**Saturviit**
**Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik**


# BRING HOPE AND RESTORE PEACE
## A STUDY REPORT ON THE LIFE AND CONCERNS OF INUIT WOMEN OF NUNAVIK

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**A long version of this report can be downloaded from www.saturviit.ca.**

Saturviit Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik
(www.saturviit.ca)

In partnership with the Community-University Research Alliance *Leadership and Governance in Nunavut and Nunavik* (www.cura.leadership.ciera.ulaval.ca)

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| CLSC: | Centre local de services communautaires, which may also refer to CSSS (Centre de santé et de services sociaux) and may be called simply clinic or nursing. |
| DYP: | Director of Youth Protection |
| FASD: | Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder |
| FCNQ: | Fédération des coopératives du Nouveau-Québec |
| Health Board: | Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) |
| KMHB: | Kativik Municipal Housing Bureau |
| KRG: | Kativik Regional Government |
| KSB: | Kativik School Board |
| NRBHSS: | Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services |
| NV: | Northern Village (municipality) |
| SHQ: | Société d'habitation du Québec |

# INTRODUCTION

It is well known that Northern communities, like other Aboriginal reserves, are in Canada among the ones most affected by all kinds of social problems. For decades, they have shown the highest rates of suicide, dropout, family violence, alcoholism, and so on. This reality is not so easy to comprehend and even harder to handle. Unfortunately, too many Canadians are unaware that the current situation is directly connected to still very recent colonial history; nor do they understand how it has impacted individuals and families. Doubtless, rapid changes in lifestyle and the disconnect between generations, caused especially by residential schools in the 1950s and 1960s, still affect all Inuit adversely. Therefore, the first step toward positive changes would obviously be to learn about and from the past, both from the standpoint of the colonizers and from that of the colonized, this being a long and trying process. The ongoing colonial relationship must also be overcome. Such a purpose is embodied by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was formed in 2008 after the Harper Government's official apologies for the legacy of residential schools. We have certainly cause for hope. Besides government initiatives, many Inuit have also taken diverse actions and engaged in discussions to give voice to their stories and to break the circle of violence afflicting their communities.

During the summer of 2005, Inuit women came from each of Nunavik's 14 communities and from the South to meet at Qilalugaq Camp near Puvirnituq, where they reflected on Nunavik's political and social situation. During this gathering, the participants came up with recommendations that would bring attention to the needs of Inuit women and children. They also drafted a manifesto called "Stop Violence" (Appendix 2) and asked all individuals and organizations to adopt it. Following the meeting, Saturviit[1] Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik was created with a mandate to give Inuit women and children a voice, to break down the wall of silence surrounding their experiences, and to promote their wellbeing.

This report echoes and goes beyond the initial set of recommendations made in 2005 at Qilalugaq Camp. It presents the results of a research project initiated in January 2013 by Saturviit in partnership with the research program CURA *Inuit Leadership and Governance in Nunavut and Nunavik: Life Stories, Analytical Perspective and Trainings*.[2] The goal of the study was to probe the conditions of life of Inuit women from Nunavik and to learn about their concerns, needs, and aspirations, in order to come up with concrete solutions to social problems. To do so, a graduate student in anthropology came to visit Inuit communities and interviewed more than one hundred women.

Since Saturviit's main mission is to give women a voice, the purpose of this book is to report their words as faithfully as possible, and not to offer a deep analysis of the historical causes of current social issues, any more than it is to give an interpretation of the overall

[1] "Saturviit" means "people who bring hope to restore peace."

[2] This CURA (Community-University Research Alliance) is a 5-year (2010-2015) research program directed by Frédéric Laugrand (Department of Anthropology, Université Laval) and funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

situation. We have merely attempted to describe women's experiences and thoughts while preserving the details and complexity.

This report sets forth women's priorities for housing, education and employment, family and individual wellness, the legal system and social services, and social harmony. It aims to pinpoint major issues that have to be addressed to help regain a safe and healthy life environment for Nunavik families and to propose ways to solve these issues in a culturally relevant manner. Although whatever regards women affects all Inuit, our study has convinced us that this exercise would also be worth doing with Inuit men. Men likewise need to be listened to, and such an exercise would positively and meaningfully complete the picture of the issues that concern contemporary Inuit society.

Throughout the chapters, some tables and statistics, numerous quotes, and a few personal stories are used to illustrate women's experiences and opinions in relation to social issues. The first chapter sheds light on the situation of many Inuit, including children, who cannot enjoy a safe and healthy living environment, or, in other words, a place where they feel at home. In Nunavik communities and in Montreal, countless Inuit suffer from the social, mental, and physical problems due to homelessness. Because the housing shortage greatly helps to create and perpetuate all major social issues, not to mention health issues, it has to be handled seriously and urgently.

The second chapter raises the participants' concerns about education, underemployment, and poverty among the Inuit. Some criticisms and suggestions are made about the current education system in Nunavik so that young people may be better prepared to take control of their lives, to continue with post-secondary education, and to participate in the job market. Because the economic situation of single mothers appears especially worrisome, some measures are needed to support them.

The third chapter is about the most sensitive and wicked but also least heard about of all problems: violence and abuse in all its forms. We disclose women's experiences with domestic and family violence, sexual assault, and abuse of alcohol and drugs. Using the participants' own words, we analyze the relationship that Inuit have with alcohol and various measures to circumvent it or cope with it. Finally, we look at the suffering of young people, particularly the ones affected by rape and suicide.

The fourth chapter presents the usefulness and limits of the resources currently in place in all communities to meet Inuit needs and ensure their safety, namely the social services, the police, and the Director of Youth Protection (DYP). We particularly point out the slowness of the justice system, the lack of trust in social workers, women's worries about the placement of more and more Inuit children in foster care, and the need for professional psychological services. We also briefly talk about the Neighbourhood Wellness Program and women's shelters, as examples of services better suited to Inuit culture and needs.

In the last chapter, we discuss social bonds as being at the core of social issues and as the crux of any solution. Throughout the interviews, the participants talked about the rupture between people, which originated in different events and traumas due to colonization, and shared with us their hope of seeing Nunavimmiut communicate and

support each other again. By restoring the role of parents and elders, they can rehabilitate social harmony and pride, as well as walk through a collective healing process.

To conclude, we offer five solutions to improve gender equality and empower Inuit women. These solutions, and based on the findings of our survey, were identified by participants at Arnaliat Nipingit 2015, the women's conference held in Akulivik in March 2015. They were presented at a panel on gender equality and empowerment of women during the 59th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, in New York City, on March 17, 2015.

## METHODOLOGY

Lisa Koperqualuk, the Chairperson of Saturviit at the time, began the research project and decided to seek the services of a student researcher from Université Laval to carry out the study with Nunavik women. With Pascale Laneuville, a graduate student with a master degree in anthropology, it was agreed that visits would be made to half of all Nunavik communities plus Montreal, and that women of all age groups and profiles should be interviewed individually. Also, an Inuk woman assisted the researcher in every community in order to facilitate contact with women, to present the project to the community, and to act as an interpreter when necessary. This is how Nancy Saunders Annanack, from Kuujjuaq, joined Saturviit's team. Before travelling up North, Lisa and Pascale developed an interview template based on Saturviit's concerns for use more as a guideline than as a systematically administered questionnaire. They also planned a travel itinerary and schedule, taking care to include both of the two Nunavik regions, and communities of all sizes (Appendix 1). Standard compensations for lodging, interviewing, and translation were agreed upon, and every participant signed a consent form. Along with the objectives of the study, the consent form mentioned that the information collected was for Saturviit's use exclusively and that the anonymity of all participants would be respected without exception.

As much as possible, Saturviit's board members and the researcher tried to contact members of each community before arrival in order to find lodging, to inform women about the study, and to start recruiting participants. After arrival, local FM radio was a favourite means to reach women and explain the study. We also asked for an office either at the school or at the municipal office where we could receive and make calls and conduct the interviews. Some women were also interviewed at work and at home. To recruit participants, we also visited major workplaces and public places, daycares, co-ops, Northern stores, sewing centres, schools, clinics, municipal offices, and any other offices. We did our best to interview women with different socioeconomic profiles and diverse occupations and work positions. Between one and five interviews were conducted per day, generally on weekdays, with an average of 13.5 interviews per community. Average time for an interview was one hour, and most interviews were conducted in English.

For the first part of the research in Nunavik, four communities on Ungava Bay were visited in the following order: Kangiqsualujjuaq, Kuujjuaq, Tasiujaq, and Kangiqsujuaq. Between four and nine nights were spent in each community, depending on the size of the population. We had no trouble recruiting participants, except in the smallest community, Tasiujaq, where many women were out of town for funerals, meetings, or training courses. Almost 60 interviews were done during the four weeks we stayed on Ungava Bay. The women were generally very open to talking about their experiences and needs and were glad to have the opportunity to do so. This survey met a real need, and the population responded with much interest.

For the second part of the research, we decided to spend a few more days in Kuujjuaq to interview additional women whose work positions were considered relevant to the

research. Then, Pascale pursued the survey on the Hudson Bay Coast alone and found interpreters in Puvirnituq, Ivujivik, and Kuujjuaraapik. Being a stranger, alone, and a non-Inuk speaker, it seemed a little bit harder to find women. Moreover, the short stay in every community obviously limited the number of interviews. Nevertheless, the support from a few generous women in each community made the work easier. Thirty-four interviews were completed during this second tour, which lasted about three weeks.

Finally, the researcher spent a week in Montreal in July and met altogether fifteen women in three different workplaces (FCNQ, KSB, and Makivik offices) and at the women's shelter Chez Doris. To locate homeless Inuit, Lisa Koperqualuk recommended that we get in touch with the Inuk social worker of Chez Doris, who referred us to Annie Pisuktie, a former social worker who had also experienced homelessness. She generously recruited participants, assisted all of them during the interviews, and translated when necessary.

For each community, we are grateful to the local women who helped out in finding lodgings, interpreters, and participants. Since the interview topics were pretty personal and sensitive, and since the interviewees and the interviewer were not known to each other, it is clear that the women who agreed to take part had to feel very comfortable with disclosure of their experiences and conversing about very sensitive social issues. It was not easy, considering how busy the women usually are, but we were pleasantly surprised by the interest shown and the participation rate. Altogether, 108 Inuit women participated in the study, along with about five *Qallunaat*[3] who held key positions as social worker, police officer, or teacher. The age range varied from 18 to 85 years old, with an average of 44 years old. The best represented age group was the forties, followed by the thirties and the fifties. Table 1 shows the details by community.

**Table 1: Age groups of the participants by community**

| **Communities** | under 20 | 20 to 29 | 30 to 39 | 40 to 49 | 50 to 59 | 60 to 69 | 70 to 79 | 80 to 85 | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Kangiqsualujjuaq** | 0 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | **16** |
| **Kuujjuaq** | 1 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 1 | **21** |
| **Tasiujaq** | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | **11** |
| **Kangiqsujuaq** | 1 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | **18** |
| **Puvirnituq** | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | **12** |
| **Ivujivik** | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **3** |
| **Kuujjuaraapik** | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | **12** |
| **Montreal** | 0 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | **15** |
| **Total** | **6** | **17** | **20** | **25** | **20** | **14** | **5** | **1** | **108** |
| *Percentage* | *5.56* | *15.74* | *18.52* | *23.15* | *18.52* | *12.96* | *4.63* | *0.93* | *100* |

This report was written as much as possible with a view to respecting the richness of the interviews, and to highlighting the major issues and reflections of women. For reasons of space, only the more frequently expressed concerns are shown here and illustrated with cases and quotes. Some statistics are presented about the women's profiles and

[3] The Inuit term "Qallunaat" (plural of "Qallunaaq") is used in this report to refer to White people in general.

experiences, but since no systematic questionnaire was used, their representativeness of the whole female Inuit population is very limited. They are offered on an indicative basis only. We preferred to let the women talk about their own concerns and experiences instead of making them answer countless questions about so many topics. Therefore, each interview was unique and conducted according to the participant's profile and interests. Throughout the text, the reader will find countless references to the interviews; these references are used to support statements and to identify the interviews they come from. We chose to number them, such as #33 for the thirty-third interview. By consulting Appendix 1, the reader can find out the participant's community and age.

# CHAPTER 1. HOUSING SHORTAGE AND HOMELESSNESS

> *Housing is a big problem up North and I think it is the cause of most problems. People who are living cramped together tend to get violent: "Don't touch my stuff, don't do this". Alcohol was not a problem before [the housing shortage] and there was not as much suicide, and sexual violence.* (#102)

## Introduction

The housing shortage, and the overcrowded homes it creates, was mentioned and discussed by a majority of the participants as one of the biggest issues in Nunavik. Most had lived in crowded homes at one point in their lives for a shorter or longer period of time, and all had been affected. According to the woman quoted above, the housing shortage is even the leading source of all social ills in Nunavik. Ever since the substantial increase in the population during the 1980s, and the beginning of overcrowding, there has been more violence, more suicide, and more sexual abuse. In 2006, Statistics Canada reported that 49% of all Inuit in Nunavik inhabited a crowded dwelling (i.e., more than one person per bedroom),[4] while only 3% of all non-Aboriginal Canadians were living in such a situation. Furthermore, the Inuit of Nunavik are the most susceptible among all Canadians to living in multi-family households: 26% versus 4% of non-Aboriginal Canadians (Statistics Canada 2006: 24-26). Given the continuing high population growth rate,[5] the situation has not improved since 2006, and might even get worse:

> The shortage of housing units has reached a critical level while the population growth rate and the age group to reach 18 years of age and older will increase in years to come. This population growth rate combined with an ageing population will result in greater housing needs.[6] (KHMB 2013: 2)

The standards for an acceptable number of co-residents in a house clearly cannot be the same in the North as in southern Quebec. For example, as Anouk Laroque, a social worker, mentioned during our study, for Nunavimmiut[7] the fact that a child does not have his or her own bedroom is not necessarily an anomaly or a risk factor. Thus, our definition of overcrowding is somewhat different from that of Statistics Canada. We will refer to a

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[4] In an article in *Le Devoir* on October 29, 2013, Robert Dutrisac re-estimated the proportion as being as high as 63% (Dutrisac 2013). According to the NRBHSS, "In 2006, 30% of private households in Nunavik had 4 to 5 people, and 25% were made up of six or more people. In Quebec, fewer than 20% of households were made up of 4 people or more" (NRBHSS 2011: vi).

[5] "Nunavik had the fastest growing Inuit population, a 25% gain since 1996. […] In both Nunavut and Nunavik, 13% of all Inuit were aged 4 and under" (Statistics Canada 2006: 21). "Nunavik's population has doubled over the past 30 years, growing from 5,860 in 1986 to 11,860 in 2011 (NRBHSS 2011: vi). Our data also show that young families still continue to have many children (refer to Chapter 5).

[6] "In 2011, more than 45% of the population was less than twenty years old "(KHMB 2013: 24).

[7] The inhabitants of Nunavik.

crowded dwelling when it contains fewer rooms than the number of residents in the house, with a couple being counted as one person. Some people must therefore either share a room or sleep in the living room. It should be noted that information about co-habitation relies on whom the participants consider to be residents of their home. We propose that residents are people who usually sleep in the house continuously for more than a month, but this definition will never reflect the complete reality of people living together. In fact, in Nunavik, overcrowded houses, on top of family and personal issues, create a constant movement of people, often women with kids, from house to house, and couch to couch, for one night or more (#24, 25, 39; Dutrisac 2013). Consequently, the number of co-residents of a home varies considerably over a year, and even over a week. This movement is part of the phenomenon of "hidden homelessness." Indeed, there are no Inuk living on the streets in the North because of the hospitality of friends and relatives, but such hospitality does not protect them from social, mental, and physical problems due to homelessness (Makivik 2012).[8] Furthermore, the number of co-residents excludes daily visitors, family members, or friends, who show up frequently at mealtimes and in the evening.[9]

In this section, we will first look at the context of social housing in Nunavik. Then, a table of numbers and some statistics will be used to portray the participants' living conditions. Health, family, and social problems due to overcrowding will also be discussed and illustrated with specific cases. Finally, we will turn toward the situation of Inuit in Montreal and discuss homelessness there in particular. We hope this discussion will help to refocus the housing issue in the North on "home" instead of on "house." While a house is often seen as a mere physical structure, a home hints at a social and emotional reality, the place where belonging (to a space and to a group) merges into a sense of security.[10]

## Housing situation and housing policy in Nunavik

[8] Qulliit Nunavut Status of Women Council identifies four kinds of homelessness in the North: 1) visible or absolute (sleeping in a shelter or "places considered unfit for human habitation"); 2) relative ("living in spaces that do not meet basic health and safety standards"); 3) hidden ("temporary staying with friends or family", "staying with a man only in order to obtain shelter", or "living in household where there are subject to family conflict or violence"); and 4) at risk of becoming homeless (close to "eviction, bankruptcy or family separation") (Qulliit Nunavut Status of Women Council (2007: 3).

[9] Visiting is often seen as a cultural practice that is now affected by new realities such as the increase in alcohol abuse and violence, which limits visiting to some degree (#72), and food insecurity, which becomes a reason for visiting. According to Brière, even today, visiting among Inuit serves to maintain social bonds on a daily basis. Moreover, social belonging and house location preferences exert an influence on overcrowding, since Inuit try to prevent spatial and social isolation (Brière 2014: 72, 85-88).

[10] The idea of feeling "at home" can also refer to someone's ability to appropriate, symbolically and emotionally, his or her house and to exert control over it (Brière 2014: 127). According to Brière, among Nunavimmiut, limitations on appropriation of domestic space, which goes along with a sense of social belonging to a household (Le Scouarnec 2007: 79), result not only from overcrowding, but also from the balance of power between a paternalistic government, which controls social housing design, issues and construction, and the Inuit, who are seen as mere beneficiaries. The outcome is a conflict between cultural values and norms (Brière 2014: 37). Today, although housing policies ignore cultural factors, traditional daily uses of the built environment persist among the Inuit (Brière 2014; Dawson 2006).

