

Talking about Justice in Nunavut, Episode 3: Creating a Healthy Workplace:
PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

HOST: Welcome to Talking About Justice in Nunavut, a series of audio interviews presented by the Law Society of Nunavut.

Today we are going to talk about creating a safe, healthy, and respectful workplace. We'll also talk about how to deal with harassment or violence in the workplace. This can be a difficult topic, and you may find the information to be upsetting. As always, take care of yourself. This means that you might want to take any steps that you need to emotionally prepare yourself and also think about what care you might need after listening to this program. We will share some resources for support in this program.

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My name is Gloria Song, and I'm an access to justice co-representative and project coordinator for the Law Society of Nunavut. The Law Society of Nunavut has been working on a project to raise public awareness in the territory about harassment and violence in the workplace, and what to do about it.

For this program, we'll hear from a lawyer about what workplace violence is, and what are the legal requirements for dealing with it. We'll also learn about workplace harassment, which is also against the law. Then we'll talk to the Aqqiumavvik Society in Arviat about what we need to think about to support a safe, healthy, and respectful workplace that is informed by an Inuit Qaujimatjuqangit approach.

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First, it's important to know what workplace violence and harassment is. Odessa O'Dell is a lawyer with the law firm Borden Ladner Gervais who has supported the Law Society of Nunavut in training its members about the law on workplace violence and harassment. Here's Odessa, talking about how to recognize workplace violence.

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ODESSA (LAWYER):

Workplace violence is more than actions that may cause injury to one's body. It also includes attempts and threats to cause injury.

Examples of workplace violence include:

- Hitting, shoving, pushing, kicking
- Shaking your fist, destroying property, throwing things
- Making a threat that you will harm someone

Employers have a responsibility to ensure a safe workplace for all workers, including one that is free from violence. Employers are responsible to identify risks of violence within the workplace and tell them to their workers. This means employers must think

about different kinds of violence that might occur, where violence might occur, and how to address and prevent it.

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For example, if you must work closely with someone who has a history of violent behaviour, your employer may have to tell you about this risk and ensure your safety. Or if your employer knows that a situation of family violence may expose workers to a risk of physical injury at work, your employer must do their best to protect the workers while at work.

Your employer must make every effort to protect you at work. This might include implementing a policy if violence has or reasonably could be expected to occur at your workplace. A policy to deal with workplace violence will include processes and procedures on how to deal with workplace violence.

Workers also have a responsibility to familiarize themselves with the policy, if their work has one, and do their part to make sure the workplace is safe for everyone.

If you experience or witness an emergency situation of violence at work, you should consider calling the RCMP as well reporting it to your employer.

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HOST: That was Odessa O'Dell, a lawyer from the law firm Borden Ladner Gervais, talking about the law on workplace violence.

It's also important to be aware of workplace harassment. Harassment is unwelcome comments or behaviour that threatens a worker's health or safety. Examples include bullying, threats, inappropriate comments, jokes, or gestures, isolating someone, sabotaging someone's work, gossiping, or revenge against someone for being involved in a harassment complaint.

Workers have a right to a safe and healthy workplace, free from harassment and violence. Workers also have a right not to be discriminated against. Like in the case of workplace violence, the law requires employers to take steps to prevent and stop harassment that is connected to the workplace and work. Workplaces must have a policy on harassment that describes the process for reporting harassment. Workers should make sure they understand what harassment is and what their work's harassment policy is. Everyone must work together in keeping the workplace safe and free from harassment.

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It's important to know that all workers have a right to a safe, healthy, and respectful workplace. But how do we make this happen, especially in Nunavut? How can we

support a safe, healthy, and respectful workplace informed by Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit values?

We have here with us Joe Karetak and Shirley Tagalik from the Aqqiumavvik Society in Arviat, to talk about this. Joe from Arviat and is Aqqiumavvik Society's Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Research Coordinator. Shirley Tagalik is on the Board of Directors for Aqqiumavvik Society and is a long-term northern resident.

It's a pleasure to have you join us today, Joe and Shirley. My first question for you is, from an Inuit perspective, informed by Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, can you describe what a healthy workplace might look like? Joe, we'll start with you.

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JOE: I think when we look at any setting, whether it's the family, if it's got anything to do with IQ expectations, any cultural expectations must always be reflected in the way we conduct business, and anything we're going to do. So be respectful of the elders, people who have skills and knowledge, and especially those that are carrying a load for any operation. Try to be supportive, be considerate of all the other people, and if you have a team of people that you're working with, that their well-being is something that you put ahead of oneself.

I think when everyone is able to do that, and you have an administrator or leader that is also understanding of that, then all these expectations - and if you want to call them guidelines - there are some things that promote not being so micro-managed, but to have people want to be there. Their contributions are appreciated. And they're always being treated fairly.

