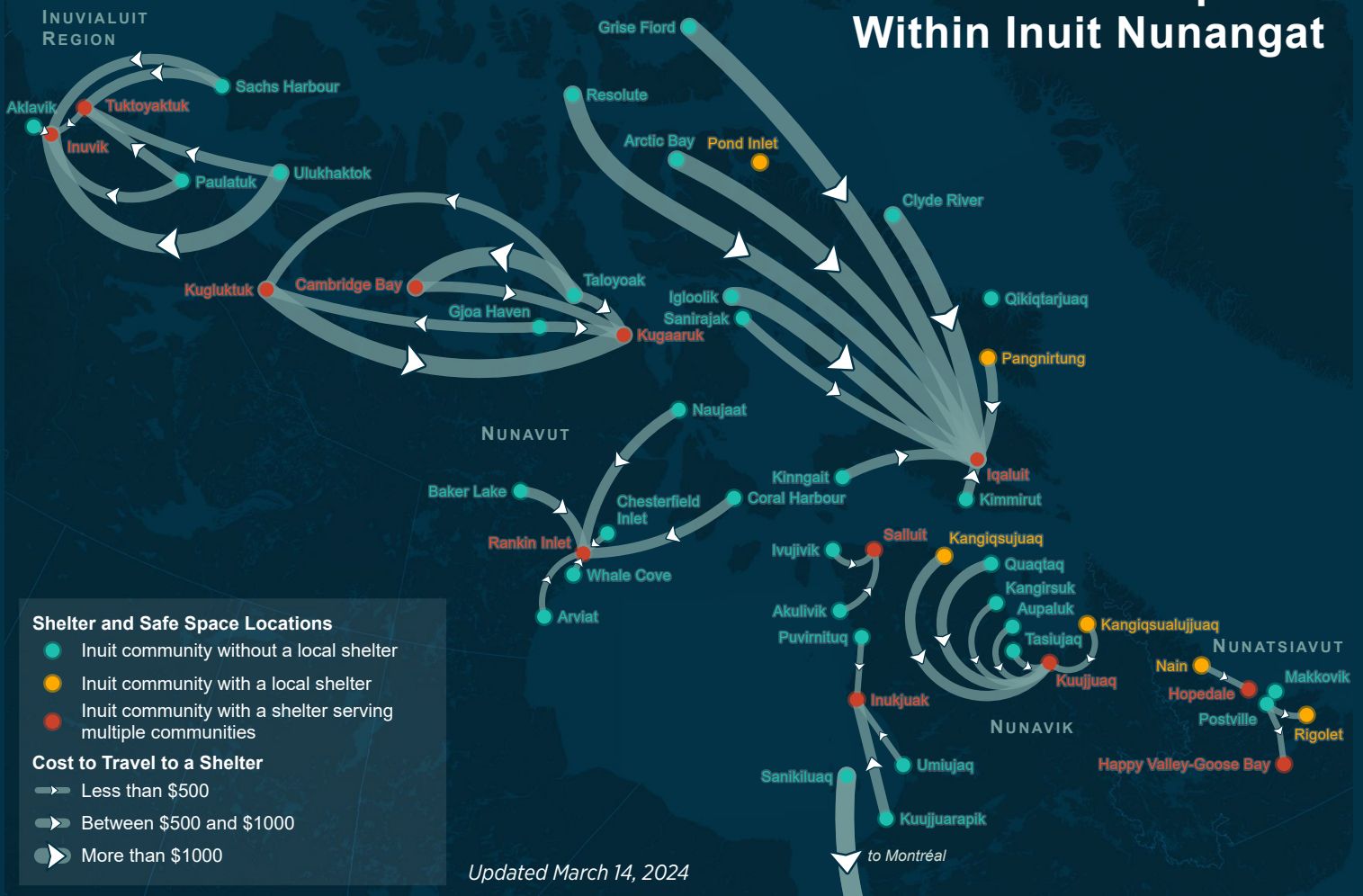
\$1,000–\$2,000 and only operate a few days per week. Comparatively, most flights within the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut, are more frequent and less expensive as flights within these regions are generally available at least five days per week and at a cost of \$1,000 or less. One exception includes travel from Sanikiluaq, Nunavik, from which flights are only available to Montreal twice per week and at a cost of \$1,500. If Inuit traveling from Sanikiluaq prefer to travel to another Inuit community, they must connect through Montreal or Winnipeg. All available flight services between Inuit communities with and without shelters are represented in Figure 8.<sup>2</sup> A complete list of flight paths and associated costs between communities without shelters is also attached in Appendix F: Access to Women’s Shelters and Safe Spaces Across Inuit Nunangat — Frequency and Cost of Flights.

2 The information gathered to create potential pathways for accessing women’s shelters and safe spaces within Inuit Nunangat in Figure 8 was confirmed by regional shelters, hamlet offices, and airlines operating in the area. The map represents the best available pathways based on factors such as shelter capacity, availability, and cost of travel. These factors are variable, hence the pathways shown in Figure 8 are non-comprehensive and may change as more up-to-date information becomes available in the future. It is also important to note that, although not shown, some communities have access to more than one shelter within a network of shelters. In these areas, the safe space that women ultimately access might be determined by personal preference, cost, or by which shelter in the region has availability. Additionally, some women also prefer to stay in their community, with either their families or relatives, even if there are no shelters and safe spaces available for them to go to in their community. In such cases, the accessibility to shelters and safe spaces is determined by personal preferences, safety and comfort issues, and cost.

Figure 8: Map of potential pathways available between Inuit communities and safe spaces

The literature review found that many communities without safe spaces only have flight options costing \$1,000–\$2,000 or more to connect them to towns that have shelters.

## Potential Pathways for Accessing Women's Shelters and Safe Spaces Within Inuit Nunangat



Overall, the most northern and remote communities in Nunavut pose the most significant transportation and cost barriers for Inuit women that may need to travel from these communities to access services (e.g., Grise Fiord, Resolute Bay, Arctic Bay, Igloolik, Sanirajak, Gjoa Haven, Clyde River). Flights from these communities regularly cost between \$1,000–\$2,000 and only operate a few days per week.

During interviews, respondents also discussed the way that financial barriers can continue to compromise people's safety, even after accessing a shelter. Notably, when women and gender-diverse clients are ready to leave a shelter, poverty often means that the only housing available to them is in marginalized areas with higher crime rates (Interview participant, 2023). The long-term impacts of poverty can continue to negatively impact their wellbeing even after they have fled situations of acute violence. Conversely, even those that are otherwise eligible for safe, affordable, state-run housing programs often run into barriers when they fail credit checks.

## Story 2

### Nowhere to Go

One interview participant described her experience navigating shelter systems for years. Her first experience accessing one was in the 90s, when her and her partner were on holiday. During the trip, when they were removed from their networks and from the possibility of witnesses, he became violent for the first time. She called a hotline, but did not know what else to do, and did not want to stay at a shelter in this province, away from home.

When she returned to her community, she felt uncomfortable reaching out for help. The community was small, and everyone seems to know each other's private lives. She was afraid of gossip and bullying.

Instead, she signed up for an affordable housing waitlist with her sister. It took seven years for them to be approved. More time passed before they were approved for a four-bedroom unit that could accommodate their families — but they were left with 11 people sharing the four rooms. Now, the house is only becoming less crowded because her children, now adults, are slowly getting approved for affordable housing of their own.

Similarly, a lack of accessible food banks and similar support systems can cause long-term instability. One interview participant spoke of a food bank that had such selective criteria that some 180 families (in a ~1,500-person community) in need were unable to access it (although what these criteria are was not identified by the interviewee).

**During interviews, respondents also discussed the way that financial barriers can continue to compromise people's safety, even after accessing a shelter.**

## Story 3

### No Credit, No Chances

*[T]here was client that we wanted to give [an affordable housing] unit to, she's been doing so well like in the program. She's very, very sufficient, very independent, very resourceful and we thought you know what, like let's graduate her from the program. Like let's have a success like let's celebrate this you know, this milestone. And again, we could not because Northview, who we would give the unit to her is that she has to do credit check. She doesn't have credit; she has nobody to co-sign for her. (Interview participant, 2023)*

## Racial and Cultural Barriers

Racial and cultural differences create barriers for Inuit women and gender-diverse people seeking to access services.

As part of the survey, a question asked respondents whose organizations do not offer any Inuit-specific services why they did not have such resources. Justifications given include:

- The shelter aimed to serve foreigners;
- Services were generalized to serve First Nation, Métis, and Inuit groups; and
- All “our families/children are white” (Survey respondent, 2023).

Similarly, a question asked respondents from organizations that do not offer any Indigenous-specific services to provide a reason. In addition to similar reasons provided in the earlier question about Inuit-specific services, other justifications given include:

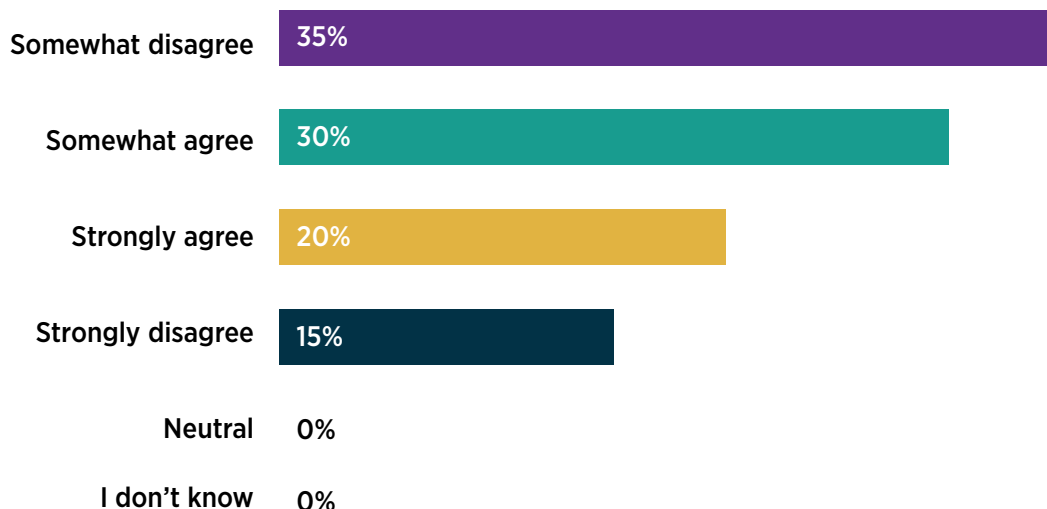
- The shelter is multinational.

Importantly, service providers may be vulnerable to confirmation bias if they only create resources that target existing demographics. That is, a shelter that does not make resources available for Inuit or other Indigenous peoples because these demographics have not historically accessed the shelter, will likely cause those communities to feel less likely to feel safe accessing these spaces.

Even as some service providers justified the lack of inclusive programming, half ( $n=10$ ) of survey respondents indicated that their identity as a non-Indigenous person can make it hard to work well with Inuit clientele (Figure 9)—even where organizations try to provide culturally appropriate resources, a lack of shared cultural heritage can inhibit the ability of service providers to build meaningful, trusting relationships with Inuit clientele.

**Figure 9: Extent to which cultural differences make it hard to work well with Inuit clientele**

*Cultural differences can make it hard to do my work well with Inuit (n=20)*



Many of the individuals that were interviewed affirmed that real or perceived racism at shelters and similar institutions can act as a huge barrier, often preventing women and gender-diverse people from accessing such resources in the first place. For individuals that may have already experienced (or

**Because these populations are particularly vulnerable to police violence, interviewees named that fear that shelters may be connected to the RCMP acts as a barrier.**

witnessed community members experience) other forms of institutional racism, there are legitimate fears that shelter services may be similarly harmful. For example, some interviewees discussed the high prevalence of medical gaslighting and medical racism – in which Inuit illnesses may be dismissed and left untreated – and explained that some people are left expecting similar experiences if they were to access a shelter. Past research into structural racism in health and social institutions found that, “since many Inuit find it difficult to have a place within the services, and that these services do not necessarily reflect their values, knowledge and ways of interacting, many Inuit choose not to go to the services until a crisis erupts. Inuit families talk about their fear of seeking help, fear of being judged or misunderstood by workers” (Fraser et al. 2021).

The health gap in Canada has been widening since the 1970s, with Indigenous people facing the worst health outcomes (Bring et al, 2006); that Indigenous communities continue to experience racism – and that the impacts of racism can very often include medically preventable death – in a variety of health and social institutions has been widely documented (see, for example, Phillips-Beck, 2020).

