

# National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls



Written Submission

Made by the Nunatsiavut Government

**Nunatsiavut Government**

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## Nunatsiavut Government – An Introduction

Our journey, as a people and as a government, has been a long and, at times, difficult one. The Labrador Inuit Association, which preceded the Nunatsiavut Government, was formed in 1973 to promote our culture; to improve the health and well-being of our people; and to protect our Constitutional, democratic and human rights. In 1977, the LIA began the long journey towards self-government by filing a statement of claim with the Government of Canada – seeking rights to the ‘land and sea ice in Northern Labrador.’

The dream of self-government was realized three decades later, with the signing of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement (LILCA) and the establishment of the Nunatsiavut Government on December 1, 2005.

The Labrador Inuit Settlement Area (LISA) is comprised of about 72,500 square kilometers (or 28,000 square miles) of land in northern Labrador and 48,690 square kilometers (or 18,800 square miles) of sea. Within LISA, Labrador Inuit receive special rights related to traditional land use, and 15,800 square kilometers (or 6,100 square miles) is designated as Labrador Inuit Lands. LILCA also provided for the establishment of the Torngat Mountains National Park Reserve, consisting of about 9,600 square kilometers (3,700 square miles) of land within LISA.

There are five communities within Nunatsiavut: Nain (pop. 1,125), Hopedale (pop. 574), Postville (pop. 177), Makkovik (pop. 377), and Rigolet (pop. 305) (*Census Canada, 2016*). There are no roads to the region or connecting any of the five Inuit communities. The prime means of transportation is Twin Otter aircraft from Happy Valley-Goose Bay, though there is a passenger/cargo ferry operating during the summer and fall, and some travel between

communities by snowmobile during the winter and spring. In addition to Labrador Inuit living within the LISA, there are 1,933 Labrador Inuit living in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, 277 living in North West River, and 2,413 living elsewhere within Canada (*internal statistics from our Registrar, fall 2018*).

The Nunatsiavut Assembly is made up of 18 members - the President, the AngajukKâks (mayor) of each of the five Inuit Community Governments, elected representatives (Ordinary Members) from each of the Inuit communities as well as two members from the Upper Lake Melville area in central Labrador, and two from Constituency of Canada. Of the five Labrador Inuit Communities, Nain has two Ordinary Members. The chairs of the two Inuit Community Corporations – located in North West River and Happy Valley-Goose Bay /Mud Lake – also sit as members of the Assembly. Elections are held every four years, with the election for President being staggered between the one for Ordinary Members to ensure continuity of governance. These elected officials represent just over 7,200 Beneficiaries of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement.

The Nunatsiavut Government is responsible for several key areas, including operations and management of programs, services and budgets, business and employment. It also plans for sustainable economic development, protection and preservation of Inuit lands, resources, culture and language, as well as for the implementation of social programs on behalf of Labrador Inuit.

The Inuit Community of Hopedale is the legislative capital of Nunatsiavut, while the administrative headquarters is located in Nain. The Nunatsiavut Government is comprised of seven departments, each reflecting the unique principles of the Labrador Inuit Constitution. Those departments are Nunatsiavut Secretariat, Nunatsiavut Affairs, Lands and Natural

Resources, Education and Economic Development, Health and Social Development, Culture, Recreation and Tourism, and Finance and Human Resources.

Unlike other governments, the Nunatsiavut Government is a consensus government – a non-partisan system of governing that is more in keeping with the way that we, as Inuit, have always made decisions. It has responsibilities and rights similar to other governments, such as planning for sustainable economic development, protecting and preserving Labrador Inuit culture and traditions, and implementing social programs on behalf of Labrador Inuit.

As a third level of government within Newfoundland and Labrador, many of the services to Labrador Inuit and Nunatsiavut communities are provided by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, such as K-12 education, transportation, health, social assistance, child welfare and justice, etc.). The Government of Canada also provides limited services (such as policing) through arrangements with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Nunatsiavut Government offers a range of services, including those in the domains of community programming, social development, mental wellness, communicable disease and public health, non-insured health benefits, language and cultural programming in schools, research, resource extraction and development, economic development, fund student participation to post-secondary, etc.

