

**Engaging Inuit Men and Boys in Ending  
Violence Against Women and Girls**

**A Gender-Based Analysis**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In its ongoing efforts to reduce violence and abuse in Inuit communities, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada has initiated the project Engaging Men and Boys in Ending Violence Against Women and Girls. The aim of the project is to contribute an innovative, culturally-specific approach that engages men and boys in the reduction of violence, and supports Inuit communities to build their knowledge, develop culturally competent programs and services and challenges current attitudes and behaviours.

While detailed statistics that describe the extent and nature of violence against women and girls across Inuit Nunangat (Inuit homelands) are lacking, we do know, for example:

- the rate of violent crime in Inuit communities is nine times higher than for Canada overall;
- violent crime is twice as common in Inuit communities with open access to alcohol;
- the police-reported rate of intimate partner violence in Nunavut (where 85% of the population is Inuit) is three times higher than in any of the provinces;
- eight out of 10 victims of intimate partner violence in Nunavut are women;
- women are more likely than men to be severely injured as a result of spousal violence; and
- one-half of Inuit women and one-quarter of Inuit men in Nunavut reported having experienced severe sexual abuse during childhood.

We also know that:

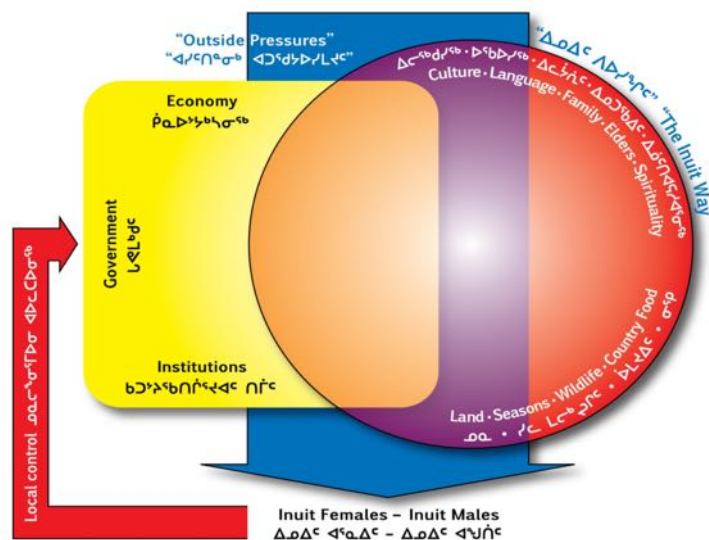
- risk factors for an Inuk woman being a victim of spousal abuse include: being under 24 years or over 64 years old, having been a childhood victim or witness of abuse, being pregnant, and leaving/threatening to leave a relationship; and
- risk factors for an Inuk man abusing his female partner include: being under 24 years of age, being long-term unemployed, having a low formal education, being a heavy drinker or being exposed to violence against his mother.

Gender-based analysis (GBA) tools are used to examine the differences between women/girls and men/boys, while also taking into account the effects of education, language, geography, culture and income, in order to promote equality (Status of Women Canada, 2013). Inuit-specific culturally relevant GBA is a way of gathering and using information about the different needs and social experiences of women and girls and men and boys in a way that reflects a particular culture.

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2012, p. 2

This paper uses the following Inuit Gender-Based Analysis Framework to examine the effects of historical and contemporary realities on violence against women and girls. The Framework focuses on key aspects of “The Inuit Way” – traditional life and values (red circle) as well as “Outside Pressures” related to historical events (blue arrow), and more recent influences such as the economy, government and institutions (yellow square) on Inuit males and females. After considering each of these factors, the final step is to consider all of these factors in how Inuit males and females may be affected by an issue, and how they can influence contemporary life through greater local control (red arrow).

### Inuit Gender-Based Analysis Framework



Applying this Framework, and consulting numerous sources on Inuit history and contemporary life, the following analysis of gender-based factors in violence against women and girls was completed.

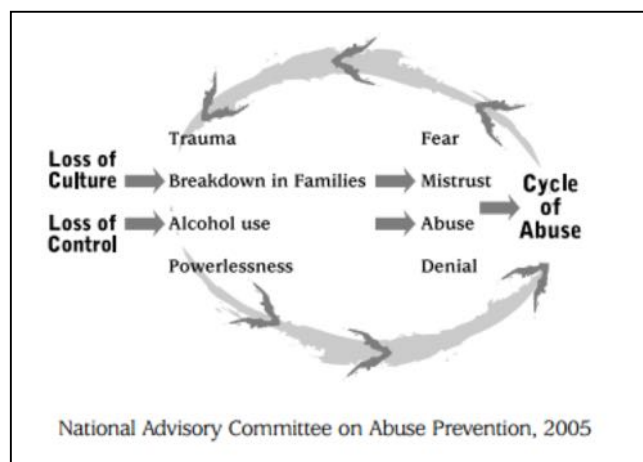
### **Summary of Inuit Gender-Based Factors in Violence Against Women and Girls**

<b><i>Traditional Life</i></b>	<b><i>Outside Pressures Transition</i></b>	<b><i>Contemporary Living</i></b>
Gender roles are complementary but flexible, and relatively egalitarian (women and men considered equal). Both men's and women's skills are essential and valued	Inuit lands are colonized by a male dominated Western society; Inuit men are initially given a higher status and support for the idea that men are superior to women, which also traps both genders in more rigid roles	The wage-based economy supplants harvesting and traditional activities, and high levels of unemployment among men create inactivity and isolation, lower family incomes and dependence on government support
Great deal of interdependence required for survival; kinship bonds are strong	Settlement significantly and rapidly disrupts the traditional economy, social values and structures, and relationships between women and men	Many women work full-time and also have primary responsibility for child care and support for the extended family, creating stress and family tensions
Fathers prepared sons and mothers prepared daughters for adulthood based on strong moral values and respect for others as well as distinct gender-based responsibilities	The collapse of the fur trade and scarcity of game erodes men's provider role and creates scarcity and starvation	Formal government structures are primarily based on external values and beliefs, laws and regulations, and have replaced the role of elders and families in transferring cultural values and solving problems
Decision-making is collaborative and solving problems is essential to community cohesion	Large communities result in more opportunities for conflict, weaker connections among residents, less social cohesion, and a more individualized society	Men hold most of the leadership positions in governments and communities, and often are uncomfortable addressing violence prevention and treatment services
A strong ethic of non-interference with others provides a degree of freedom and independence in small tight-knit groups	Settled community life affects men more negatively than women as women's skills and abilities are more adaptable to this environment	Current educational structures and methods are less focused on moral development and favour women's learning styles; the high dropout rate is not preparing youth for participation in the current economy
Law and justice is informal but effective in maintaining order and preventing the most harmful behaviours	Christian values at the time favour men's role as head of the family. Family violence and child sexual abuse are hidden in order to preserve families	Policing and justice systems are seen to tolerate violence and favour offenders over victims; victim services are lacking
Violence against women and girls occurs but is controlled for the sake of social harmony, although some women are trapped in unhealthy relationships	Residential school education separates children from their parents, eroding Inuit values and transfer of knowledge. Children are exposed to corporal punishment and sexual abuse	Mental health counselling and treatment services are inadequate to deal with current issues and past trauma. Men are less likely to seek out counselling and access to the land as a healing influence is more restricted than in the past
A healthy, intimate relationship with the land, wildlife and plants is maintained; the land holds spiritual and healing elements		
Men and women work together to ensure the family survived – men have a strong provider role and women are responsible for family and camp life	Introduction of alcohol disinhibits behaviour and results in addictions and a rise in violence, especially among men	

As this table shows, many traditional, transitional and contemporary factors are thought to contribute to the high levels of violence against Inuit women and girls. While an understanding of these factors is important to facilitate changes in societal responses to violence as well as individual behaviour, they are not intended to explain away violence or condone abusive behaviour. Similarly, addressing triggers for violence such as intoxication, relationship conflict, emotional and psychological abuse by partners, and individual stressors is as important as looking at the historical roots of gender conflict and violence. All perpetrators of violence need to be held accountable for their actions through the criminal justice system.