I think any time we do that, in any setting, whether it be the family or at the workplace or in an organization, it's going to make a difference, if it's not just words. If it's not just "These are the expectations." There has to be a deeper depth; it has to have a solid foundation. Once you have a solid foundation, then it's a lot easier to manage and keep it organized.

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HOST: Thanks, Joe. And how about you, Shirley?

SHIRLEY: I would add that that solid foundation is always situated in the four big laws of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. So if you are looking to build a healthy workplace, then it must be built on that foundation of having a common purpose, working for the common good, being harmonious, being respectful, and continually planning to achieve something sustainable for the future. If you use those four big laws to ground how you design and introduce your workplace environment, then you pretty much can't go wrong. And then all of the IQ principles provide opportunities for you to meet those four

foundational goals because the Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit principles are actually processes that help us apply those four foundational laws.

The problem is, of course, you need to have a deep understanding of how all of these things work together in a very holistic way to create this environment that is conducive to health and well-being. Unfortunately, very few of our managers and supervisors have this kind of big overall approach. I would say the foundational laws are ones that are not necessarily inherent in *Qallunaaq* - QQ way of envisioning a workplace. And so we have to really seriously sit down, plan out what we want to accomplish, what we want our workplaces to look like, and make the shifts that accommodate those IQ foundational laws, and enable us to implement those principles as a way of achieving the vision that we have for a workplace that promotes health and well-being.

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HOST: I'd like to draw on a little bit more about something that both of you have mentioned. What are some things that managers, supervisors, and other people in management can do to help create this healthy workplace that you're describing?

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JOE: I think one of the things that we found in trying to promote IQ principles, the foundational laws, the holistic approach, is that I'm not sure if asking people to take a paradigm shift is as easy as it sounds. I think that one of the things that we would probably need to do is somehow find a way of looking at internalizing these concepts. Because a lot of times, our muscle reflexes will take over under pressure.

I think when you're talking about things in general, and we're planning and doing visioning and those kinds of things and overall organizational expectations, I think that's not a difficult thing for people to agree to and understand. When it comes to action, and things happen that may be difficult, hard to do, pressure builds up - that's where it becomes difficult to apply those. A lot of times, it will be because of ourselves.

So how do we stay obligated to those under those kinds of pressure? It's something that I think you have to work through, because you don't know how you're going to react unless you're in a situation of difficulty. I think that whether you did it right or wrong is not so much the only thing to think about, but why did that happen? How do we prevent that from happening again?

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And so sometimes, the plan has to have a "re-setter" or something like that. I know in the Inuit system, *aajiqatigiinniq*, one of the IQ principles which is consensus-building - they call it consensus-building because that's the closest thing they can translate it into in English, but it is a deeper, greater concept. When you have a situation where we're trying to abide by these IQ expectations and organizational approaches, and things

become difficult from within, that can probably be done internally. You can have a system in there that addresses that.

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When the pressure is coming from the outside, that's a different thing. So again, you have to have strategies and things in place as well as you could, but you also have to have something that will deal with the unexpected. Nobody saw this one coming. With the Inuit system, the reason why they thought holistically was because they understood that they didn't control everything. But they needed a management system that can handle the situation they're in. And so, creating a management system based on holistic thinking is a really interesting concept. I think that conversation will take us forever to try to explain, but it's understanding that when you try to set something up to try to micro-manage it, there's a big difference to getting people ready to handle the situation which they may encounter.

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And so the whole approach has to be that it's independent; each person has the capacity to be able to make the decision on the spot, to be able to accommodate the problem or situation they're trying to deal with. Having everything pre-set, of course is the best we can do, but it never plays out that way. It's always going to have gaps. When the answer is always run home any time you run into a problem, go ask the father what to do, and you can't get to the father, how is this going to work? You have to make the system more independent. But see, that's where trust is going to have to be in place. They're going to have to trust their employees. The employers have to trust the system will work.

When it doesn't, there has to be something that helps them deal with that. A lot of times, when you are used to a system under pressure, that will kick in. It's what you know that takes over. And if you have to re-adjust people from that, that's where I think the training, re-visiting, and trying to get everyone comfortable with it and looking at it as a team all the time will help.

HOST: Thanks, Joe. And how about you, Shirley, what do you think management can do?

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SHIRLEY: I think Joe describes, in terms of creating a healthy workplace, to give recognition and trust to those people who have the skills to do the job so that if you need a decision made quickly, you rely on the people who are in the field closest to the problem at hand. However, beyond that, an Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit management system also requires that it is set up in a more horizontal fashion, whereas the Qallunaat Qaujimagatuqangit system is a very vertical system. So managers and supervisors up the chain are making decisions without necessarily involvement or

consultation with people who are working on the front lines. This is the antithesis of IQ. *Piliriqatigiinniq* requires that we bring as much expertise, as much knowledge, as many skills and brains to seek solutions collaboratively, so that we end up with the best possible results.