Under LILCA, the Nunatsiavut Government has authority to make laws in relation to a number of subject areas, including health, education, income support, and social, family, youth and children services.

## **Inuit Wellbeing in Nunatsiavut – An Introduction**

Inuit have a holistic and collective understanding of wellbeing. Thus, the Nunatsiavut Government works for wellbeing across all levels: individual, family, community, and society. Healthy individuals exist in a context of healthy families; healthy families exist in a context of healthy communities; healthy communities/regions arise when the broader Canadian society acknowledges, respects, and supports Inuit leadership, knowledge, and culture.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (the President of Nunatsiavut Government is a board member and Nunatsiavut Government employees participate on working groups/committees) identifies the social determinants of Inuit health in Canada (2014) to be:

- Quality of early childhood development;
- Culture and language;
- Livelihoods;
- Income distribution;
- Housing;
- Personal safety and security;
- Education;
- Food security;
- Availability of health services;
- Mental wellness; and
- The environment.

There are significant shortfalls within the social determinants of health, and Inuit lag behind non-Indigenous Canadians in many key indicators. In 2015, low-income prevalence in Nunatsiavut ranged from 23.4 per cent (Makkovik) to 49.8 per cent (Hopedale) – among the worst community rates within the province (ranking 337 to 362 out of the 363 Newfoundland and Labrador communities). The median after-tax income in 2015 ranged from \$20,011

(Hopedale) to \$29,024 (Makkovik), while the provincial median was \$39,722.00 (*Community Accounts NL, 2016*). One in five homes with children is overcrowded and many occupied private dwellings are in need of major repairs (10.7 per cent in Makkovik to 34.8 per cent in Rigolet) (*Nunatsiavut Housing Needs Assessment, 2012*). Regionally, 48.6 per cent of households are food insecure, with rates as high as 73 per cent moderate or severely food insecure in Hopedale and 69 per cent moderately or severely food insecure in Nain (*Food Security, All Households Survey, 2014*).

There are high rates of crime and violence within Nunatsiavut. The court circuit serving Nunatsiavut has been documented to have the sixth highest rate of domestic violence in the country (*CBC, 2018*). One in three respondents to the *Inuit Health Survey (2008)* identified having experienced sexual abuse during childhood and one in five identified having experienced sexual violence as an adult. Rates of police-reported homicide and attempted murder were 0.2/1,000 (Canadian rate 0.0/1,000); rates of major assault were 17/1,000 (Canadian rate 1/1,000); rates of sexual violence were 19/1,000 (Canadian rate 1/1,000); and rates of common assault were 93/1,000 (Canadian rate 5/1,000) (*Statistics Canada, 2012*). Women aged 15-44 had the highest rates of police-reported victimization by violence (217/1,000 for women aged 15-29 and 157/1,000 for women aged 30-44) and men aged 15-44 were most likely to be accused of violent violations (235/1,000 for men aged 15-29 and 218/1,000 for men aged 30-44) (*Statistics Canada, 2012*).

There are high rates of families involved with the child welfare system. Currently there are 142 children in care, 60 of whom are placed outside Nunatsiavut. The majority of these children come into care due to “parental neglect, inability to protect, failure to provide the

necessities of life”, much of which is associated with parental substance abuse. Very few children come into care due to physical or sexual abuse.

Family and community distress are closely associated with suicide - the leading cause of death in Nunatsiavut. Based on 2013-2017 rates for suicide in Nunatsiavut, the prevalence is 18.2 times higher than the Canadian average (200/100,000 vs. 11/100,000) and the rate of hospitalization due to suicide attempts/injury in Nunatsiavut are nearly 6 times higher than the Canadian average.