The *National Strategy to Prevent Abuse in Inuit Communities* (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006b) provides a view of the Inuit cycle of trauma and fear that also contributes the dynamics of violence, while acknowledging that the circumstances of each abuse situation are more complex.

**Root Causes of Abuse  
from the National Strategy to Prevent Abuse in Inuit Communities**



According to this model, the loss of culture and tradition, and a loss of control over individual and collective destiny leads to personal trauma, breakdowns in families, alcohol use and feelings of powerlessness. This in turn creates fear, mistrust, abuse of others and denial of the problem. In spite of many gains in knowledge, changing attitudes and service improvements, the cycle of abusive and unhealthy relationships continues in Inuit families and communities. Combining an analysis of Inuit gender roles and experiences with this understanding of the cycle

of abuse provides opportunities to develop prevention approaches that engage both men and women in change.

Male engagement is a critical element in strategies to reduce violence against women and girls.

This paper highlights the following actions to address gender-based contributors to violence:

- exploring new models for men supporting each other in a reduction in violence;
- supporting men to become counsellors, mental health workers and addictions service providers;
- providing opportunities for men and boys to understand how traditional roles have changed and to regain pride and self-esteem;
- expanding inter-generational on-the-land programs;
- conducting research to determine the protective factors that prevent many abuse victims and child witnesses from becoming abusers;
- targeting high-risk males for prevention and intervention programs;
- beginning education about healthy relationships and intolerance for violence in early childhood;
- breaking the silence on abuse and speaking out in support of victims;
- making structural changes to diversify and develop the economy; reform the education system; improve policing and justice responses; fund mental health, healing and trauma services; and work toward gender parity in elected positions; and
- reinforcing traditional values related to healing and working together.

Violence in general, and violence against women and girls in particular remains a pervasive and serious problem in Inuit communities. By building awareness of the traditional influences, transitional pressures and contemporary realities for men and women we are in a better position to address these issues. Similar to other Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada initiatives, the project Engaging Men and Boys in Ending Violence Against Women and Girls will create tools and support communities in reducing destructive levels of violence and abuse.





## INTRODUCTION

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada has been active in prevention of child sexual abuse, family violence and violence against women and girls since its inception in 1984. Pauktuutit's family and community focus has always reflected the need to address issues and priorities of men as part of the solution to high levels of abuse and violence in Inuit communities. Its project Engaging Men and Boys in Ending Violence Against Women and Girls will contribute an innovative, culturally-specific approach to engaging Inuit men and boys in reducing violence against women and girls. By reviewing and adapting existing programs, and integrating elements of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ), or Inuit traditional knowledge, Pauktuutit's work will support Inuit communities to build their knowledge, develop culturally competent programs and services, and challenge current attitudes and behaviours that continue to contribute to the highest rates of violence in Canada. The project also will provide tools to assist community groups and agencies to work with abusers as well as reach at-risk groups such as young men and previous offenders.

This paper examines violence against Inuit women and girls from an Inuit gender-based perspective, that is, it looks at both similarities and differences between males and females in relation to traditional roles and values, historical impacts and contemporary experience that contribute to present day abuse and violence. The aim of the paper is to increase understanding in Inuit communities of the unique root causes and experiences that contribute to violence against women and girls; and suggest ways of addressing violence that takes these realities into consideration.

### **The Gender-Based Nature of Violence and Abuse**

Detailed statistics that describe the extent and nature of violence against Inuit women and girls across Inuit Nunangat (Inuit homelands) are lacking, however, we know that incidents of violence in general are high in Inuit communities, and women are more likely to be the victims and men to be the perpetrators of interpersonal violence. For example, data collected by the Qanuippitali Inuit Health Survey in Nunavut in 2007-08 indicate that:

- one-half (52 per cent) of women and almost one-half (46 per cent) of men reported having experienced at least one form of physical violence as an adult; and
- about one in four (27 per cent) women and one in 20 (5 per cent) men reported having experienced some form of forced sexual activity as an adult (Galoway & Saudny, 2012).

***About one-half of adult Inuit men and women  
have experienced physical violence as an adult***

A study of police-reported crime in 38 Inuit communities<sup>1</sup> in 2010 found that from 2006 to 2008, more than 10,000 violent crimes were reported to police, and the authors acknowledged, like many other analysts, that many criminal incidents are not reported to police. This rate of violent crime, at 90 incidents for every 1,000 residents, is nine times higher than the rate for Canada overall, while the rates of sexual assault and common assault in particular are 12 times higher (Charron, Penney, & Senécal, 2010).

***The rate of violent crime in Inuit communities  
is nine times higher than for Canada overall***

Men are more likely to be accused of violent crime than women. In the study described above, men aged 15 to 29 years were accused of 235 incidents of violence per 1,000 persons and the rate for those aged 30 to 44 years was 218 incidents per 1,000. By comparison, women aged 15 to 29 were the accused at a rate of 103 incidents per 1,000 individuals. (Charron, Penney, & Senécal, 2010)

Women in Inuit communities are 11 times more likely than Canadian women in general to be the victims of (reported) violent crime, and also are almost twice as likely to be victims compared to men in the same communities. Young women aged 15 to 29 were the victims in one-half (51 per cent) of violent incidents reported to police in this period. Another striking finding is that the rate of violent crime in communities with open access to alcohol was twice that in communities where alcohol is officially prohibited, and therefore less accessible if not completely absent (Charron et al., 2010).

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<sup>1</sup> Excluding Rigolet, Newfoundland & Labrador, and 14 communities in Nunavik because of data limitations.

***Violent crime is twice as common in Inuit communities  
with open access to alcohol***

Violence against family members is a too common occurrence in the territories. In 2011 in Nunavut, there were 1,097 reported violent offences against family members (Sinha, 2013), with the Canadian census reporting 7,780 families in Nunavut that year (Statistics Canada, 2012).

***The police-reported rate of intimate partner violence in Nunavut  
is three time higher than in any of the provinces***

***Eight out of 10 victims of intimate partner violence in Nunavut are women***

Police-reported rates of intimate partner violence in Nunavut are more than three times higher than those in any of the provinces, and eight out of 10 victims are women (Sinha, 2013). However, a national survey of transition homes in 2010 indicated that only one-third (33 per cent) of abused women in Nunavut shelters had reported the most recent abusive incident to the police (Statistics Canada, 2011).