We find three house types in Nunavik: very rare private houses; institutional houses reserved for employees, most of them *Qallunaat*; and social housing. Private houses are so uncommon[11] because of the high cost of building, maintaining, and heating in Nunavik (#24, 42).[12] Despite a Makivik program that offered to pay 75% of the building costs (#78), only about three of the female participants in Nunavik owned their own homes—one in Quaqtaq and two in Kuujjuaq. Thus, almost all houses inhabited by Inuit are social housing, belong to Makivik, and are managed by the regional body known as the Kativik Housing Management Bureau (KHMB).

> The KHMB was created in 1998 and was given by the Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ) the responsibility to manage social housing, including rent collection, maintenance and assignment of houses, and so on, under the authority of Makivik Corporation (Makivik 2014b; Quebec Government 2001: 23-24). KHMB units are either single houses, duplexes, or, more recently, apartments, each one having two to five bedrooms. The rent varies according to the number of rooms and household income. The lowest rent is $100, which is available to seniors whose sole income is the government pension.

To be allocated a house, Inuit have to fill in and submit an application at the local KHMB office. Each application is valid for a period of six months, after which the applicant must reapply. The application may be made for different reasons; for example, young families want to have their first home, newly expanded families need a larger home, or some want to reduce their rent by renting a smaller house (#30, 41, 43, 45, 71, 83, 85, 91). Quite often, instead of receiving a brand new house, a family switches their place with another family (#8, 59, 80).

The supply of housing units built each year does not equal the demand; consequently, most applicants have to renew their applications year after year, and the waiting list is long.[13] Some have waited up to six or seven years (#24, 49, 53, 61, 62). In 2012, 2,609 KHMB units gave shelter to a population of 12,090 Inuit in Nunavik, for a total of 3,429 families (KHMB 2013: 6, 21). At that time, Makivik (2012) estimated the immediate need at 1,000 houses.[14] The annual number of new houses, built during summer and fall, is determined by the funding available to Makivik, which comes mostly from the SHQ. Depending on the number of houses assigned to each community, local housing committees then select which applicants will get one (#40). Decisions have to meet some criteria, and priority usually goes to low-income families and to people with major family issues (#9).

Obviously, not everyone agrees with this way of selecting beneficiaries. Among applicants who fail to meet the criteria, some choose to fight the decision in order to win their case. In this regard, three childless young women with family problems in their

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[11] According to Statistics Canada (2010), in 2006 only 2% of all Inuit in Nunavik owned their homes, while 75% of Canada's non-Aboriginal population did.

[12] As Duhaime points out, the rising price of materials and high operating costs like heating are economic barriers to private ownership (Duhaime 2008: 86).

[13] See also Brière (2014: 128).

[14] In its survey of social housing needs, the KHMB estimated at 820 the current needs for housing units, and also discussed the possibility of building additional bedrooms to optimize the current housing stock (KHMB 2013: 21).

previous homes ended up, after many years of waiting, writing letters to the housing committee so that they could finally be allocated their own housing (#24, 40, 62). Some said that low-income families are generally favoured at the expense of families with one or more members holding a good job. The first kind of families struggle to pay their rent, accumulate debt, and are eventually evicted, whereas those who can afford the rent and suffer as much from family problems, must spend years on the waiting list (#44). This is what one single mother, who finally got a house, told us:

> I went from house to house, from couch to couch with my kids. I was not able to find a house, because I wanted to work in a good environment, to make good money. I was not qualified enough for the house, because I had a job, and it was the hardest time of my life. There are so many people who are going through it and houses are overcrowded. We are not given funding for more housing because people are not paying their rent. Social housing is for people who cannot afford to pay rent, so they pay really low rent, but still they don't pay. They keep the house and they go in debt up to $9,000 and they finally get kicked out. And there are other people who want to pay, who want a house, who want to take care of their families. It is a disaster, it is sad; I don't understand it. (#25)

Another Kuujjuaq woman had to wait many years for a house because she had no kids. She denounced the policy that favours couples with children and believes that it drives some women to have babies for this one purpose. For people like her, with good jobs and no kids, there is no option, unless they agree to be bound by a contract that lasts more than 20 years to buy their own home:

> It took me seven years to get a house here because I don't have kids. […] I went crazy; I would die for a house. I had money, a boyfriend, but no children. […] I wanted my house because my drunken mother kicked me out every day. I had to sleep on my dad's couch and he lives in a two bedroom with three people. […] "I am going to work today, I am a good citizen, I graduated, I can pay bills, I am a responsible person. Why can't you give me a house? You are giving a house to a person with eight kids who works as a janitor." […] They say that social housing is for people that cannot afford housing, so where is the regular housing? Can I go apartment shopping, where? There is no such thing as that, unless you want to build your own house. I am 22 years old, I should not have to put my life down on land for the next fifteen years. […] People with kids are priority; that is why people are having kids, to get a house. (#24)

A last point to be discussed is the trouble Inuit have paying their rent and the new menacing reality of evictions. During a radio interview for CBC News (September 12, 2012), Watson Fournier from the KHMB explained that eviction of families who have fallen behind in payment of their rent started in 2010 with the aim of sending people the message that rent has to be paid. For the third year in 2012, 14 families, distributed in seven communities, were evicted. For the KHBM, this policy became necessary because 19% of the rent is not collected every year, which amounts to about one million dollars. Since the KHMB is the only provider of houses in Nunavik, and since families would have to pay three or four times their actual rent to own the same kind of house, it is unthinkable to kick out all of the families who do not pay their rent. Consequently, before eviction, local agents should try to work out repayment agreements. According to Mr. Fournier, the KHMB selects those families that fail to respect the terms of the agreement and proceeds to evict

them. Eviction is used to make room for other families who are more willing to pay. For those who lose their houses, the only way to become eventually eligible for another house is to respect a five-year contract for repayment.

During our study, a local KHMB officer said the number of cases of unpaid rent had been decreasing since the evictions began (#78). The evicted families, who usually have several children, find themselves homeless and have to move from one living room to another because they cannot find a house that has enough space to accommodate them on a long-term basis. A 26-year-old woman told the story of her father, who had adopted her own daughter. Her father, together with his girlfriend and his adopted daughter, were evicted and had been moving from one house to another until he recently moved into an already overcrowded home. The participant hoped that the situation would not affect the academic performance of her biological daughter:

> They have been kicked out of their house because they didn't pay their rent. […] They now have debt that they have to pay well for five years before they can apply for a new house. They ask me to apply for a house, but I didn't do it yet. So they went from house to house for a while and then moved to my sister's house in [another community]. […] They are now living ten people in the house with six bedrooms. Since the kids are sleeping mostly in the living room, they are OK in the house I think. I hope that the moving will not affect too much my daughter, because she attends school and she is really good at school. (#35)

Another woman who works for the KHMB disagrees with the evictions, but admits that it is not easy to deal with people who do not want to help themselves merely by applying for rent discounts. There are many possible ways to reduce the rent of low-income households, but people are not always informed or willing to ask for them. She added that, considering the food prices up North, it is not surprising to find people out of money:

> It is very sad to see people being kicked out and then moving from couch to couch. This is a White people's rule. […] Yet, the rent is not too high, it is OK. People even get discount for low incomes. They just have to make an effort to ask for the discount. […] Some people cannot help themselves, and we have to push them so hard to take advantage of the programs, to apply, find the papers and fill the forms. They have to be motivated. Some don't care, but they have to, because their rent can get very high. (#40)

While some Inuit point to abuse of alcohol and drugs as a cause of rent arrears, others defend parents who are just trying to feed their children (#40, 81). For some women, the problem is that we only hear about the lack of housing, while the major problem is the cost of housing, which makes people apply for smaller houses, when they are already cramped. Rents should be reduced so that people can live in a house that fits the size of their family (#85, 90, 93).

**Participants' profile**

This table shows the participants' housing situation, and provides a comparison of this situation in different communities. It must be remembered that the figures are not

exhaustive, since social housing data were not systematically collected for each participant, although a vast majority of them answered the questions about their housing situation.

**Table 2: Housing situation of the participants by community**

| Communities | Crowded | Average residents | Three generations | Feel crowded | Not their home | Waiting list | Satisfied | Total participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kangiqsualujjuaq | 8 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 6 | **16** |
| Kuujjuaq | 2 | 3.26 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 11 | **21** |
| Tasiujaq | 4 | 5 | ? | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7 | **11** |
| Kangiqsujuaq | 6 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 11 | **18** |
| Puvirnituq | 8 | 5.7 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 7 | **12** |
| Ivujivik | 2 | 4 | ? | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | **3** |
| Kuujjuaraapik | 2 | 3.6 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 5 | **12** |
| Montreal | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 13 | **15** |
| **Total** | **32** | **4** | **12** | **15** | **14** | **10** | **62** | **108** |
| *Percentage* | *30%* | — | *11%* | *14%* | *13%* | *9%* | *57%* | – |

According to the information furnished by participants and to our definition of overcrowding, 30% of them were living in crowded houses; the highest rates were in Puvirnituq and Ivujivik[15] (about two-thirds), and the lowest in Kuujjuaq and Montreal.[16] The average number of co-residents went from 2 (Montreal) to 5.7 (Puvirnituq),[17] and at least 11% of all housing units lodged three generations. Only 15 participants complained that their homes were too small for the number of residents. This shows that overcrowding is subjective, or that it is not always seen negatively. In fact, 53% of all participants openly expressed satisfaction with their current housing situation (the lowest level of satisfaction was in Kangiqsualujjuaq). No more than 10 women were currently on the KHMB waiting list. However, the overwhelming majority of women had experienced problematic housing situations in the past. Aside from overcrowding, other sources of dissatisfaction were the need for renovation (#11, 27, 48, 55),[18] living in a duplex or apartment with neighbours (#59, 73, 78, 79), defective heating system or poor insulation (#61, 68), having stairs,[19] or being poorly located (#59, 71).[20] Not feeling at home was another source of discontent and

[15] Considering the low number of participants in Inukjuak, this percentage is far from being representative.

[16] It was mentioned that the housing situation in Kuujjuaq had improved and was not as difficult as it had been some years ago, even for childless people (#61, 62).

[17] In Puvirnituq, at the time of the interviews, there were 360 social housing units for 1,700 inhabitants, for an average of 4.44 persons per house, and there was only one private house (#67, 78). This represents an improvement since 2008, when a couple of hundred homes housed 1,500 inhabitants (CBC News, May 27, 2008).

[18] Only four women mentioned this problem. This is surprising because in 2006 Statistics Canada reported that 46% of all Inuit in Nunavik lived in dwellings that required major repairs, versus 7% of all non-Aboriginal Canadians (Statistics Canada 2006: 25). Many women mentioned that their house had been renovated not too long ago.

[19] An elder mentioned that she did not like living in a 2-storey house because it was becoming hard to go up and down the stairs (#77). Another woman complained that some houses had no toilet upstairs (#89).

[20] Elders especially appreciate living close to services, such as a church and stores. About dissatisfaction with the configuration and isolation of semidetached houses, see also Brière (2014: 35).

was connected to family or conjugal problems. Of the 14 women who mentioned that they did not live at home (implying often that they lived at their spouse's house), five complained about conjugal difficulties and would like to have their own houses.

We tried to detect a connection between, on the one hand, the economic situation and job market participation among households and, on the other hand, their housing situation, but the data, which are far from complete, showed no correlation. In fact, housing situations were varied and complex, as well as the factors that influenced them.

## Health and social impacts of housing shortage

### Health issues

In 2012, Donat Savoie, on behalf of Makivik, reported:

> This overcrowding has a major impact on the development of children, both in terms of their physical health (they are more vulnerable to infections and chronic lung disease) as well as their psychological well-being (they exhibit symptoms of distress, including difficulties in impulse control and in learning at school). Recently in the Inuit community of Kangiqsualujjuaq (George River) located on the East coast of the Ungava Bay, there were 90 cases of tuberculosis. (Makivik 2012)

In 2012, Kangiqsualujjuaq saw a spread of tuberculosis that sparked concerns about the impact of overcrowded housing on health (#7, 21, 26, 96). Statistics Canada (2006: 24; 2013: 3) confirmed the problem and added that the situation poses a high risk for respiratory infections among children:

> Health experts maintain that inadequate housing can be associated with a host of health problems. For example, crowded living conditions can lead to the transmission of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and hepatitis A, and can also increase risk for injuries, mental health problems, family tensions and violence. Hospitalization rates for Inuit children with severe lower respiratory tract infections are the highest in the world. Research has shown that crowding, along with poor ventilation in Inuit homes, contributes to these rates. (Statistics Canada 2006: 24)

In the context of this study, no data have been collected about the impact of overcrowded housing on the mental and physical health of Inuit women. Nevertheless, we thought it important to provide some of the information available on the topic, since it was a concern for many participants. One simple fact was raised about hygiene; when too many people are living in the same house and relying on the same water tank, it is really common to run out of water for one or more days until the water truck arrives (#26). Although most inhabitants have a drinkable water supply for drinking and cooking, they still have no water for showering and use of a functioning toilet. Beyond physical health, the Qulliit Nunavut Status of Women Council also recognizes the impact of overcrowded housing on children's mental and emotional wellbeing:

> [They] suffer through constant stress, experience of breakup of families, and suffer academically. […] have an inability to concentrate in the classroom, no sense of security, poor nutrition, confused behavior based on the absence of routine, and constant worry about where they will be sleeping that night or how many people will share their room. (Qulliit Nunavut Status of Women Council 2007: 7)

We shall now look at the participants' specific social experiences.

Narrative: Experiencing conjugal violence and feeling at home nowhere

*Maria*[21] *had her first baby with a man who used to beat her up. She left him and then had two more children, who were adopted by relatives, before meeting her husband. She had three children with him and they are now living all together in a two-bedroom house. While their teenager has his own bedroom, the rest of the household (four people) share the other room.*

*Maria's husband doesn't help much with housework and children; fortunately her mother does. Overconsumption of alcohol by both Maria and her husband greatly strains their marriage. When alcohol arrives in town, there are always people who want to drink in their house, and her husband agrees to have them come over without seeking her advice. They don't really communicate anymore, anyway.*

*When she first moved into the house with her husband, she thought she was having her own place, but now she does not feel at home anywhere. Her husband regularly forces her to have sexual intercourse. She loves him but does not feel it is reciprocal. She thinks he doesn't realize she is trying her best to satisfy him. In addition, he regularly asks her to leave the house for a while in order to make room for a mistress. When this happens, her kids stay with their father, and she moves to her mother's house, where there is no place for her anymore. Last time, she was there for a whole month.*

*Maria would like to have a place in town, like a shelter, to go to when she has to leave her house, and when she wants to take a break from her husband. Sometimes, she thinks the best solution would be to have her own house, without her husband. At the same time, she feels it is not usual for Inuit to act that way; women are supposed to stay with their husbands, and spouses have to get along.*

Having no home: being stuck in a house with alcohol abuse and violence

Maria's case reveals how housing problems can affect women and how this issue is interrelated with other social issues such as alcohol abuse and violence. Conjugal problems together with the housing shortage mean that Maria has no home; she has no stable place where she feels secure. The inability to move into another house, along with the pressure of social norms and parental considerations, may compel some women to remain in unhealthy marriages (#19). This was the situation of a 51-year-old woman who lived with a husband addicted to alcohol and drugs, who was jealous, a control freak, and also used to forcing her to have sex (#14). Some younger women experienced the same kind of situation, such as a participant's granddaughter, who was often booted out of her house with her baby because her boyfriend wanted to party:

> My second granddaughter was living with us with her boyfriend, and she had a baby in May. On November 8th, they got their house. November 9th in the morning, she was

[21] Fictitious name.

> kicked out of the house because her boyfriend wanted to have a party. It has been the fourth time she is kicked out already. He wants big parties and she doesn't want it at the house because of the baby. And she doesn't want people smoking in the house because of the baby. He doesn't want to listen, so he kicks her out. So she ends up at my house all the time. I keep telling her; "it is not a life, he is not worth to be with you." But she doesn't want her son to be fatherless. (#21)

Maria's story is also the story of many women who frequently have to run away from alcohol abuse and verbal and physical violence, most often bringing their children with them, for one or few nights. They usually end up in the houses of relatives or friends, where they feel safe (#6, 35, 41, 44, 45, 46, 50, 54, 81), or in a women's shelter when the community has one[22] (#11, 14, 19, 20, 23):

> There are people coming to me at night, to run away from violence, for protection. They would need a women's shelter. I even take some kids because their parents are drunk. […] From my past experience, when you are in this kind of situation, you need help, so I welcome those people for the night. Police even bring kids to me sometimes. […] Sometimes we are a lot of people in the house. (#38)
>
> There are women who come to my place when they run away from their house, and sometimes they are drunk. […] They come, because of the view; they can see the whole town from the house. […] It doesn't bother me to have women coming in; I like to have visitors. […] I am not afraid of drunken men, because they don't come to my place. (#80)

Receiving a battered or frightened woman at night is not always appreciated; some hosts were afraid that an aggressive man might be pursuing his spouse (#56). Two participants mentioned they used to take in women and children, and they expressed the difficulty they faced accommodating them in their homes, especially when the women were drunk. One decided to start to lock her door at night, because she didn't want her children to be in the presence of battered and drunken women anymore (#67). The other had to stop taking in her friend and her kids:

> Last year, I had a friend who was alcoholic and fighting with her boyfriend every night. She was coming to my house every single day; she was drunk and with her two kids. She was my friend and I had to help her, but for two months it was not really changing and I got tired. I said: "That is it, I cannot anymore. I have enough to do just with my kids. Just me, I have enough problems." I am not that kind of person that can just take care of everybody else. (#68)

Many participants who talked about conjugal violence believed that the presence of a women's shelter in their community would be the best solution to help women who live in such situations (#33, 38, 45, 47, 50, 54, 73, 80).[23] However, some recognized that a more efficient and sustainable solution for women would be prevention and education (#21), and of course construction of more houses (#28). Indeed, a woman who worked in a women's shelter noticed that, when houses had been built in town, there was a period of time when fewer women were coming to the shelter (#17). Another participant pointed out that a

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[22] For a discussion about women's shelters, refer to Chapter 4.