Alcohol and substance abuse is also closely related to the high rates of family and community distress. The percentage of Inuit in Nunatsiavut that reported heavy drinking (having five or more drinks; four or more for women) on one occasion at least once a month was 47 per cent (*Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS), 2012*) as compared to 33.3 per cent (plus or minus 4.5 per cent) for the province (*Community Accounts NL, Profiles*) and 18 per cent for the total population of Canada (*Canadian Community Health Survey, 2012*). The reported rate for Nunatsiavut (47 per cent) was considerably higher than that of Inuit Nunangat (26 per cent) (*APS, 2012*). Four out of five Labrador Inuit participating in the *2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey* noted alcohol use was a problem in their community.

Rates of fluency in Inuktitut are in decline and the majority of fluent speakers are over the age of 50. It is estimated that only 10 per cent of Labrador Inuit fluently speak and understand Inuktitut. Language prevalence varies by community – in Nain 295 individuals identify Inuktitut as their mother tongue, 45 in Hopedale, 0 in Postville, 15 in Makkovik, and 5 in Rigolet (*Statistics Canada, 2016*). This decline poses an increasing challenge: it is difficult to hire Inuktitut-speakers for key roles such as teachers, translators, and interpreters. Connection to



community and culture continues to be central. Traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering continues to be practiced and passed on to younger generations, with land-based activities identified as key to people's wellbeing. Support for traditional arts such as sewing, drum dancing, and throat singing has been increasing. Many Inuit youth express a strong interest in learning Inuktitut and participating in cultural and traditional activities.

School participation and high school graduation rates in Nunatsiavut are below average. There are 562 Labrador Inuit aged five-to-18 years living in Nunatsiavut (*internal Registrars statistics, 2018*), however only 511 (including those who are *not* Labrador Inuit) registered for K-12 in the 2017-2018 school year (*NLESD, 2017-2018*). School graduation statistics show that most youth in Grade 12 graduate, but only one in three is graduating from the academic stream (*NLESD 2017-2018 Graduate Rates*). For those aged 25-64 years, rates of completing high school or post-secondary are as low as 59 per cent in Nain and 64 per cent in Hopedale (*Census 2016, Statistics Canada*).

Unemployment, underemployment, and non-participation in the labor market are likewise a concern for Nunatsiavut. The unemployment rate (aged 15 years and older, May 1-7, 2016) ranged from 15.6 per cent (Hopedale) to 40.9 per cent (Makkovik), while the provincial rate is about 15 per cent (*Census 2016, Statistics Canada*). In 2015, rates of those 15 years and older who did not work during the year ranged from 15 per cent in Makkovik to 39 per cent in Nain and Hopedale (*Census 2016, Statistics Canada*).

In addition to current contextual factors limiting wellbeing, historic experiences have had a significant impact on the wellbeing of Labrador Inuit. The introduction of a wage-based economy, community settlements, and western social values by missionaries and traders

permanently altered the social fabric of Labrador Inuit, dating back to the 1700s. The introduction of disease, most notably the Spanish Flu, had devastating effects on communities, particularly Okak, Hebron, and Nutak, where nearly 70 per cent of the population died in 1918. Forced relocation from Hebron in 1959 and other communities caused family ties to be broken, severed connections to homelands, and placed relocates in extremely vulnerable situations, with high rates of lateral violence in their new communities, poor shelter, and limited access to food (particularly wild food). Residential and boarding schools, along with the foster-care system, further damaged individual, family, and cultural wellbeing. Children and families continue to struggle with this long legacy of intergenerational trauma, which is closely linked to substance abuse and violence.

These challenges to Inuit social determinants of health and social equity were present across the NI-MMIWG testimonies of Labrador Inuit. Understanding this broad context for violence is critical to addressing the issues. As has been repeatedly stated but cannot be overstated, addressing social inequities faced by Inuit is critical to improving individual, family, and community well-being.