According to the General Social Survey conducted in 2004, 28 per cent of women and 17 per cent of men in Nunavut in a current or previous marital or common-law relationship reported being the victim of some form of spousal violence in the five years preceding the survey (across the territories in general, about equal proportions of men and women reported being a victim of spousal violence) (Sinha, 2013).

Female victims of spousal violence are twice as likely as males to suffer the more severe forms of spousal violence, such as being beaten, choked, threatened with or having a gun or knife used against them, or sexually assaulted (57 per cent compared with 23 per cent in the three northern territories). Women are also twice as likely to be injured as a result of the violence (59 per cent versus 32 per cent). One in three victims in the territories (37 per cent) reported that their partner had been drinking at the time of the violent incident. (Sinha, 2013)

***Women are more likely than men to be severely injured***

### ***as a result of spousal violence***

Levels of childhood abuse in Inuit communities also are high. The rate of family violence against children and youth aged 0 to 17 years in Nunavut is seven times the average for Canada. While gender-based statistics are not available for the territories, in Canada as a whole, girls are 56 per cent more likely to be victims of violence by family members than boys (Sinha, 2013).

### ***One-half of Inuit women and one-quarter of Inuit men in Nunavut reported having experienced severe sexual abuse during childhood***

Data collected by the Qanuippitali Inuit Health Survey in Nunavut indicate that:

- one-third (31 per cent) of respondents experienced severe physical abuse as children; and
- one-half (52 per cent) of women and one-quarter (22 per cent) of men reported having experienced severe sexual abuse during childhood (Galoway & Saudny, 2012).

### **Factors Contributing to Risk of Abuse**

While more research is needed on the particular risk factors for abuse among Inuit women and men, an overview of woman abuse in Canada identified evidence-based factors that can increase a woman's vulnerability to being abused in a relationship. Multiple factors create an even higher risk. Risk factors for women include:

- being under 24 years or over 64 years old;
- having been victimized in childhood or exposed to violence against their mothers;
- being pregnant; and
- leaving/threatening to leave the relationship.

Also, women in common-law relationships are at higher risk of abuse than women who are married, and the presence of weapons in the home is associated with lethal violence (multiple sources cited in Hart & Jamieson, 2002).

***Risk factors for an Inuk woman being a victim of spousal abuse include:  
being under 24 year or over 64 years old, having been a childhood victim  
or witness of abuse, being pregnant, and leaving/threatening to leave a relationship***

Risk of abuse also increases when a boyfriend or husband is under 24 years old, is unemployed (long term), has low formal education, is a heavy drinker, or was exposed to violence against his mother (Hart & Jamieson, 2002).

***Risk factors for an Inuk man abusing his female partner include:  
being under 24 years of age, being long-term unemployed, having a low  
formal education, being a heavy drinker or being exposed to violence against his mother***

Personal history of abuse is clearly an important risk factor. In a study of family violence and sexual assault from 1999 to 2004 in the territories, data indicate that over two-thirds of First Nations, Inuit and Métis sexual assault offenders, and over three-quarters of family violence offenders likely had suffered a personal history of abuse (Paletta, 2008). However, the question remains, why do some survivors of abuse go on to abuse others, and others do not?

The remainder of this paper describes the Inuit Gender-Based Analysis Framework, then presents women's and men's perspectives and experiences related to Inuit traditional gender roles, family and community life, effects of significant outside pressures, and realities of contemporary life. The concluding section examines these findings in relation to violence against women and girls, with particular attention to ways in which men and boys can become more engaged in preventing gender-based violence.

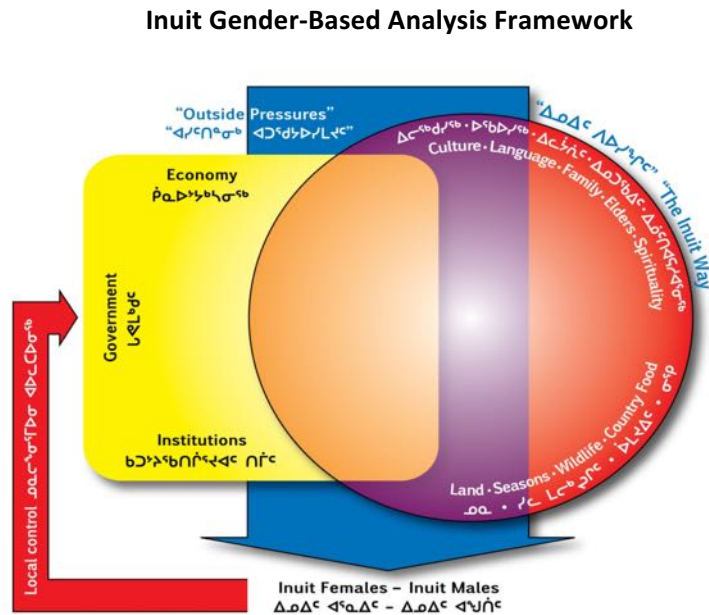
## INUIT GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS – THE FRAMEWORK

Gender-based analysis (GBA) and more recently gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) are analytical tools to examine the differences between women/girls and men/boys, while also taking into account the effects of education, language, geography, culture and income, in order to promote equality (Status of Women Canada, 2013). Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada began using gender-based analysis in 2006 as a way to understand both similar and different effects of

policies and programs on Inuit women and men. The organization developed an Inuit-specific approach that takes into account the effects of culture and history on the experiences of men and women.

Inuit-specific culturally relevant GBA is a way of gathering and using information about the different needs and social experiences of women and girls and men and boys in a way that reflects a particular culture.

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2012, p. 2



The Inuit Gender-Based Analysis Framework takes into account key aspects of Inuit traditional life and values (red circle), including culture, language, family life, elders and spirituality, as well as land, seasons, wildlife and country food. “Outside Pressures” relate to historical events (blue arrow), and more recent influences – the economy, government and institutions such as schools, healthcare, the justice system, etc. (yellow square). After considering each of these factors, the final step is to consider all of these factors in how Inuit males and females may be affected by an issue, and how they can influence contemporary life through greater local control (red arrow). The intent of the analysis is to create more equitable outcomes for all.

## THE INUIT WAY – CULTURAL AND LAND-BASED INFLUENCES

Inuit have lived as an evolving Indigenous culture in the Arctic for thousands of years, developing technology for a sustainable subsistence economy; creating effective governance and decision-making processes; and maintaining family and community values and structures that provided coherence and continuity, as well as preserving complex spiritual beliefs and codes of behaviour. In Inuit culture, gender roles are distinct but flexible, and through history, women and men have worked closely together to ensure the survival of their families and communities.

### **Culture, Family, Community**

#### ***Family is the Central Institution***

Traditional Inuit life revolved around the immediate and extended family. Family units usually included a husband, wife, their children and possibly other relatives such as grandparents and single or widowed uncles and aunts and their children. Extended families were comprised of multiple family groups that travelled together and formed hunting camps. Generally, women and men worked cooperatively to support the family, discussing issues and making decisions together (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006a; Williamson, 2006a). Children were highly valued and “parented” by the extended family and community in that everyone took responsibility for transmitting values, guiding behaviour and keeping children safe.