[23] Most participants talked about the need for a women's shelter, although others recognized that some men who experience conjugal violence also need a shelter (#56).

shelter cannot solve the problem and that lack of housing also affects children who are more at risk of being exposed to violence and sexual abuse:

> The housing situation is horrible. If you are a woman and you have four kids and a husband who is useless and beats you up all the time, who comes home drunk four nights a week, you have nowhere to go. You go to a women's shelter for two weeks and then what? You are going to go back to him. The women cannot run away and rent an apartment. There is no way out when you are in such a situation. It is very sad. […] Housing is the first resource that women need in order to be able to raise their kids in a healthy environment, to be a good mother. Young women and young people have it really hard right now. So much goes back to the housing situation. For young girls, if they are sexual abused, there is nobody to turn to. (#28)

One woman in her forties raised the paradox of the situation: the question should not be "where women should go?", but "why it is women and children who have to leave home when men want to drink?" Indeed, when there are problems in the house, it would be more reasonable that women and children could stay, while the men leave (#29). But in the way some women talk of their living place, it seems obvious that many feel the house belongs to the man. Consequently, male behaviour, actions, and decisions often force women and their children to leave home. Having a bar in town, or any place for people to drink and party, instead of doing so at home, could be at least a partial solution to the problem (#105).

Conflicts between co-residents, and lack of space for childrearing

In Maria's case, we finally note some of the major consequences of overcrowding: lack of privacy[24] and conflict between each person's interests and needs. While some teenagers or young adults want to listen to loud music and party the whole night long, elders prefer tranquility, and children need to sleep well in order to succeed at school (#26, 96):

> If you are a child living with 11 people, fighting, drinking, you don't sleep at night. Do you want to go to school and study? No, because you are not getting rest, because you are not living a healthy lifestyle. Trying to keep mentally healthy here is not normal. That needs to change immediately. (#25)

Indeed, partying at home and receiving visitors do not provide a healthy environment for children to grow up in. Not only do they hardly sleep at night, but they also may have nobody to wake them up and serve them breakfast in the morning. Indeed, some participants were alarmed by the fact that many kids do not eat enough while their parents drink, smoke and, at times, play games (#5, 9, 46, 71, 87). Abuse of alcohol by parents often encourages children to escape on their own and find another house to spend the night with grandparents or other relatives, for example (#1, 105).

Whether crowded or not, forced cohabitation can be hard when not enough people contribute financially to payment of food purchases, bills, and rent, and when some co-residents have drinking problems. One elder told us about how uncomfortable she felt living with her son whenever he came home intoxicated. For this reason, she would rather

[24] According to Brière (2014: 90), while the Inuit family traditionally lived all together in the same room, the importance of benefiting from the privacy of an individual bedroom has increased, and the number of bedrooms in houses is currently insufficient.

have him apply for his own house (#90). Another woman, a single mother from a small community where houses are not built every year, had to live fifteen years cramped with siblings who began to abuse alcohol after their mother's death. In addition to alcohol abuse and violent behaviour, they were not working, thus forcing their sister to support the household even though she was already struggling financially:

> I was living in a crowded house after my mother died. I had a kid to raise and the oldest in my siblings were living with me. It was difficult; I didn't know what to do. I had a mental breakdown. […] When I was living with my brothers, who were young men, drinking and grieving about our mother, with their personal problems, there was some violence in my house. (#81)

Otherwise, the mere fact of living with too many people in the same house can create anger and aggressiveness towards family members. Having more space for everyone, and more private space, could alone make a difference in the communities not only in terms of violence, but also in terms of mental health and the capability of people to act for themselves:

> Crowded places tend to have more chaos in the house. They tend to be mad at each other; [people saying]: "You are in my space," things like that. […] Kids see the violence. I wish they didn't. If there were more houses in each village, I think the chaos will lessen. The more crowded you are in the house; the more confrontation is going to happen. [With more housing], there would be more breathing. (#54)

> [Since I received my house], my mind is so clear. I was going so crazy at my grandpa's. People go crazy in Kuujjuaq, because there are so many people in one house. When you are in your comfort zone, you can do other things like go cutting hair…you can do more. (#62)

Overcrowding may also prevent children from having good parental upbringing. Many participants talked about the difficulty faced by young parents trying to raise their kids properly when they have to live with their own parents. When there are too many people bringing up a child, not only can the kid become confused, but it is also hard for that young person to become self-reliant and for responsible parents to raise the kid in their own way (#7, 49).

> Housing is a problem for young parents; when they don't get their house, they cannot raise their kids as adults. They would be more responsible if they had it. (#102)

> There is no room for [young parents] to raise their kids; they have to live with parents and grandparents and siblings. They cannot raise their kids their way and kids get confused being educated by many people. Every people, every generation have their own way to raise kids. (#96)

The difficulties that today's youth experience in raising their children could not simply be explained by overcrowded housing. We will see further in this report other women's concerns about parenting (see Chapter 5).

**Housing and homelessness in Montreal**

Why move down South?

According to Makivik, in 2006, 20% of all Canadian Inuit lived in southern Canadian cities. About 1,000 Inuit, mainly from Nunavik, lived in Montreal (Makivik 2012). We propose grouping Inuit people living in Montreal into four categories: workers, students, hospitalized Inuit, and homeless. In this study, we only interviewed workers and homeless Inuit, who were usually the ones most likely to live in Montreal for a long period of time. While the workers and the homeless lived in quite different conditions, the same social issues had motivated them to go to Montreal. They had mostly moved there because of the "high cost of living in Nunavik, high level of poverty, food insecurity, housing crisis, physical and sexual abuse, marital problems, etc. Other Inuit arrive in Montréal when they leave detention centers" (Makivik 2012). While the housing shortage is a major incentive, there are Inuit who fail to find and keep accommodation in Montreal and live on the streets in order to stay away from the problems of the North (CBC News 2008; Dutrisac 2013).

Table 3 shows all of the participants who were living in Montreal, their age, the number of years spent in Montreal, their motivation for moving down South, and their housing and employment situations. Out of fifteen, three had moved there many years ago to follow their non-Inuit husbands (one Mohawk, two *Qallunaat*); only one was still married, and none of them were homeless. Family or conjugal problems, often marked by violence, motivated six Inuit among the youngest to move; four of them had not worked for a long time, and three had no rented place to live in. Four women had come South to pursue their education, to get access to a better school system, or to fill a position in Inuit institutions; all of them rented or owned a dwelling and worked full-time. Finally, two simply attributed their presence in Montreal to an interest in city life; both were on welfare, and one had no home.

**Table 3: Women participants who live in Montreal.**

| Age | Years spent in Montreal | Reasons for moving | Housing/co-residents | Employment situation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **29** | 7 | Conjugal issues | Rent/2 | Work |
| **38** | 1 | Conjugal issues | Boyfriend's/2 | No income |
| **39** | 9 | Conjugal issues | No home | No income |
| **42** | 8 | Family issues | Rent/2 | Work |
| **45** | 34 | Family issues | Boyfriend's/2 | Welfare |
| **45** | 27 | School | Own/1 | Work |
| **47** | 27, on and off | City life | Rent/2 | Welfare |
| **47** | 16, on and off | City life | Women shelter | Welfare |
| **49** | 3 | School/job | Rent/2 | Work |
| **52** | 35, on and off | Followed husband | Rent/1 | Work |
| **52** | 30 | Job/Housing | Rent/4 | Work |
| **53** | 20 | School /Housing | Rent/3 | Work |
| **54** | 8 | Family issues | Rent/1 | Welfare |
| **62** | About 40 | Followed husband | Rent/2 | Widow's pension |
| **63** | 33 | Followed husband | Own/2 | Work |

Two out of fifteen participants mentioned that the housing crisis in Nunavik was a major incentive for moving. It not only pushed them to Montreal, but also prevented them from going back to their communities:

> We decided to move South for house purpose mainly, and secondly because there was no job available for me up North, although my husband was working. [...] Eventually, I want to move back North, but there is always this housing problem. You cannot just move there when you want, you have to wait for a certain time. If it would be simpler, I would have moved back long time ago. People who are down South have to have an application for years, and then they eventually call you. Some people die waiting. (#102)

> After a few years working as a teacher, I decided to move back South around 1993 because there was no house for me. There was already a housing shortage. [...] I won't go back North because there is no way to get a house. [...] It is not good to be living with too many people who have their own ways and desires. (#96)

Among participants living in Montreal and having a place to stay, all were satisfied with their housing. In the city, where construction costs are the lowest and where private landlords abound, providing you have the financial means, it is easy to find a room or an apartment to rent, and even a house or a condo to acquire. This is why single women, either working or receiving welfare, can rent housing.

If we first look at the category of Inuit workers (eight women), they had all rented or owned their own accommodations since their arrival in Montreal. The Inuit organizations (Makivik, the Kativik School Board, and the Fédération des cooperatives du Nouveau-Québec) that hired them helped them find lodging. Most of them were living in Dorval or the surrounding area (#95, 96, 102, 103, 104, 105). At the opposite end, out of seven women who had never worked in Montreal, six had been homeless. Four were still not renting apartments; they lived at their boyfriends, on the streets, or in a women's shelter. It is also interesting to note that most of those who had left their Northern community because of conjugal or family conflict or abuse had almost never worked in Montreal, had lived on the streets, and had sunk into alcohol abuse (#97, 98, 99, 100):

> They are running away from an abusive family or husband. Lots want to find a job and apartment but they never do it because it is hard. I even had a hard time to find an apartment by myself because I cannot speak French and I look like a Native. I think that some Inuit would better be going back home, those who don't know how to live down here, how to survive. (#97)

In fact, Aboriginal people have trouble at times finding apartments because of the racist behaviour of some owners. A long-time female employee at Makivik had decided to buy her own house for this reason. Once, she charged an owner who wanted to cancel her lease when he learned about her ethnic origin (#104).

Young women who come to party in the metropolis and leave their children behind were of particular concern to this woman:

> Most women come here to run away from abusive families, from husbands. A lot of the young Inuit either came for a clinic or from the prison, and they are falling through the cracks. They need more support for them. Because they are young and they party a lot, they say it is fun, so it is hard to pull them out. Eventually, it is not fun anymore. Most of

them have kids up North, they left them with the father or their parents. They stay drunk because it is hard for them. [25]

Narrative: Living on the streets: drinking, being beaten, and losing her children

*Anna[26] is 39 years old and moved to Montreal nine years ago because she was not getting along with her boyfriend. She ran away without telling him. She used to rent different apartments in Montreal, but now she has been homeless for five years and she finds it very hard. She has never worked in Montreal, and she thinks she won't be strong enough to find a job, even though she used to work up North. She hasn't received welfare for three years, because she has no address. During the day, she can eat and wash at the women's shelter Chez Doris. At night, she stays outside, spending a lot of time at Cabot Square until the shelter opens again.*

*She has had four kids with four different men. Two of her children are old enough to take care of themselves, and two are under Youth Protection. She is not allowed to see one of them until he turns 18. Once in a while, she sees or talks to one of her daughters who is living with the father near Montreal. But now, considering how jealous her new boyfriend is, she prefers to avoid contact with her family.*

*She would like to have her little one back, but she would have to find an apartment first. Knowing that she would be kicked out rapidly, she doesn't even look for one. Indeed, she was kicked out of her last apartment because her boyfriend had been very violent with her. Not a day passes without her getting hit by him. Everything he does comes down to drinking and beating her up. She drinks everyday too, but out of consideration for her unborn baby, her second one from her current boyfriend, she tries to reduce her consumption. She doesn't attend her prenatal medical appointments because she doesn't like to be in hospital.*

*She knows her boyfriend is a woman beater, and everyone tells her to leave him. But she cannot. If she tries, she knows she would go back to him right away. She feels attached to him, even though he frequently lays charges against her. Recently, he put her in jail because she found out he was seeing another girl. He always calls the police, whereas she never does when he hits her, because she loves him and doesn't want him to be in jail.*

*She feels depressive sometimes, thinking about suicide, but she remembers she has kids to see. She would like to get into social housing in Montreal for Inuit, an apartment building from where she would never move. She thinks having an apartment would help her to sober up. Sometimes, she thinks about going back North, but her parents passed away and she has never got along with her siblings.*

Experiences of homeless Inuit in Montreal

[25] This quote comes from the interpreter of the interviews effectuated in July 2013.

[26] Fictitious name.

This story illustrates pretty well a multitude of social problems experienced daily by Inuit homeless women in Montreal: loss of their kids, alcoholism, violence, stays in jail, depression, and illness.[27] Since we will discuss these topics more fully later on, we will focus here on how they specifically relate to homelessness in the city. As mentioned earlier, lack of money and racism are not the only obstacles to finding and keeping accommodation; there is also violence and alcohol.

Among participants who have experienced homelessness, all said they had been drinking at least occasionally. Some reported they had reduced their consumption, in some cases after treatment, and four considered themselves to be hard drinkers. When you spend most of your time on the streets, and when your boyfriend is alcoholic, it is very difficult to stay away from alcohol and from the violence that comes most often with it.

> Sometimes I think about moving back North, when I get really tired of Montreal. I can't seem to sober up when I am down here. […] In Montreal, I like to hang around with my people, speak Inuktitut, walk around, and enjoy the day. We walk a lot to stay away from beer. Sometimes, people drink a little too early and I invite some girls to take a walk even though they want to drink. I change their mind. Inuit [on the streets] are used to fighting a lot, but now thinking that I am the oldest of the new girls here, I try to teach them to not fight each other for a man or beer or drugs, so they calmed down a lot. (#97)

Nevertheless, having a home where they feel secure and are away from drunken people can help some women to drink less, provided they do not live with a spouse who drinks:

> I have a boyfriend, but he has his own place. I don't want him to move in with me. I like my independence; nobody can hurt me at my place. I have a good relationship with him when he is not drunk. He is alcoholic and he doesn't work, he couldn't. […] I still drink too often because I am with an alcoholic boyfriend. Sometimes, I can have a one or two days break from alcohol. He drinks at his place and I say: "I have stuff to do." This is my way to not drink. (#99)

Like Anna, many women who leave Nunavik because of conjugal or family problems replicate unhealthy relationships in the South and, just like in the North, they have trouble getting out of them because they have nowhere else to go. A 38-year-old woman, who had moved to Montreal about a year ago because of ongoing problems with her common-law spouse, decided, two days before the interview, to leave her new boyfriend, an alcoholic and aggressive man who had sent her to jail. She used to stay in his apartment, but she is now living on the streets:

> Since I am in Montreal, I am just with my new boyfriend and I do nothing else. […] He drinks a lot. When he gets up, he drinks, and by the time I get up he is drunk. […] I went in jail last year; he hit me and I hit him back, then he called the police. […] I am not supposed to see him anymore [because of probation], and I still see him. But I left two days ago. I have been away from home for two days. I am with friends, homeless

[27] A caseworker at Chez Doris, who talked about AIDS among Inuit homeless women as a harrowing and pressing problem, mentioned that many have been suffering and dying without being treated. Indeed, for diverse reasons, many Inuit stay away from hospital.

> people, outside. […] Usually, I would call and he would say: "Just come home." I don't want to repeat it now. (#100)

In general, Inuit women have babies at a young age, but those living on the streets obviously cannot keep them. They either leave them up North or lose them through the Director of Youth Protection (DYP) because of the multiple risks to their lives: having no shelter and no income, suffering from a lot of violence, and being alcoholic. Not having accommodation in Montreal necessarily means losing your children. Whereas in Nunavik it is easier to find relatives or friends to take care of your children or to house you, in Montreal not only is the community far away, but also the laws are more strictly enforced. When the DYP intervenes, children end up with strangers (#98), with the fathers (#98, 99, 100, 107, 108), or with other relatives (#98, 99 100, 106):

> I have one kid who lives in Montreal with his father; he is 14 years old. […] I haven't seen my kid for eight years because I drink. In 2002, a social worker told me to not see him. I call him only. I am going to ask to know if I can see him now.

> I know lots of people who lose their kids from DYP, even my friends. One girl was carrying her baby and she was very drunk and the police had to take the baby away from her. I was so mad at this girl. […] Some of the kids are put with their blood family, some go to a foster family, and the family loses them. […] The parents have to go to therapy to have their baby back. (#97)

To get their children back, women must at least quit drinking, most of the time by following a treatment plan, find an apartment, and get away from violence. Many try to go through rehabilitation, but fail to complete the program. Otherwise, stays in jail, or at least at the police station, are not uncommon for homeless Inuit women, as we have already seen in the few quotes presented. Some first come down South because they have been sentenced to prison, and then decide to stay because of their fear of facing their victims and/or their family members who live in the North. Once on the streets, alcohol abuse and conjugal violence become a return path to jail. According to an Inuk worker for the KSB, there is also a tendency among homeless Inuit to simply seek trouble when winter comes, so they can stay warm in prison:

> I know homeless Inuit in Montreal. The one I know is there for very long, almost 30 years. I know that some try to get in trouble to be in jail in wintertime, and come out when it is warm. […] I know a few who don't want to go back North because they are scared of their ex-spouses, or uncle, or dad. They run away. Or, for the men, it is because they committed a crime, and they are hiding here. (#105)

For an Inuk living on welfare for many years and being used to the lifestyle on the streets, jail is also a place to take a break from alcohol and her boyfriend:

> I went in jail for nine months; it was my longest. I got arrested because I was defending myself. […] In jail, there were other Inuit; I was not alone. It was like vacation to me; no beer, no drugs. It is kind of detoxifying you. […] I don't mind going back there sometimes, taking a break from downtown and from my boyfriend. […] Sometimes jail helps; girls go there and get healthy. If you go to hospital to detoxify, you might escape, but you cannot escape from jail. […] Last time, I went in for one night and I saw at least fifteen Inuit women. (#97)

Living on the streets easily becomes a lifestyle. Inuit who are first immersed in this environment upon their arrival in Montreal have trouble leaving it later, because that is all they know. Even those who manage to find an apartment and pay their rent with welfare still spend time on the streets, visit homeless shelters, and at times suffer from alcoholism and violence (#97, 99, 106, 107):

> I know one woman who got an apartment, but she is so used to living on the streets, to being with those people who live on the street, that she is still always there. […] One of my cousins lives on the streets, when she could live comfortably with her own job and her own place. She used to have a job and home, and she chose to live on the street, maybe because of alcohol and drugs. (#105)

Women who work in Montreal are aware of homelessness among Inuit. Some have relatives living on the streets and visit them sometimes; others bring country food to the shelters once in a while (#102, 105). However, some prefer to stay away from homeless Inuit because they know such people would only ask for money and become aggressive if they do not get what they want (#101, 103).