## **Service Delivery in Nunatsiavut**

Services in Nunatsiavut are predominantly delivered by the Nunatsiavut Government, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Government of Canada, with a few services receiving funding to operate independently. Health and social services are delivered jointly by the provincial and Nunatsiavut governments. The Province operates nurse-staffed clinics in each community. A doctor travels into communities periodically and clients travel to Happy Valley-Goose Bay or further for urgent and specialist medical services. The Nunatsiavut

Government offers public health and home care and manages Non-Insured Health Benefits for Labrador Inuit. The Province has mental health and addictions counsellors based in Labrador Inuit communities (Nain, Hopedale, and Makkovik, with travel to Rigolet/Postville), with the Nunatsiavut Government providing multiple complimentary mental wellness and healing programs. The Nunatsiavut Government is in regular communication with provincial health and mental health services, aiming to improve service delivery for Inuit. Health promotion initiatives are predominantly led by the Nunatsiavut Government.

Family services are jointly offered by the provincial and Nunatsiavut governments. Currently, the Province manages child welfare services, though it is the intent of the Nunatsiavut Government to move towards devolution. The Nunatsiavut Government is in an active partnership with the provincial Child and Youth Advocate's Office to complete a thorough review of child welfare services for Inuit children. (A wide range of concerns have been brought forward and a thorough report is due March 2019.) The Nunatsiavut Government offers a variety of supports to families, including a Family Connections Program, which has shown great success in improving parental/family outcomes and parental/family wellness and healing programs.

Education is also jointly offered. Early childhood education is offered by the Nunatsiavut Government, through federal funding. The nature of the funding agreement limits programming to the school year – September through June – and requires the Nunatsiavut Government to meet provincial regulations, some of which do not align with the reality of Labrador Inuit communities and has periodically caused daycares to be limited to the 'unregulated child care' limitations of four children total. The Nunatsiavut Government additionally offers a Language Nest program to promote Inuktitut use among young children, Child Development programs, and

an Aboriginal Head Start and Family Resource Center to promote parent involvement. Grade schools are operated by the provincial government with support for culture and language programming offered by Nunatsiavut Government. The Nunatsiavut Government also administers funding support for Labrador Inuit attending post-secondary education.

Justice services (from victim services to policing to correctional centers to parole programs) are administered by the provincial and federal governments. In recent history, Labrador Inuit held sentencing circles, but the practice stopped due to loss of volunteers. The Nunatsiavut Government is currently developing a strategic direction to increase involvement in justice services. There is currently a Nunatsiavut Government representative involved with meetings related to policing. A Prison Liaison Worker is available at the Labrador Correctional Centre where many Inuit men are held. Other programming is offered within the Labrador Correctional Center, and a position has been created with a dedicated focus to providing clinical intervention with sexual offenders – a group typically under-served in the region. Mental wellness and healing support for both victims and offenders are offered by Nunatsiavut and provincial mental health service providers.

The Nunatsiavut Government is working on economic development opportunities, including increasing opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. The Nunatsiavut Government also assists people in accessing the social assistance funds through provincial service providers.

Food security has been made a significant priority by the Nunatsiavut Government, with a dedicated programming and the current development of a strategic document. Likewise, the

Nunatsiavut Government is working to increase access to housing, including focusing funding to develop many new lots within communities.

The Nunatsiavut Government also operates the provincially-funded Supportive Living Program in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Nain, and Hopedale, as well as the provincially-funded homeless shelter in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and an overnight youth centre in Nain. Hopedale, Nain, and Rigolet all have shelters for women fleeing violence. There is a new multi-plex building for vulnerable families in Hopedale, where families are provided social supports by the Nunatsiavut Government, and similar unit will open in Nain next year.

Unfortunately, due to the current severe lack of housing, there are few opportunities for women, families, or men to gain adequate permanent housing in a timely manner. This means people (women, youth/young adults, and men) return to homes where they experienced violence and/or that families feel obligated to provide housing to those who are homeless (including those returning from correctional facilities and those with histories of violence and substance abuse).

Service access varies by community: Nain has many services available (including those that travel to the other communities), while Postville, the smallest Labrador Inuit community, has very minimal services (including no full-time RCMP or child welfare postings). Such variation in service delivery may make sense from a population-based, or even a needs-based perspective, but presents challenges for the communities wherein services are not available on the ground. As an example, the community of Postville expresses that residents know when the RCMP are in town and behavior changes accordingly.