Moreover, because these populations are particularly vulnerable to police violence, interviewees named that fear that shelters may be connected to the RCMP acts as a barrier. At the same time, interview participants also noted that in cases where heterosexual couples are experiencing domestic violence,

police are more likely to side with an abusive man than with an abused woman (Interview participant, 2023), which may exacerbate pre-existing race-related fears of the police.

Even for municipalities that have non-police support groups (i.e., street response programs), such services are not always operational 24 hours a day, leaving providers no choice but to rely on RCMP during certain times of day (Interview participant, 2023). In other cases, shelters or safe sites hire private security companies which can relieve untrained staff of conflict management responsibilities (Interview participant, 2023), but may lead those accessing shelter services feeling unsafe.

## Story 4

### Violence at the Safe Site

Because of lifelong barriers to education and opportunities, many Inuit women that do find jobs at shelters are only qualified for the lowest-rung jobs, working in background roles instead of in direct support roles. Then, their unique perspectives into the needs of clients cannot be integrated into shelter management. For example, one interview respondent that is employed as a custodian at a shelter discussed seeing repeated instances of violence at the hands of shelter security personnel. She said that, when potential clients have arrived at the shelter seeking safety, she has witnessed the security guards pushing them or throwing them to the ground. Vulnerable women fleeing violence are met with violence; staff that have the unique cultural perspectives to be able to understand and anticipate these cycles of harm do not have the power to interrupt them.

Similarly, some service sites have requirements around taking people to appointments (i.e., medical). In some cases, those who are accessing shelters are not able (due to language barriers) or willing to consent to such treatments. In such cases, service providers are often required to force those at facilities to attend appointments without receiving consent and leave these same people with potentially traumatic experiences (Interview participant, 2023).

Finally, one interview participant noted that the shelter model may be inaccessible to any residential school survivor, as the way these institutions function are structurally similar enough to residential schools that they are a trigger for trauma survivors, and therefore are inaccessible.

## Gender-Related Barriers

The survey also asked why service providers' organizations did not provide resources for gender-diverse individuals. Justifications included:

- No capacity to explore that;
- No relevant specialists onsite; and
- The facility prioritizes those with medical needs.

As with shelters that cater to non-Indigenous populations, the assumption that a “generalist” shelter can be inclusive may incidentally lead to the exclusion of gender-diverse individuals.

During interviews, respondents stated that there were particularly urgent needs to build in more supports for two-spirit people, as there are incredibly few resources in shelter systems that have been developed to support this population specifically. Some interview participants have witnessed homophobia and other forms of lateral violence among those that are supported in shelters, highlighting the need for targeted trauma recovery supports.

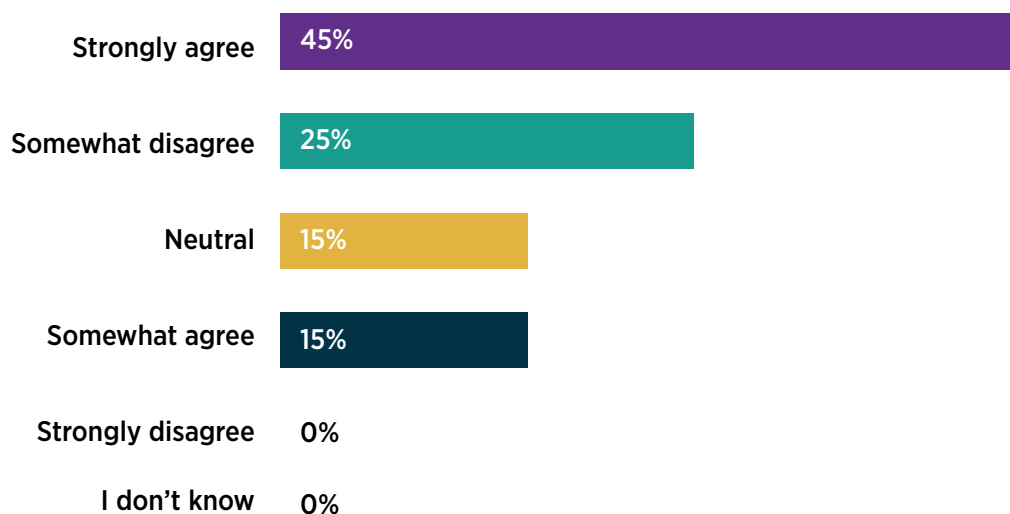
## Language Barriers

Language barriers have also been identified as inhibitive for potential shelter clientele that speak Inuktitut. In the survey, 45% of respondents ( $n=9$ ) cannot speak any Inuktitut. Even in shelters where there were some Inuktitut-speaking employees, survey respondents that there were often very few speakers which could compromise the quality of service for clients who only speak Inuktitut.

Survey respondents were asked to rate how much language barriers make it difficult to effectively work with Inuit clientele (Figure 10). More than half of respondents (60%,  $n=12$ ) agreed that language barriers posed a problem.

**Figure 10: Extent to which language barriers pose a problem for Inuit clientele**

*Language barriers can make it had to do my work well with Inuit (n=20)*





## Barriers that Apply to Specific Regions

Many service providers identified a lack of appropriate shelters in Inuit Nunangat, especially in rural and remote areas. One survey respondent noted that there were no shelters or safe spaces in most of the villages. As discussed above, transportation away from rural areas to sites that had available shelter services is often limited or very expensive — even for clients that can travel over land to access safety, gas in remote communities can cost as much as \$20 - \$30 per gallon, roads are badly maintained, and people frequently break down during travel and need to call search and rescue (Interview participant, 2023). Survey respondents indicated that this can be compounded by a lack of awareness of how to access shelter services that exist away from one's home community. For urban service providers, connecting with rural communities that might need to access their organization's services was identified as an ongoing barrier. At the same time, urban centres were less likely to have services that had culturally appropriate resources.

In rural areas, there are fewer shelters. Interviewees from more rural areas discussed the lack of transitional housing programs that are available. Without these sorts of longer-term solutions, women and gender-diverse individuals accessing shelters are more likely to need to stay for months at a time — or, as one interview participant said, as long as seven-plus years (Interview participant, 2023). This leads to overcrowding and can mean that shelters are almost always full, and can have waitlists with dozens of people on them. This in turn can delay vulnerable people in accessing safety (Interview participant, 2023). Full shelters can pose unique challenges for Inuit; in one interview, the participant said they often have to turn down potential clients from the far North because their shelter is already full with people from in-province.



### Story 5

#### Couch Surfing Due to Lack of Services

An Inuit woman from Nunavut was experiencing violence but was unable to access a shelter: there were no beds. The woman, and her three month-old baby, became homeless. This led the woman to experience a mental health crisis that resulted in a suicide attempt. In the aftermath, friends and community members allowed her to sleep on their couches for a while, but eventually, her options ran out. She was forced to leave Nunavut, feeling desperate and despondent. She did not want to leave her home, but could see no other options. She travelled to Quebec and then to Ottawa, but continued to fall between the cracks for years. (Interview participant, 2023)

## Substance Use Challenges

In some cases, under-resourcing at shelters and safe sites can cause these services to rely on the RCMP. In the interviews, this was discussed in the context of substance use. One interview participant said that receptionists are sometimes so overworked and undertrained, they frequently have no capacity to do more than call RCMP or Child Services to intervene in problems that arise with people in shelters, such as those caused by addiction diseases. For clientele at risk for alcoholism or other substance use conditions, travelling long distances when fleeing violence can remove them from existing social support networks and result in situations where alcohol or drugs are the only coping mechanisms available to them (Interview participant, 2023). Without a combination of sobriety support and greater mental health supports more generally, this can lead to guests being removed from shelters and safe sites that enforce sobriety, leaving them support-less and far from home (Interview participant, 2023).

### Story 6

#### Barriers Stack Up

*You know, trying to get people — trying to get our clients who are you know, addicted to whether it be alcohol or substance, that we have to get them either into, like I said the WMS program here. Which has a very long waitlist. they pick and choose who they take on. They don't return phone calls. You know, we have — in order to get them out to treatment it is required that we have to set them up with counselling before they go off to treatment. For example, we have a client who completed three months of WMS. So, what — he did the Withdrawal Management Program he got himself a job, he was put together and then he calls me one day, just recently and he says, "I can't get out to treatment until August". And I'm like, "Why so long?", and he says, "I don't know. But I'm so frustrated" ...And I said, okay like let's just see what we could do because currently he is unhoused, he was housed a year ago with us. And due to his alcoholism, he lost the unit. But we kept him on as a client because there was just so many complaints from neighbours and things like that so, you know, now he's back on the street. And he's back to drinking because of the frustration that he is not able to go and better himself...You know, because the agreement was that we had, was you, you know, start to make the proper steps. Go out to treatment, you know get the help that you, that you need, come back and we will look into housing you. Well now he is not going to go to treatment for another like three months, you know. (Interview participant, May 18, 2023)*

## Story 7

### Safety Without a Support Network

An Inuit woman who had been experiencing violence in her remote northern community had been making do because she had the ongoing support of her sister. When her sister died, the woman decided to uproot her life and fly south in search of a safe space. But when she arrived at the shelter, she was disconnected from her support network and had a hard time coping. Without any support networks to catch her, she started frequenting bars, and would frequently return to the shelter intoxicated. The only site in the community to support people trying to become sober was already full, and was not accepting clients from outside of the community. Eventually, the shelter called the RCMP to remove the woman from the shelter.

## For Service Providers

During surveys and interviews, service providers were asked about challenges they face when trying to provide accessible, safe, and culturally relevant services to clientele. Generally, interview respondents spoke of feeling burnt out, working long hours or double shifts, having had no training. Interviewees expressed feeling like their “head is barely above water,” or like they “have [their] back up against a wall” (Interview participant, May 18, 2023).

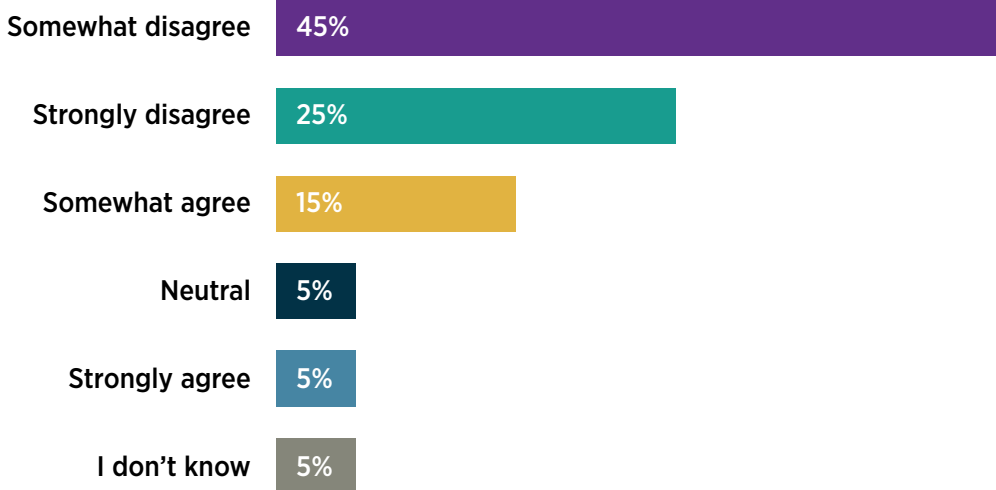
This is in part due to the inherent difficulty of this line of work – as one interviewee said, for service providers that “have trauma from our childhood, we’re reliving it every day, in this job,” (Interview participant, May 18, 2023).

A series of survey questions asked respondents to rank how much they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements related to resources available for organizations. While many organizations represented in the survey are adequately funded ( $n=9$ ), most survey respondents do not think the government provides appropriate funding in general (see Figure 11). One interview respondent said that pan-Indigenous funding pathways are not working for Inuit communities, or services that target Inuit communities, but did not offer further clarification. Another interviewee named that there is a lack of adequate provincial and federal funding specifically, and that these programs should be fully funded by these levels of government (Interview participant, 2023). A lack of adequate communication channels between government bodies and frontline services like shelters may be partially to blame for the lack of adequate governmental supports.

**While many organizations represented in the survey are adequately funded ( $n=9$ ), most survey respondents do not think the government provides appropriate funding in general.**

**Figure 11: Responses regarding whether government funding is accessible and barrier-free**

*Funding provided by various levels of government is easily accessible and barrier-free (n=20)*



In rural areas, shelter providers are also tasked with filling roles that extend far beyond providing safe sites. For areas without nursing homes, medical clinics, and other sorts of care facilities, shelters can often be tasked with filling that role, even as they may lack capacity or appropriate training. One interview participant, for example, said that one of their long-time clients only ever accessed the shelter because she had early onset dementia, and there were no other facilities where she could receive 24/7 care: “We got her in here just to like — she would have more supports here she would have a sense of community here” (Interview participant, 2023).