Services and help for homeless Inuit

There are different places and services available for homeless Inuit in Montreal and the participants who lived in Montreal were aware of the existence of many of them. First, there are three daytime shelters where homeless people can be served meals, have a space to rest, take a shower, do laundry, obtain new clothes, use a computer, and receive counseling or assistance to apply for a job or an apartment or to complete any application or form. These shelters are The Native Friendship Centre of Montreal, The Open Door (located in a church), and Chez Doris. Both Chez Doris and The Friendship Native Centre hire an Inuk caseworker.[28] Inuit women who are or used to be homeless express their preference for Chez Doris because it is the only place where women only are admitted, but also because there are more Inuit and fewer people of other First Nations.[29] Indeed, a woman mentioned conflict between Inuit women and First Nations women at The Native Friendship Centre (#97). Furthermore, Chez Doris is near Cabot Square (also called Atwater Park), where a lot of Inuit hang out:

> I like to hang out [at Chez Doris] with women when there is no men, talk to my people, have breakfast and lunch, watch a movie, do drawing, go on Facebook, do sewing. We have country food sometimes. […] A lot of Inuit hang out at the Cabot Square, very close from Chez Doris. There is The Open Door too, where most of the men go. […] I was at The Native Friendship Centre yesterday to pick up a food basket. It is a good place too, but some Inuit and Indians don't get along; they fight sometimes. I stopped going down there because I got attacked by two Indian girls. (#97)

Eight women interviewed in Montreal were actually met at Chez Doris. None of them were working, and most had been homeless in the past, if not still living on the streets. Even

[28] "On April 27, 2011, Makivik Corporation and the CHEZ DORIS, Women's Shelter Foundation Inc. signed a Partnership Agreement which entails, amongst other things, the hiring of an Inuit Case Worker […]" (Makivik 2012).

[29] "Inuit women represent 15% of the clientele of CHEZ DORIS" (Makivik 2012).

those who were not homeless anymore continued to visit Chez Doris daily or weekly because they liked to meet with other Inuit women, among other reasons (#97, 99, 100, 101, 106, 107).

Two shelters for Aboriginal people are open at night and provide accommodation for a variable length of time. The shelters are Projets Autochtones du Québec (PAQ)[30] and Native Women's Shelter of Montreal. One of the women interviewed had been at the second place for half a year. She explained that in order to stay there she had to see a counselor frequently, be sober, and be in by 11 at night (#108). As a matter of fact, compliance with such rules as sobriety and respect for others is a condition for attendance at all shelters and homeless centres. An Inuk who used to work at Chez Doris stated that the absence of gender-mixed shelters discourages some women from coming in because they prefer to stay on the streets with their boyfriends.

Homelessness is thus seen as a major issue for Inuit in Montreal, and some participants expressed their desire to see the city get Inuit social housing, where unfortunate Inuit could find a home with people from their communities and try to get away from alcoholism and violence. Even more useful would be an Inuit centre, where only Inuit may gather, benefit from medical care, take part in cultural activities, and also enjoy country food (#98, 104, 107, 108):

> Inuit need a place where they can go to gather, for activities; a place only for Inuit, there is nothing like that here. Chez Doris is for any women, and The Friendship Native Centre doesn't even welcome only Natives, but also Africans and Spanish. There is no privacy. [...] The problem is that there is no funding program for Inuit, it is only for Northern communities. There is nothing for Montreal. There is no centre for dropping people, homeless, for food and medical care, and there are a lot of homeless people. [...] They need services more directly linked to Inuit. (#96)

**Summary**

In this chapter on the housing shortage, we have tried to describe how Inuit women experience the lack of housing, the overcrowding of dwellings, and the homelessness. The housing issue is closely linked to many other social problems, such as alcoholism, violence, sexual assault, suicide, child neglect, dropping out from school, and so on. While women living in Nunavik are cramped together in very few houses, those living in Montreal usually have more options and more space. However, a large proportion of women moving to Montreal because of social problems "fall through the cracks" and, for many reasons, are unable to find stable and safe places to live. Ultimately, both up North and down South, too few Inuit women, and children, can enjoy feeling at "home," that is, living in a place that ensures their physical, mental, and emotional health as individuals and families. Here are the main points to retain from this first chapter:

1. Lack of social housing is an undisputed fact in Nunavik, and the current pace of construction is not close to keeping up with growing demand. In this study of Inuit

[30] In 2004, Makivik signed a Partnership Agreement with the PAQ with funding being provided by Makivik and the Kativik Regional Government, through the Ungaluk Program. "More than 50% of the visitors to this shelter are Inuit" (Makivik 2012).

women, lack of housing has been presented as one of the biggest issues in Nunavik communities, if not the most important one, which must be dealt with as a priority.

2. 30% of the participants were living in crowded dwellings, while at least 14% felt a lack of living space. The average number of co-residents among the participants in Nunavik was 4.5.
3. Overcrowding of houses is directly connected to most social issues. People living in crowded houses are more at risk of being exposed to alcohol abuse, violence, and sexual assault. Moreover, this environment is inappropriate for adequate raising and upbringing of children. Regarding alcohol consumption, some women suggested it might be beneficial to have a place in each community that is reserved for drinking and partying.
4. The many Inuit individuals and families with no house of their own cannot enjoy a stable, safe, and healthy living space; they have nowhere to feel at home, and they have no choice but to beg a little space here and there, in already crowded homes. Although these people never live on the streets, they face the same difficulties as the homeless.
5. Some participants complained about the fact that low-income families get priority for new housing; this policy encourages some women to have babies without working, and makes some higher-income individuals, couples, or families wait for years before getting a house. Because social housing is the only viable housing option in Nunavik, all Inuit should have equal access. By allowing those who can afford to pay rent to get their own homes, we could reduce the number of cases of unpaid rent and limit evictions.
6. Lack of housing opportunities forces some women to stay in abusive conjugal relationships. When experiencing verbal and physical violence at home, many women have to run away for a night or more, but then have no choice but to go back. Shelter for women and children, when available, is thus a necessary solution, albeit a temporary and partial one.
7. The causes of overcrowding are both material, i.e., there are not enough units for the population, and financial, i.e., most people end up living together for lack of money. The only way to reduce overcrowding in Nunavik would be to build more social housing units, with preference for single houses (because of dissatisfaction with duplexes and apartments) that can accommodate families with more than two kids. If new houses have to be bigger than two-bedroom units, rents should stay low, to prevent food insecurity and overcrowding.

The housing shortage is a major reason why women move South to Montreal, where housing conditions are generally way better. However, when women move to Montreal because of family or conjugal problems, they often end up on the streets, hardly work, and experience alcoholism and conjugal violence. Thus, Inuit housing and an Inuit centre (providing a wide range of services and cultural activities) were suggested as a priority measure to improve the living conditions of Nunavimmiut in Montreal.

## CHAPTER 2. SCHOOLING, EMPLOYMENT, AND THE ECONOMY

> *The education here is second education; it is not the same as the one you have as Southern students in Canada. We are not really taught what is important; the importance of getting a job, of understanding yourself and knowing who you are. It has a big effect on youth today. It has a lot to do with youth having a hard time finding a job. […] If you are given a second education here, you lose hope, you don't want to continue, you don't believe in yourself. […] It has a huge effect on the whole Nunavik, because 51% of the population of Nunavik is youth, and 85% of them drop out.* (#25)

### Introduction

In *Health Profile of Nunavik 2011*, the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services reported an improvement in the still low education level of Nunavimmiut: "In 2006, among people aged 25 to 64, 10% had a high school diploma, 30% had a post-secondary diploma below a bachelor's degree, and 10% had a university degree. The partial post-secondary diploma is the most common in Nunavik […]."[31] Still in 2006, school attendance of young 15 to 24 years old was close to 33%, versus 69% for the rest of the population of the province of Quebec. The employment rate was higher in Nunavik (64%) than in the rest of Quebec (61%) for the population 25 years of age and older, but much lower in Nunavik (38%) than in Quebec (56%) for youth between 15 and 24 years old, inclusively. Incomes were lower in Nunavik, "in spite of the higher cost of living" (NRBHSS 2011: VI-VII).[32]

According to a report from the Institut de la Statistique du Québec (2013), in 2010 15.4% of all families living in Nunavik had low incomes, compared to 11.4% for the rest of Quebec. Moreover, this percentage rose to 40% for one-parent families. According to a study on poverty by the Canada Research Chair on Comparative Aboriginal Conditions, at least 20% of private households in Nunavik are affected by poverty (Duhaime 2009: 4).[33] In addition, up to 44% of private households live with a "minimum comfort budget," which is three times higher than for the rest of Quebec. Poverty particularly affects single-parent families and the elderly who receive the federal pension as their only source of income.

Beyond these statistics, the participants experienced a low level of education, a high jobless rate and a high cost of living as major issues in Nunavik. The young woman quoted

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[31] In 2011, 17.8% of all students graduated (George 2012).

[32] The median income in Nunavik was $20.971, while it was $22.471 in Québec as a whole.

[33] Poverty is defined broadly as "a state of material destitution, of inadequate health and education, of insecurity and of predisposition to risks and the inability of a person to be heard and to influence his or her own fate"(free translation – Duhaime 2009: 4).

above described how Nunavik's deficient education system is affecting the youth, and indeed Inuit society as a whole.[34] Of course, the education system cannot be blamed as the cause of all the problems, but its flaws, as discussed by women, need to be exposed and overcome. In this chapter, we will also address job market issues, as linked to Inuit education, and to family finances.

The first section will present the overall situation of schooling and employment in Nunavik. The second one will show the participants' profile regarding these issues, and also their financial situation. We will try to compare age groups and communities, and analyze the relationship between graduation and employment. We will then discuss, in the third section, the limits of the current education system and some ideas for improvement. To highlight the causes and consequences of school dropout, and the relationships between the education system, the unemployment rate, and financial hardship, the life stories of two women will be presented in the fourth part. The job market will finally be analyzed: how accessible jobs are to Inuit with or without high school diplomas, the quantity and quality of employment opportunities, and women's experiences in the workforce. Finally, we will look at the causes and consequences of prevailing economic hardship in Inuit families.

Throughout this chapter, we wish to get the reader to think about the value Inuit attach to schooling and employment, and about their perceptions of and involvement in these "modern" realities. Also, we wish to question whether or not Nunavik's education system and job market encourage people to take charge of their development, empower themselves, and become accountable. Finally, what are the responsibilities of Nunavimmiut for the success of schooling and their own financial independence?

**Overview of Nunavik's education system and employment opportunities**

Since 1978, following the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA), each of Nunavik's 14 communities has had its own elementary and secondary schools, which the Kativik School Board (KSB) administers. From kindergarten to grade two, classes are taught exclusively in Inuktitut. From grade three, parents have the choice to place their kids in French or English immersion.[35] Due to the small size of the communities and "the trilingual programming and staffing, most classes are multi-level, with two to three grades per class." Cultural classes are available; most of the time girls are sewing or cooking, while boys are doing carpentry or outdoor activities.[36] For youth at risk of dropping out of school, alternative education programs, such as Individual Pathways of Learning, (IPL), focus more on cultural skills, life skills, and/or work skills. The adult education and vocational training department provides other options for Inuit who wish to go back to school after dropping out. The adult general education program is offered in about half of the

[34] "Nunavik's population is young: approximately one third (34%) of the population is under 15 years of age, compared to 16% for Québec" (NRBHSS 2011: vi).

[35] "The breakdown of the students between the two languages is practically equal" (free translation – Duhaime 2008: 64).

[36] However, in reality, teachers for cultural classes are hard to find and retain.

14 communities, although distance education is also available. Vocational training programs are provided in Kuujjuaq and Inukjuak only (KSB 2013).

Inuit who successfully complete secondary five have an opportunity to pursue post-secondary education with the support of the KSB's Post-Secondary Sponsorship Program. They have to choose between a French institution, Cégep Marie-Victorin, and an English institution, John Abbott College, both located on the island of Montreal. The program financially supports eligible students in many ways; for example, by paying all educational costs and by providing lodging and living allowances (KSB 2011).

To be admitted to college, Inuit have to pass a test and if they fail, they have to complete secondary 6 in Kangiqsujuaq (#81). Once in college, Inuit follow introductory courses—or propaedeutic—for one or two years before starting a specific program. The most popular college program chosen by Inuit is Social Sciences (#94, 96). As in high school, a high percentage of students quit college before completing their program, as we will see.

A study of employment in Nunavik, conducted by the KRG in 2011, revealed a significant gap between the training required for the jobs available and the educational level of the local population (KRG 2011: 59). Officially, only 3% of all jobs required no degree, while 12% required a high school diploma, and more than 50% needed college or university. For all positions requiring a post-secondary education degree, JBNQA non-beneficiaries (mainly non-Inuit) were much more numerous. Women outnumbered men in jobs that needed a high school, college, or university diploma, while men had more practical training degrees and certificates. People who worked as educators at the daycare or as teachers at the school had the possibility to complete training (partly on-the-job) to obtain a qualifying certificate.

For a population of about 7,000 Inuit between 15 and 65 years old, 4,179 regular full-time jobs were listed throughout Nunavik in 2011 (NRBHSS 2011: 12). However, non-beneficiaries monopolized about 50% of them.[37] Roughly equal numbers of men and women held these jobs.[38] Public and semi-public institutions, private companies, and cooperatives accounted for 92% of all regular full-time jobs. Women were particularly present in public institutions at the regional level for positions in health care, social assistance, and educational services (NRBHSS 2011: 16, 22). Over the past ten to fifteen years, the opening of daycares in all communities has undoubtedly largely facilitated the increasing numbers of women on the job market. Generally, men and non-beneficiaries

[37] The number has doubled since 1998. In 2011, there were also 1,044 regular part-time jobs, 768 seasonal jobs, and 1,910 casual jobs, for a total of 7,901 jobs in Nunavik. There were also 654 positions in Inuit organizations outside Nunavik (KRG 2011).

[38] While job creation between 1998 and 2005 worked more to the benefit of Inuit women and non-Inuit, the number of jobs for beneficiaries and for women decreased significantly in Nunavik in areas outside its communities, primarily in the mining industry (Duhaime 2008: 12-13, 40).

were better paid (NRBHSS 2011: 33), but in general "Nunavik residents hold more lower-paying jobs (retail and seasonal jobs, for example)" (Duhaime 2008: 76).[39]

Local KRG employment officers have a mandate to help Inuit find jobs in their community, or elsewhere, like at the Raglan Mine. They also give information and support to beneficiaries who wish to apply for government assistance programs, such as employment insurance, welfare, family allowances, old-age pension, and so on. Due to lack of information, sometimes compounded by lack of motivation and the complexity of the application process, the recipients of such assistance programs are not as numerous as they could be. For example, many people fail to complete their application because they do not have the required documents, such as a birth certificate and a social insurance number card (#81). Consequently, "employment income is by far the main source of personal income," accounting for "more than 80% of personal income sources since at least 1991" (Duhaime 2008: 80).

## Participants' profile

The following table shows the educational degree, employment status and financial situation of the women who participated in our study, by age group. The first column shows how many had a high school diploma, while the second shows how many had any other diploma, such as a junior college diploma or a professional or technical training degree. The third column shows how many had a job, whether full-time or part-time. Finally, the fourth shows how many answered in the affirmative when asked if they were currently experiencing financial hardship.

**Table 4: Educational degree, employment, and financial situation of the participants, by age group**

| Age group | High school diploma | Post-Secondary diploma | Working | Financial hardship | Total participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Under 20** | 2 | 1 | 4 | 1 | ***6*** |
| **20 to 29** | 12 | 1 | 16 | 3 | ***17*** |
| **30 to 39** | 14 | 2 | 12 | 8 | ***20*** |
| **40 to 49** | 7 | 2 | 18 | 10 | ***25*** |
| **50 to 59** | 5 | 2 | 13 | 6 | ***20*** |
| **60 to 69** | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4 | ***14*** |
| **70 and over** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | ***6*** |
| **Total** | ***43*** | ***11*** | ***68*** | ***33*** | **108** |
| *Percentages* | *40%* | *10%* | *63%* | *31%* | – |

Among the participants, 40% had successfully completed high school, while 10% had a college diploma or a vocational training certificate. Conversely, 60% of all the women had

[39] Finally, most beneficiary employees (68%) earned a salary between $30,000 and $50,000, while only 9% made more than $50,000. Among women who were working full-time, 51% earned under $40,000 (Duhaime 2008: 76).

never attended school,[40] were currently at school, or had dropped out. Among age groups that were more likely to have a high school diploma (62 women 20 to 50 years old), just over half had graduated. While this detail is not shown in the table, 14 women had gone to college in Montreal without finishing their programs; therefore women who had dropped out of junior college outnumbered women who had completed junior college. Women between 20 and 39 years old had the highest proportion of high school graduates (70%), whether or not they had completed their degrees in regular or adult programs. The lowest rate of high school graduation was in Kuujjuaraapik (1 out of 12) and the highest ones were in Kujjuaq (12 out of 21) and Kangiqsualujjuaq (7 out of 16).

When asked why they had left high school before graduating, women mentioned various reasons: being pregnant or having babies to take care of (#11, 21, 37, 61, 74, 75, 88, 107), being more interested in partying (drinking and taking drugs) (#69, 92, 97), being too lazy to wake up in the morning (#45, 81), being neglected by their parents—who were often alcoholic (#85, 86, 89), and being more interested in work (#51, 53, 95).[41] The same reasons could apply to the choice of not going to junior college or taking adult education, i.e., being a mother, having to leave the community, and having to work (#80, 81). Dropping out from junior college, which is also very common, was explained by trouble adapting to the education system and to life in the South (# 24, 25, 44, 47, 59, 68, 70), by parental responsibilities (#23, 25, 49, 67, 68, 81, 100), and by the need to work (#23, 49).