As with many traditional cultures, in the past marriages were arranged by parents as a way to form alliances between families and to form stronger unions, based on the practical wisdom of older adults, which would benefit all of the families. While these unions had a practical purpose, they also could trap women in an unwanted marriage, which could be difficult to escape, even if it was abusive (Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993b).



### ***Gender Roles are Complimentary***

Traditional Inuit male and female roles were complementary and generally mutually respectful (Williamson, 2006b; Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association, 1991), and revolved around family responsibilities. Men had primary authority outside the home and were responsible for harvesting game, making tools and weapons, constructing shelters, tending the sled dogs, and looking out for the families' general welfare and safety.

The husband was considered a good man if he was a good provider, industrious, modest, generous and generally behaved according to the Inuit ideal of adult behaviour.

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006a, p. 22

Fathers were actively involved in parenting both male and female children, and were responsible for passing on all their skills to their sons, or if there were no sons, a daughter or daughters, who would then join the men in hunting. Similarly, men with an interest in sewing could take up that activity.

Women had primary authority in the home, with the main responsibility for childcare (with help from older daughters); plant and berry gathering; food preparation; making clothes, tents and other gear; and maintaining the home (Pauktuutit Inuit Women if Canada, 2006a; Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association, 2001).

There is some disagreement on the extent to which women made or influenced decisions in the hunting camps, with some sources indicating they had significant influence or equal decision making (and when all hunters were away from camp, a woman leader made decisions) (Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association, 1991). Other sources say that important decisions that affected the whole community were made by men with input from community members, and with the greatest weight given to (female and male) elders (Williamson, 2006b).

### ***Community Cohesion and Harmony***

Community formations changed with the seasons and in response to shifting alliances and tensions. Kinship bonds were strong among extended families. During the summer, smaller groups would travel and hunt together; in the winter, multiple family groups would congregate in larger camps, which, however, rarely grew to more than 50 people. In community life, women interacted primarily with other women, and men with men.

This form of community organization required a great deal of harmony to operate effectively. Discord and tension could disrupt the entire group, affecting its welfare and even survival.

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006a, p. 30

Essential individual skills and attributes for a strong community included patience, the ability to solve problems or if they couldn't be solved, to accept what could not be changed, an approach that some now see as passive or fatalistic. In traditional culture, it was considered childish to show anger or frustration, which could be dealt with instead through physical activity and time spent with others. Men more rarely showed their feelings compared to women.

Another strong traditional value was that of non-interference. As long as individuals were not a threat to themselves or others, they had the right to make their own decisions and follow their own paths. This extended to healing or counselling relationships which were supportive but non-directive. Children also were allowed a great deal of latitude in behaviour, and if needed, correction was gentle, minimal and never physical. Some attribute the peace generally achieved in the camps to the value of non-interference. In a situation where people were obliged for survival to live very close to each other, at times for extended periods, efforts were made to minimize points of conflict and abuses of others' rights (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006a).

Clearly, gender-based violence occurred in traditional Inuit society, but there is unanimous agreement that it was much less prevalent than in the present day (Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993b; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006b; Billson, 2006), and that

attitudes against violence were much stronger, although some women did feel trapped in unhealthy relationships because of family pressure or lack of alternatives (Levan, 2003).

### ***Law and Justice is Informal but Effective***

In traditional times, there was no formal authority to address bad behaviour and the whole community was expected to help maintain order through common values, beliefs and taboos. Elders and respected adults could be asked to provide guidance and intervention if needed. In the small hunting camps, problems between men and women were easy to detect, and other adults would intervene if they believed a woman or her children was in danger.

The effectiveness of the traditional Inuit justice system is attributed to values that were intensively taught to children and reinforced throughout adulthood, and the respect and authority given to elders (Bonesteel, 2006; Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993b). Violence was dealt with through customary law, which focused not so much on punishment of the offender and justice for the victim, but the return to harmony for the family and community. The circumstances of the incident and those involved were taken into account. Violence against any community member would generally be dealt with swiftly and effectively, as suited to the crime and the willingness of the offender to take responsibility for his or her actions. It would begin with admonishments and counselling, and progress through to shaming, social exclusion and exile from the community (Levan, 2003; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006a; Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993b).

### **Land, Wildlife, Traditional Food**

Traditional Inuit life was intimately connected to the vast land that extended families and hunting groups lived and travelled on, moving with the seasons and in order to harvest animals needed for survival.

### ***A Land-Based Economy***

Historically, the survival of Inuit depended solely on the land and waters and the wildlife that they provide. The relationship between the Inuit and the land was one, like a newborn baby to her mother.

Inuit men and women have always been intimately connected to the land – men through their primary role as hunter and provider of sea and land mammals, fish and birds as the main food sources for the family, and women in their role in gathering berries, plants, seaweed, etc. for food, and medicinal plants and animal parts for healing (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006a; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2007).

Inuit hunters developed extensive knowledge of the animals they hunted, the geography of the hunting ranges, sea and ice conditions, weather and climate, and relied on this knowledge for safety and success in food procurement, passed down from generation to generation. Women, in turn, were proficient and innovative in producing clothing, travel and hunting equipment, without which hunters would not survive. Men spent the most time outside of the camps, but all family members were actively engaged in land-based activities throughout the year.

### ***Wildlife Provides Nutrition and Cultural Connections***

Inuit traditional food was well suited to sustaining an active population in a harsh environment. Harvested Arctic food provided all of the nutrients needed. A great deal of time, energy and skill needed to be devoted to hunting, providing a vital sense of productivity and mastery for men and boys (Williamson, 2006b; Inuit Tuttarvingat, 2008). The “provider” role is described as essential to the identity of Inuit boys and men. The ability to hunt successfully could mean the difference between abundance for the family and community (the harvest was and continues to be shared) and hunger or starvation.

Animal harvesting provided other essential cultural activities. According to Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, post-harvesting activities were important for strengthening family and community bonds, through food sharing and communal eating. Use of harvested materials in production of arts and crafts was an opportunity for creativity and for elders to pass on skills and knowledge to younger generations. Thus, traditional food use has deeper implications than nutrition, it is “holistically entwined with culture and personal identity, as well as with physical health” (2007, p. 9).

### ***The Land as “Healer”***

The relationship between Inuit and Inuit Nunangat (lands) is a key factor in Inuit mental wellness.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2008, p. 8

Inuit have always been intimately connected to their traditional lands – earth, sea, sky, plants, animals and the spirits that inhabit all of these dimensions. Being “out on the land” provides a sense of well-being to all Inuit (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2008). Men in particular have identified the importance of land-based activities to their mental wellness (Inuit Tuttarvingat, 2008).

Land based activities provide a safe and empowering environment for Inuit men to share experience and knowledge and build relationships.