# Opportunities

Interview and survey participants identified several key opportunities to improve the success of their services.

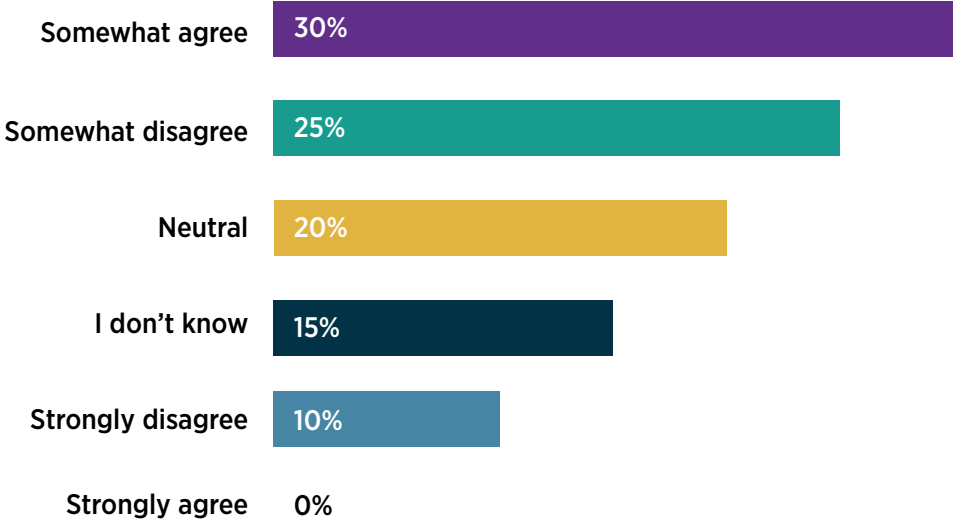
During the survey, respondents were asked to select from a list of options which resources would have the greatest impact in reducing barriers and increasing access to services for Inuit and gender-diverse individuals. Key resources named were:

- Trauma-informed training;
- Increased funding for programs;
- Access to childcare; and
- Cultural safety and awareness training for staff.

Generally, survey respondents were mixed on whether ample opportunities exist for organizations in their respective regions to better meet the needs of people seeking their services (Figure 12).

**Figure 12: Ratings of ample opportunities for organizations to better meet client needs**

*Ample opportunities exist for organizations to partner in my region to better meet the needs of people seeking our services (n=20)*





Survey respondents were also asked to write in what would make it easier for their organization to provide services to Inuit women and gender-diverse individuals seeking safety and shelter. Respondents' answers include:

- Adequate meeting space;
- Hotel space to provide support in people's home communities;
- Increased funding (for programs and for clients, e.g., so they receive income while away from work);
- Multi-agency partnerships to plan for joint outcomes access different service providers individual clients may be accessing;
- More available programming, including cultural training for staff;
- More workers, and more Inuit workers specifically; and
- More transitional and long-term safe housing options, and more housing support.

In a final, open-ended question, survey respondents also indicated that more partnerships or programming for multi-agency efforts to address the interconnectedness between housing shortages, affordability, domestic violence, and recovery were needed. Other respondents named a need for increased support for service providers to reduce turnover and provide more stability for both providers and clientele, including increased training, mental health supports, or staff housing. Similarly, interview respondents

also noted that shelter staff are relied on as counsellors, despite training — and that this pressure could likely be alleviated by the presence of on-site mental health professionals who were hired to work as in-house counsellors.

During interviews, respondents indicated that some programs are beginning to include counselling, access to elders, and other mental health supports. Interviewees named the need to have similar supports included at more programs. Such supports can increase community connectedness and initiate recovery processes that are needed after enduring violence or other traumas. A need for increased suicide support was also mentioned (Interview participant, 2023).

Similarly, providing access for people in shelters to traditional practices — like sewing parkas or mitts — was brought up as a helpful, healing support practice that more shelters should implement. Other participants suggested additional cultural activities — powwows, dancing, land-based activities — could benefit guests recovering from trauma. In rural areas, interviewees recommended making skidoos, ATVs, or camping equipment available to support people getting onto the land. These activities are more likely at rural shelters. For urban shelters, different supports are needed — like helping people who have only ever lived in remote areas understand how to navigate a new city.

**During interviews, respondents indicated that some programs are beginning to include counselling, access to elders, and other mental health supports. Interviewees named the need to have similar supports included at more programs.**

*[A]ll of these organizations they do their best to you know, ensure and support indigenous — Inuit women... they're very timid when they come here, they're very new. They're so sheltered in these small communities that when they come here it's a whole new world... It's very overwhelming... (Interview participant, 2023)*

Different problems arise at shelters that only cater to specific Indigenous/Inuit demographics. For example, some Inuit-specific or Indigenous-only safe sites — especially those tailored to non-Indigenous families — were critiqued for breaking up families that had non-Inuit or non-Indigenous members. Some interview participants said that more work is needed to create culturally safe spaces that can keep multi-ethnic families together (Interview participant, 2023). For services that cater to families with children, survey and interview data both indicated that more onsite childcare for clients is needed in order to allow for the children's caretakers to rest and recover. Similarly, because families are sometimes onsite for months at a time, having an in-house educational program was suggested (Interview participant, 2023).

Interviewees also named that having onsite drug and alcohol counsellors, midwives, and people legally empowered to administer medications onsite could improve people's experiences. Patient advocates — either hired through the shelter, or made available through agency-to-agency partnerships — was also named as a needed resource.

Resources for shelter clients that have been impacted by the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) crisis, and those that have been impacted by the sex trade, was also named as an outstanding need for many shelters and safe sites (Interview participant, 2023).

Similarly, having more employee time dedicated to helping clients apply for provincial and federal supports (like EI or other benefit programs) was cited as a mechanism to support people's longer-term stability (Interview participant, 2023).

Increased access to transportation benefits was also cited; in one interview participant's city, low-income people can receive free bus passes, but only if they have an address. Expanding programs like this that support low-income people such that they are also accessible to people without addresses — and resourcing shelters enough to connect clients to these resources — could benefit shelter guests (Interview participant, 2023).

## Lessons from Other Frontline Organizations

There are also examples of successful agency-to-agency communication. Already, organizations like the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) provide application-based funding for health and wellness programs, and has additional needs-based funding for shelters (Interview participant, 2023). These sorts of collaborations

**Collaborations across program types — such as providing application-based funding for health and wellness programs, and needs-based funding for shelters — can help communities work together to create holistic supports in shelters, and for clients that have left shelters but are still in recovery.**

across program types can help communities work together to create holistic supports in shelters, and for clients that have left shelters but are still in recovery.

During the interviews, information about culturally responsive resources made available by community organizations was shared. For example, in addition to providing direct funding for shelters, QIA also helps people fleeing violence build skills to put their lives back together. Many people accessing shelters arrive with nothing beyond the clothes on their back, and often come without appropriate winter gear. QIA funds and supports programs that teach shelter guests how to sew traditional parkas and become otherwise empowered to meet their basic needs. With QIA's support, shelters can bring in elders and other knowledge holders to provide guidance during these programs.

Similarly, people also named the success of programs like medical boarding houses, that have found ways to provide robust, holistic, and culturally appropriate care to people during times of need by connecting transportation, in-home support, accommodation and meals for women and gender-diverse people that would otherwise live in geographic areas where medical care (e.g., during childbirth) would otherwise be unavailable. Such programs were cited as positive examples of what more holistic programming could look like for shelters and safe spaces.

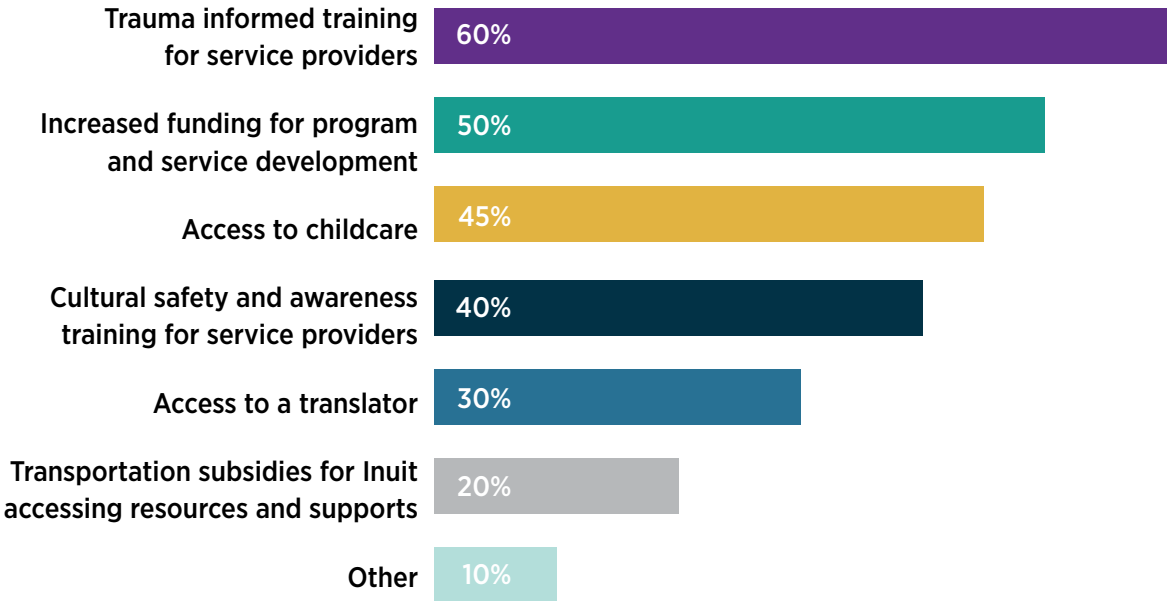


Some interview respondents said that shelters would do well to incorporate best practices from different types of frontline organizations. One interviewee said that organizations providing targeted support for unhoused Inuit are generally better connected to Inuit-specific resources and supports, and are doing a better job of targeted outreach.

When it comes to the success of advocacy groups connecting potential clients to services, survey data indicated that further work was needed. Respondents were asked whether advocacy groups in the region are promoting the needs of Inuit seeking services. Forty-five per cent ( $n=9$ ) of respondents strongly or somewhat disagreed, and an additional four respondents were neutral or not sure. Only one respondent strongly agreed that advocacy groups were promoting the needs of Inuit seeking safety and shelter.

**Figure 13: Most helpful supports and resources to reduce barriers for Inuit women and gender-diverse individuals**

*Which of the following resources and supports would be most helpful in reducing barriers and improving access to services for Inuit women and gender-diverse individuals? (select up to three) (n=20)*



## 5 Lessons Learned

This study identified primary barriers for shelter clientele and service providers. Moving forward, there are opportunities to improve the quantity and quality of services that are available to Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and families, to ensure that these vulnerable populations can access the care and safety that they deserve. In this section, recommendations made by survey respondents and interview participants have been described. These recommendations could be used to inform policy, programming, and funding streams in order to continue to improve the safety nets available to vulnerable communities both in Inuit Nunangat and in urban centres across Canada.

- Create resources and supports for all vulnerable communities that might access a site, not just those populations that historically have. At a minimum, have protocols in place to be able to be responsive to the needs of the most vulnerable members of a community — like those that have left their home communities, two-spirit people, non-English speakers, and people with functional access needs.
- Create funding pathways or other support systems for people that have traveled from remote areas or other provinces in order to access services, so that clients do not graduate from shelters only to become homeless and removed from their communities, without any way back.
- Create better programming for children and youth. Find ways to keep families together, especially those with older children or mixed-race/white relatives that may be excluded from safe sites that do not allow white users, or male children above a certain age. Develop child care support and education programming in shelters that serve families.
- Increase access to housing. Solutions might include low-barrier housing for people without credit scores; long-term transitional housing; a diversification of landlords so that a single monopoly cannot exclude ‘blacklisted’ tenants from ever accessing housing; an increase in low-income and affordable housing more generally; and other measures that increase housing security across all demographics, such as rent control, tenant protections, rent assistance, and so forth. Additionally, shelters and safe spaces could hire or train staff to connect clients to existing housing supports.