Access to appropriate services was another key theme within testimony of Labrador Inuit. The service context has changed over the decades (eg. there was a time when the RCMP was not

in Rigolet and when provincial mental health and addictions counsellors were not based in any community). However, meaningful access to appropriate services continues to be a concern. Many agencies (particularly provincial and federal) struggle with short-staffing and high turnover, such that capacity to deliver the necessary services is significantly lacking and continuity of care is regularly interrupted. Understanding the culture, community, context, and service network for Nunatsiavut takes time: high turnover significantly impairs this critical component of meaningful access to appropriate services. Committed funding – particularly from the province – for the Nunatsiavut Government to have dedicated resources to contributing in the support for justice service delivery is still lacking, posing a significant challenge to tracking necessary information, develop strategic plans, and initiate and deliver necessary supportive services.

## **Nunatsiavut Government Recommendations**

To reduce incidence of violence and violent death amongst Inuit, the Nunatsiavut Government feels that there must be measureable actions in addressing the poor social determinants of health faced by Inuit and Labrador Inuit communities; sustained funding and support for Inuit to self-govern and deliver services to their communities and peoples; and active engagement of Inuit leaders in all stages of the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies, programs, services, as well as practice approaches which impact Indigenous communities and peoples. Addressing social inequities will significantly improve the wellbeing of Inuit communities, families, and individuals and create opportunities for further healing, success, and leadership. Inuit self-governance and participation in national/provincial/territorial governance is the most effective means of ensuring policies, programs, services, and practice

approaches are appropriate for Indigenous communities and peoples. Within this overarching theme, Nunatsiavut Government has multiple sub-recommendations.

## **Social Determinants of Health and Social Inequities**

The need to address social inequities faced by Inuit peoples has been repeatedly stated (eg. *RCAP, 1996; TRC, 2015; National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy, 2016; UNDRIP, 2017*). Challenges within Inuit communities all – in some way – relate to a lack of social determinants of health (outlined above) and while there has been some progress in addressing these concerns, the work is far from done. Inequitable social determinants of health for Inuit is keeping Inuit trapped in cycles of poverty and violence and leads to high rates of health and mental health concerns, child and family welfare issues, unemployment and underemployment, and incarceration and violence. Inuit and their families and communities have a right to social equity and social determinants of health and it is time that right sees measureable and sustained action.

- Equitable access to educational opportunities and outcomes. Inuit children require access to high quality education ranging from early childhood to post-secondary. Due to the developmental importance of early childhood, this time period is particularly is important. Educational achievements – starting in early childhood – promote individual and family wellbeing across the lifespan.
  - Inuit leadership and ownership over the delivery of education services must be strengthened and promoted.
  - Adequate funding for year-round daycare and childcare services must be made available for Nunatsiavut.

- Socio-emotional supports must be available in schools in addition to standard educational and learning assistance supports.
- Educators and staff in the education system must be made familiar with Inuit culture, language, and community context; Inuit should be encouraged and supported to pursue positions within the education system.
- Inuit culture and language must be meaningfully incorporated throughout the school curriculum, with Inuit Kaujijajatuqangit (IK) as a core component.
- Inuit must be supported to participate in post-secondary education, with specific consideration for unique cultural and contextual barriers they may face in preparing for, attending, and returning from post-secondary.
- Inclusion of Inuit culture and language in programs and services must be a priority. All programming and services for Inuit must consider and incorporate Inuit culture and language, this is particularly important for children and families, so as to nurture and raise Inuit with a strong cultural connection and identity. Inuit participation and ‘success’ in all programs and services – education, health, mental health, justice, etc. – is mediated by the cultural and linguistic congruence of the program or service. Further culture and language vitality promote community well-being and healing overall.
  - Inuit culture and language must be incorporated throughout all programs and services occurring in Nunatsiavut.
  - Inuit should be encouraged and supported into roles of delivering services and providing input to service development, delivery, and evaluation.