The overwhelming majority of women with high school diplomas were working. Only six graduates were not working: two were taking care of their babies, one had stopped for legal reasons, and three were living in Montreal. Many mentioned that having a diploma gives access to a better job (#1, 49, 56, 73, 75, 80), to better working conditions, and to higher salaries (#1, 10, 41, 43, 61, 73, 81). At the same time, other participants argued it is unnecessary to graduate in order to work in their community (#19, 35); indeed, almost 40% (26 out of 67) of those who were working had no high school diploma, yet most of them held office positions in Inuit organizations. Since 20 of them were 40 years old or older, their work experience may compensate for the fact that they had not graduated (#49). However, some young people still left school in order to work (#19, 51, 95). Furthermore, according to a 53-year-old woman, because many jobs are available in Inuit organizations in Montreal, competition among Inuit to get these positions is weak. This suggests that Inuit have no need for diplomas to find good work in the metropolis (#96).

As for employment, 63% of the participants were employed at the time of the interviews. Participants under the age of 30 had the highest rate of employment (87%), and those 60 years old or older the lowest (25%), an unsurprising fact, since most of them had retired. Comparing the percentages by community, more participants were working in

[40] Many among them were elders and could not attend school because no school existed in their community during their childhood. Some moved South for schooling, but many had never gone to school at all or had never graduated. The reasons were mainly that 1) they stayed home to help their parents with housework or they helped their parents by earning a wage (#5, 42, 52, 94), 2) they got married (#32, 63), 3), or they moved back home after having experienced hardship in the South (#34, 93, 102).

[41] Across Canada, the main reasons why Inuit women quit school are pregnancy and child care (Statistics Canada 2008: 2). According to Duhaime, 70% of young Inuit women who gave birth had not completed their high school degree, whereas this percentage was only 23% for Quebec as a whole (Duhaime 2008: 16).

Tasiuaq than anywhere else (91%), while fewer had jobs in Kuujjuaraapik (42%) and Kangiqsujuaq (44%). Among women living in Montreal, half of them were not working, but many said they used to work in Nunavik whenever they went back.

We identified six main categories of employers that provide clerical work, community/social work (or frontline work), or manual work (mostly maintenance). The categories are not exhaustive and do not include all of the different kinds of positions available in the North. We use them simply to classify the kinds of work of the survey participants. Some women held more than one job at the same time. In each case, we chose the job that seemed to provide the most income. Participants with jobs at Makivik offices (three) exclusively lived in Kuujjuaq or Montreal. Makivik employees also included four workers in local offices of the Kativik Housing Management Bureau (KHMB), and two others at an airport (Air Inuit is a Makivik subsidiary). Clerical work for the KRG included agents at Park Nunavik (two women, in Kangiqsualujjuaq and Kangiqsujuaq), 11 municipal employees, seven employees of different departments of the KRG head office in Kuujjuaq, and one agent of the Kativik Regional Police Force (KRPF). Frontline work for the KRG refers to daycare educators and directors, and manual work to the janitor at the municipal office. Four women worked at the KSB head office in Montreal, while nine were teachers or support staff in Nunavik schools. Apart from a woman in a department of the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services office in Kuujjuaq and a janitor in a CLSC, the category "NRBHSS" covers many frontline workers: community workers;[42] wellness workers; any worker at the clinics or hospitals; workers at the sewing centre; and health support workers for former residential school students (office in Kuujjuaq).[43] The category "FCNQ" refers to the head office employees in Montreal and to a janitor in a co-op. Finally, 2 participants were working as DYP agents.

As shown in Table 5, the biggest employer among the participants was the KRG (25 women, 37% of the workers), and the smallest ones were the FCNQ and the DYP (12% altogether). About half of the 68 workers had clerical work (35 women), 37% were frontline workers (25 women), and 12% had manual work (eight women).

**Table 5: Employers and kinds of work of the participants**

| **Kind of work** | Makivik | KRG | KSB | NRBHSS | FCNQ | DYP | ***Total*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Clerks** | 7 | 21 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 0 | **35** |
| **Frontline workers** | 0 | 3 | 9 | 11 | 0 | 2 | **25** |
| **Manual work** | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0 | **8** |
| **Total** | **9** | **25** | **13** | **13** | **6** | **2** | **68** |

[42] When working for social services, the Inuit are named "community workers" and not "social workers" because they are not professionals (#92).

[43] We also included in the category a woman working at the Tungasuvvik Women's Shelter in Kuujjuaq, although the shelter is not administered by the NRBHSS, being only partly funded by the board.

We noticed that most women had held several different jobs over their lifetimes, a sign of the high level of mobility of the workforce. When asked why they left their last job, the women gave the following reasons: trouble reconciling parental and/or family responsibilities and work; need for more challenging work; and a wish to find better working conditions and more employee benefits. Despite this mobility, 49 out of 68 employees (72%) held the same position for more than one year, and half of them (35%) for five years or more. Among women who were not working at the time of the interviews, only a few preferred receiving welfare benefits while many were busy with family and/or parental responsibilities. Some were out of work for medical reasons, or simply retired.

Finally, 31% of the participants said they were experiencing financial hardship at the time of the study. Women between 30 and 49 years old were the most affected, the percentage being 40%. If we keep in mind that the participants from Ivujivik were too few to be representative, participants from Kuujjuaraapik had the highest rate of financial hardship (66.67%), and those from Kuujjuaq the lowest (14%). Indicators of financial problems included not having a high school diploma, living with many people in one house, having no work, having no support from one's partner, and being a single mother. To be financially stable, a family usually needs at least two salaries to cover household needs, i.e., paying for bills, rent, and food. Mothers often had to support their families alone (#14, 15, 41, 42, 44, 54, 59, 61, 74, 77, 80, 83, 85, 95).[44]

**What has to be improved in Nunavik's education system**

Second-rate education and the language issue

Around 27% of the survey participants openly asserted that Nunavik's education system is problematic. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it pushes many Inuit—and *Qallunaat*—families to leave Nunavik in order to get better schooling for their children (#25, 28, 61, 102, 105). Nunavik's low educational level can be seen in two interrelated ways: the limits of the existing system; and the attitude and behaviour of both parents and children vis-à-vis the school. Let us start with the limits of the system, as described by the participants.

Although many participants seemed satisfied with KSB services, many others said the education available up North is second-rate, i.e., it is not equivalent to education in the rest of the province. This is clearly seen in the fact that schoolchildren who move from a KSB school to another school in the South have a few years of catching up to do. This was the situation encountered by a woman who moved to Montreal with her daughter who had been in grade six in Nunavik, but was now pushed back to grade one:

> It was hard for my daughter to start school here, because she had some delay. She was in "classe d'accueil", in French, to catch up, which she did in two years. She was

[44] Our data show that the community of Kuujjuaraapik has the worst educational level, employment rate, and family financial situation. This is consistent with the 2004 study by the NRBHSS, which reported that the communities along the Hudson Bay coast are worse off than those on the Ungava coast (Anctil 2008).

> supposed to be in grade 6 up North when she arrived, but in reality she was grade 1 in the South. Now, she is going to regular secondary two. (#105)

Another young woman expressed the same idea:

> If I am to get kids, I am not going to let my kids go to school here […]. When I went down South, I was in secondary 3. I saw an Inuk kid who grew up down South; they were doing the same work in grade 6 here. I don't want my kids to be left out of the world. (#24)

Some women attributed this problem to the KSB's balanced bilingualism program. The program is based on the idea that the best way to learn a second language is to have a strong base in one's mother tongue.[45] Some participants believed that children should be taught in English, or French, right at the beginning of their schooling, with regular periods of Inuktitut, so that they can get their regular education immediately and not have to start later (#104). That was what a 23-year-old woman thought, mentioning there could be an Inuktitut period every day in all grades:

> I think [the problem] is because we spend the first three years in Inuktitut. We don't learn English, we don't learn French, and when we hit grade three, we start splitting half English half French. […] We don't need to have Inuktitut constantly for the first three years. I heard that James Bay Cree set up their system that is 70% English or French and the rest their language. They don't spend the first three years all in Cree; they split it. Here, after grade 4 you only have one period every five days of Inuktitut. It should be one period of Inuktitut everyday throughout the whole grades, and we learn English and Inuktitut in kindergarten. (#24)

Another 23-year-old woman believed that the bilingualism program is the reason for the second language education offered by the KSB. According to her, such education should be given only to children with learning disabilities, not to every child:

> I think that instead of starting the child in the second language they should start them in the first language. And evaluate children with difficulty and put them in second education. […] Here, they start with easier things, as people learning in second language, as for kids with difficulties. We don't learn the same thing that normal people do; it is not the same program, it is a second education program. […] I went down South in secondary one and I believed myself to be a very smart girl, someone who understands French properly, who can communicate with anyone. (#25)

An Inuk woman living down South said she was glad to have her daughter attending school in Montreal, admitting there would be more opportunities for her later. The current system, she thought, can jeopardize the lives of Inuit children, who cannot even read and write properly. She agreed with the importance of having a cultural program in the schools, but it should not jeopardize academic learning (#104).

<u>The responsibility of teachers, students, and parents</u>

[45] "Research results from other parts of the world have shown that students who spend more time learning in their mother tongue achieve excellent academic results in both first and second languages" (KSB 2013).

To explain Nunavik's educational situation, some participants pointed out the problem with recruiting and retaining qualified teachers for an appreciable length of time. First, it is almost impossible to find Inuit teachers—to teach Inuktitut—who have studied in education (#28). Few Inuit are motivated to go South to take a teaching program, all the more so because Inuit usually do not get the same employee benefits as do *Qallunaat* (#21, 24). Once hired as a teacher, an Inuk can get partly-on-the-job teacher training that extends over several years, but many never obtain their qualifying certificate.

Second, *Qallunaat* teachers who apply to teach in KSB schools do meet the academic requirements, but many of them are very young and have no or very little experience in teaching; moreover most of them have little knowledge about Inuit culture (#41). In addition, some participants believed that many *Qallunaat* teachers are not in Nunavik for the right reasons and do not have the necessary skills and motivation to provide young Inuit with what they need. Nevertheless, there are fortunately some good and devoted teachers up North:

> The teachers are so young; they just graduated. They are here for an adventure; let's go skiing and mountain biking. My little brother's teacher is barely there. Every day we got a note: "sorry, there is no class this afternoon". […] But, some who are there for many years are good. They have to understand that [for Inuit] every day is a fight just to go to school, to eat breakfast, to get up. (#24)

> You have teachers up here that just really don't care; they just come for their experience. Because it is hard to recruit teachers. […] You have amazing teachers up here too, teachers who have been here for 30 years, very dedicated people too. Then you have teachers that don't have the qualification to be teaching. (#28)

Indeed, although we should not generalize to all KSB schools, some complained that the school in their community is too often closed or that teachers are too regularly absent. Furthermore, we heard people saying it is not normal that kids nowadays never have homework and often watch movies in class. This makes it even more difficult for Inuit who then have to adapt to Southern schools, whether high school or college (#62, 68, 78).

> We are technically behind others for a few years and it makes a difference especially when you get to high school; Southern students are way more advanced than students here. […] Teachers are very absent around here. […] A lot of White people tend to take sick leaves, and a lot of Inuit are hanging over. […] My niece, she is in grade 5 or 6 and she can't read. Half of last year, she didn't have any school because the teacher took sick leave. And then the same story with a different teacher. […] My perception of White people to come up to the North, is to gain experience, and they get good jobs. (#61)

Obviously, unlike in the South, there is a lack of staff to replace sick teachers. Another woman recognized the problem with *Qallunaat* teachers, but also assigned a share of the responsibility to children whose delinquent behaviour makes it very difficult for teachers: "The teachers are having very hard time, especially in the big schools. By the time kids hit grade three and four, they are impossible to control. It is not like down South. These teachers have to go through a lot to work up here" (#28).

According to an Inuk in her thirties from Kuujjuaq, given this problem of student behaviour, education is now unfortunately more focused on discipline than on teaching

(#23). Two elders from Puvirnituq even thought that children at school, instead of being taught, are just playing. Thinking they have all the rights, children get used to doing whatever they want; they miss school, are late and disrespectful, and so on.[46] They regret that the stricter teachers leave the North too quickly:

> Nowadays, if the students don't want to go to school, they don't go. If they want to be late, they are late. [Education] is not very strong. Even when they are late, [teachers] don't tell the parents anymore. Sometimes, I say that kids in school are playing. […] Those real teachers never come back, those who are strict. Teachers are not strict anymore. At the beginning, when education started, they were well taught. (#72)

> [Education] is not going well. […] [Children] don't respect. They can argue with the elders, and they are not trying to be punctual. If they want to be late, they are late. […] Even though kids are very young, they think they can be higher than teachers, they think they have a big right. This problem comes from the parents, the house. […] They think they have a right to argue. It was not like that back then. (#77)

These elders mentioned, as others did, the parents' role in children's behaviour at school. While most women valued schooling and wished their kids would obtain high school diplomas, others did not. School dropout is often related to the family situation. Indeed, many children do not grow up in an environment conducive to academic success because of parental neglect and lack of discipline (#1, 10, 74, 33, 37, 41, 43). Alcohol abuse by the parents, or family violence, to name examples that come up frequently, too often result in children being left alone with lack of food, sleep, and moral structure.[47] As a result, the students are tired, feel grumpy, and lack concentration in class, if they are not simply absent. Moreover, having no rules to follow, and finding their own ways to survive, they learn to do what they want to do; some begin to consume drugs and alcohol, and some decide to stay up all night and cannot get up to go to school when morning comes. We see this in the interviews:

> Most people drop school at a young age mostly because of lack of support from the family, from their parents. If the parents are working, and if they want to be selfish, students would lack support. […] When parents are drinking, taking drugs or gambling, the kids just go away, find another place. (#7)

> Some parents don't push their kids enough to go to school, that is why we sometimes go through the FM to tell parents to push their kids, or to push parents to be more responsible for their kids. Some kids have no limit and they stay late outside at night, so the parents are not able to wake up them and they don't listen. (#37)

Manon Fournier, who has taught in Nunavik for 12 years, pointed to lack of parental cooperation and participation in their children's academic achievement. She recognized that this attitude may be related to their schooling experiences, and also to the lack of maturity of young parents. Furthermore, many parents fail to take responsibility for their children's education and behaviour, and they tend to blame school and teachers for any problem. A school counselor asserted that bullying is another major reason for dropout (#65).

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[46] Please refer also to Chapter 5 about the attitude of children and youth nowadays.

[47] See also chapter 3 about child neglect.

In short, children and teachers need parental support to make the school experience a success, and parents have to acknowledge their responsibility (#42). The rapid changes that have occurred in Nunavimmiut lives during the last century, and which are partly due to the introduction of schooling, have resulted in confusion between the two lifestyles. The woman quoted below, who worked as a KRG employment officer, explained that between the need to preserve Inuit traditions and identity on the one hand and the need to learn new academic skills and participate in the job market in order to survive on the other, many Inuit do not know where to put their priorities:

> I don't know if it is the school's fault or the parents' fault [concerning drop out]. It is hard for an Inuk who has always been living here, to look farther, and some Inuit say that the Inuit language is important and Inuit should not lose it, and other people say that it is better to have a good education to have a better job. So it is confusing. […] People have their own responsibility, and the parents have the responsibility with their kids' life. (#81)

Not everyone perceives a contradiction between preservation of Inuit culture and establishment of an effective education system in Nunavik. The following woman believed that both are necessary and desirable, not only to increase the number of professionals who provide services in Northern communities, but also to ensure greater independence and freedom for women:

> I think Inuit have to be educated. […] We just have to be educated like everybody else on the planet, and we still have our Inuit values in there. But in order for us to take over and to be our own leaders, we need to be educated. You cannot stay in that state where we are still in, from 30 years ago. […] Without losing the Inuit way…but we are also in today's world, we like to have skidoos, all the things that everybody on the planet likes to have. […] We want to keep our language for sure, but we also need to equalize with southern Quebec for education. Because in the end, when you finish high school here, you have to go South to go to college or university, and more often than not, people are behind. (#66)

To be good role models for their children, this woman believed that people should finish high school and try to find jobs to support their families. She pointed to a strong tendency among Inuit to simply leave school and live on welfare for the rest of their lives:

> Parents who don't have education should understand that they need to go back to school, to have their secondary 5 if they want to support their family, not depending on income support like welfare. That is the mentality of many of them; dropping out from school and having welfare. It is not good for their kids; their family being on welfare when you are mentally and physically OK. I hope they have more motivation to have education, to have a better life. (#81)

She continued saying that, to her, getting a good education is the only way to solve social problems in Inuit society, because it will make people more confident and aware of their reality. Therefore, she hoped all parents would complete high school:

> People need to get more education; that is a big issue. Once they get more education, they will understand the society better and they will put their life better. I have clients who dropped out when they were in secondary 1 or 2, and I have to help them all the time with their application forms; they are not confident enough to write. It is like

> they are still in kindergarten. […] I think that the community will improve if they have many educated people who finish secondary 5 at least. (#81)

We will return to the parental role in Chapter 5. For now, we want to highlight how the parents' perception of school influences whether, by their behaviours and their words, they do or do not encourage their children to attend. This perception is surely rooted in the tough experience that many parents had when they were sent off to a residential school, and that experience may play a part in the current attitude:

> I went in residential school in Churchill for 3 years. […] It was very difficult to be away from home. […] My parents didn't push me to go, it was the government that convinced them the importance for the kids to go to school. We just followed what the government was asking and we paid a big price for that. […] I had no connection with my family. […] I was very homesick and lonely, surviving, because I was the oldest of the family and very loved. I was brought up by the community. And then there was no love in the school institution. And when you have been in a system for a long time, you let your feelings go to survive, because it is so painful. (#30)

The disconnect between parents and children that occurred in those days is still being felt in many ways in Nunavimmiut communities, and is central to understanding social problems experienced by Inuit today. Past experiences have shaped views of schooling and school institutions, but these views are being and should be redefined, from one generation to the next: "The problem is that people of my generation have been abused during their school, so they don't bother to encourage they kids into schooling. They concept of education has to be changed. We have to instil love of learning in each child" (#96).