- Increase the capacity and number of non-police street response resources so that service providers that are incapable of de-escalating and resolving conflicts and violence can lessen their reliance on the RCMP, thereby reducing incidences of racially motivated police violence.
- Create safe spaces and supports for substance users that are fleeing violence, so that they are not shut out from service provision due to the addiction.
- Increase supports for service providers to increase training, increase pay, and reduce burnout and rapid turnover. Hire specialists like licensed counsellors, nurses, etc.
- Create programming to connect Inuit and other Indigenous clients with elders and opportunities for knowledge sharing, land-based activities, and other cultural activities to promote cultural connectedness and healing.



# Consent Form



## Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE STUDY

### Declaration of Informed Consent and Permission to Use Information

I (name) \_\_\_\_\_, on this day (complete date) \_\_\_\_\_, consent to participate in a key informant interview regarding the Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (Pauktuutit) study, *Planning for the Future: An Interpretation of Concrete Data to Create a Depiction of the Reality Inuit Women Face When Seeking Safety, Through Words and Stories*.

I understand that this study is being conducted by Pauktuutit. The purpose of this interview is to identify the realities and challenges faced by Inuit women, gender diverse individuals, and their children when accessing shelters and services in Inuit Nunangat and urban centres. Findings will be used to inform and support Pauktuutit's policy and advocacy efforts in relation to shelters and services in each region, and to increase awareness of community needs. Participants will receive a \$50 honorarium for their participation and will have the opportunity to review the notes and transcriptions from their interview in order to make additions or clarifications to collected information, if requested.

By signing below or verbally acknowledging the following during the interview, I indicate my understanding that:

- I consent to have my words and responses recorded via audio recorder and notes.
- I am free to NOT respond to questions that may be asked, and I am free to end the interview at any time.
- I will have the opportunity to review the information collected following this interview to make additions or clarifications to the information I provided, if I request to do so.
- I grant Pauktuutit the right to use any intellectual property that I choose to share as a participant in the study, for purposes specific to the study and not beyond that. Pauktuutit will ask for my consent for any additional use beyond those purposes.

For more information, please contact Kerenza Plohman, Senior Policy and Research Analyst at Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada at 204-813-1151 or [kplohman@pauktuutit.ca](mailto:kplohman@pauktuutit.ca).

Signature of participant/verify oral consent \_\_\_\_\_

# Interview Guide

## 1. PRE-INTERVIEW

*Before formally beginning the interview, ensure the following has been completed:*

1. Introductions
  - Introduce yourself and the research team, who you work for.
2. Give the participant an overview of the project and goals of the research.
  - **Overview:** Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (Pauktuutit) are undertaking a study to identify the realities and challenges faced by Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children when seeking safety and security through shelters and services in Inuit Nunangat and urban centres.
  - **Goals:** Findings will be used to inform and support Pauktuutit's policy and advocacy efforts in relation to shelters and services in each region, and to increase awareness of community needs. Participants will have the opportunity to review the notes and transcriptions from their interview in order to make additions or clarifications to collected information, if requested. We acknowledge that this is a sensitive issue. If at any time you need help, resources, or to stop, please tell us.
3. Explain the outline of the interview process (interview, transcription, verification, use of quotes in reporting).
4. Provide an opportunity for the participant to ask questions.
  - Providing accurate answers to participants' questions is an important aspect of free, prior, and informed consent.
5. Review the consent form.
  - Once the participant's questions have been answered, verbally confirm that the consent form has been signed before beginning the interview.
  - If the consent form has not been signed and submitted, read the consent form aloud and obtain verbal consent. Ensure that the audio recorders are on and have the participant provide their verbal consent for the recording.
  - If the participant does not provide consent, do not continue with the interview.
  - Confirm home address, phone number, and email for honorariums.

- **Confirm home address, phone number, and email for honorariums.**
6. Review aftercare resources:
- Ensure that each participant is provided with the list of aftercare resources. You may choose to go over this list of resources with the participant. These include:
    - **First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line** at 1-855-242-3310 or the online chat at hopeforwellness.ca; and
    - **The Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Help Line.** Available in Inuktitut and English, 24/7 – call 867-979-3333 or toll-free 1-800-265-3333.
  - If a participant reacts strongly to a question (i.e., difficulty composing themselves, appears withdrawn, or seems triggered, etc.), pause the interview and ask if you can call a friend or family member for them. Participants can stop the interview at any time. It is up to the participant if they wish to continue with the interview.
  - The researcher should leave their name and phone number with each participant so they may be reached if needed. The researcher should follow up with the participant several days after the interview. It is important to ensure the participant feels supported during and after the interview.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

*Read the text below with AUDIO RECORDERS ON at the start of each interview.*

Today is [date]. We are interviewing [participant name] for the Pauktuutit's Planning for the Future study. Thank you for your time today.

Before we turned on the recorders we reviewed the consent form and \_\_\_ provided verbal consent. Can you just confirm that for me?

## 3. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### 3.1 BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

*The first set of questions are to help us get to know you and understand your position in relation to safety services for Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children.*

1. Please tell us about yourself.
  - a. What community are you from and where do you currently live?

- b. What is your experience (or current position) in relation to emergency and safety services for Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children?

### **3.2 AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES (FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS ONLY)**

*The next set of questions aim to explore the availability of emergency and safety services for Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children, such as shelters and safe spaces.*

*[for the interviewer: this section can be skipped if interviewing an individual who has only accessed services]*

- 2. What services and supports does your organization provide for Inuit seeking safety?
  - a. Are these services specific for Inuit women and their children? Gender-diverse individuals?
  - b. How does your organization ensure cultural safety for Inuit accessing your services?
  - c. How does your organization ensure equal access for gender-diverse individuals?
- 3. Are you aware of other resources and supports for Inuit women, their children, and gender-diverse individuals in your community, such as emergency shelters and transitional housing programs?
  - a. If yes, what services?
  - b. If no, can you identify the nearest community that someone would have to travel to in order to access these services?
    - i. Are you aware of transportation services that connect your community to the nearest community that provides these services?
    - ii. Do you know how much it would cost to travel between communities to access emergency shelters or safe spaces?

### **3.3 BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES**

*Through the following questions, we hope to better understand the challenges and barriers that Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children face when accessing shelters and safe spaces.*

- 4. Based on your experience, what are some of the challenges or barriers that Inuit face when looking for safety and security through shelters, transitional housing, or similar services? (E.g., financial, transportation, cultural, and/or language barriers)
  - a. Have these challenges or barriers changed over time?
  - b. Are there any barriers that are specific to gender-diverse individuals?

5. Have you noticed any differences in the quality of services offered to Inuit, versus non-Inuit?
  - a. What about for services offered to gender-diverse individuals?
6. Do you have any concerns or fears regarding access to emergency shelters and safe spaces for Inuit? (e.g., funding limitations, stigma, judgement, etc.)
  - a. What about for gender-diverse individuals?

### 3.4 OPPORTUNITIES

*Before we wrap up, we hope to identify opportunities to improve on the existing services for Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children.*

7. In your view, what *should* services providing safety and security to Inuit look like?
  - a. What would it look like for these programs and services to be culturally appropriate and relevant to Inuit?
8. Can you tell me of any resources and supports that are needed to better meet the needs of Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children seeking safety and security?
  - a. What would make it easier for Inuit women, their children, and gender-diverse individuals to access emergency shelters and safe spaces?
9. Are there any individuals, groups, or stakeholders who are well positioned to advance these opportunities?
  - a. Are there opportunities for partnerships?
  - b. Who should be involved in program development and implementation?

### 3.5 CLOSING

10. Do you have any final comments you would like to share?
11. Is there anyone else you think we should speak to as a part of this study? (e.g., individuals, organizations, etc.)

## 4. CONCLUSION

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today to share your knowledge.

*Read with audio recorders on after every session.*

Today is [date]. We have just finished interviewing [participant name] for the Pauktutit's Planning for the Future study.

My name is [name]. Notes are recorded in/on [notebook/computer]. This interview has taken approximately [#] hours [#] minutes.



# Survey Questions

## PART 1: RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND IDENTITY

1. Do you identify as Inuit?

- Yes
- No

2. With what gender do you most identify?

- Woman
- Man
- Two-Spirit
- Non-binary
- Multiple identities
- Prefer not to say
- None of the above

3. What type of organization do you work with?

- Emergency shelter
- Drop-in agency
- Supportive housing agency
- Police service
- Child protection services
- Education and early learning and childcare organization
- Community support service
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the name of the organization that you work with? (optional):

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your role?

- Administration
- Front-line service provider
- Leadership
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

6. Where is the organization that you work with located?

- Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR)
- Kitikmeot Region, Nunavut
- Qikiqtani Region, Nunavut
- Kivalliq Region, Nunavut
- Nunavik
- Nunatsiavut
- Southern urban centre (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is your current proficiency in Inuktitut?

- I do not speak any Inuktitut
- I can speak some words or phrases
- I am fairly proficient in Inuktitut
- I am fluent

## **PART 2: AVAILABILITY AND ACCESS TO SUPPORTS AND SERVICES**

*This set of questions aims to explore the availability of emergency and safety services for Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children, such as shelters and safe spaces.*

8. What demographic does your organization aim to serve? Please select all that apply.

- Inuit
- First Nation
- Métis
- Women
- Gender-diverse individuals
- Children
- Other

9. Approximately what proportion of people living in your community are Inuit?

- 0 – 25%
- 26 – 50%
- 51 – 75%
- 76 – 100%
- I'm not sure

10. Approximately what proportion of people accessing the services provided by your organization live in your community?

- 0 – 25%
- 26 – 50%
- 51 – 75%
- 76 – 100%
- I'm not sure

11. Where do your Inuit clients permanently reside? (select all that apply)

- Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR)
- Kitikmeot Region, Nunavut
- Qikiqtani Region, Nunavut
- Kivalliq Region, Nunavut
- Nunavik
- Nunatsiavut
- Southern urban centre (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

12. What services does your organization provide? [select all that apply]

- Short-term shelter
- Transitional housing
- Life skills and educational programming
- Childcare and youth supports
- Mental health and wellness supports (e.g., counselling)
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

13. Does your organization provide resources or supports that are Inuit-specific?

- Yes
- No

*If the respondent answers yes to Question 12, they will proceed to Question 13. If they answer no, they will skip to Question 14.*

14. If yes, approximately what proportion of resources and supports are Inuit-specific?

- 0 – 25%
- 26 – 50%
- 51 – 75%
- 76 – 100%
- I'm not sure

15. If your organization does not provide Inuit-specific resources, please explain why (optional):

\_\_\_\_\_

16. Does your organization provide resources or supports that are Indigenous-specific?

- Yes
- No

*If the respondent answers yes to Question 15, they will proceed to Question 16. If they answer no, they will skip to Question 17.*

17. If yes, approximately what proportion of resources and supports are Indigenous-specific?

- 0 – 25%
- 26 – 50%
- 51 – 75%
- 76 – 100%
- I'm not sure

18. If your organization does not provide Indigenous-specific resources, please explain why (optional):

---

19. Does your organization provide services specifically for gender-diverse individuals?

- Yes
- No

*If the respondent answers yes to Question 18, they will proceed to Question 19. If they answer no, they will skip to Question 20.*

20. If yes, approximately what proportion of resources and supports are tailored to the needs of gender-diverse individuals?

- 0 – 25%
- 26 – 50%
- 51 – 75%
- 76 – 100%
- I'm not sure

21. If your organization does not provide resources for gender-diverse individuals, please explain why (optional):

---

### PART 3: BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

*The following questions aim to help us better understand the challenges and barriers that Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children face when accessing shelters and safe spaces.*

22. From your perspective, what are the most common barriers that Inuit women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children face when seeking safety and security? (Select up to three)

- Unfamiliarity with available resources, supports, and services
- Financial inaccessibility of resources, supports, and services
- Lack of culturally relevant programs and services
- Lack of available services in more remote locations
- Fear of stigma, judgement, violence, and other negative repercussions
- Institutional and systemic racism
- Language barriers
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

23. Please indicate to what degree you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	I don't know
Language barriers can make it hard to do my work well with Inuit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cultural differences can make it hard to do my work well with Inuit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation is a barrier to Inuit accessing services at my organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Money is a barrier to Inuit accessing services at my organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

24. Are there any other challenges or barriers that Inuit women and/or gender-diverse individuals face when accessing your organization's services? Please explain (optional):

---

25. Are there any other challenges or barriers that you face when delivering resources and supports within your organization? If so, please explain (optional):

---

26. Which of the following resources and supports would be **most** helpful in reducing barriers and improving access to services for Inuit women and gender-diverse individuals? [select up to three]

- Access to a translator
- Access to childcare
- Language training in Inuktitut for service providers
- Cultural safety and awareness training for service providers
- Trauma informed training for service providers
- Training for service providers on working with gender-diverse individuals
- Increased funding for program and service development
- Transportation subsidies for Inuit accessing resources and supports
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

27. Please indicate to what degree you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	I don't know
My organization is adequately funded in order to meet the needs of people seeking our services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Funding provided by various levels of government is easily accessible and barrier-free	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advocacy groups in my region are promoting the needs of Inuit people seeking our services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ample opportunities exist for organizations to partner in my region to better meet the needs of people seeking our services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

28. What would make it easier for your organization to provide services to Inuit women and gender-diverse individuals seeking safety? Please explain (optional):

---

29. Do you have any further comments or suggestions for improving access to resources and supports for Inuit women and gender-diverse individuals seeking safety?