- Service providers (including health, social services, justice, education, etc.) within Nunatsiavut must be educated on Inuit culture, history, and community context prior to commencing service delivery.
- Service delivery systems and policies must be flexible to adapting to the needs of Inuit and context of Nunatsiavut.
- Availability of livelihood and equity within the income distribution. Poverty (both absolute and relative) reduces individual, family, and community wellbeing. Employment opportunities must be available for Inuit which provide a sustainable and equitable livelihood and for those requiring social assistance support, this must be sufficient to cover the basic costs of living within the Nunatsiavut. Income and social assistance for Inuit in Nunatsiavut must match the costs of living in Nunatsiavut.
  - Economic development within Nunatsiavut must continue, with Inuit leadership prioritized throughout.
  - Support for Inuit entering and participating in the labor market according to their ability/interest must continue and strengthen.
  - Minimum wage within Nunatsiavut must be increased to match the higher cost of living within isolated, northern communities.
  - Rates of payment for social assistance must reflect the higher costs of living within Nunatsiavut and broader social determinants of health.
- Protection and justice services within Nunatsiavut – including child welfare, policing, courts, correctional centers, and offender re-integration – must be adapted to the unique Nunatsiavut context. Current systems of protection and justice have been transplanted

from the South and do not align with the reality of life within Nunatsiavut and frequently result in needless distress for all involved.

- There must be continued commitment to redesign child welfare services to meet the needs of Inuit and Nunatsiavut communities.
- There must be continued commitment to support devolution of child welfare services to Nunatsiavut Government from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The right to timely court proceeding – both family and criminal – must be upheld and enforced. This may require significant service redesign or increased funding for positions in Labrador and Nunatsiavut.
- Alternative means of courts – including family mediation, domestic violence courts, drug courts, sentencing circles, etc. – must be explored and implemented within Labrador and Nunatsiavut.
- There must be a renewed intergovernmental commitment to review and remedy issues associated with the justice system, considering the needs of victims and offenders as well as families and communities.
- The community of Postville requires full-time policing services, which they have long been calling for.
- Correctional services must promote rehabilitation and well-being, including access to culturally-congruent mental health and health services, educational and employment development services, and reintegration planning and services post-release. The needs of Inuit women in correctional centers in Newfoundland must

be given specific consideration due to severe lack of access to culturally-congruent services and supports.

- Transitional housing and half-way housing must be made available to offenders being released to Nunatsiavut and Labrador.
- Emergency shelter and housing for men – including offenders – must be given targeted consideration as a means of preventing violence and increasing healing and well-being for men.
- Shelter services must be made available to vulnerable and homeless (including those housed in unstable situations) women, regardless of whether they are currently fleeing a situation of violence. Current shelter services often limit to women experiencing violence, leaving other women vulnerable.
- A range of healing and rehabilitative services must be made available to offenders, victims, and the respective families of both, including those which are based on cultural means of healing and/or occurring on the land.
- Service delivery to children and youth must be grounded in best-practices when working with children, with specific consideration for developmental needs and trauma-informed practice. This may require the development of a child advocacy center, child-specific trainings for all involved service professionals, and/or mobile positions with a dedicated responsibility to working with children.
- All protection and justice services (including policing, courts, correctional centers, child protection, and health and mental health services) must be grounded in knowledge of trauma-informed practice, with specific consideration for the impacts of intergenerational trauma and family violence.

- Service providers must be specifically trained in how to intervene in situations of family violence and how to promote safety, healing, and wellbeing for all. Policies and practices for family violence intervention must be grounded in an understanding of context of small, isolated, Inuit communities due to the unique dynamics that poses.
- Access to Legal Aid and legal services must be significantly increased for Labrador Inuit. Appropriate capital and resources must be dedicated to legal services in Nunatsiavut.
- Policies and practices for Victim Services, Probations, and Parole must be adapted to the needs of Labrador Inuit and context of Nunatsiavut communities.
- Nunatsiavut must be provided with funding for a community justice coordinator, Gladue writers, Indigenous court workers, and positions dedicated to supporting restorative justice, rehabilitation, and healing for the victim(s), offender, families, and community.
- Inuit must be supported in training, recruitment, and retention into justice service positions. Overall recruitment and retention practices for justice service professionals must be reviewed and improved.
- There must be an accessible mechanism for reporting and addressing malpractice and poor services within justice and protection services. Such mechanism(s) must be broadly advertised and easily accessible to community members.
- Inuit must have access to housing and food security. Both housing and food insecurity are major contributing factors to ill-health within Nunatsiavut. Food and shelter are basic human needs and when these are inaccessible, there is no foundation on which to address

other tasks of living. Barriers to housing and food security must be urgently addressed collaboratively between governments.