Teaching of Inuit history, more curricula, and better services for students

To improve the adequacy of the education system in the North, some participants mentioned the need to integrate Inuit history into the school curriculum**,** instead of just teaching Canadian history as it is taught to all Canadians. It is surprising that most young people are unaware of the events that marked the lives of their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Teaching knowledge about their own past and Inuit identity could make the system more suitable and help develop more confident individuals (#26, 70):[48]

> I didn't know that my family members went to residential school, that they survived the hardship conditions in life. For me to be here, it makes me realize who I am. I didn't know about residential schools, tuberculosis, relocation, the kids taken away, because they never taught us. They teach you history of Canada in school. We don't learn history of Inuit. (#25)

Teaching Nunavimmiut who they are, preparing them for the job market, and passing on a sense of responsibility will certainly provide them with greater ability to take their

[48] Moreover, integrating cultural values into schools can have a positive impact on school performance; that is the conclusion of a study conducted among the Yup'ik of Alaska (Lipka 1991). According to another study (Targé 2005), despite the apparent contradiction between school education and learning of oral knowledge among Inuit, the Arviammiut of Nunavut have managed to develop oral transmission of knowledge in schools and this helps to improve inter-generational communication and helps people to see their oral traditions in a new light. Obviously, this passing on of knowledge contributes to the continuity of Inuit identity, although it is always more successful when it takes place on the land.

future in hand. Because it is hard for most Inuit to leave their community for another community or a city for their education, several participants expressed interest in more study and training opportunities, whether technical, junior college, or professional, in their communities, or at least in Nunavik. Indeed, many of them said they would continue their education if they could do so in their hometowns (#1, 2, 69, 73, 80). More technical and professional schooling programs up North will make it possible to train more Inuit teachers, counselors, workers, and professionals, who will be able to provide their own people with services by replacing *Qallunaat* employees (#65).

Another solution proposed by a school counselor would be to create education centres for students who have problems, either because they want to return to school after having dropped out or because they have learning disabilities. In such a centre, alternative education skills could be taught and counselors could be made available to the whole family. In this way, regular school will be able to focus on successful students, instead of on crisis management. This solution could prevent DYP and social workers from having to get involved, and it could help everyone to concentrate on what is best for the children:

> There are a few [students] who are coming back to school. We are working on it, but they are so behind. It is not the good time…where they left off and try to put them back in that classroom. We have to find a place for them. I wish we had another education centre for those dropouts who come back to school, so they can do other educational skills…So the school doesn't just focus on crises. We also have to help out kids who are successful at school; that is two different things. One teacher can handle one successful kid and a crisis in the same classroom. […] Something like a youth centre, but more counselors that would have an office and be basically helping kids and families in a natural way. Like, let's get back our communication together with working people and parents for the children's sake. Not by going to the DYP or CLSC. […] A small school system to prepare them to come back to school. (#65)

A lot of children are experiencing learning difficulties at school, and this is contributing to the high dropout rate and the difficulty in providing standard education in Nunavik. To improve the situation, more staff are surely required. Because of the large number of children with learning disabilities, a participant believed that there should be a greater permanent presence of specialists,[49] such as psycho-educators, and that there should be more resources for children in Nunavik in order to assess every child's capacities and troubles at an early age and identify special needs. Parents, who often feel helpless vis-à-vis the institutions that are supposed to work for them, should then receive the support they require in order to help their children succeed in school (#60). To this end, there should be more assistant teachers (#60, 65).

Difficulties encountered in junior college studies

As a result of the gap between Northern and Southern education, continuing studies at the junior college level is not easy, all the more so because it involves leaving one's native community. Inuit students must adapt to multiple new realities; a new school environment

[49] The word "specialist" does not necessarily refer to professionals with university degrees, but rather to any frontline worker or counselor who has the required skills and training.

that has its own requirements, a new social context, away from the family and the community, and a new cultural environment. For many Nunavimmiut, moving down South for the first time, most of the time alone, and for a long time, is simply a culture shock. This is the view of the ladies quoted below, who tried more than once to pursue their education in Montreal. The first one was only 20 years old; she had no children and was planning to go back to junior college. The other, being a single mother of three children, gave up the idea:

> I first went to John Abbott in Art, but I dropped out. It is different to be in Montreal; there is a lot of benefits, like shopping malls, but culture shock is a big thing for all Inuit. […] I was living alone in an apartment for one semester, in downtown. I was feeling alone. […] It was a big school; here in high school there are 40 students, there it is 40 in one class. (#47)

> I have been to college in Montreal with my first baby, and it was too hard. So I gave up at the beginning. […] I came back after five months and tried a second time, but didn't finish it. […] I don't want to study anymore. I think that Inuit need a college in the North. It is too hard to go studying in the South. I am really proud of those people who make it. (#70)

Because it is hard to catch up to the stricter requirements of the Southern education system, there is sometimes discouragement, loss of confidence and motivation, and thus dropping out. Parental responsibility is also often an additional source of stress that pushes young students to return to their communities, where they can find the moral, material, and emotional support they need, and even employment in order to become self-sufficient and provide for their children. This 23-year-old single mother, who had tried to go to college, acknowledged that her education in the North had not prepared her, both academically and on a personal level, for junior college:

> I tried to go to college, but it didn't work out, it was way too difficult for me. I had a child at a very young age, at 19 years old. So that prevented me from continuing my college. […] When we are sent down South for college, we are so unprepared. They don't prepare us in our school because we are learning the second language, not the first language. The transition gap between high school and college is so huge. […] I was taken from here to go to a big 3,000 populated school; for me, that was so hard. It was hard as an Inuk person, because I was different from anyone else, and because I was not given that confidence, encouragement, and motivation in the school here. I had to make me want to go to college. (#25)

KSB's post-secondary program also has certain limits, according to some participants. A young woman from Kuujjuaq felt it unacceptable that she had been placed in the same class as immigrants, for whom English is a second language, while Nunavimmiut get their schooling in that language. Furthermore, this post-secondary program forces students to choose between two colleges, while there are many other possibilities for post-secondary education in Quebec and in the rest of Canada:

> I finished high school in Kuujjuaq and tried to go to school down South in Montreal in fashion design. I didn't like it at all because they put me with immigrants […] because my second language is English, my first language, Inuktitut. But I graduated in English, and they put me as an immigrant and I didn't like it. […] The thing is that Inuit have a set place to go; John Abbott and Marie-Victorin. Those are the two places you can choose. But if you are like me and you have a big mouth and you want to fight against

> it…I got to go to La Salle, I got to pick where I wanted to go. […] A lot of people have graduated from social sciences, but they come back and they are secretaries, have office work. (#24)

As a matter of fact, the overwhelming majority of Inuit students choose social sciences as their junior college program. According to a 63-year-old woman who had lived in Montreal for many years, the fact that Inuit are encouraged to pick specific fields of study, regardless of their individual interests, also contributes to loss of enthusiasm:

> [My kids] didn't like KSB's choice of education; the counselor at the KSB office tends to decide for kids on what they have to do, according to their knowledge. My kids wanted to pursue other things and they didn't have any choice, so they just left the college. […] *Qallunaat* in the South tend to want to control Inuit even here. These are olden day people. They forget that Inuit educate themselves; they get to know things and want to do their own choices. They think that we are not smart enough to make our own choices. […] If they choose to go to other colleges, they have no funding from Kativik. Inuit have to be very strong and smart to be accepted to another college of their choice. (#94)

Although the program can provide students with the supervision and support they need to complete their post-secondary education, these comments suggest that it does not always foster personal growth, development of self-confidence, and recognition of the ability of Inuit youth to make their own decisions.

**Narratives: Causes and consequences of school dropout on women's life**

*Martha*[50] *is 53 years old. She grew up with parents who used to drink a lot of alcohol at home and she often witnessed domestic violence. During adolescence, she was very sick and tired of alcohol abuse and left school before starting high school. At the age of 17, she had her first baby, who was adopted by her mother. Later on, Martha got married and had three biological and three adopted children.*

*Martha used to be an alcoholic. She now acknowledges that she has not always been a good mother to her children, and that they have been affected by her alcohol consumption. She fortunately stopped drinking because she was afraid that Youth Protection would take them away. Now, many of her children also have drinking problems, including her daughter and her son in-law, who have many children and who have recently adopted a baby. Martha worries a lot about the baby's safety when her daughter and her son in-law drink.*

*Martha and her husband have always had a good relationship; they support each other and have good communication. They live together with her biological daughter, her grandchild, her adopted son, and a foster child; six all together in a home that has four bedrooms.*

*Martha is unemployed in order to take care of her grandchild while her daughter continues to attend school. Her husband doesn't work either. They often lack money, but always make sure they have enough food at home. They sometimes have to seek help*

[50] Fictitious name.

*from their children who now live in their own homes. Fortunately, one of their sons is a great hunter and often shares country food with them. Martha and her husband have applied for welfare benefits and are waiting for a response.*

Martha's life experience illustrates how school dropout sometimes goes along with alcohol-related problems and financial hardship, both as causes and as effects. As mentioned earlier, family life is crucial for the future of children, and problems experienced at home often perpetuate themselves across generations. Once a child becomes a parent, lack of education often leads to trouble finding a job and making enough money to support a family. This is particularly awkward for single mothers, who, fully involved with their children, cannot rely on financial support from a spouse. Nor can they work or complete their schooling, as shown by Valery's case.

*Before the age of 35, Valery[51] got pregnant three times. She was 21 years old at the birth of her first baby, and the last one is now four years old. Each of her kids has a different biological father, but none of the fathers has ever felt committed to Valery. So she has always been a single mother.*

*She doesn't have any support from the fathers, and she struggles to raise her kids alone. She is unemployed in order to care for her children full-time, and nobody else in her house works, so it is very difficult financially. She receives family allowance cheques from the government, but she still often lacks food. She has support from relatives sometimes, and she mostly receives help through the Hunter's Support Program. This program provides her with country food to eat once in a while, although she would like to have it more often.*

*She dropped out of high school when she was 16, simply because she didn't want to get out of bed in the morning. Even if she did want to work, it would be difficult to find a job without a degree. However, she has worked as a janitor in the past. She would like to return to school, but she would need to leave the community and she doesn't want to go away from her kids.*

We can see here a vicious circle from which it is difficult to escape; it is created by lack of education, parental obligations, and insufficient financial means. Having to take care of her children does not allow Valery to go back to school, because there is no education program for adults in her community. Even if she could continue to work as a janitor, existing janitorial positions are rare, and so she would have to wait until one of them becomes vacant. Until then, she can only rely on government assistance. It goes without saying that single mothers are among the most economically vulnerable individuals, and this vulnerability is amplified when they have not graduated.

[51] Fictitious name.

**Underemployment: not enough jobs or lack of willingness?**

The value Nunavimmiut place on schooling is at least partly based on the importance they attach to participation in the job market. They consider it necessary to succeed academically because they know that it is now essential to have a good job in order to support a family. For them, academic learning provides the tools needed to survive in today's world, i.e., the job market and the market economy. So does graduation really give access to better job opportunities for people living in Nunavik, and do the opportunities offered by the job market in the communities encourage young people to study and earn a living? In other words, are there enough jobs for Inuit, and are they interested in these job opportunities? We will now explore the limits and problems of employment in Nunavik, according to women who participated in our survey.

As we saw earlier, opinion is divided on the issue of whether a high school diploma does or does not offer better access to employment; some think it enhances your chances to get a good job, others think it makes no difference. In support of the second opinion, one argued that there are more opportunities for people without diplomas in Nunavik than in the South (#28, 61). Another found it unfair that people with experience but no schooling usually get the jobs, at the expense of those with diplomas (#54, 84). Furthermore, a lot of students leave school in order to work full-time, a sign that it is possible to work without having graduated.[52] Finally, graduation does not ensure that Nunavimmiut learn what they need for success on the job market; that is to say, self-confidence and the abilities to read and write properly. In sum, many Inuit leave school without being able to express themselves adequately. The previous arguments support the idea that high school education does not necessarily provide a better chance for employment in Nunavik, and this reality can deter people from staying in school.

However, we can still believe that school graduates have access to better-quality jobs, providing such jobs are available in adequate numbers. While at least a quarter of the participants acknowledged a lack of job opportunities in Nunavik, the problem is as much a matter of quantity as a matter of quality. People who have trouble finding work are usually looking for a specific kind of job they like. What some call "being picky" (#82, 92) seems justifiable to others. Thus, according to some participants, there is a lack of job opportunities that fit the interests of job seekers. Some want to be janitors, some are looking for office work, and others prefer manual work (#22):[53]

> I think it is hard to find a job here; there are not enough. There are some opening jobs, but people have to have a certain job that they like, that they can do, a job that fits their knowledge, their education. (#41)
>
> There are not lots of good jobs in town. […] It is hard to find a job that you like to do. […] There are not enough jobs for people in town, but even though there are some jobs available, people are not applying. Sometimes, it is because there is not the job they want in their life. […] Most jobs that are available are janitor, store boys, labour

[52] One participant pointed out that it may be hard to find jobs for young people who have not graduated because, in addition to lacking work experience, some cannot write and read properly (#49).

[53] For example, women may prefer office work, although such positions are not numerous in all communities, and men, manual work such as being a mechanic (#60).

> in construction. Some would like office positions. There are not many options here. (#81)

Actually, many move from one position to another until they find what they are made for. Some never find it up North and move to Montreal for more opportunities (#49, 102, 103). While there are job opportunities in the mining industry, and while many Inuit working at the Raglan Mine greatly appreciate their work (#1, 13, 14, 20, 32, 44, 54, 55, 62, 85, 94), most Inuit see it as inconceivable for them or their spouse to be away from the community and the family for two weeks at a time, twice a month (#43, 49, 51, 53, 67, 75, 96). In addition to looking for a job that suits them, people necessarily seek better working conditions and benefits (salary, plane tickets, vacation, housing, insurance, etc.), which differ among regional organizations. Moreover, *Qallunaat* get more benefits than do Inuit for the same work, and this fact discourages some Nunavimmiut from working for some employers (#24), as these women mentioned:

> At the cafeteria of the hospital, there is a division; the local people are not given the benefits as the White men. If a person from South comes to work, he gets four paid trips a year, where the local person doesn't. The benefits are different. Sometimes, Inuit got tired; that is why people change jobs a lot. (#21)

> *Qallunaat* who come North make more money than Inuit, just because they are up North. Everybody should be treated the same way, because they are all up North. It is not fair. In the future, the governments should treat everybody the same, give them the same salary. It is very hard, because *Qallunaaq* stay in the community, because they don't know the land, how to survive as Inuit, so they don't bother about getting a snowmobile, or gas. And Inuit make less money and try to make a living. They are more struggling. (#33)

Among participants who believed that jobs available in the communities are sufficient (about a quarter of the participants), many pointed out that the problem is the idleness of some people who prefer to stay home, drink, rely on welfare or on others (#7), and/or have babies (#4). This is to say that people who really want to work, who really look, will find it (#34, 68).

> There are not enough jobs here, but one problem is that there are some jobs open and nobody wants to fill them. Maybe some don't want to work, some are not interested, or the pay is not good enough. (#22)

> There are a lot of job openings in town, all the time, but there are a lot of people who don't want to work, who have alcoholic problems, who are too lazy. Some get a job and quit after pay cheque. Some of them are on welfare, some put all their money in alcohol, and they are always asking other people for food and money. (#67)

Alcohol consumption may be in conflict with holding a job over the long term; some people use their pay cheques to buy alcohol, and when they start to drink, they do not show up at work anymore (#15). On the subject of laziness, a woman 60 years of age pointed out that the education at residential schools had fully prepared people of her generation for work, while younger generations do not have the same discipline:

> There are some people that after pay cheque start drinking. They never go back to work. […] Us, our age group, we have been disciplined; we can work well. We are lucky because we were born when the transition was starting to happen, the 9 to 5

> was already in existence. We have learned enough to have our jobs. That is what I say about residential school students; we were disciplined to show up to work no matter what. But now our younger generation, it is a different thing, it is always 'end of' thinking "I don't have to work, I will take that end of next month." (#21)

Another woman specified that, according to her, it is particularly the individuals between 30 and 40 years old who have problems with work, while the youngest show more drive (#26). Two elders from Kangiqsualujjuaq expressed their dissatisfaction with the ones who are doing nothing constructive with their days by hanging around. They say this is not good for them and for the community; they could do some cleanup in town and on the land, for example:

> Before, it was easy to find a job; now it is really hard because the town is very small. And people do nothing; they just wait for a job. Instead of waiting and doing nothing, they should all take time to clean up the town and the land, because it is dirty. (#3)

> One of the big problems is not having a job; women who just hang around the co-op; nothing to do, looking at what others buy. They need to find something to be busy with; but I don't know if they can do that. (#8)

Nonetheless, many positions stay open for a long time before getting filled, and others are never filled. Some positions are particularly difficult to fill because of the personal investment they require, such as community worker and DYP officer, and/or because of the poor employee benefits they offer, such as wellness workers and local justice committee coordinator (#64).[54] Ideally, Inuit should be holding these positions in every community to ensure that the services are available in Inuktitut.

Finally, we should mention some challenges faced by women, who represent a significant proportion of the workforce in regional organizations, when they want to work. It is far from simple for them to devote themselves to a full-time job, especially when it requires frequent trips outside the community, because they usually have children to care for and cannot necessarily rely on a spouse. Also, daycares and schools do not always ensure that children are cared for every day on the same schedule as offices. First, the places at daycares are not always sufficient—some waiting lists are long[55]—and regular attendance by educators is in some cases lacking (#15, 59, 92). Then, as we have already mentioned, in some communities the school is sometimes closed for a day, or an afternoon, and the children end their classes before 5 o'clock without having the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities. As a result, workplaces take on the appearance of a daycare at certain hours and days, women are often absent from work, or they even leave their jobs if family responsibilities and issues become incompatible with work. As a

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[54] Not everyone likes jobs that imply responsibility or that require specific skills in accounting or management, for instance. Many prefer less demanding jobs, such as janitor or cashier (#45, 55, 83). Two other factors likely contribute to the difficulty in hiring and retaining Inuit in positions with responsibilities: 1) the strong social criticism and high expectations that the community has toward people who are figures of authority and guidance (Hervé 2013), and 2) the lack of sensitivity and openness to Inuit worldviews and social practices in the way Western institutions operate, such as social services (#24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 33, 39, 61, 105).