---

## **PART 5: CLOSING**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your answers will help Pauktuutit to inform future initiatives, programs, and policies to address these gaps in services for Inuit women and gender-diverse individuals seeking safety and security.

If you're experiencing emotional distress and want to talk, please call the First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line at 1-855-242-3310. It's toll-free and open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. [www.hopeforwellness.ca](http://www.hopeforwellness.ca). The Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Help Line also provides 24/7 support in Inuktitut and English at 867-979-3333 or toll-free at 1-800-265-3333

For Nunavut specific resources, please visit <https://www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/mental-health-2> for a list of available supports.

# Women’s Shelters and Safe Spaces in Inuit Nunangat

Region	Community	Name of shelter	Distance to nearest shelter
Nunatsiavut	Nain	Nain Safe House	~ 0 km (some people may live outside of town centre)
	Hopedale	Selma Onalik	~ 0 km
	Postville	N/A	~114 km (Rigolet) or ~182 km (Happy Valley-Goose Bay)
	<i>Note: Women will also, generally, stay with family and relatives rather than fly out of the community.</i>		
	Makkovik	N/A	~78 km (Hopedale)
	<i>Note: Generally, women will stay with family and relatives or get support from RCMP rather than fly out.</i>		
	Rigolet	Kirkina House	~ 0 km
	Happy Valley-Goose Bay	Libra House	~ 0 km
Nunavik	Akulivik	N/A	~ 201 km (Salluit)
	Aupaluk	N/A	~ 150 km (Kuujjuaq)
	Ivujivik	N/A	~ 125 km (Salluit)
	Inukjuak	Ajapirvik Women’s Shelter	~ 0 km
	Kangiqsujaq	Mianirsivik Kangiqsujaq (local shelter)	~ 0 km
	<i>Note: This is a local shelter where women can stay up to seven days. Women can also go to Kuujjuaq.</i>		
	Kangiqsualujjuaq	Qarmaapik House: multi-use safe place (local shelter)	~ 0 km
	Kangirsuk	N/A	~ 230 km (Kuujjuaq)
	Kuujjuaq	Tungasuvvik Women’s Shelter	~ 0 km
	Kuujjuarapik	N/A	~ 356 km (Inukjuak)
	Puvirnituq	N/A	~ 180 km (Inukjuak)
	Quaqtaq	N/A	~ 330 km (Kuujjuaq)
	Salluit	Initsiaq Women’s Shelter	~ 0 km
	Tasiujaq	N/A	~ 110 km (Kuujjuaq)
Umiujaq	N/A	~ 231 km (Inukjuak)	



Region	Community	Name of shelter	Distance to nearest shelter	
Nunavut	Arctic Bay	N/A	~ 1,225 km (Iqaluit)	
	Cape Dorset/Kinngait	N/A	~ 395 km (Iqaluit)	
	Clyde River	N/A	~ 748 km (Iqaluit)	
	Grise Fiord	N/A	~ 1,500 km (Iqaluit)	
	Hall Beach/Sanirajak	N/A	~ 796 km (Iqaluit)	
	Igloolik	N/A	~ 854 km (Iqaluit)	
	Iqaluit	Qimaavik Women's Shelter	~ 0 km	
	Kimmirut	N/A	~ 121 km (Iqaluit)	
	Pangnirtung	Tullivik Group	~ 0 km	
	<i>Note: This is a family service place that offers counselling services. Women can access private homes as safe houses if needed. When safety is an issue, referrals are made to Iqaluit and women and children are flown out of the community.</i>			
	Pond Inlet	Local Women's Shelter (for the community members only)	~ 0 km	
	Qikiqtarjuaq	N/A	~ 173 km (Pangnirtung)	
	<i>Note: Women typically prefer to stay with families or relatives in town.</i>			
	Resolute Bay	N/A	~ 1,570 km (Iqaluit)	
	Sanikiluaq	N/A	~ 1,288 km (Montreal)	
	Sanirajak	N/A	~ 796 km (Iqaluit)	
	Arviat	N/A	~ 215 km (Rankin Inlet)	
	Baker Lake	N/A	~ 257 km (Rankin Inlet)	
	Chesterfield Inlet	N/A	~ 90 km (Rankin Inlet)	
	Coral Harbour	N/A	~ 466 km (Rankin Inlet)	
	Naujaat	N/A	~ 498 km (Rankin Inlet)	
	Rankin Inlet	Kataujaq Society Shelter	~ 0 km	
	Whale Cove	N/A	~ 68 km (Rankin Inlet)	
	Cambridge Bay	Operational Arnat Qimavik – Cambridge Bay Wellness Centre Crisis Shelter	~ 0 km	
	Gjoa Haven	N/A	~ 245 km (Kugaaruk) or ~ 794 km (Kugluktuk)	
	Kugaaruk	Operational Tammaaquik Women's Centre – Family Violence centre	~ 0 km	
	Kugluktuk	Kugluktuk Women's Crisis Centre	~ 0 km	
Taloyoak	N/A	~ 185 km (Kugaaruk) or ~ 454 km (Cambridge Bay)		

Region	Community	Name of shelter	Distance to nearest shelter
Inuvialuit	Aklavik	N/A	~ 63 km (Inuvik) or ~ 158 km (Tuktoyatuk)
	Inuvik	Inuvik Transition House Society	~ 0 km
	Paulatuk	N/A	~ 395 km (Inuvik) or ~ 350 km (Tuktoyaktuk)
	Sachs Harbour	N/A	~ 401 km (Tuktoyaktuk) or ~ 513 km (Inuvik)
	Tuktoyaktuk	Aimayunga Women and Emergency Foster Care Shelter	~ 0 km
	Ulukhaktok	N/A	~ 671 km (Inuvik)
<i>Note: Women also sometimes go to Yellowknife or Tuktoyaktuk.</i>			

**APPENDIX E**

# Women’s Shelters and Safe Spaces in Select Urban Centres

Community	Name of Shelter
<b>Yellowknife</b>	Alison McAteer House
	Lynn Brooks’ Safe Place for Women
	Yellowknife Women’s Society Emergency Shelter for Women
	Home Base – Youth Emergency Shelter
<b>Edmonton</b>	WIN House
	Lurana Shelter
	Wings of Providence
	La Salle
	Sage Seniors Safe House
	Women’s Emergency Accommodation Centre
	The Today Centre
	A Safe Place
	Islamic Family & Social Services Association

<b>Calgary</b>	Maskan
	Brenda Strafford Foundation Heart Home Network
	Discovery House
	Sonshine Centre
	Kerby Shelter
	Brenda's House
	Inn From the Cold
	YWCA Emergency Shelter
	Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter
	YW Sheriff King Home
	Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society
<b>Winnipeg</b>	Ikwe-Widdjiitiwin
	Willowplace Shelter
	Alpha House
	ChezRachel (L'Entre-Temps des Franco-Manitobaines Inc.)
	Bravestone Centre
	Native Women's Transition Centre
	North End Women's Centre Transitional Housing
	Villa Rosa Inc.
	The Indigenous Women's Healing Centre
	Macdonald Youth Services - Youth Resource Centre & Emergency Shelter
	Sakeenah Homes

<b>Toronto</b>	The Redwood
	Street Haven
	Nellie's
	YWCA Arise Shelter
	Red Door Family Shelter
	Interval House
	Anduhyau Emergency Shelter
	Yorktown Family Services
	Fatima House
	Mary Sheffield House
	North York Women's Shelter
	Sistering
	Aurora House
	Ernestine's Women's Shelter
	Yellow Brick House
	Nisa Homes
Women's Habitat	
Sakeenah Homes	
<b>Ottawa-Gatineau</b>	Tungasuvvingat Inuit
	Minwaashin Lodge/Oshki Kizis Lodge
	Maison d'Hébergement Pour Elles Des Deux Vallées
	Maison d'amitié
	Maison Unies-Vers-Femmes
	L'Autre Chez Soi
	Nelson House of Ottawa-Carleton
	Interval House of Ottawa
	Sakeenah Homes
	Harmony House
	Le Centre Mechtilde

<b>Montreal</b>	Dauphinelle
	Maison du Réconfort
	L'Escale pour Elle
	Maison Secours aux Femmes de Montréal
	Auberge Transition
	Maison Flora Tristan
	Auberge Shalom Pour Femmes
	Auberge Madeleine
	Maison Grise de Montreal
	Multi Femmes
	Le Chaînon
	Assistance aux Femmes de Montréal
	Maison Alice-Desmarais
	Carrefour pour Elle
	Maison de Lina
	Les Maisons de l'Ancre
	Maison le Prélude
	Maison l'Esther
Maison Dalauze	
<b>Halifax</b>	Adsum for Women & Children
	Bryony House - Halifax Transition House Association
	Alice House
<b>St. John's</b>	Kirby House

## APPENDIX F

# Access to Women’s Shelters and Safe Spaces Across Inuit Nunangat – Frequency and Cost of Flights

The table below was compiled to illustrate the cost of accessing shelters when Inuit women are required to travel outside of their communities to access shelters and safe spaces. All flights were found by identifying an air carrier that serviced a particular region and identifying the cost and frequency of flights from one destination to another. Possible pathways were also verified via phone calls with service providers and hamlets. Prices are intended to reflect an average cost of a flight from one destination to another and cannot be considered exact. Prices are marked by the day the research was conducted (July 2023) and are subject to change.

Region	Destination	Airline	Route / Flight Path	Frequency of Flight	Cost of Flight (one way)
Inuvialuit Settlement Region	Aklavik → Inuvik	North Wright Air	Direct flight or drive/taxi from Aklavik to Inuvik (~2.5 hrs).	6 days per week	~ \$200
	Paulatuk → Inuvik	Aklak Air	Direct	3 times per week	~ \$1,000
	Sachs Harbour → Tuktoyaktuk	Aklak Air	Sachs Harbour → Inuvik. Drive/taxi from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk (~2 hrs).	3 times per week	~ \$815
	Ulukhaktok → Kugluktuk	Canadian North	Direct	1 time per week	~ \$500-1,000
Nunavut	Grise Fiord → Iqaluit	Canadian North	Grise Fiord → Resolute Bay → Iqaluit	Once a week (every Monday)	~ \$2000
	Resolute Bay → Iqaluit	Canadian North	Direct	4 times per week	~ \$1,000-\$2,000
	Arctic Bay → Iqaluit	Canadian North	Arctic Bay → Resolute Bay → Iqaluit	4 times per week	~ \$1,000-\$2,000
	Igloolik → Iqaluit	Canadian North	Direct	5 times per week	~\$2,000
	Sanirajak → Iqaluit	Canadian North	Direct	3 times per week	~ \$600-\$700
	Gjoa Haven → Kugaaruk	Canadian North	Gjoa Haven → Kugaaruk	4 times per week	~ \$932
	Clyde River → Iqaluit	Canadian North	Direct	5 times per week	~ \$1,500-\$2,000