In our workplaces, if we're not doing that, if we're not making spaces for people to actively contribute, and if we're not valuing that contribution, then it's suddenly not a healthy workplace. It becomes exercises in frustration, isolation, marginalization. And that's typically what we see, especially in most institutionalized organizations, that people don't have the authority, don't feel that sense of buy-in and contribution to really actively participate and contribute to seeking a solution that is going to improve the common good.

And so again, it comes back to very careful design of your management system. How you engage and interact with the people that you are supervising, and how you situate yourself so that you are not the expert in the room, but that you are valuing and collecting all of the contributions that everyone has to bring to the table, and facilitating that information in such a way that you come to the best possible outcomes. That's what IQ looks like in the workplace, and that's not what we see generally in our workplaces in Nunavut.

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HOST: Thanks, Shirley. So we've talked about some of the stuff that management can do to help create that space that is a healthy workplace. Are there things that workers themselves can do to contribute to a healthy workplace?

JOE: One of the things that I think that we're probably promoting is a holistic approach, and when you talk about a holistic approach, there has to be a platform that everyone looks at this holistic perspective from. One of the basic things to understand, and more as children, our way to understand is that a holistic perspective to me is something that could reflect history, present and the future, or that everything has two sides to it. There's not just a positive or a negative. Anything that any subject of which anything we look at or anything will have an opposite side to it. And this is where the harmony and balance thing comes from. And I think that you have to continue to have a system in there that is going to determine whether you have to counterbalance something or maintain the balance.

When you look at anything holistically, one of the basic platforms that we were introduced to by an Elder, Angalik, when I asked him, what is it that we're not teaching people today that their observation skills are not very strong? When I say that, I immediately mean the hunter-gatherer economy system, and this is another concept altogether. So one of the things – especially a person such as myself that actually grew up and was born in a hunter-gatherer society system, and now being introduced into a Western economy system, I've seen the conflict throughout my whole life.

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And so this is where, if you're going to say, what should the employees do, what should the people do, it's hard to just go there and say, "It should be like this, this, and this." I think you have to help everyone understand the setting. And I think if you look at the way Inuit people's expectations are based on a hunter-gatherer system, it's quite often in the opposite direction of the other economy system. There are conflicting values, so when you're in a mixed cultural setting, it actually changes on the number of dynamics of the combination you have at the workplace.

One of the examples that comes into my head is that I used to run a dog team when I was young. I had all kinds of dogs, different kinds of dogs. One of the things about the pure husky eskimo dog is that it's designed specifically for this setting up north. It doesn't have to eat very much, it doesn't have to drink very much. It's just very designed for this setting. And when we start having mixed blood, mixed breeds and stuff – I'm not trying to make this a racial thing – but one of the things is that other dogs needed a shelter, they need to get water every day, and they needed to be fed every day. A real husky dog can not eat for three days and be totally okay. In fact, if you overfeed it, it actually would be a problem.

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So each person is going to be very different and I think that you have to keep looking at the way that the individuals are, to answer this properly. So if we're looking at a group of people, and these are the people, you have to make it work with who you got. You can put expectations and everything else, and have general structures there that are going to be, but if you don't accommodate each person, their needs, and respect the paradigm of which they came from, it's unfair to say, "Okay, these are going to be our expectations." Because there will be some people who are prepared properly for that, and that's easy to say that. But when there's a lot of people who haven't been prepared to be in that setting of expectations, you have to find a way to help them, if they're willing. It has first be that they agree to do this, they're willing to do this and they actually want to do this. Because IQ isn't something that works by enforcement. It only really works if you accept it and want it to be that.

So human beings are very complex in the sense that we have the power to decide. We have decision-making ability. With animals, they have very little decision-making to be made. Most of them have instincts that are built into them. And with human beings, we have to teach everybody those things. And so, the background of people have always got to be considered, and how do you bring them forward from there, and them agreeing to go with you on that.

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So any particular problem that we're going to encounter can have complex reasons why it's there. Those are the ones that are hard to address. I'm not sure if it's the right thing

to say, but the situation of which the impact of colonization has had on Inuit people, has to now be factored in as part of the problem on top of other lack of skills and knowledge they may have to be able to work in a setting such as the new world, the new economy system. So if you could look at this holistically and accurately, hopefully, this is something that has to have a team that has to do that. There has to be, whether it's the people themselves that are part of the team, or you have a couple of people who are in charge of looking at certain areas, but again, it's something that works a lot better if people buy into it.