[55] Several survey participants thought many women are still forced to stay home because of lack of spaces in the daycares (#4, 8, 15, 28, 31, 45, 46, 54, 67, 83). A woman has to apply as soon as she gets pregnant in order to get a space for her child (#43, 48, 49, 59, 73).

participant said, the situation can be especially hard to manage for single mothers or women whose husbands or kids have drinking problems:

> There are a lot of mothers who are single mothers with not much support. The daycares are way packed up; the waiting list is so long, so it is hard for them to get childcare. And the organizations don't provide childcare. It is very hard, that is why there are so many single mothers that are not employed. They can't. And they have financial difficulty because it is so expensive to live up here. […] Plus, there are a lot of social issues: alcohol and drug abuse, family violence, and sexual abuse. It makes it hard for women to take care of kids, with a husband or boyfriend that doesn't support them in any way and even makes things worse. […] If you are caught up in that particular circle, it is hard to come to work 5 days a week from 9 to 5. Sometimes they have to quit; sometimes they lose their jobs; that is why they move a lot from job to job. (#28)

**Financial hardship**

As the last interview extract pointed out, having no stable work puts women, most often than not mothers, in a precarious financial situation. This is especially true when they have not enough, if any, financial support from children or husbands who either do not work or keep their money for their own expenses, while women alone pay the rent, bills, and food (#14, 41, 68, 70, 80, 83, 84, 85). A woman talked about her own family situation, mentioning that her husband did not use to work, just like her sister's partner. She thus felt responsible for her whole extended family:

> I think women are more urged to do in their life and for their children. Also, we have to support a lot our family, and other families that are not our household. […] The way I see it; women are working harder than men nowadays, because men are staying home or doing their projects voluntarily at home. […] [My husband] finally found a job. It would be a big release for me, because I have been working alone for a while, and supporting my son and him financially. […] My other family, on my part, they ask for money. […] I have to help other people in my family because they don't work. I have been asking them to get their income at least, like welfare. […] I have been pushing them, telling them that I cannot support them. I worry a lot for them. […] I think they are just not trying hard enough to find work. (#59)

Another Puvirnituq participant (#74), who had six kids at home and worked full-time, said she was used to not having food at home. Her boyfriend, who was a drug addict, and her older children, who drank a lot, did not help her much financially. Consequently, her children often had to visit her siblings in order to eat. Another Kuujjuaraapik woman (#83) was experiencing financial hardship, since, in a household of seven, she was the only person who worked full-time. She had not paid her rent for months and was now thinking of applying for a smaller house to pay less rent. She wanted to apply for family allowance for her grandchildren, but she complained that the KRG local officer did not know how to fill out the application.

Hardship up North comes partly from the very high cost of living. We have already discussed the trouble encountered by some people paying their rent and the resulting accumulation of unpaid bills. Store-bought food is roughly 60% more expensive in Nunavik

than in the Quebec City area (Duhaime 2008: xx). Consequently, not only do many fail to get enough food to feed the whole family until their next pay cheque (#10, 11, 14, 45, 70, 74, 83), but also exorbitant prices and poor food choices encourage them to choose junk food, which has adverse effects on children's health and attention in classrooms. In this context, cooking classes are seen as constructive, although there are not enough of them, as is distribution of breakfasts and snacks to students, both being NRHBSS initiatives.[56] This woman explained the situation in these words:

> There are a few cooking trainings here, with the public health department; they promote healthy cooking and healthy country food. It is very expensive to cook healthy in the North, to buy fresh vegetables, even though we want to. For women, if they have to feed kids, they have to feed them with the food they can afford, that means Kool Aid and hot dogs. And when you have kids that are not well nourished and rested, they don't want to go to school. If they go to school they are tired and will act out in school. (#28)

While a lot of Nunavimmiut have trouble affording store-bought food, the Hunter's Support Program ensures distribution of country food to the whole community, according to a list of priorities, with elders and single-mother families coming first. The program is very much appreciated by Inuit, although it is insufficient to meet the needs of everyone for country food.[57] Indeed, some times of the year, and even some entire years, depending on the community, there is hardly any country food in the community freezer (# 28, 40, 45, 46, 67, 74, 80, 91).

Apart from this program, sharing within families is also fundamental and still common among Inuit. Families that come out best financially are used to receiving relatives at home for mealtimes: siblings, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces, and so on, and also friends and other children from the community (#1, 78). While most of them are glad to help others, many recognize that the trouble their relatives have feeding their children is caused by spending money on alcohol and drugs (#5, 9, 14, 16, 67, 71, 81, 86, 87, 91, 92):

> Some people are just lazy and don't even try to work; just too much into drugs or alcohol. Some people who cannot afford food don't even ask but go to my place at lunchtime, assuming we have enough food for whoever comes in. Even people on welfare are buying drugs and it is not enough for the whole month. I don't know how they survive the whole month. [...] Some people, always the same, go on the radio to borrow money or ask for food. (#46)

Indeed, when relatives cannot help, people who are short of money and food will sometimes use the local FM radio to call for help from the entire community (#87), as this elder explained: "Anybody has to go to the radio sometimes for food, after having asked

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[56] It also happens that cooking activities are organized, often sporadically, by groups of women, such as the Women's Auxiliary, sewing groups, or *Qallunaat* workers. Some participants expressed a wish to have this kind of activity more often in their community (#1, 16, 28, 68, 75, 79, 80, 81, 83).

[57] About a quarter of the participants had no hunters in their families; they received country food either through the Hunter's Support Program or from friends, and most of them wished to have more of this food at home. Inuit living in Montreal and jobless are among the ones who miss country food the most, while women who work in the metropolis can find different ways to bring food from the North. At least 35 (one third) of all participants occasionally or frequently used the community freezer.

their relatives. When you are very hungry, you ask through the radio and somebody in the community will bring you something, most of the time Hunter Support" (#84). Considering the fact that many families, and children, currently lack food at home, two women from Kuujjuaraapik suggested the creation of a food bank in their community (#85, 87).

There are various governmental programs to help Nunavimmiut who struggle financially; some are specific to the family situation (maternity leave and family allowance), or age-related (Old Age Security Pension), while everyone is eligible for social assistance (welfare) or employment insurance, providing they have a valid reason for not working and the spouse does not work either (#49). These allowances alone are often not enough to ensure a decent standard of living (#84, 90, 99), and, as seen earlier, being eligible for a financial support program does not mean someone will be able to apply and get the support. Not only are some Inuit unable to read documents written in English or French (#49), but, as explained this local KRG officer, many other obstacles may occur, such as the complexity of providing official documents:[58]

> There are not too many people on welfare here. Some people had applied but they have to give their back-up documents: birth certificate for example, or parents' income tax return, and they don't, so the application is rejected. Some of them have a complication to have the documents; some just don't try hard enough. […] One problem is that people don't have a birth certificate; and some people were adopted in the past without legal papers. They can ask for it, but when they hear it is going to take time, they give up easily. […] I know one woman with three kids. She cannot have a birth certificate. She cannot work. I don't know how they survive. She needs the certificate to have a social insurance number, and she needs a social insurance number to work. (#81)

This difficulty in providing official documents is so serious that it even prevents people from working. Because of the trouble she faced in her work, the above-quoted woman was seeking help from lawyers who would visit each community in order to give advice and assistance to people in special situations, such as those who had not been adopted legally. A lawyer is available from Makivik's office in Montreal, but, according to the experience of the same KRG officer, this lawyer is hard to reach.

Otherwise, a struggling single mother may choose to use the legal system to make the father of her children pay child support (#8).[59] Not everyone wants to go through the process, and some simply prefer to avoid asking for anything from their children's father:

> I have some financial difficulties, but I am surviving. I don't want to ask for help to the father, to have the full power on my kid. (#95)

> I was out of work for 11 months and I had a lot of financial difficulties. I don't understand still how I could manage it; I had barely food. I am a single mother and don't receive any money from the father of my two first kids. […] I went through legal procedures before to have child support from him, but we were back together for a while. When we split up again, I didn't ask for money. I don't want to create a drama with him and his girlfriend. (#70)

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[58] "In 2010, the rate of people on social assistance in Nunavik (7.2%) reached a similar level as that for all of Québec" (NRBHSS 2011: 24).

[59] One participant tried to get child support, but the process was too long and expensive (#39).

Ignorance of the legal process and its complexity also kept some women from looking for financial support from the fathers of their children (#39). For this reason, and since single-parent families are often more under pressure than any other group (#54, 61, 62), single mothers need support and assistance to complete the procedure (#41, 60).

Social services also in some specific cases give needy people support. There is an Emergency Food Program that provides on occasion funds to be spent on food for people with no income, pregnant women, or mothers with young babies. In this case, the social worker either gives food tickets (#2, 72, 88) or goes shopping with the person who requires food (#92). Social workers also encourage and support people in their job search, and in some cases help them to budget their money. For example, a Kuujjuaraapik woman, who had no work or child but received welfare, used to run out of money routinely because she liked to travel to other communities whenever she got her welfare cheque. Social workers were now taking care of her money, paying her rent and bills every month, and giving her money every two days to buy food (#82).

According to the following elder, money management is very difficult up North because of the high cost of living:

> Today, it is only by money that we can do everything. […] More people are having a hard time because everything is expensive. It is harder for people who don't have a job. A lot of people don't work, and they have kids. There is welfare, but some are not eligible for welfare, because the spouse is working. Now, we have to do money management. For people who can do it, if they have a job, it is OK. But it is so expensive these days. (#33)

In many cases, of course, money problems are related to addiction. According to another woman, some people really need help:

> A lot of people have financial problems. They don't know how to budget. […] Yes, they need counseling for that, they really need to know how to manage their money. Because to me, a lot of people make themselves become in poverty because of the addiction. They put their money in the wrong place: they don't know: "OK to pay house, put the money to rent and then the bills." They don't know how to do that, they spend it all in one shot. A lot of people are going from pay cheque to pay cheque, no savings, and have debts. (#21)

Otherwise, a lot of families are doing well and find different income sources to improve their financial situation. Selling of handiwork, mostly clothing made by women, and sometimes selling of carvings, jewelry (#31, 32, 37, 38, 51, 59, 70, 84, 87, 88, 90, 101), and country food (#37, 43, 45, 75, 76) have become widespread among Nunavimmiut. Most people sell through the Hunter's Support Program, but there are many other ways nowadays, such as Facebook, to reach a much wider customer base. Some groups of women, such as the Women's Auxiliary, also have funding from the KRG to make clothing for men without wives and children without mothers. This type of selling and sharing, which the Hunter's Support Program helps, is a major part of the informal social economy among Inuit. Recently, the tourism industry has also been offering new opportunities, which are still very limited, for those who are interested in hosting or guiding foreigners on the territory (see KRG 2011: 60).

**Summary**

In this chapter, we have described, from the participants' standpoint, the problems with the education system and the job market in Nunavik. In the current conditions, neither of them offer all Inuit an opportunity for personal growth and achievement. Although there is room for improving the curriculum, teacher recruitment, and opportunities for post-secondary education and vocational training, the small population and the geographic isolation make establishment of efficient, diverse services expensive and complex. The same is true for the job market, which is very difficult to develop, given the trouble faced by local or foreign private companies surviving in the North.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, problems related to the education system and the job market in Nunavik are undeniably an incentive to move to the South of the province. Whereas services and resources are more numerous and more efficient in Montreal, under-education and economic insecurity also affect a significant proportion of Inuit living outside Nunavik.

When considering the high rates of under-education and unemployment, we should always keep in mind the historical, social, and cultural context. We should also recognize that everyone has a share of responsibility. We briefly mentioned that the way Inuit experience and perceive school and work necessarily influences their interest in going to school or work. We should therefore wonder what really matters to them. Why do not schooling and work always come first? What are the obstacles to these two in everyday life? Of course, when basic needs like eating, having a suitable life environment, and feeling safe are not met, major daily concerns may not include getting an education, and having a personal and ongoing commitment as an employee.

Family life and the upbringing that children get from their parents play an important role in the path taken by the upcoming generations. That is why we feel it must be discussed, and this is what we will do in Chapter 5. Schooling alone cannot make people feel empowered, accountable for their fate, self-confident, and willing.

The major points to retain from this chapter are:

1. 40% of all participants had graduated from high school, and 10% had post-secondary diplomas. At the time of the interviews, 38% of all participants were not working, and 31% mentioned that they were struggling financially. Women from Kuujjuaraapik had the highest rates of school dropout, unemployment, and financial hardship.
2. Many women pointed out that priority should be given to improving Nunavik's school system and creating post-secondary and vocational programs in the North, in order to train more skilled workers and qualified professionals among the Inuit.
3. The KSB curriculum does not currently offer an educational level equivalent to the level provided in the South of the province, this failure being partly due to the bilingual program and to the complexity of recruiting and retaining qualified, experienced, and dedicated teachers. The consequences are lack of motivation and confidence among youth, a high rate of school dropout, difficulty in pursuing post-secondary education, and departure of families for the South.

4. The school failure rate can also be explained, among other factors, by lack of parental structure, the possibility of finding a job without a diploma, teenage motherhood, family troubles, and abuse of drugs and alcohol (among the students and/or their families).
5. Otherwise, the curriculum should provide young people with a better preparation for post-secondary education and the job market, without jeopardizing preservation of the Inuit language and culture. Inuit history and identity should thus be taught. Furthermore, more services and specialists should be available for students with learning disabilities. Better ways to reintegrate those who have dropped out need to be found. On these issues, an education centre, separate from regular school, could be created to help learning-disabled children and their parents.
6. Many Inuit are deterred by the prospect of leaving the community in order to graduate (in adult education) or to pursue post-secondary education, partly because of their parental responsibilities. When moving to Montreal for junior college, a lot of Inuit rapidly drop out due to a sense of social isolation and culture shock. Some participants expressed a desire to have more flexibility in the KSB's postsecondary program when they choose their educational institution and their field of study.
7. Although most Nunavimmiut recognize the importance of schooling and participating in the job market in order to satisfy the needs of their families, a lot of people are in favour of dropping out and becoming dependent on government assistance and the community. Traumatic past experiences, as well as rapid and recent changes in Nunavimmiut lifestyle have undoubtedly played a role. The increase in the graduation rate over the generations may however bring about a gradual change in attitudes and conceptions.
8. The participants were divided over the adequacy or inadequacy of the number of jobs available in their communities. The issue may be more a matter of variety and quality of job opportunities. Some positions, such as clerk and community worker, are difficult to fill because they require a high school or post-secondary degree, and strong personal and social commitment. Conversely, other positions are valued but they are limited in number. Alcohol and drug consumption are seen as another explanation for unemployment.
9. Because the average woman 20 years of age or older has custody of at least one child, and because many women cannot rely on having a spouse to take care of the children and pay the bills, they are more vulnerable to instability and are more likely to be struggling workwise and financially. Availability of daycare does help them to balance work and family, although in some communities daily attendance of educators and teachers could be enhanced, and the number of childcare spaces increased.
10. Financial struggling can be explained by the high cost of living (especially store-bought food), idleness, drug and alcohol consumption, lack of information and assistance to apply for government programs, trouble finding and holding on to jobs, and, finally, trouble managing money. The consequences are most often food insecurity and overcrowded housing. Many families rely on support from relatives or from the community in general, mainly through the Hunter's Support Program.

To deal with the precarious economic situation of families, especially single mothers, Nunavimmiut women proposed some solutions: cooking classes, a food bank, budget counseling, together with a lawyer's services to make government assistance programs more accessible.

# CHAPTER 3. VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

> *One of the biggest problems here is alcohol abuse. Without that, there will not be as much crimes and offenders. That causes violence, a lot of conjugal violence, and drinking and driving. […] To Inuit, drinking is a way to avoid their problems. But when they are drunk, they go crazy and become aggressive. […] It is people who had too much problem in their childhood.* (#70)

## Introduction

As in other Canadian Native communities, there have been frequent reports of high rates of violence and also drug and alcohol abuse in Nunavik. For instance, Duhaime asserts that "daily consumption rates of Inuit for alcohol and tobacco are about three times higher than in Québec," while also noting that crime and family violence rates are higher (Duhaime 2008: 116). In addition, "there are between 6 and 10 times more women who are victims of conjugal violence" (Duhaime 2008: 22). According to Statistics Canada (2006), Aboriginal women who suffer violence differ from other Canadian women in terms of the number and severity of assaults against them. They are more at risk; around 54% of them have been victims of sexual assault or violence, versus 37% of non-Native women. Also, the homicide rate for Aboriginal women is eight times higher than the homicide rate for non-Aboriginal women.

In a study of family violence[60] and abuse in Canadian Aboriginal communities, Bopp *et al.* (2003) underline its specific features among Aboriginal people. They define it as a collective syndrome of traumas due to colonial history, and this syndrome, instead of being an anomaly, has become a norm that has been perpetuated cyclically from one generation to the next. Indeed, children who live through chronic violence are much more at risk of maltreatment and, whether or not they are direct victims, much more at risk of replicating similar violent behaviour in their future family lives. In this context, general community well-being, which is indicated among other things by rates of alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, poverty, and unemployment, plays a key role in deciding whether violence will be perpetuated. Consequently, such violence requires intervention and healing at the level of family and community relationships, and not merely punishment of individual behaviour taken in isolation. While this will be a topic of the next chapters, we will now focus here on the experiences and opinions of Inuit women with regard to violence and abuse of any kind.

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[60] Bopp and *al*. (2003) and Montminy and Brassard (2012) favour the notion of family violence instead of conjugal violence because it emphasizes the holistic nature of this phenomenon, when one talks about violence suffered by Aboriginal women. Here is a definition proposed by Green: "a consequence of colonization, forced assimilation, and cultural genocide; gestures, values, beliefs, attitudes, and types of negative, cumulative and multigenerational behaviour of a person or people that reduce or destroy the harmony and well-being of Aboriginal people as individuals, families, extended families, communities, and people" (free translation – Green 1996: 1).