Region	Destination	Airline	Route / Flight Path	Frequency of Flight	Cost of Flight (one way)
Nunavut	Qikiqtarjuaq → Pangnirtung	Canadian North	Direct or multiple stops	5 times per week	~ \$550-\$1,500
	Kimmirut → Iqaluit	Canadian North	Direct	3 times per week	~ \$813
	Coral Harbour → Rankin Inlet	Calm Air	Direct	7 times per week	~ \$970
	Naujaat → Rankin Inlet	Calm Air	Direct	7 times per week	~ \$875
	Chesterfield Inlet → Rankin Inlet	Calm Air	Direct	5 times per week	~ \$150
	Arviat → Rankin Inlet	Calm Air	Direct	9 times per week	~ \$285-\$575
	Whale Cove → Rankin Inlet	Calm Air	Direct	5 times per week	~ \$264
	Baker Lake → Rankin Inlet	Calm Air	Direct	5 times per week	~ \$650
	Sanikiluaq → Montreal	Air Inuit	Sanikiluaq → Kuujuaapik → Montreal	2 days per week	~ \$1,500
Nunavik	Ivujivik → Salluit	Air Inuit	Direct	7 days per week	~ \$204
	Akulivik → Salluit	Air Inuit	Akulivik → Ivujivik → Salluit	7 days per week	~ \$390
	Puvurnituaq → Inukjuak	Air Inuit	Direct	7 days per week	~ \$330
	Kuujuaapik → Inukjuak	Air Inuit	Kuujuaapik → Umiujaq → Inukjuak	7 days per week	~ \$570
	Umiujaq → Inukjuak	Air Inuit	Direct	7 days per week	~ \$275
	Tasiujaq → Kuujuaq	Air Inuit	Direct	7 days per week	~ \$275
	Aupaluk → Kuujuaq	Air Inuit	Aupaluk → Tasiujaq → Kuujuaq	7 days per week	~ \$360
	Kangirsuk → Kuujuaq	Air Inuit	Direct	5 days per week	~ \$420
	Quaqtaq → Kuujuaq or Salluit	Air Inuit	Quaqtaq → Kangirsuk → Kuujuaq or Quaqtaq → Kangiqsijuaq → Salluit	4 days per week	~ \$500
Nunatsiavut	Postville → Hopedale	PAL Airlines	Direct	5 days per week	~ \$200
	Makkovik → Hopedale	PAL Airlines	Makkovik → Postville → Hopedale	5 days per week	~ \$200



# Literature Review

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Purpose of the Literature Review

The *Planning for the Future* study aims to assess the shelter and support needs of Inuit women, gender diverse individuals, and their children to provide a picture of the experiences and challenges they face when seeking safety and security. There is a gap in knowledge around the realities in supports and services available for this population. This project, through utilizing existing data, a survey, and key informant interviews, seeks to develop a broad understanding of the use and access to shelters, the specific experiences of Inuit women, gender diverse individuals, and their children, and what their needs are with respect to shelter facilities, communities, and infrastructure.

This literature review aims to identify what is known about the gaps and needs, and existing resources and services for Inuit women, gender diverse individuals, and youth in Inuit Nunangat and outside of Inuit Nunangat, in select urban centres. Specifically, this literature review will consider the resources and services that exist in each region of Inuit Nunangat, including Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut. It also considers the following urban centres: Yellowknife, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa-Gatineau, Montreal, Halifax, and St. John's.

The literature review highlights the following information pertaining to Inuit communities in Inuit Nunangat and in select urban centres:

- Demographic statistics;
- Existing women's shelters and safe spaces that are available for violence and abuse victims;
- Available transportation and flight services; and
- Existing gaps and needs for Inuit women seeking safety.

Beginning the work here provides the project team with foundational knowledge and understanding of the project context. This will help inform how interview and survey tools are developed for engagements on this topic in the next stage of the project.

## Gendered Violence Among Inuit

Gender-based violence (GBV), understood as forms of violence that people experience because of their gender, how they express that gender identity, or how it is perceived, is a significant and growing problem in Inuit Nunangat and in southern urban centres (Women and Gender Equality Canada 2022). As the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) has highlighted, understanding gendered violence against Inuit requires situating the issue within its colonial context, including how Inuit ways of living were disrupted as colonialism developed in the North (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada and Comack 2020).

Inuit women and girls living in the territories, and especially those who identify as gender diverse, experience disproportionate rates of violence compared to their cis-hetero and non-Indigenous counterparts living in Canadian provinces (Boyce 2016; Brennan 2011; Jaffray 2020; Perreault and Simpson 2016). Those who experience violence in remote or isolated areas also face additional challenges as many factors exacerbate the violence faced by those in the territories. This includes a lack of access to shelters, mental health services, legal services, and public transit, as well as economic difficulties and poverty, and barriers to maintaining the confidentiality of reports of abuse (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2019; Tungasuvvingat Inuit 2016). Notably, shelters are essential services for those who experience violence as they are often a first step to protecting victims of violence from further violence.

Research has also found that the programs, services, and supports available to Inuit women in urban areas vary greatly across the country. This is partly due to the discrepancy between the financial support received by provincial and municipal governments, the population of Inuit living in the city, and the prevalence of advocacy groups promoting the needs of urban Inuit (Pauktuutit 2021). The current study aims to build on this literature and fill the gaps in knowledge regarding the needs of Inuit when seeking safety from violence in Inuit Nunangat and southern urban centres.

## Data Sources

This literature review was informed by publicly available information and grey literature on the topic of Inuit women's safety and security. The literature review of emergency shelters and safe spaces was retrieved through web searches in public search engines, including Google, government websites, academic journals, and news articles.

It is important to note that this literature review will be further built out based on the information gathered through a series of interviews in Phase II of the project. The current review is intended to provide a preliminary overview of the resources and services that currently exist for Inuit women, gender diverse individuals, and youth, both inside and outside of Inuit Nunangat.

## Supports and Services in Inuit Nunangat and Select Urban Centres

In 2016, the total Inuit population in Canada was 65,025, representing an increase of 29.1% from 2006 (StatsCan 2016). The 2016 census also found that close to three-quarters of Inuit lived in Inuit Nunangat. Of Inuit who lived in Inuit Nunangat, the majority lived in Nunavut in 2016 (63.7%), while one-quarter (24.9%) lived in Nunavik. An additional 6.6% of Inuit lived in Inuvialuit and 4.8% lived in Nunatsiavut communities. A breakdown of demographic statistics is included in Table 1 below.

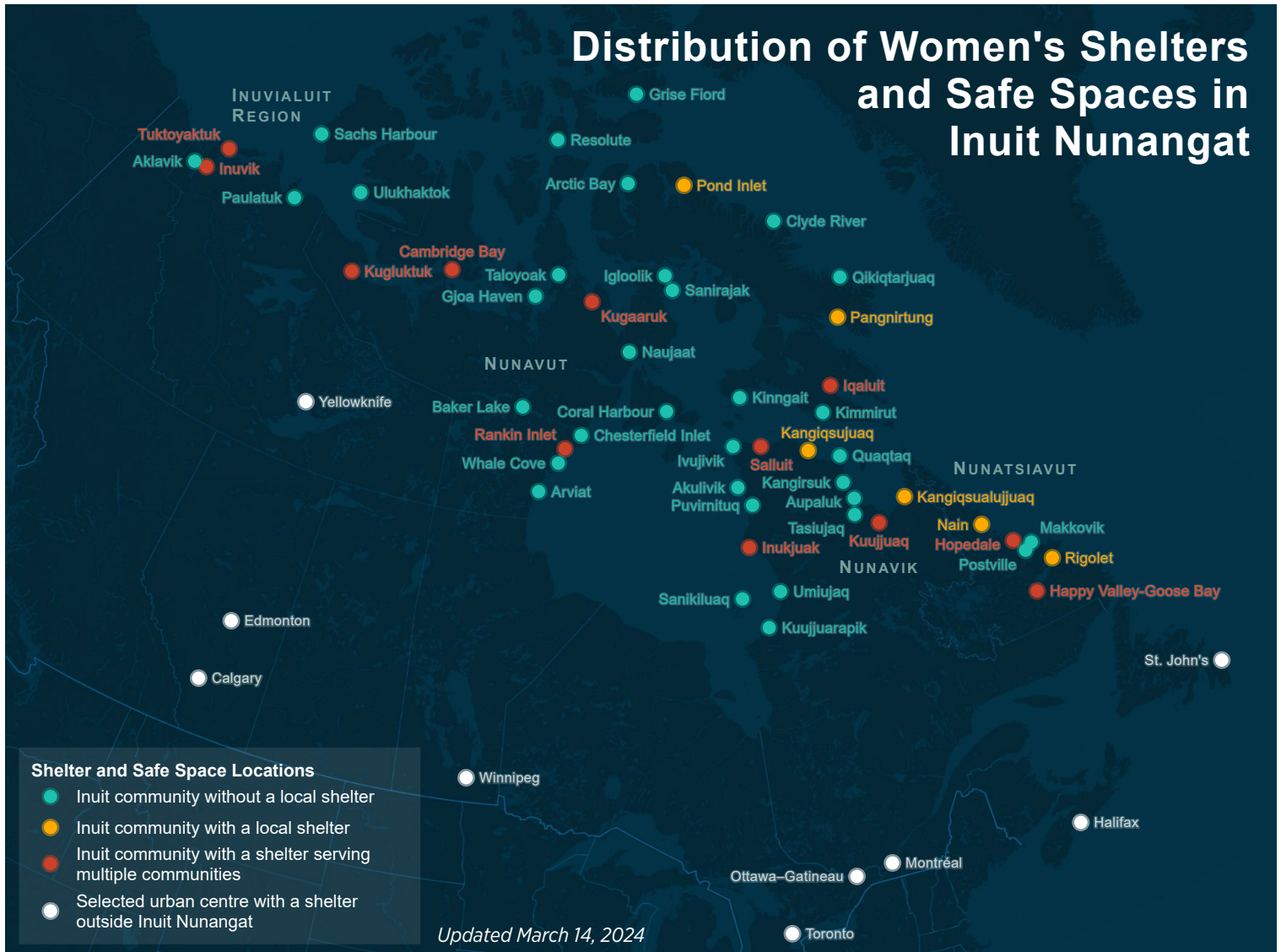
**Table 1: Inuit demographic statistics.**

Region	Total Number of Inuit Residents	Per cent of Total Inuit Population in Canada
Nunatsiavut	2,285	3.5%
Nunavik	11,795	18.1%
Nunavut	30,140	46.4%
Inuvialuit	3,110	4.8%
Outside Inuit Nunangat	17,695	27.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>65,025</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016

The literature review revealed approximately 18 shelters and safe spaces that currently exist in Inuit Nunangat for Inuit women, gender diverse individuals, and their children seeking safety. It also revealed at least fifty shelters and safe spaces that exist for women-identifying people in urban centres, although Inuit-specific services were limited. These are mapped in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Shelter sites available to Inuit women



The available resources and supports for Inuit women seeking safety are reviewed in more detail in the following subsections which are organized by region, along with profiling demographic statistics and flight and transportation services that connect communities within Inuit Nunangat and to urban centres.

## Inuvialuit

The Inuvialuit Settlement Region is in the northern portion of the Northwest Territories and is comprised of six Inuit communities: Aklavik, Inuvik, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour, Tuktoyaktuk, and Ulukhaktok. In 2016, there were 3,110 Inuit living in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, making up 4.8% of the Inuit population in

Canada (StatsCan 2016). Of the Inuit population, 1,595 identified as female, representing 51% of the total population of Inuit in the Inuvialuit region. Demographic statistics regarding gender-diverse individuals living in this region are not publicly available.

Available safe houses and emergency shelters in Inuvialuit include:

- Inuvik Transition House Society (Inuvik); and
- Aimayunga Women and Emergency Foster Care Shelter (Tuktoyaktuk).

Each space is an emergency shelter that provides domestic violence focused programming. However, the Inuvik Transition House Society also provides transitional housing for women, which differs from emergency shelter services in that it provides women with options for a longer length of stay. The literature review found no emergency shelters or safe space services located in the other four communities in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. An internet search found that Aklavik has a homeless shelter, but no information regarding specific services for women, gender diverse individuals, or children was found.

For Inuit who live in other communities and need to travel to access these services—including Inuit from Aklavik, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour, and Ulukhaktok—they must fly. Aklak Air provides scheduled flights from each community, except for Aklavik, where a chartered flight is required. Flights can cost anywhere from \$1,000–\$2,000 for a one-way ticket. Tuktoyaktuk is the only community in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region that is connected to Inuvik by road, and which is only a two-hour drive. However, public transportation is not available, leaving many Inuit to hitchhike in the absence of affordable transportation options which can put them at risk of danger.

## Nunavut

Nunavut has 25 communities, including Iqaluit, Pond Inlet, Baker Lake, Rankin Inlet, and Cambridge Bay, among others. According to the 2016 census, approximately 30,140 Inuit live in Nunavut, making up 46.4% of the Inuit population in Canada (StatsCan 2016). Of the Inuit population living in Nunavut in 2016, 14,930 identified as female, representing 49.5% of the Inuit population in Nunavut. Demographic statistics regarding gender-diverse individuals living in Nunavut are not publicly available.

The literature review and verification with the Hamlets and local services found six<sup>3</sup> safe houses and emergency shelters that exist for Inuit women, gender diverse individuals, and their children in Nunavut. These include:

- Operational Arnat Qimavik – Cambridge Bay Wellness Centre Crisis Shelter (Cambridge Bay);

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3 Upon verification with hamlets and local social services, researchers found that the shelters in Kinngait (Cape Dorset), Baker Lake, and Taloyoak are no longer in operation. Researchers were, however, unable to verify why these shelters closed.