Ilisavik Society, no date

Being on the land was considered one way to deal with anger, especially for men and boys (Kirmayer, Fletcher, Corin, & Boothroyd, 1994). Changes in climate resulting in more highly unpredictable weather and increasingly dangerous conditions on the land and sea ice prevent more Inuit from leaving their camps and communities today. According to one recent study, this has had a negative effect on mental health (Cunsolo Willox et al., 2012).

### **OUTSIDE PRESSURES – HISTORICAL EFFECTS**

To move forward on gender issues in the Canadian Arctic, policies and programs need to consider the adverse effects of colonialism and the residential school system on Inuit communities more broadly and the role of gender in Inuit society and the imbalance that exists in the relations between Inuit men and women more specifically.

Morgan, 2008, p. 5

## Contact

Initial contact between Inuit and Europeans was sporadic and infrequent, beginning with the early explorers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and gradually increasing into the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as Christian whalers, traders and missionaries spent longer periods of time, or settled, in the Arctic. Nevertheless, regular contact and real influence over Inuit traditional life by non-Inuit has only occurred in the last 100 years. Early interactions were trade-based, with Inuit supplying furs and other animal products in exchange for metal tools, rifles, food and clothing (Bonesteel, 2006). During these transitional times, it is thought that men initially benefitted more than women from contact with Europeans as a result of the fur trade, which at its height provided many trade goods. Once this boom ended through over-trapping, men lost this advantage.

In early transitional times, Western forces reached out to men first, and so they participated in the new economy (through fur trade) and learned English before women did. They felt the greatest impact of cultural change but also were promoted to higher ranked jobs according to Western values.

Williamson, 2006b, p. 63

The collapse of the fur trade, along with the depletion of other animals resulted in fewer trade goods and widespread starvation in the 1930s (Bonesteel, 2006), which may have eroded the male role as provider.

As much of the early contact was male to male, societal ideas of the time that women were property with few rights were played out in instances of European men “buying” Inuit wives in exchange for trade goods or food, and of Inuit women providing sexual services for food and family goods (Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993b).

## Settlement

Settlement, rather than contact, was the defining experience in Inuit colonization<sup>2</sup>. In order to more easily provide health services and western education (and to strengthen sovereignty claims to the far North), the Canadian Government encouraged Inuit to move to permanent settlements through the 1950s and 1960s. Settlement brought active governance by non-Inuit through Canadian laws and government regulations. Settlement ended the subsistence hunting, land-based Inuit lifestyle, and radically and rapidly altered its economic base, decision-making structures, community relationships, childrearing practices, family dynamics and gender roles (Qikiqtani Inuit Association, 2010; Bonesteel, 2006).

Arctic life has changed drastically in just two generations. The grandfathers of today's working-age men lived almost entirely off the land... For many men, adapting to the new social structure has been traumatic.

Inuit Tuttarvingat, 2008, p. 4

Living in larger communities created more competition for local food resources and the need to travel farther to find animal and plant foods. Houses were small, crowded and not suited to preparing and storing harvested animals. Inuit communities grew suddenly from about 50 family-related people to larger, more diverse groups of several hundred that remained in one place all year long (Bonesteel, 2006), requiring different social interactions and conflict management skills.

Settlement is often described as more disruptive to Inuit men than women, because men's primary role as hunter and provider was severely curtailed by the greater difficulty in harvesting game and inactivity through living in a permanent house with mechanization of many traditional tasks, whereas women's roles in the household and in raising children continued (Morgan, 2008; Williamson, 2006b). Women also already had the experience of living and working full-time in a community setting compared to hunters who spent time in smaller

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<sup>2</sup> Colonize: to settle among and establish control over the Indigenous people of an area, to appropriate a place for one's own use (Oxford On-line Dictionary, [www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/colonize?q=colonize](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/colonize?q=colonize))

hunting parties and on the land, making them better able to adapt to modern community life (Inuit Tuttarvingat, 2008).

### **The Christian Church**

Christian doctrine presented a new world view to Inuit, which often clashed with traditional beliefs and values. Missionaries discouraged many aspects of Inuit culture – shamanism in particular.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, no date

The first Christian missions were established in the eastern Arctic in the 1700s followed by both Protestant and Catholic outposts in the 1800s. By the 1920s, almost all Inuit had converted to Catholicism and Anglicanism (Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2008). These missions, headed by men, exhibited the conservative views of the Church at the time that men were superior to women. It can be argued that the Christian church in the 19<sup>th</sup> and into the late 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (the 1980s) tolerated violence against women in marriage through the view that the marriage should be preserved at all costs, and often held women responsible for sexual violence against them. Sexual abuse of both girls and boys inside and outside the family was considered shameful and was hidden by many priests and ministers (Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993a).

### **Western Education and Residential Schools**

Inuit children were first sent to residential schools in the 1860s, and by settlement in the 1950s-1960s almost all children attended residential or day schools following educational policies of the Canadian Government. By 1964, 75 per cent of Inuit children aged six to 15 attended school for most of the year, separated from their families, from community life, and from the land.

Inuit culture was not valued and not taught in Inuit schools at that time. Children were told their traditional diet was responsible for sickness and must be banned... Children were not allowed to speak Inuktitut in school... and over time many lost the ability to communicate with their own parents...

Stein, no date, p. 140



Negative effects of the residential school system are well documented: Inuit language, culture and spiritual beliefs were eroded; traditional education methods of daily hands-on knowledge transmission ended; traditional father-son and mother-daughter skills were lost; and story-telling, music, dance, craft and respect for the environment were interrupted (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, no date; Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2008; King, 2006). Residential schools have left a legacy of emotional trauma for women and men that has been linked to present-day addictions, mental health issues, parenting difficulties, deep shame and resentment among many survivors and their children and grandchildren. Experiences of corporal punishment, sexual and physical abuse introduced children to higher levels of violence than they previously had experienced.

Inter-generational ties and gender-based knowledge transmission were severely affected by children's long absences from the family, and it was difficult for children to re-integrate into the extended family and community.

Parents still had the values of keeping the family together, close connections with relatives. When we came back, we broke ties to that circle. We didn't learn the traditional values of being a man or a woman.

Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993b, p. 156

### **Introduction of Alcohol**

As noted by Korhonen (2004), alcohol was not used traditionally by Inuit, and while they were exposed to alcohol for 140 years since whalers introduced it in the Arctic, problem drinking and addiction did not arise until settlement in the 1950s-1960s (Qikiqtani Inuit Association, 2010). The rise in violence against women has exactly paralleled the rising availability of alcohol (Billson, 2006).

Alcohol abuse and addiction has become a serious problem in Inuit communities; and intoxication is linked to many acts of violence. Alcohol acts as a dis-inhibitor to otherwise unacceptable behaviour, can increase feelings of anger, and impairs judgement. Inuit have repeatedly identified alcohol and drug abuse as contributors to family violence and violence

against women (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006b; Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association, 1991).

## CONTEMPORARY LIFE – FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

The traditional role of Inuit elders as teachers, counsellors and dispute mediators has, to a large degree, been taken over by the schools, social services and the justice system... The primary importance of the hunting, trapping and fishing economy has become subservient to the wage economy and there has been an increase in problems related to lack of money: unemployment and the high cost of food and housing were not problems in the traditional economy.

Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association, 1991, p. 6

### **The Economy**

While the present-day northern economy is slowly growing and diversifying, the main sources of employment are government services, blue collar/trades and resource extraction industries. The employment rate in the wage economy of most Inuit communities remains low; and dependence on government transfers is high. As a result, poverty rates also are high. However, many Inuit still maintain ties to the traditional economy – subsistence hunting to support the family, and hunting, trapping and producing traditional art and crafts for income.

Only recently have Inuit women and men begun to have similar rates of participation in the wage economy, although men's incomes are on average \$10,000 higher than women's (Bougie, Kelly-Scott & Arriagada, 2013). Women's previous higher levels of employment have been attributed to lower levels of alcohol and drug abuse (Billson, 2006) and their more successful transition to community life (Morgan, 2008); these differences may now be diminishing. However, men still are more likely to be unemployed, that is, seeking but not finding work – 21% of men and 14% of women were unemployed in 2011 (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern

Development Canada, 2013). In addition to their paid employment, women continue to have primary responsibility for childcare and support to extended family members.

As a result of higher unemployment, availability of ready-made consumer goods, and reduced access to game, Inuit men are thought to be less active and more isolated than in the past (Williamson 2006a). While women's roles have expanded, men's roles have contracted, leading to more leisure (or unoccupied) time, increased frustration and stress (Condon and Astern, 1991, cited in Williamson, 2006b). This uncertainty of purpose and identity is particularly challenging for young men, who have been taught to appreciate the hardships of their parents or grandparents raised on the land, but feel weak themselves because they cannot succeed in either the traditional or the modern world (Wexler, 2006). The situation may worsen as climate change increasingly affects access to the land and harvesting activities (Cunsolo Willox et al., 2012; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Nasivvik Centre for Inuit Health and Changing Environments and National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2005) and the demands of contemporary life further reduce access to or enjoyment of traditional activities.

The shift away from the traditional land-based economy and to living in larger communities means that there is less interdependence between women and men for survival (Bonesteel, 2006) as well as less extended family investment in healthy couples and families. In the past, healthy spousal partnerships were more central to collective well-being. Greater differences in wealth and a more individualistic society also may be creating resentment and divisions within extended families.

The resource extraction (minerals, oil and gas) industry has the potential to increase employment and income among Arctic residents, however, there also can be negative impacts on women, men and families. For women, large mining developments have been associated with higher levels of sexual exploitation and family violence, strains on family life due to two-week on, two-week off shifts at remote sites. For men, mining can contribute to occupational and mental health problems, resulting in higher rates of alcohol abuse and violence, and disruptions to harvesting activities and community participation, as well as a "boom and bust" employment cycle (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2008; Buell, 2006).

## **Government**

External laws and regulations in the Inuit Nunangat have grown from fairly minimal with loose enforcement in the 1930s to wide application and a strong Western government presence today (Bonesteel, 2006). Inuit representative bodies in Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region are working to bring governance back in line with Inuit knowledge and values; and devolution of some federal and provincial authorities to regional and territorial governments simulates a return to Inuit self-government. Overall, however, current government structures have supplanted traditional methods of governing and decision-making, disempowering elders, leaders and prominent family groups (Bonesteel, 2006). Formal government also results in less application of Inuit traditional and cultural values in everyday life and to some extent becomes a substitute for personal and family responsibility for well-being.

While women hold many staff positions in government and community services, they continue to be underrepresented in public leadership and decision-making roles (Morgan, 2008). For example, in 2014 only three of 22 seats in the Nunavut legislature are held by women. Interestingly, in 1997 the Nunavut Implementation Committee advocated for a double representation system of one man and one woman from each consistency in the soon to be formed Nunavut Legislature, to be consistent with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. The idea was defeated by a small margin in a public vote – 57 per cent against (Williamson, 2006b).

It has been noted that many men in positions of leadership in government and community organizations are uncomfortable talking about and taking action on issues related to child sexual abuse, sexual assault and family violence. Possible reasons include their own victimization; their guilt and shame in having been perpetrators; or their thinking that these are “women’s issues” (Inuit Tuttarvingat, 2008; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005).

## **Institutions**

### ***Education***

It is estimated that 75 per cent of Inuit youth today are not completing high school (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2011) and low education is associated with many risk factors that can result in violence.

Low educational outcomes are associated with adverse social implications, including greater unemployment, greater numbers of youth entering the criminal justice system and greater incidences of illness and poverty. Existing socio-economic conditions will worsen unless more Inuit children graduate from high school with opportunities to succeed in post-secondary education.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2011, p. 7

Currently, only one-half (51%) of Inuit ages 25 to 64 have completed at least high school. While Inuit women and men aged 25 to 64 are equally likely to have postsecondary school qualifications (35%), women are more likely than men to have a college diploma, university certificate or university degree, while men are more likely to hold a trades certificate (Statistics Canada, 2013). Higher levels of education are directly related to employment and income, and the ability to participate fully in the Northern economy.

Western classroom-based education is the norm throughout the North, and although efforts are being made to include more Inuit cultural knowledge in the curriculum, some cultural experts believe that traditional parent-child transmission of knowledge has been disrupted and the school system does not do an adequate job of building character, teaching children how to use intellect to control emotion or instilling “essential beliefs and values about how to operate respectfully in the world” (Tagalik, 2010, p. 6). Similar to other areas of Canada, there is growing awareness that current teaching methods and the classroom itself does not provide an active and dynamic learning environment for boys.

### ***Policing and Justice***

In addition to high levels of unemployment among Inuit, the dominance of non-Inuit in the policing and justice system has contributed to disintegration of traditional community leadership and social control of behaviour.

While considerable progress has been made in improving police and justice system knowledge of Inuit culture and social issues, and responses to violence against women have improved, there are still many gaps in crime prevention and intervention and barriers to services, including inadequate levels of policing, infrequent circuit court visits, a lack of trust and belief in the justice system, language barriers and lack of support for victims. There still is a perception that the policing and justice systems favour offenders over victims, that male abusers are given too light sentences and little rehabilitation, and that the “system” still tolerates “domestic” violence (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2013; 2006b).

It has been noted that services for crime victims often operate in isolation from each other and lack a systematic and coordinated approach, while prevention of victimization is hindered by a lack of basic counselling services, inequitable distribution of resources, lack of trained staff, and little support for front-line workers (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006b).

According to some authors, Inuit women are more vulnerable to abuse of power and control because the traditional counselling/healing and community justice structures that protected them and affirmed their value have been taken away (Billson, 2006; Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993b; Pauktuutit Inuit Women’s Association, 1991) and the patriarchal (male-centred) values of western society supplanted the more egalitarian ones of traditional Inuit culture (Billson, 2006). However, many believe that the Western corrections system fails Inuit men as well.

Males are, in very significant numbers, reportedly angry, confused, ill educated and underemployed compared to their female Inuit peers, striking out at themselves and others, and locked in anti-social alcohol and drug abuse adaptations. There appears to be no effective justice system response to their behaviour and very few therapeutic resources have been targeted at this status group...

Clarmont, 1999, cited in Billson, 2006, p. 76

## ***Mental Health / Healing***

The Inuktitut meaning of “healing” is that you can speak of your thoughts and your feelings. When you can speak of your feelings, then you can stand strong.