- Intergovernmental commitment to addressing housing insecurity, including permanent and stable funding, within Nunatsiavut must continue, until such a time that all individuals and families have access to housing which meets their needs.
- Housing and building construction within Nunatsiavut must be adapted to the northern context. Such an approach will reduce operating and maintenance costs of the home and promote the longevity of buildings. This may increase upfront costs of construction and/or require additional training and/or policies in northern building construction.
- Individuals and families – including men and fathers – must have access to emergency shelter as well as long term housing options.
- Transitional and supportive housing must be made available to individuals and families who require it.
- To the greatest extent that child safety will allow, children must be supported to remain in their home, with their families. This may include providing extensive support to parents and families to address concerns (including housing insecurity/overcrowding, food insecurity, housing repairs/maintenance, substance abuse, domestic violence, etc.) within the home such that the children may remain there.
- For situations wherein children cannot be maintained safely within the family home, every effort must be made to keep the child within their family, within their

community, within Nunatsiavut, and connected to their family, culture, and language. This will require targeted efforts to develop and maintain child placement options within Nunatsiavut communities.

- Intergovernmental commitment to address food insecurity within Nunatsiavut must continue with consideration for both commercial and wild-foods. Policies and programs developed must be responsive and accountable to the needs of northerners and have the active participation of Inuit stakeholders.
- Complimentary programs and services for food security (eg. breakfasts and lunches at schools, meals on wheels for Elders, programming to educate and support community members in healthy and cost-effective meals, etc.) must be adequately and sustainably funded and supported.
- Health and mental wellness services must be accessible to Inuit. Accessibility considers not only geographic and financial barriers, but also sociocultural barriers. Practitioners must understand and be able to mitigate potential barriers of language and communication differences, cultural and contextual differences, impacts of colonization and intergenerational trauma, and the challenges posed by poverty, overcrowding, and food insecurity. Increasing Inuit employment within the health sector will help reduce these barriers; however system redesign and adaptation may also be required.
  - Healing from the ongoing impacts of intergenerational trauma, systemic harms, and social inequity requires significant on-going attention and commitment. Cycles of violence and substance abuse are rooted in these problems and thus healing is critical to the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

- Culturally-congruent, trauma-informed clinical and supportive interventions and care for addictions and substance misuse must be available to all Inuit, drawing upon harm-reduction and recovery-focused principles of care.
  - Culturally-congruent, trauma-informed promotion, prevention, and intervention initiatives focused on cycles of domestic, physical, and sexual violence must be available to all Inuit, with specific considerations for the needs of males and females across the life-span.
  - Culturally-based initiatives (including land-based and traditional activities) focused on intergenerational trauma and healing must be available to all Inuit.
- Health and mental health service providers must be educated on Nunatsiavut culture, context, and communication patterns prior to commencing service provision there. This includes training on the impacts and means of mitigating the poor social determinants of health within Nunatsiavut, as well as trauma-informed practice focused on harm-reduction. Service providers must demonstrate a commitment to understanding, respecting, and adapting to Inuit culture.
- Health and mental health systems must regularly be jointly reviewed for whether they are meeting the needs of Inuit in the best means possible. Where there are shortfalls in service delivery, consideration must be given for all possible means of increasing timely access to appropriate, culturally-congruent services.
- The increased vulnerability of Inuit required to leave their communities for medical services (and for other reasons) must be recognized and re-dressed. To

the greatest extent possible, health services should be made available to Inuit within their communities and regions. As there may continue to be some specialist services which are only accessible in service hubs, means of reducing Inuit vulnerability while away from their homes must be explored and implemented.