- Operational Tammaaquiik Women’s Centre – Family Violence centre (Kugaaruk);
- Kugluktuk Women’s Crisis Centre (Kugluktuk);
- Kataujaq Society Shelter (Rankin Inlet);
- Qimaavik Women’s Shelter (Iqaluit); and
- Tullivik Group (Pangnirtung).

All of these services offer temporary shelter for women seeking safety, while two of these spaces provide more tailored services. The Cambridge Bay Wellness Centre provides transitional housing and services for children and youth. They also provide mental healthcare, cultural programs, capacity building workshops, and recreation and wellness programs. In Pangnirtung, the Tullivik Group provides safe houses for women fleeing abuse (Dready 2002). However, this information may be outdated. Recent sources confirming if the Tullivik Group still provides these services were not publicly available. In 2021, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) invested \$11 million into the development of four domestic violence shelters in Baker Lake, Gjoa Haven, Pangnirtung, and Pond Inlet, although many of these shelters may still be under development (NTI 2021). It was unclear whether services exist in other Nunavut communities such as Whale Cove, Coral Harbour, and Kimmirut.

Communities in Nunavut are not connected to each other by highway, nor are they connected by road to other Canadian cities. Inuit that must travel to access these services must fly. Canadian North services most communities in Nunavut, including Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet, and Cambridge Bay, among others.<sup>4</sup> Calm Air International LP also services the Kivalliq region of Nunavut. One-way tickets throughout Nunavut cost anywhere from \$300–\$2,000, depending on the point of departure and arrival. Flights travelling to and from Iqaluit are the most affordable.

## Nunavik

Nunavik, located in the northern portion of the Province of Quebec, has 14 communities, including Akulivik, Aupaluk, Inukjuak, Ivujivik, Kangiqsualujuaq, Kangiqsujuaq, Kangirsuk, Kuujuaq, Kuujuarapik, Puvirnituq, Quaqaq, Salluit, Tasiujaq, and Umiujaq. According to the 2016 Canadian census, there were 11,795 Inuit living in Nunavik, making up 18.1% of the Inuit population in Canada (StatsCan 2016). Of the Inuit population living in Nunavik, 5,845 identified as female, representing 49.5% of the Inuit population in Nunavik. Demographic statistics regarding gender-diverse individuals living in Nunavik are not publicly available.

The literature review found that at least five communities in Nunavik provide shelter and emergency services for Inuit women and their children seeking safety. These include:

<sup>4</sup> Canadian North, Route Map, [canadiannorth.com/plan\\_your\\_trip/route-map/](http://canadiannorth.com/plan_your_trip/route-map/)

- Ajapirvik Women’s Shelter (Inukjuak);
- Qarmaapik House: A multi-use and safe place for families (Kangiqsualujjuaq);
- Mianirsivik Kangiqsujuaq (Kangiqsujuaq);
- Tungasuvvik Women’s Shelter (Kuujjuaq); and
- Initsiaq Women’s Shelter (Salluit).

Each of these shelters provide domestic violence focused programming in addition to temporary shelter and safe space services. The Initsiaq Women’s Shelter in Salluit also provides counselling, while the Tungasuvvik Women’s Shelter in Kuujjuaq provides wellness and recovery programs, as well as educational programming. The Qarmaapik House in Kangiqsualujjuaq was designed to provide emergency services and to prevent children from being taken away by protection services. The program is often the first to intervene in family crises, offering 24-hour support, counselling, workshops, and a safe space for families to spend up to seven days (Rogers 2018). Recently, Qarmaapik House staff have started training workers in other Nunavik communities, sharing what they’ve learned (Ritchie 2022). Information was not available for ten communities in Nunavik, including Akulivik, Ivujivik, and Puvirnituaq, among others. It is unclear whether shelters and safe spaces exist in these communities.

All communities in Nunavik are fly-in only, and so Inuit that need to travel to another community to access these services must travel by air. Inuit Air provides flights to each community in Nunavuk, with Kuujjuaq and Puvirnituaq acting as important gateways airports to more northern communities.<sup>5</sup> One-way flights throughout Nunavik can cost upwards of \$1,000, depending on the point of departure and arrival.

## Nunatsiavut

The Nunatsiavut region is located in Newfoundland and Labrador and is comprised of Inuit Settlement lands in northern Labrador. There are five Inuit communities, including Nain, Hopedale, Postville, Makkovik, and Rigolet. According to the 2016 Canadian census, there are approximately 2,285 Inuit in Nunatsiavut, making up 3.5% of the Inuit population in Canada (StatsCan 2016). Of the Inuit population in Nunatsiavut, 1115 identified as female, representing 49% of the total Inuit population in these communities. Demographic statistics regarding gender-diverse individuals living in Nunatsiavut communities are not publicly available.

The literature review found at least four safe houses and emergency shelters that exist in Nunatsiavut. These include:

- Nain Safe House (Nain);
- Selma Onalik (Hopedale);

5 Inuit Air, Destinations, [airinuit.com/en/book/destinations](http://airinuit.com/en/book/destinations)

- Kirkina House (Rigolet); and
- Libra House (Happy Valley-Goose Bay)

All of these services provide emergency and temporary shelter for Inuit women along with domestic violence focused programming. The Libra House provides longer term and more comprehensive services, including emergency shelter for up to six weeks, a 24-hour crisis line, counselling, educational programming, support with seeking housing and employment, and childcare support. It was unclear whether services exist for Inuit women and gender diverse individuals seeking safety in Postville and Makkovik.

There is no road access to Nunatsiavut communities, and travel to and from these communities is only possible by air or sea. Inuit traveling from Postville and Makkovik must rely on flights operated by Air Borealis which can cost up to \$400–\$500.<sup>6</sup> A coastal ferry service also departs once a week from June to November, costing anywhere from \$70–\$500 depending on the traveller’s age and whether they are travelling with a vehicle.<sup>7</sup>

## Select Urban Centres

In 2017, the census reported that approximately 17,695 Inuit lived outside of Inuit Nunangat, representing 27.2% of the total Inuit population in Canada (StatsCan 2016). Moreover, in 2011, the National Household Survey reported that approximately 72% of Inuit women and girls in Canada lived in Inuit Nunangat while over a quarter of Inuit women and girls (28%) reported living outside of Inuit Nunangat (StatsCan 2011). However, the proportion of Inuit women and girls living in Inuit Nunangat declined since 2006, at which time 77% of Inuit women and girls reported living in Inuit Nunangat (StatsCan 2011). A previous study by Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada found that many factors push Inuit women away from their hometowns and into cities. While some women actively seek opportunities in urban centres, the cost of housing and poor-quality services in the North also push them to move south (Pauktuutit 2017).

The literature review revealed over fifty shelters and safe spaces that exist outside of Inuit Nunangat for individuals seeking safety in urban centres, although many of these are not Inuit-specific. The following subsections provide an overview of demographic statistics in select urban centres, along with existing shelters and safe spaces and transportation services that connect Inuit travelling from Inuit Nunangat. Overall, it was found that the most services exist in the largest urban centres, including Toronto and Montreal, while the fewest services exist in the maritime provinces.

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6 Air Borealis. Where we Fly, [airborealis.ca/en/fly-borealis/where-we-fly/](http://airborealis.ca/en/fly-borealis/where-we-fly/)

7 Newfoundland and Labrador, Goose Bay-Rigolet-Ports North to Nain, [gov.nl.ca/ti/ferryservices/schedules/h-goosebay-nain/](http://gov.nl.ca/ti/ferryservices/schedules/h-goosebay-nain/)



## Yellowknife

In 2016, 585 individuals living in Yellowknife identified as Inuk (Inuit), representing 3% of the total population (19,569). Of this, 340 identified as female, representing 58% of the total Inuit population in Yellowknife (StatsCan 2018i). Demographic statistics regarding gender-diverse individuals living in Yellowknife are not publicly available.

At least four safe spaces and shelters are available for women and youth in Yellowknife. These include:

- Alison McAteer House;
- Lynn Brooks' Safe Place for Women;
- Yellowknife Women's Society Emergency Shelter for Women; and
- Home Base – Youth Emergency Shelter.

The Alison McAteer House and the Yellowknife Women's Shelter provide emergency and short-term shelter for women to receive support while they are fleeing violence (YWCA NWT 2021). However, only the Alison McAteer House allows both women and their children to access the space. Lynn's Place similarly offers a safe and affordable space for women who need housing after fleeing violence. The space contains 18 suites and allows children under 16 to stay with their mothers for up to three years based on a need assessment (YWCA NWT 2021). Yellowknife also has a Youth Emergency Shelter where youth aged 12-24 can access food, showers, and a bed. No services in Yellowknife are Inuit-specific nor tailored to the needs of gender-diverse individuals.

Inuit seeking safety in Yellowknife are most likely to travel from the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, and air travel is the only option. Aklak Air connects Yellowknife with communities in this region including Inuvik, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour, and Ulukhaktok. North Wright Air also connects Yellowknife with Inuvik and Aklavik, while Canadian North connects Tuktoyaktuk to Yellowknife via the Norman Wells Airport. For all other communities throughout Inuit Nunangat, Yellowknife can be reached via major airports, including Vancouver or Edmonton. A one-way ticket costs approximately \$600-\$700.

## Edmonton

The 2016 census found there were 76,205 Indigenous peoples in Edmonton, making up 5.9% of the population. Of the Indigenous population, 1,110 or 1.5% were Inuit (StatsCan 2018b). Of the Inuit population, 530 individuals identified as female, representing approximately 47% of Edmonton's Inuit. Demographic statistics regarding gender-diverse individuals living in Edmonton are not publicly available.

Available shelters and safe spaces for Inuit women in Edmonton include:

- WIN House;
- Lurana Shelter;
- Wings of Providence;
- La Salle;
- Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre;
- The Today Centre;
- A Safe Place; and
- Islamic Family & Social Services Association.

Most services in Edmonton provide short-term emergency shelter for women fleeing violence, and many of them also accommodate children. The WIN House, for example, provides women and their children with meals, an on-site nurse, access to transportation, and 24-hour helpline. The Lurana Shelter, Wings of Providence, Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre, and The Today Centre also provide women with food, clothing, transportation, and child support as well as specialized services related to counselling, advocacy, legal and medical support. La Salle and A Safe Place are geared for women transitioning from a front-line crisis agency and who are looking for longer-term support. Housing is available for women and children up to one year. Additional services such as counselling, childcare, life skills and employment skills training, and child and youth programs are also available. The Today Centre is the only service to advertise specific supports for gender diverse individuals. No emergency services or shelters in Edmonton seem to be tailored specifically to Inuit.

Inuit from the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and Nunavut are the most likely to travel to Edmonton to access shelter and safety. For Inuit who must travel to Edmonton to access these services, air travel is the only option. Direct flights are available between Edmonton and Yellowknife via Calm Air, Canadian North, and WestJet, which is the major airport connecting Inuit communities in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and Nunavut. A one-way flight costs approximately \$800–\$1,500.

## Calgary

In 2016, there were 41,645 Indigenous peoples living in Calgary, making up 3% of the city's population. Of this, 440 were Inuit, representing 1.1% of the total Indigenous population in Calgary (StatsCan 2018a). Of the Inuit population, 280 identified as female, representing approximately 64% of Calgary's Inuit population. Demographic statistics regarding gender-diverse individuals living in Calgary are not publicly available.

Available shelters and safe spaces for women-identifying people in Calgary include:

- Maskan;
- Brenda Strafford Foundation Heart Home Network;
- Discovery House;
- Sonshine Centre;
- Brenda's House;
- Inn From the Cold;
- YWCA Emergency Shelter;
- Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter;
- YW Sheriff King Home; and
- Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society.

The majority of services and supports available in Calgary provide short-term emergency housing for women fleeing violence. Like Yellowknife and Edmonton, there is a lack of services that are Inuit-specific, and which are tailored to the unique needs of gender diverse individuals. Notably, only one emergency shelter in Calgary—the Awo Taan Healing Lodge—is tailored for Indigenous peoples and guided by Indigenous teachings.

Inuit from the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and Nunavut are the most likely to travel to Calgary to access shelter and safety, and they must travel there by air. However, there are no direct flights that connect Calgary with communities in Inuit Nunangat. All Inuit traveling to Calgary, including Inuit from other regions throughout Inuit Nunangat, must travel through other major airports including Edmonton, Toronto, Ottawa, or Montreal. A one-way flight costs approximately \$1,100–\$2,000.