Inuk healer/counsellor, quoted in the *National Strategy to Prevent Abuse in Inuit Communities*, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006, p. 8

Traditionally, Inuit dealt with emotional difficulties by talking to respected community leaders, elders and shamans, and spending time on the land. Inuit men interviewed in 2007 about their health issues and needs noted the importance for men to talk about and get support for their personal problems and mental health issues, but that it can be difficult for them to seek out services, which are in short supply and almost always delivered by women (Inuit Tuttarvingat, 2008). While women more often access counselling and support services, these services do not always meet their needs for safety or get at root causes for emotional issues.

There is a chronic and widespread lack of basic health and social services in most Inuit communities across the North, and mental health and addictions services are particularly lacking. Specialized services, for the most part, such as residential addictions programs and psychological and psychiatric treatment are only available in large northern or southern urban centres. In addition to the contemporary stressors such as addictions, housing shortages and severe crowding, unemployment, food insecurity, poverty, and erosion of cultural connections, many Inuit have not resolved past individual and collective traumas. These include forced attendance at residential schools, forced relocations of families and communities, removals to the south for tuberculosis treatment, and widespread famine (King, 2006; Qikiqtani Inuit Association, 2010; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2013; Bonesteel, 2006). The lack of community healing services means that many individuals, women and men, are struggling with multiple layers of unresolved trauma with nowhere to go for help. The consequences of these issues include the highest rates of violence and suicide in Canada.

## **APPLYING A GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS IN PREVENTING VIOLENCE**

## Summary of Inuit Gender Issues Contributing to Violence Against Women and Girls

The following chart summarizes key gender issues/experiences in Inuit traditional life, outside pressures resulting from contact and settlement, and the realities of contemporary living as they relate to violence against women and girls.

### Summary of Inuit Gender-Based Factors in Violence Against Women and Girls

<i>Traditional Life</i>	<i>Outside Pressures Transition</i>	<i>Contemporary Living</i>
Gender roles are complementary but flexible, and relatively egalitarian (women and men considered equal). Both men's and women's skills are essential and valued	Inuit lands are colonized by a male dominated Western society; Inuit men are initially given a higher status and support for the idea that men are superior to women, which also traps both genders in more rigid roles	The wage-based economy supplants harvesting and traditional activities, and high levels of unemployment among men create inactivity and isolation, lower family incomes and dependence on government support
Great deal of interdependence required for survival; kinship bonds are strong	Settlement significantly and rapidly disrupts the traditional economy, social values and structures, and relationships between women and men	Many women work full-time and also have primary responsibility for child care and support for the extended family, creating stress and family tensions
Fathers prepared sons and mothers prepared daughters for adulthood based on strong moral values and respect for others as well as distinct gender-based responsibilities	The collapse of the fur trade and scarcity of game erodes men's provider role and creates scarcity and starvation	Formal government structures are primarily based on external values and beliefs, laws and regulations, and have replaced the role of elders and families in transferring cultural values and solving problems
Decision-making is collaborative and solving problems is essential to community cohesion	Large communities result in more opportunities for conflict, weaker connections among residents, less social cohesion, and a more individualized society	Men hold most of the leadership positions in governments and communities, and often are uncomfortable addressing violence prevention and treatment services
A strong ethic of non-interference with others provides a degree of freedom and independence in small tight-knit groups	Settled community life affects men more negatively than women as women's skills and abilities are more adaptable to this environment	Current educational structures and methods are less focused on moral development and favour women's learning styles; the high dropout rate is not preparing youth for participation in the current economy
Law and justice is informal but effective in maintaining order and preventing the most harmful behaviours	Christian values at the time favour men's role as head of the family. Family violence and child sexual abuse are hidden in order to preserve families	Policing and justice systems are seen to tolerate violence and favour offenders over victims; victim services are lacking
Violence against women and girls occurs but is controlled for the sake of social harmony, although some women are trapped in unhealthy relationships	Residential school education separates children from their parents, eroding Inuit values and transfer of knowledge. Children are	
A healthy, intimate relationship with the land, wildlife and plants		



is maintained; the land holds spiritual and healing elements	exposed to corporal punishment and sexual abuse	Mental health counselling and treatment services are inadequate to deal with current issues and past trauma. Men are less likely to seek out counselling and access to the land as a healing influence is more restricted than in the past
Men and women work together to ensure the family survived – men have a strong provider role and women are responsible for family and camp life	Introduction of alcohol disinhibits behaviour and results in addictions and a rise in violence, especially among men	

Many traditional, transitional and contemporary factors contribute to the high levels of violence against Inuit women and girls. While an understanding of these factors is important to facilitate changes in societal response to violence as well as individual behaviour, they are not intended to explain away violence or condone abusive behaviour. Similarly, addressing triggers for violence such as intoxication, relationship conflict, emotional and psychological abuse by partners and individual stressors is as important as looking at the historical roots of gender conflict and violence. All perpetrators of violence need to be held accountable for their actions through the criminal justice system.

### Root Causes of Abuse

The *National Strategy to Prevent Abuse in Inuit Communities* (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006b) provides a view of the Inuit cycle of trauma and fear that contributes the dynamics of violence, while acknowledging that the circumstances of each abuse situation are more complex.

**Root Causes of Abuse  
from the National Strategy to Prevent Abuse in Inuit Communities**



According to this model, the loss of culture and tradition, and a loss of control over individual and collective destiny leads to trauma, breakdowns in families, alcohol use and feelings of powerlessness. This in turn creates fear, mistrust, abuse of others and denial of the problem. In spite of many gains in knowledge, changing attitudes and service improvements, the cycle of abusive and unhealthy relationships continues in Inuit families and communities. Combining an analysis of Inuit gender roles and experiences with this understanding of the cycle of abuse provides opportunities to develop prevention approaches that engage both men and women in change.

### **Engaging Men and Boys in Ending Violence**

Men and boys have an essential role in healing and change. Male engagement is a critical element in strategies to reduce violence against women and girls.

#### ***Peer Support and Counselling***

##### ***Explore new models for men supporting each other in a reduction in violence***

There is great power in Inuit men who have healed from their own victimization and from alcohol and drug addiction, who have been abusers themselves in the past but are no longer, or who have never been abusive, to educate and counsel other men and boys who are at risk of being abusive or violent to others. This type of peer-to-peer support is effective because the participants are able to reach a level of communication and understanding that is only possible through the sharing of similar experiences and values within a particular cultural and gender perspective. New models of supported lay (volunteer) counselling could be explored. Existing men's healing groups could be expanded to other communities.

We need each other to start dealing with our problems and I think that's the message that we should really try and get out there. It's "we need each other to start helping ourselves and our families and our communities."

Inuk man, quoted in *Inuit Men Talking About Health*, Inuit Tuttarvingat, 2008, p. 3

***Support men to become counsellors, mental health workers  
and addictions service providers***

Similarly, men should be further encouraged to become counsellors, mental health workers, addictions service providers and social workers so that men are available to seek professional help from other men. However, in the case of couples counselling and youth education about healthy relationships, combined gender groups and strong male and female educator teams likely would be most beneficial.