- For healing services, a pan-Indigenous approach to services is inadequate. Inuit culture and context is distinct from other Indigenous groups. Inuit needs in mental wellness and healing services, including inpatient treatment, must be given specific consideration and a continuum of culturally-congruent services made accessible to all Inuit.
- Inuit must be supported in training, recruitment, and retention in health service professions. Overall recruitment and retention practices for health service professionals must be reviewed and improved.

Commitments such as the Inuit Crown Partnership Committee are important steps to move forward key issues in social inequity to a collaborative resolution. Such joint efforts must maintain dedicated focus and attention.

## **Sustained Funding and Support**

Nunatsiavut Government is committed to addressing the social inequities faced by their constituents. Services – from advocacy to frontline practice – delivered by the Nunatsiavut Government have been repeatedly shown to positively contribute to individual, family, and community well-being. Supporting self-governments – such as Nunatsiavut Government – to be active leaders and service delivery bodies must be a key priority in improving individual, family, and community wellbeing.



While some programs and services of the Nunatsiavut Government fall within the tripartite Fiscal Financing Agreement, many program and services area are subject to short-term project agreements which inhibits long-term planning and growth in a program area, and often results in interruptions or sudden ends to the services being delivered. Many funding opportunities express there must be sustainability plan written into the proposal, despite the fact that there is no matching commitment to sustained funding.

Wellbeing in Nunatsiavut requires sustained funding and support for the delivery of effective programs and services. Funding models for Inuit services must be changed to provide sustained support to the delivery of effective services. With sustained funding and support, self-government and Inuit-led service delivery will continue to grow and prosper within Nunatsiavut.

### **Inuit Leadership Throughout**

To meet the needs of Inuit, all policies, programs, and practices which impact Inuit must incorporate Inuit perspectives throughout the development, implementation, and evaluation phases. The Nunatsiavut Government wants to continue to build relationships with both the provincial and federal governments to ensure that Inuit strengths and needs are taken into account in the development of all policies, programs, and practices. The Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee is a significant positive step in this direction, but one which will require continued support and commitment in order to remain effective.

Likewise, there are examples of effective partnership with provincial leaders and service providers. The Province must begin to consult Inuit on issues that affect them and must give such input real consideration. Unfortunately, too often these partnerships are vulnerable to changing provincial and federal government leadership priorities; changing personnel in

management and civil service positions; or overlooked entirely when Inuit perspectives do not align with the priorities of federal or provincial partners.

Inuit leadership is important in meeting the needs of urban Inuit. Of the 7,136 Labrador Inuit, 65 per cent are living *outside* LISA: 31 and 34 per cent respectfully in the constituencies of Upper Lake Melville (Happy Valley-Goose Bay, North West River, and Mud Lake) and in the Constituency of Canada. While there some supports available to Labrador Inuit in Upper Lake Melville, many are lacking – due to lack of sufficient resources - for urban Inuit within Canada.

Meaningful involvement of Inuit requires sustained commitment to engage with Inuit leaders, regardless of changes in political leadership, changes in personnel, or differing priorities. Not only is this a constitutional requirement, wellbeing among the many Inuit Canadians requires it.

## **Conclusion**

To reduce incidence of violence and violent death amongst Inuit, Nunatsiavut Government feels that there must be measureable actions in addressing the poor social determinants of health faced by Inuit and their communities; sustained funding and support for Inuit to self-govern and deliver services to their communities and peoples; and active engagement of Inuit leaders in all stages of the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies, programs, services, and practice approaches which impact Indigenous communities and peoples.

Addressing social inequities will significantly improve the wellbeing of Inuit communities, families, and individuals and create opportunities for further healing, success, and leadership.

Inuit self-governance and participation in national/provincial/territorial governance is the most effective means of ensuring policies, programs, services, and practice approaches are appropriate for Indigenous communities and peoples. Attention to these critical areas will reduce the incidence of violence against Labrador Inuit.