## Winnipeg

The 2016 census showed that of the major cities in Canada, Manitoba has one of the highest populations of Indigenous peoples. Over 92,000 Indigenous peoples live in Manitoba, representing over 12% of the population. However, only 320 people identified as Inuit in Winnipeg (StatsCan 2018h), indicating that Inuit make up less than 1% of Winnipeg's Indigenous population. Of the 320 Inuit in Winnipeg, 180 identified as female, representing approximately 56% of Winnipeg's Inuit population. Demographic statistics regarding gender-diverse individuals living in Winnipeg are not publicly available.

Available shelters and safe spaces for women-identifying people in Winnipeg include:

- Ikwe-Widdjiitiwin;
- Willowplace Shelter;
- Alpha House;
- Chez Rachel;
- Bravestone Centre;
- Native Women’s Transition Centre;
- North End Women’s Centre Transitional Housing;
- Villa Rosa Inc.;
- The Indigenous Women’s Healing Centre;
- Macdonald Youth Services — Youth Resource Centre & Emergency Shelter; and
- Sakeenah Homes.

Most of the services available in Winnipeg are short-term emergency shelters, except for the Indigenous Women’s Healing Centre and the Alpha Centre which provide longer-term housing and supports for women seeking safety and security. Notably, Ikwe-Widdjiitiwin is the only other service in Winnipeg besides the Indigenous Women’s Healing Centre that offers tailored services for Indigenous peoples. However, like other urban centres, there is a lack of services that are tailored to the specific needs of Inuit and gender diverse individuals.

Inuit from the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and Nunavut are the most likely to travel to Winnipeg to access shelter and safety, and they must travel there by air. Flights are available to Winnipeg from communities in Nunavut via Canadian North, Calm Air International LP and Air Canada. Flights from the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut require connections through major airports such as Edmonton, Toronto, or Montreal.

## Toronto

In 2016, there were 46,320 Indigenous peoples living in Toronto. Of this, 685 identified as Inuit, representing 1.5% of the total Indigenous population in Toronto (StatsCan 2018g). Of Toronto’s Inuit population, 365 identified as female, representing approximately 53% of the total Inuit population in the city. Demographic statistics regarding gender-diverse individuals living in Toronto are not publicly available.

Available shelters and safe spaces for women-identifying people in Toronto include:

- The Redwood;
- Street Haven;
- Nellie's;
- YWCA Arise Shelter;
- Red Door Family Shelter;
- Interval House;
- Anduhyaun Emergency Shelter;
- Yorktown Family Services;
- Fatima House;
- Mary Sheffield House;
- North York Women's Shelter;
- Sistering;
- Aurora House;
- Ernestine's Women's Shelter;
- Yellow Brick House;
- Nisa Homes;
- Women's Habitat; and
- Sakeenah Homes.

Like most other urban centres, many services for individuals seeking safety and security in Toronto are short-term emergency shelters. An exception to this is the Mary Sheffield House which provides women with longer-term transitional housing. The Anduhyaun Emergency Shelter seems to be the only emergency service for Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, although it does not appear any services and supports in Toronto are Inuit-specific. Sistering and the Aurora House provide emergency shelter for women, trans, two-spirit, non-binary, and gender-diverse individuals who are single or those with children who are currently experiencing abuse and need immediate shelter.

Geographically, Inuit from Nunavut and Nunavik are the most likely to seek access to safety and shelter in Toronto. For Inuit travelling from communities in Inuit Nunangat to Toronto, air travel is the only option. Flights are available for Inuit travelling from communities in Nunavut via Canadian North, costing

approximately \$650–\$1,000 one-way. For Inuit traveling from other parts of Inuit Nunangat, they must travel to Toronto by connecting through other major airports, such as Yellowknife, Edmonton, Montreal, or St. John’s, costing upwards of \$1,000–\$2,000 for a one-way ticket.

## Ottawa-Gatineau

In 2016, 38,120 people identified as Indigenous in Ottawa-Gatineau. Of this, 1,280 identified as Inuit, representing 3.3% of the total Indigenous population in Ottawa-Gatineau (StatsCan 2018d). Moreover, 700 individuals identified as female and Inuit, representing approximately 55% of the total Inuit population living in the region. Demographic statistics regarding gender-diverse individuals living in Ottawa-Gatineau are not publicly available.

Shelters and safe spaces for women-identifying people in Ottawa-Gatineau include:

- Tungasuvvingat Inuit;
- Minwaashin Lodge;
- Maison d’Hébergement Pour Elles Des Deux Vallées;
- Maison d’amitié;
- Mason Univers-Vers-Femmes;
- L’Autre Chez Soi;
- Nelson House of Ottawa-Carleton;
- Interval House of Ottawa;
- Sakeenah Homes;
- Harmony House; and
- Le Centre Mechtilde.

The majority of services and supports available for women seeking safety in Ottawa-Gatineau are short-term emergency shelters. Tungasuvvingat Inuit provides several services tailored to Inuit women and children. For example, the organization employs a Violence Against Women Counsellor and Advocate who provides culturally-specific counselling services, support and referral services for Inuit women aged 16 years and older, and they provide supports to Inuit age 13 years and older who have experienced sexual exploitation through the Alluriarniq program. Tungasuvvingat Inuit also connects Inuit of all genders who have experienced violence and/or homelessness with long-term shelter. Finally, they provide targeted supports for families and children through the Ilagiaqatigiitsiarniq program (formerly Family Well-Being).

Aside from Tungasuvvingat Inuit, there is a limited focus on Inuit-specific services in Ottawa-Gatineau. The Minwaashin Lodge provides services for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women facing violence broadly. There is an apparent lack of services that are geared towards gender diverse individuals.

Inuit travelling to Ottawa-Gatineau to seek safety and shelter are the most likely to travel from communities in Nunavut or Nunavik. Flights are available from Iqaluit to Ottawa via Canadian North, costing approximately \$450–\$1,200 for a one-way ticket depending on where a traveler is departing from in Nunavut. All other communities in Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, and Inuvialuit must connect through major airports such as Montreal, Toronto, or Edmonton, costing approximately \$800–\$2,500 one-way.

## Montreal

In 2016, there were 34,745 Indigenous peoples living in Montreal. Of this, 975 identified as Inuit, representing approximately 3% of the total Indigenous population in Montreal (StatsCan 2018c). Of Montreal's Inuit population, 615 identified as female, representing approximately 63% of the total Inuit population in the city. Demographic statistics regarding gender-diverse individuals living in Montreal are not publicly available.

Available shelters and safe spaces for women-identifying people in Montreal include:

- Dauphinelle;
- Maison du Réconfort;
- L'Escale pour Elle;
- Maison Secours aux Femmes de Montréal;
- Auberge Transition;
- Maison Flora Tristan;
- Auberge Shalom Pour Femmes;
- Auberge Madeleine;
- Maison Grise de Montreal;
- Multi Femmes;
- Le Chaînon;
- Assistance aux Femmes de Montréal;
- Maison Alice-Desmarais;

- Carrefour pour Elle;
- Maison de Lina;
- Les Maisons de l’Ancre; and
- Maison le Prélude;
- Maison l’Esther;
- Maison Dalauze

Montreal appears to have the most services for individuals seeking safety from violence out of southern urban centres. The majority of services are short-term emergency shelters, while some longer-term transitional housing services are available through Auberge Transition. Like Ottawa-Gatineau, many services available for individuals fleeing violence in Montreal emphasize the needs of the francophone community. There is a limited focus on services for Inuit, and especially those who are gender diverse.

Inuit seeking safety and shelter in Montreal are most likely to travel from communities in Nunavik or Nunatsiavut. Flights are available via Inuit Air from each of the 14 communities in the Nunavik region, costing approximately \$1,000–\$2,000 for a one-way ticket. For Inuit traveling to Montreal from other regions of Inuit Nunangat, they must connect through other major airports, costing upwards of \$1,500 for a one-way ticket.

## Halifax

According to the 2016 census, there were 15,810 Indigenous peoples living in Halifax, making up 4% of the city’s population. Of the Indigenous population, 405 were Inuit, representing 2.5% of the total Indigenous population in Halifax (StatsCan 2018c). Of the Inuit population in Halifax, 220 identified as female, representing approximately 54% of the city’s Inuit population. Demographic statistics regarding gender-diverse individuals in Halifax are not publicly available.

Available shelters and safe spaces for women-identifying people in Halifax include:

- Adsum for Women and Children;
- Bryony House — Halifax Transition House Association; and
- Alice House.

The Adsum for Women and Children and the Alice House both provide short-term emergency shelter for women fleeing violence, while the Bryony House provides longer-term transitional housing for women



and their children. There are no safe spaces in Halifax that tailor services specifically to Inuit and gender diverse individuals.

Inuit traveling to Halifax to seek safety and shelter are most likely to travel from communities in the Nunatsiavut region. For Inuit seeking safety in Halifax, there are no direct flights that connect Halifax to communities in Inuit Nunangat. Inuit traveling from Nunatsiavut must connect to Halifax through St John's, costing approximately \$1,000–\$1,500 for a one-way ticket. Inuit travelling from other parts of Inuit Nunangat must connect through major airports such as Edmonton, Toronto, or Montreal, costing upwards of \$1,000 one-way.

## St. John's

In 2016, there were 6,690 Indigenous peoples living in St. John's. Of this, 730 identified as Inuit, representing approximately 11% of the total Indigenous population in St. John's (StatsCan 2018f). Of St. John's Inuit population, 390 identified as female, representing approximately 53% of the total Inuit population in the city. Demographic statistics regarding gender-diverse individuals living in St. John's are not publicly available.

Available shelters and safe spaces for women-identifying people in St. John's include:

- Kirby House;
- Marguerite's Place Supportive Housing; and
- St. John's Women's Centre.

The services in St. John's are short-term and provide emergency shelter and basic support services only. There is a lack of longer-term transitional housing support in St. John's, along with services that are geared towards Inuit and gender diverse individuals.

Inuit traveling to St. John's to seek safety and shelter are most likely to travel from communities in the Nunatsiavut region. For Inuit seeking safety in St. John's, there are no direct flights from communities in Nunatsiavut. Inuit travelling from communities in Nunatsiavut must connect through Happy Valley-Goose Bay, costing approximately \$800–\$1,000 for a one-way ticket. For Inuit travelling from other regions in Inuit Nunangat, they must connect to St. John's through major airports including Toronto, Montreal, or Halifax which can cost upwards of \$1,200–\$2,000 for a one-way ticket.

## Gap Analyses and Needs

The following section reviews the preliminary gaps and needs identified during the literature review for Inuit women, gender diverse individuals, and their children when seeking safety and security. Broad findings include:

There is limited access and availability of resources and supports for Inuit living in smaller and more remote northern communities. There are several communities in Inuit Nunangat that do not seem to have dedicated emergency shelters or safe spaces available for Inuit women seeking safety and security, such as Sachs Harbour and Ivujivik, and among other communities. However, work is underway to increase access to these services. For example, as NTI has invested \$11 million into the development of shelters in Nunavut.

There are significant affordability and accessibility barriers for Inuit that must travel between communities in Inuit Nunangat or to southern urban centres to access shelters or safe spaces. Nearly all communities require travel by air, and flights costs are extremely high and risk being inaccessible for many women.

Very few services exist in Inuit Nunangat or in southern urban centres that are both Inuit-specific and tailored towards gender diverse individuals. A key gap includes the need for more resources and supports that are inclusive for people that identify as Inuit and gender diverse.

Urban Inuit may face significant barriers with accessing resources and supports, including Inuit-specific services and encountering language barriers. For example, as Inuit women from Nunavik are likely to be referred to Montreal and possible frustrations they may encounter include not having Inuit supports because services are often in English or French, not Inuktitut.

## Conclusion

The literature review has revealed that several shelters and safe spaces exist in Inuit Nunangat, although there are limited services in smaller and more remote communities in the North. In many cases, Inuit women, gender diverse individuals, and their children are required to travel to seek safety, whether it is to other communities in Inuit Nunangat or to urban centres in the south. Needing to travel to other communities to access services can come at an extremely high cost that is inaccessible to many families, in addition to presenting language barriers for some Inuit. As noted, however, these findings are preliminary and based on information that is publicly available. The next phase of this project will involve a series of engagements and interviews with Inuit women and gender diverse individuals, as well as service providers, that will gather their perspectives on access to supports and services. These findings will be further built out based on what is heard through the stories of Inuit women and gender-diverse individuals seeking safety and security.

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