***Healing and Self-Esteem***

***Provide opportunities for men and boys to understand how traditional roles  
have changed and to regain pride and self-esteem***

All the men, regardless of age, emphasized the importance of creating a stronger male cultural identity through men's groups or land excursions. This, they said, could significantly boost Inuit men's sense of pride.

Inuit Tuttarvingat, 2008, p. 28

Inuit men and boys would benefit from more opportunities to regain a sense of pride and self-esteem related to their capabilities and contributions to contemporary life, through an understanding of how traditional roles have evolved and how the effects of colonization and settlement can be addressed in a healthy way. Opportunities for older and younger men, fathers and sons, and boys without fathers and male role models to spend time on the land and in harvesting activities would serve several purposes. It would continue to preserve and share traditional male knowledge, restore closer bonds between generations and ensure more boys and men have access to the healing capacity of the land.

## ***Expand inter-generational on-the-land programs***

### ***Building and Sharing Knowledge of Why Many Victims of Abuse Do Not Abuse Others***

#### ***Conduct research to determine the protective factors that prevent many abuse victims and child witnesses from becoming abusers***

An important question that remains unanswered is why many victims or witnesses to childhood abuse or family violence do not become violent themselves. What are the protective factors, experiences and decision points that steer them down a different path than men who do repeat the pattern of abuse? This knowledge can be used to create more effective abuse prevention programs and design better interventions for violent offenders. Inuit men can undertake and contribute to such research, and non-violent men can share their experiences and motivate others to make different decisions.

### ***Reaching Out to High-Risk Males***

#### ***Target high-risk males for prevention and intervention programs***

Strategies to reduce violence against women and girls (and violence in general) should target men with one or more high-risk factors (with highest priority given to those with multiple factors):

- youth aged 15 to 29, and adults aged 30 to 44;
- child physical or sexual victimization;
- witnessing abuse against their mothers;
- heavy drinking or drug and alcohol addictions;
- experiencing long-term unemployment;
- general violent/aggressive behaviour;
- past incidents of violence against girls or women;
- in common-law relationships that include conflict and high levels of jealousy; and
- have partners who are under the age of 24, were victims of childhood abuse, witnessed their mothers being abused, or are pregnant.

Men and boys who have come to rely on violence and abuse to maintain control in their lives will have to “unlearn” this coping mechanism and re-learn effective life strategies that do not cause harm to others and themselves.

### ***Strengthening Early Education on Healthy Relationships and Violence Prevention***

Given the high levels of violence among young men, family, school and community-based education and awareness about healthy relationships, gender roles and experiences, and intolerance for violence should occur throughout childhood and become a concentrated message by early adolescence. Three-way family, school and community participation in “character building” education is essential.

#### ***Begin education about healthy relationships and intolerance for violence in early childhood***

Both genders need to re-connect to traditional values of relative gender quality, complementary roles, mutual respect and interdependence in family relationships. At the same time, young people need to learn and practice the skills required for healthy, non-violent interpersonal and community relationships: consultation, problem solving, conflict resolution and emotional control. Men play an important role in this education: as individual role models, as representing the male gender perspective, and as visible proponents of violence-free relationships.

### ***Challenging Non-Interference in Interpersonal Violence***

An Inuit value that had a clear purpose in traditional times but does not adapt well to contemporary life is non-interference. The ability to give community members privacy and a good deal of freedom in behaviour helped small, close-knit and interdependent family groups to thrive. It was a value that worked well in a stable society with a strong justice system and low levels of misbehaviour.

#### ***Break the silence on abuse and speak out in support of victims***

In a contemporary society facing high levels of violence and other social problems, non-interference enables abuse to continue. It does not provide support to victims of abuse to seek

justice and safety, or require offenders to take responsibility for their actions and change their behaviour, and it does not convey the message that violence is unacceptable. Men in particular could make an impact in breaking the silence on abuse and speaking out in support of both abusers and victims.

### ***Making Structural Changes***

Male elected leaders and community decision-makers can bring about structural changes that would reduce the incidence of violence against women and girls, for example, by:

- diversifying and developing the Northern economy to increase employment and reduce poverty and government dependence;
- reforming the education system to better meet the needs of boys and increase secondary and post-secondary graduation rates for boys and girls;
- continuing to improve policing and justice responses to violence, providing better support for victims and better treatment for offenders;
- making mental health, healing and trauma services a funding priority; and
- working toward gender parity (equal number of women and men) in elected positions.

***Make structural changes to diversify and develop the economy,  
reform the education system, improve policing and justice responses,  
fund mental health, healing and trauma services  
and work toward gender parity in elected positions***

### ***Renewing Traditional Values Related to Healing and Working Together***

A renewal of traditional values would strengthen the ability of men and women to return to more balanced and respectful gender relationships, to raise children in the Inuit way, and to create a more harmonious society. The principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit that were highlighted in the *National Strategy to Prevent Abuse in Inuit Communities* have value in this regard.

***Reinforce traditional values related to healing and working together***

### **Inuit Principles of Healing and Working Together**

***Piliriqatigiinniq:*** working together for the common good – knowing one’s role within the family, community and organization, making decisions that benefit everyone.

***Avatikmik Kamattiarniq:*** environmental wellness – a balanced and healthy interconnectedness in the individual, family and community.

***Pijittsirarniq:*** service to others and leadership – combined, they are part of the idea of wisdom in Inuit culture.

***Pilimmaksarniq:*** empowerment – using all the available information to right social and spiritual wrongs and work toward a balanced and strong Inuit society.

***Qanuqtuurrarniq:*** resourcefulness and adaptability – the capacity to be creative, flexible and solution oriented.

***Ajiiqatigiinniq:*** cooperation and consensus – a reciprocal healing process based on the values of others’ perspectives, decisions reached by consensus.

A clear message to transmit to children who are learning social norms and values, youth who are forming relationships and finding their way in the world, and adults who are partners and parents is that healing from trauma and living without violence is possible. Men and boys can join with women and girls to change the course of the present and the future.

## **CONCLUSION**

Violence in general and violence against women and girls in particular remains a pervasive and serious problem in Inuit communities. The rate of violent crime and of intimate partner violence is much higher in Inuit communities than for Canada overall. Alcohol often is a factor in violent crime and both men and women are victims. However, women are more likely than men to be victims of intimate partner abuse and to be severely injured as a result of spousal violence. Childhood physical and sexual abuse has been a too common traumatic experience for boys and girls and is considered a contributor to adult violence.

We are now much more aware of the risk factors for both female victimization and male offending in partner abuse, which with a gender-based analysis of traditional influences, transitional pressures and contemporary realities puts us in a much better position to support

both men and women in ending violence. This paper has used an Inuit Gender-Based Analysis Framework to examine the effects of culture and history on men and women in order to increase understanding in Inuit communities of the unique root causes and experiences that contribute to violence against women and girls, and has suggested ways of addressing violence that take these realities into consideration. Similar to other Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada initiatives, the project Engaging Men and Boys in Ending Violence Against Women and Girls will create tools and support communities in reducing destructive levels of violence and abuse.

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