



# Access to Justice

## Family Violence Prevention

### ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR FAMILY VIOLENCE IN NUNAVUT

#### OVERVIEW

##### PHASE I – RESEARCH PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

In the spring of 2019, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (Pauktuutit) and the Law Society of Nunavut (LSN) joined forces to undertake a project that would break the silence on family violence in Nunavut. The goal was to better understand the legal barriers and needs of Inuit women dealing with family violence. The project consisted of a research study that would inform a follow-up public awareness campaign. With guidance from an advisory committee and with the support of both government and community-based partners, Pauktuutit and the LSN aimed to better understand the effectiveness of the Family Abuse Intervention Act (FAIA).

Over the period of four months, qualitative data was gathered through 38 interviews with individual Inuit women with lived experience along with seven focus groups consisting of Inuit and non-Inuit service providers. The Phase I Report on Preliminary Findings shares their stories and perspectives on family violence in Nunavut and the legal system as it relates to the FAIA.

An early emerging theme was the important role of Inuit society. The interviews revealed that women with lived experience often turned to the family and community first for help or support. This included turning to Elders for more traditional Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) advice and guidance. The stories shared by these women interviewed spoke to how often the support offered by the family, community and Elders were not aligned.

"It touches upon community well-being. I'm happy about this Act being reviewed because the IQ portion really needs to be factored into the Act."

*-Woman with lived experience*

Inuit service providers also echoed the importance of the role of Inuit society as it relates to dealing with family violence. In their opinion, the way forward must carefully incorporate Inuit Societal Values; the legal system and the Inuit way must continue to build a common path to come together.



# INUIT SOCIETAL VALUES

## Inuuqatigiitsiarniq



Respecting others, relationships and caring for people.

## Pijitsirniq



Serving and providing for family and/or community.

## Pilimmaksarniq/ Pijariuqsarniq



Development of skills through observation, mentoring, practice, and effort.

## Piliriqatigiinni/ Ikajuqtigiinni



Working together for a common cause.

## Tunnganarniq



Fostering good spirits by being open, welcoming and inclusive.

## Aajiiqatigiinni



Decision making through discussion and consensus.

## Qanuqtuarniq



Being innovative and resourceful.

## Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq



Respect and care for the land, animals and the environment.

Both the women with lived experience and the service providers expressed their views on the need for more than a law to solve family violence in Nunavut. The problem of family violence is complex and requires a more wholistic approach. Through the interviews and focus groups, Pauktuutit and the LSN heard that other forms of support and programming are needed. For example, this includes safe housing for both the abuser, as well as women and their children. The topic of Inuit specific healing services and wellness programs was brought up as a gap that needs to be addressed. Service providers also requested more training to better understand Inuit culture so that they could more effectively address family violence in Nunavut.

It is equally important to note, positive stories were also shared from both women with lived experiences and services providers. While there are gaps in the system, FAIA has offered support to women experiencing family violence. These successes have also been captured and shared in this Report. Learning from their experience to guide next steps that will help bridge the gaps will be invaluable.

Moving forward, Pauktuutit and the LSN will continue to collaborate and develop a mass media awareness campaign to break the silence on family violence in Nunavut. Through these interviews with women with lived experiences and focus groups with service providers, there is a better understanding of the legal barriers and needs of Inuit women dealing with family violence in Nunavut. These findings will inform key messages. This public awareness campaign will bring this topic to the forefront, helping to break the silence on abuse and family violence in Nunavut.

Pauktuutit and the LSN are committed to continuing to work with the stakeholders going forward, both governmental and non-governmental, and support them in their efforts to collaborate in addressing the concerns, gaps and working towards solutions. Service providers, the community, Elders and families need to work together, as one, to end family violence in Nunavut. Above all, Inuit Societal Values must be a key consideration moving forward.

The women with lived experiences who found the strength and courage to stand up and share their stories have broken the silence on family violence in Nunavut. Pauktuutit and the LSN stand beside them and commit to supporting them by continuing to collaborate with

the stakeholders and ending the cycle of family violence in Nunavut – *Piliriqatigiinni* – working towards a common cause.

"Inuit [have a] way of dealing with family violence. And it's not in the policies, unfortunately... I think it's a goal that Nunavut should be aiming for... to have a vision for... that offender or victim and the family to be dealt with, you know, in a more holistic way."

–Woman with lived experience

## NEXT STEPS

Next steps for the *Access to Justice for Family Violence in Nunavut* project includes validating the findings. Pauktuutit and the LSN will share the preliminary findings with those women with lived experience who participated in the interviews, as well as the service providers who participated in the focus groups to confirm what was heard and what was captured as themes, and key findings. The key findings captured in this preliminary Report provides for a better understanding of the legal barriers and needs of Inuit women dealing with family violence in Nunavut. These insights will inform the development of a public awareness campaign that will bring this topic to the forefront, helping to break the silence on family violence in Nunavut.

To break the cycle of family violence in Nunavut, the important role of Inuit society as it relates to dealing with family violence and Inuit Societal Values must be considered; solutions must be culturally relevant and wholistic. The legal system and the Inuit way must build a common path to come together.

*Piliriqatigiinni* – working together  
for a common cause.

*Pauktuutit and the Law Society of Nunavut wish to acknowledge the financial contributions of the Department of Justice Canada and The Law Foundation of Ontario.*



While financially supported by the Law Foundation of Ontario, Pauktuutit and the Law Society of Nunavut are solely responsible for all content.