That's one of the things about IQ. Here's a very blunt example. With the environment being as harsh as it is, if you didn't abide by the holistic Inuit cultural approach, you didn't live. It's impossible for an individual person to survive in this setting. It always has to be a team approach. It always has to be the whole system is working well together to withstand the environmental pressures of this setting, because it's just so supremely difficult. We human beings aren't pre-designed to... We're the most vulnerable things in this setting. We're the weakest things in this setting. We're not the strongest ones. Without that knowledge, we have nothing. So when I asked about the observation skills not being there, what are we not teaching? Angalik immediately said, "But it's not one thing."

And I go, "What do you mean by that?"

It's always about life. But we need technology to survive this environment. There are three concepts that he mentioned. And each one of these have a large... they're huge. There's so much information. Well, life is impossible to even contain in conversation. Technology is a lot easier because it's physical, it's obvious. Technology in the sense of, in this case, is a way of thinking is a technology. How you can think of inventing a solution is a technology. The items which you create to solve the problem are technology. So technology is something that isn't just a computer. You're a form of technology in this case. You can improve yourself. The environment, the setting in which we have everything come from, it comes from the environment.

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When he said it that way, I said, "Oh, I retract my question." Because I realized that when we ask a question, we often don't realize how many things have to come into play to actually answer that properly. We're looking for one answer for one question. And even if there are three different answers to the questions, which one do you think works best? We're so designed to do that now. Where in the Inuit system, in a holistic perspective concept, you never approach anything with that, knowing that the setting will always have an influence, and the technology you have available at hand, and the situation of which people are in, all have to be looked at to look at the answer of any moment.

HOST: That's a really important way to look at it. How about you, Shirley?

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SHIRLEY: I think that what Joe's been talking about is a critical challenge that Inuit everywhere face, because they are trying to negotiate recovery from immense colonization and continuing colonization through our institutions and the way our workplaces are set up. But also, there requires healing and revitalization of the IQ understanding that will help people get their lives back on track. And so at Aqqiumavvik, our commitment is to healing and the revitalization of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. One of the key pieces that we begin with is inunnguiniq, the process of making a capable human being. Because it requires us as individuals to continually be seeking that capacity in order to be able to deal with the changes and the critical issues that we face every day in our lives.

The Elders say that it's all about being in relationship. The way we live life must be in respectful relationship. That's one of the four big laws. And so if we consider Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit perceptions of what respectfulness requires, then it takes us right back to those IQ principles. And it's actually all laid out in the IQ principles. Inuuqatigiitsiarniq emphasizes collective well-being and how we meet the needs of others before we seek our individual needs. Tunnganarniq is how we are inclusive and welcoming and create that supportive environment that lets everybody do their very best and work towards those healthy relationships. Piliriqatigiinni q we talked about, which is seeking understanding, finding common ground, having a shared purpose ... So everybody taking on their individual roles to carry their share of the work load and focus on achieving the goals that have been identified. Pijitsirni q is the way we serve the common good, taking on even those tasks that are not popular, not easy to accomplish, but doing them so that we can contribute, so that everybody has a role in contribute.

And then as Joe mentioned, the key to all of this is Aajiiqatigiinni q, where we're continually negotiating, recognizing everybody's equal and trusted voice in a process that allows us to confront conflict and negotiate solutions and come together and get back into that balance that is required. So in fact, all of the issues that arise in our workplaces have solutions in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, if we were really about to use IQ as a way to restore that kind of healthy environment that would enable us all to be as productive as we possibly could be in our workplaces.

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HOST: You've been listening to Joe Karetak and Shirley Tagalik from the Aqqiumavvik Society in Arviat, talking about their thoughts on what needs to be considered to support a safe, healthy, and respectful workplace in Nunavut, informed by Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. We also heard from lawyer Odessa O'Dell from law firm Borden Ladner Gervais about what workplace violence is. This wraps up the end of Part 1 of Episode 3 of Talking about Justice in Nunavut, but be sure to tune into Part 2, where we'll hear some more from Joe and Shirley about this topic.

We've talked about some serious topics during this audio program, and sometimes that can bring up some difficult feelings. If you need to talk to someone, the **Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Help Line** offers anonymous and confidential telephone support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The number is 1-800-265-3333. Again, that's 1-800-265-3333.

This program has been part of the Law Society of Nunavut's project on raising awareness about harassment and violence in the workplace. We are thankful to our funders, the Department of Justice Canada.

If you want to listen to this recording again, this recording can be found on the Law Society of Nunavut's website, along with other resources about harassment in the workplace that we've developed with the support of ilinniapaa Skills Development Centre. For more information about this project or other resources, you can also call the Law Society of Nunavut toll-free at 1-844-979-2330. That's 1-844-979-2330.

It's been a pleasure Talking about Justice in Nunavut with you. We hope you all stay safe and healthy.