Our survey participants replied that alcohol and drug abuse, verbal and physical violence, sexual assault, and suicide are major and strongly interconnected social issues in their communities. As mentioned in the introductory quote, alcohol abuse was most often pointed out as the main cause of the other issues, to which we can add child neglect, murders, fatal motor vehicle accidents, and any kind of crime. According to elders, violence, sexual abuse, and suicide are all much more recurrent nowadays in Inuit society than they used to be in the old days, and this is largely due not only to greater access to alcohol and drugs (#33, 44, 50, 56, 71, 72, 77, 90), but also to changes in lifestyle, as these quotes from elders illustrate:

> In my time, there was hardly any physical violence, but nowadays there is physical violence and even murders; they even kill from physical violence. In my time, we respected each other more. There would be some violence, but not as much as these days. (#27)

> Lots of people suffer from violence because of alcohol. I was growing up with a very fun life in the past, since there was no alcohol or drugs. But nowadays, it is hard. I never saw my parents arguing or fighting, and my husband was not violent to me. Nowadays, it is very different. Back then, we didn't see any drunk people. […] There is more violence and sexual abuse. I don't go out, so I don't really know these things, but the only thing I know is that it is because of alcohol and drugs. (#72)

Two other elders thought life was safer when Inuit were living in small groups and always moving from place to place (#50, 57).[61] The issue is more than merely one of alcohol consumption and sedentary living, and many participants recognized that the overall hardship due to colonization is the real source of social ills.[62] Indeed, these ills may be happening more often in part because of the many traumatic experiences and rapid changes in Inuit life, including the slaughter of sled dogs,[63] the residential school experience, sexual abuse of children, the forced relocations, the introduction of alcohol and drugs, and the greater access to these substances. These events are still causing a lot of suffering, anger, and distress.

In this chapter, our objective will be to disclose women's experiences in order to illustrate how violence and abuse of any kind are intricate and pervasive issues. Using numbers and a table, we will first look at the participants' personal background in terms of violence, alcohol and cigarette consumption, sexual assault, and suicide. Second, a section will be devoted to the use of alcohol among Nunavimmiut, to its relation to crime, risk of death, and family violence, and to different ways of fighting addiction. The three following

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[61] Dupré (2014: 165-167) and Kral (2009) elaborated on how the gathering of many family groups into a single year-round village adversely impacted family relationships and social organization. Together with a rupture of family bonds, it has been the source of many social conflicts. According to Kral, it has led to more independence in children and teenagers, and also to a malaise that underlies the high suicide rate among the youth in Nunavik (Kral 2009: 59).

[62] Clairmont (1996: 6) distinguishes between *precipitative* causes (alcohol and drug abuse, jealousy, poor communication, and so on) and *structural* causes of domestic violence (introduction of patriarchal values and the effects of colonization).

[63] According to Lévesque (2008), although there never was a federal policy of systematically eliminating sled dogs in Canada, the deaths of hundreds of dogs in Nunavik did and still have devastating consequences for the Inuit.

sections will then more specifically discuss domestic violence against women, sexual assault against children, and suicide among teenagers. In this chapter, we will discover how history has led to anger in men, low self-esteem in women, and a general lack of trust in others. This situation partly explains the silence surrounding violence and abuse.

**Participants' profile**

Table 6 shows women's past and present experiences with alcohol and cigarette consumption, violence, sexual assault, and suicide. While alcohol and cigarette consumption and sexual assault concern personal experience specifically, violence—both physical and verbal—may include family violence occurring at home but not necessarily directed at the participant. Suicide may include both attempted suicide by the participant and loss of a friend or a close relative through suicide (i.e., parent, sibling, cousin, spouse, child, grandparent, grandchild). Three columns are devoted to alcohol; the first one refers to women who currently drank alcohol but did not feel they had a problem with alcohol consumption. According to the participants, this meant they drank not every day but rather about once a week to once a month. Drinking every day, or frequently on weekdays, was thus usually seen as overconsumption. Women in the "current alcoholism" column did not, of course, necessarily openly label themselves as alcoholics, but most said they drank either almost every day or "a lot." The "past alcoholism" column refers to women who had been alcoholic in the past and had either totally stopped drinking or cut back on their consumption to a point they considered to be no longer problem drinking.

As mentioned earlier in this report, we did not systematically question each participant about all topics covered by the study. Sometimes there was not enough time and sometimes the interpreter felt some discomfort asking an elder about very personal matters, for instance. In addition, some participants simply declined to talk about certain subjects, and we respected their decision. Consequently, to give a better idea of the prevalence of experiences with consumption, violence, sexual abuse, and suicide, the two bottom lines of the table provide first the number of participants who gave information about each topic (for example, 50 out of 108 in the first column), and second the percentage of respondents giving information who replied in the affirmative (37 out of 50: 74%). Naturally, we cannot say the percentages are perfectly representative of Nunavik society as a whole. To give an idea of the prevalence of these problems by age, we divided the table into age groups and provided in the rightmost column the total number of survey participants in each age group. The data were not broken down by community because we did not find any significant differences among them, other than that most women who currently labelled themselves as heavy alcohol drinkers were living in Montreal (five out of eight), and that alcohol abuse and risk of alcohol-related death were particularly high in Kuujjuaraapik and Puvirnituq, two communities on Hudson Bay.[64]

The table starts with cigarette consumption, which seems to be widespread: 74% of all participants said they smoked. The highest rates were among women under 20 years of age (five out of six, although very few participants were in this age group) and between 30 and 39 years of age (12 out of 20). There is no column for drug use because the data were

[64] Again, this is consistent with the 2004 NRBHSS study, which reported that the communities on Hudson Bay are more disadvantaged than those on Ungava Bay in terms of social problems (Anctil 2008).

too irregular and scarce. We know that ten women currently smoked marijuana, and that 12 had quit. Otherwise, some brought up problems due to heavy drug consumption by a relative or a spouse. Other women mentioned that their spouses spent a lot of money buying cannabis and easily became aggressive when they ran out (#14, 35, 74). A few participants talked about past use of stronger drugs and how therapy had helped them to stop (#62, 99, 101). In this chapter, when talking about drugs, we will mainly refer to cannabis.

**Table 6: Participants' profile in terms of alcohol and cigarette consumption, violence, sexual assault, and suicide.**

| Age group | Cigarette smokers | Current alcohol consumption | Past alcoholism | Current alcoholism | Experience of violence | Experience of sexual assault | Suicide in entourage | Total participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Under 20** | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | **6** |
| **20 to 29** | 6 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 0 | 7 | **17** |
| **30 to 39** | 12 | 10 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 6 | **20** |
| **40 to 49** | 9 | 10 | 7 | 3 | 13 | 6 | 6 | **25** |
| **50 to 59** | 3 | 6 | 11 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 6 | **20** |
| **60 to 69** | 2 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | **14** |
| **70 or over** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | **6** |
| **Total** | **37** | **35** | **30** | **8** | **43** | **18** | **33** | **108** |
| **Respondents** | 50 | 78 | 78 | 78 | 58 | 39 | 44 | - |
| *Percentages* | *74%* | *45%* | *39%* | *10%* | *74%* | *46%* | *75%* | - |

When questioned about alcohol consumption, close to half the participants said they were used to drinking, but not abusively (second column). The non-abusive consumption rate was higher among women between 30 and 39 years old (50%), and zero among those who were 60 or over. Also, while 39% of all participants mentioned past experience with heavy consumption, women in their fifties were more numerous in this category (55%). Out of 30 women who had been alcoholic, 17 had totally stropped drinking and 13 had reduced their consumption. Pregnancy (#19, 49, 61), problems with the legal system, mainly with Youth Protection (#38, 43, 45, 58, 83, 89, 95), and serious accidents involving alcohol abuse (#4, 48, 93) were the main reasons for quitting drinking. Thirteen people had stopped through therapy, in Kuujjuaq or Oka for instance, but at least five others had started to drink again after rehabilitation (#38, 66, 68, 100, 101).

According to our data, about 10% of all participants drank almost every day and saw their consumption as problematic. They were somewhat equally distributed among women from 20 to 69 years old. Alcohol consumption by women was often related to alcohol consumption by their partners. For instance, six women out of eight who drank a lot had an alcoholic spouse (#2, 12, 97, 98, 99, 103). Moreover, when women had stopped drinking, some spouses had done likewise (#1, 14, 61, 74). Although not indicated in the table, we should add that at least 40% of all participants (44 out of 108) were or had been affected by a close relative or partner's heavy consumption. Furthermore, at least eight women had experienced or witnessed violence at home due to their parents' alcohol consumption (#19,

24, 47, 59, 65, 83, 89, 92), and 13 women had suffered from conjugal violence due to their partners' alcohol consumption (#1, 11, 14, 20, 35, 41, 46, 55, 74, 88, 89, 95, 101).

Altogether, 74% of all participants asserted that they had experienced (directly or not) physical or verbal violence in their lives, whether related to alcohol abuse or not. Women belonging to the 20 to 29 and 40 to 49 age groups had the highest rates (respectively 53% and 52%), while those under 20 and those over 60 had the lowest (respectively 30% and 15%).[65] Seven participants had been molested by one of their parents as a child (#24, 49, 65, 83, 86, 92, 99); seven had witnessed brutality between their parents (#19, 66, 25, 47, 59, 89, 103); fifteen had been abused by their ex-spouses (#11, 20, 35, 38, 41, 55, 65, 68, 87, 94, 95, 101, 105, 106, 108); and, finally, nine were currently mistreated by their partners (#1, 14, 46, 74, 88, 100, 98, 97, 107). Other women reported aggressive behaviour from a child (#10), a schoolmate (#61), and a sibling (#81, 97), and one woman acknowledged her own abusive behaviour toward her ex-husband (#17). Among those who had been abused, we only know of seven who had pressed charges against their abusers (#14, 35, 47 61, 55, 95, 97). No more than 17 out of 58 women (29%) answered that they had never been verbally or physically abused.

Now regarding sexual assault, 18 out of 39 participants (49%) had experienced it, while 16 never had. The youngest (under 30) and the oldest (over 70) participants were those who had been the least affected. According to the participants, different individuals had perpetrated the assault: the spouse, a relative, a stepfather, a *Qallunaaq*, or, finally, a friend. We know that for at least 11 of these participants, the attack had happened during childhood or adolescence (#20, 45, 21, 58, 71, 74, 82, 86, 89, 103, 105). Only ten had talked to a relative and/or to the police about their assault, either right after the first incident (#2, 36, 58, 82, 92) or after many incidents (#14, 103). Several had also waited years before revealing the incident to someone they trusted (#20, 32, 71, 105).

Finally, 33 women out of 44 (75%) had either tried to commit suicide during an episode of depression (#19, 62, 82, 92, 97, 98) or had lost a close relative, a partner and/or a close friend through suicide, or both. That is to say that suicide-related suffering affected about three-quarters of all participants, not including women whose close friends or relatives had gone through deep depression and tried to kill themselves. Most people who commit suicide do so as teenagers. Seven women had lost children through suicide (#5, 14, 30, 54, 67, 83, 87), three had lost their spouses (#21, 62, 99), nine had lost one or more of their friends (#9, 19, 22, 31, 37, 40, 61, 62, 95), four had lost siblings (#95, 97, 104, 106), and seven had lost other relatives (#20, 27, 30, 45, 72, 82, 86). Apart from suicide, a participant had in many cases lost a parent (29), a sibling (7), a child (9), or a spouse (9) through accident, most often a motor vehicle accident (involving alcohol or not), illness, or murder. In short, there were very few who had never seen a close friend or relative die, no matter how.

### General impacts of alcohol and drug abuse on community life and risk of death

[65] Although not shown in the table, we noticed that the participants who lived in Montreal (80%), Kuujjuaraapik (50%) and Kuujjuaq (48%) were the most likely to have encountered some form of violence, and those who lived in Puvirnituq (17%) and Kangiqsujuaq were the least (25%).

We stated in the introduction that alcohol—and sometimes drug—abuse is really often seen as the cause of violence, crime, and many other social issues in Northern communities. Close to 100% of all women who were asked what they thought of alcohol consumption in the community answered that it was problematic. Indeed, 70 women associated alcohol with social problems, while only three were of the opinion that alcohol was not a major issue. Generally, women thought there was too much alcohol—and drug—consumption and addiction. For instance, a mother was concerned that, in the communities, children were widely exposed to drugs and alcohol, making it difficult for parents to keep them away from the harmful effects: "The village is so small; it is easy to get into following people who are just lazing around, just doing drugs and alcohol. It is hard to keep kids out of trouble" (#46).

Economically, participants related alcohol and drug addiction to idleness and food insecurity. Alcoholic people who drink daily or almost daily are more likely to have trouble keeping a job and thus providing their families with an income. Not only was the family deprived of wages to meet its needs, but also part of the household income was spent on alcohol. As we saw in the last chapter, even with a salary, people who prioritize alcohol can hardly fill the pantry because of the high cost of food.[66] As a result, there is pressure on other households to share their food (#46, 71).

Some women complained that alcohol made a lot of men helpless at home, both financially and with the children, thus putting a burden on women.

> Problems of drug and alcohol abuse put a lot of pressure on women, because they have to take care of children, they have to work; they are the only ones who are helping financially. […] I think that these days, women work more than men. (#15)

> There are men who are supportive to their wife, and others who don't help at all with kids, who don't care and give them more problems. It is because of alcohol problem that men are hardly helping their wife these days. Since my son slowed down alcohol consumption, he is more supporting. (#34)

Socially, many women mentioned that alcohol caused lack of respect for others, and especially for parents and elders who used to be much more respected and listened to in the past (#33, 89, 102). Also, some elders endured harassment from family members who craved to get money to buy drugs or alcohol (#7):

> They try to ask for my money, but since I figured out that they use it for drug and alcohol, and not for food, I don't give them money anymore. There are other elders who are abused like that. They give money, thinking it is for food, but it is not. I saw elders like that at the elders' house. (#71)

Many elders were scared when they saw people under the influence of alcohol, and they sometimes chose to lock their doors to keep them away:

> I don't like to have drunken people around. […] There is a lot of violence because of alcohol and drugs now, and I get scared really easily because of drunken people. Once,

[66] This is particularly true if we consider the high price of bootlegged alcohol in Nunavik; for instance, according to police sources, the average price for a little bottle of liquor, a "mickey" of 13 ounces, is $120. In comparison, in the southern part of the province, a 13 ounce bottle sells for about $12 to $15.

> a drunken man came to watch through my window and I had enough time to lock the door. I have to lock the door now because of that. I never call the police because I don't speak English. I usually call my daughter and my son-in-law. (#90)

In short, the following elder thought alcohol consumption affects the ability of Inuit to communicate and help each other: "Alcohol is the cause of lack of communication in the community. More cargos are coming in. Alcohol is disturbing; it is like everybody just sink because of alcohol. They are overtaken by alcohol, and nobody is working together" (#33).

Alcohol consumption also causes a lot of damage to the health of Inuit through Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), serious and fatal accidents, violence, murder, parental neglect, and even suicide. According to the Neighbourhood Wellness Program coordinator, Louise Fortin, FASD is under-diagnosed in Nunavik because of the costs of assessing this disorder. Affected children display emotional instability, various physiological disorders, learning disabilities, and developmental and behavioural disorders, similar to borderline personality disorder.

In the words of several participants, it is not so uncommon to see Inuit pregnant women drinking alcohol (#48, 68, 69, 73, 78, 82, 87, 98), even though some prevention programs attempt to make women aware of the impact of alcohol on the fetus (#16, 68, 69, 87).[67] Whereas use of cannabis has unknown effects on the baby, some also smoke cannabis while pregnant (#12, 48, 87). A woman talked about her sister's consumption and mentioned that it is possible to recognize children who were intoxicated before birth by their learning disabilities:

> I see a lot of pregnant women who drink alcohol, and walk in the street. They talk about that at the radio, try to do prevention. One has twins in her belly and is doing drugs too. […] My sister was an alcoholic while she was pregnant, and her daughter is older than mine, but less mature. So it affects the baby to drink while pregnancy. […] [Those kids] have learning disabilities. (#87)

Another 36-year-old woman thought there should be more prevention work with women about the dangers of alcohol abuse during pregnancy. She also described the symptoms of FASD and recounted the case of a woman who had adopted a girl from another community who showed these symptoms:

> I see a lot of women who drink during their pregnancy. […] They realize the impact only after the baby is born. […] We don't talk to them enough; we need to talk more about it. […][Those kids] don't have concentration, their learning ability is slowed; they are less affective, hyperactive. They just do what they want, with no consequence. They are trouble magnets. […] One of my clients adopted a girl whose biological mother was saying that she wasn't taking drugs and alcohol. But she couldn't see the reality, because she wasn't living in the same village. When her

[67] For instance, there is the "Nine Months Bonding Program" in the Inuulitsivik Health Centre in Puvirnituq (Rogers 2013). We know that the maternity ward of the Inuulitsivik Centre printed a flyer in 2008 to raise awareness about fetal life (Pernet 2010). There is also a new program at the Tulattavik Centre in Kuujjuaq called SIPPE, or ISPEC in English (Integrated Services in Perinatality and Early Childhood – Rogers 2015b). Finally, Pauktuutit (Association of Inuit Women of Canada) has a program of training workshops on FASD (Pauktuutit 2015).

> adoptive daughter was two years old, she was running all over, touching everything. She doesn't have any ears to listen; everything was going in and out. (#48)

In the following quote, the participant felt there were not enough resources to prevent FASD and to support families that had to live with it. This is why she wanted to work on FASD prevention, pointing to the healthy lifestyle of her ancestors:

> I see a lot of women who drink during their pregnancy and it is sad. We see the result; we see kids suffering from FASD. They can't escape; they can't do anything about it. It is not how we have to live, because our ancestors were not like that, they were healthy, they had no alcohol. […] I want to promote healthy pregnancy, talk to pregnant women. […] [Those children] have learning disabilities and they can't just relax. They can't talk normally; they pronounce words very differently. There are lots of kids like that. It is not supposed to be like that. […] I don't think there are resources for them. (#68)

Today, with greater access to alcohol, motor vehicles, and gas, drinking and driving have become a pervasive problem, and the cause of many motor vehicle accidents and deaths, especially among young people (#69, 70, 75, 77, 81, 84, 86, 89, 91, 100). It is not for nothing that, according to some participants, incarceration of Inuit, and thus crime, is almost always due to alcohol abuse, and that impaired driving is the primary reason why Inuit women get charged (#63, 70, 96, 101): "Alcohol is always the cause of violence: no alcohol, no violence. 100% of people in jail have alcohol problem" (#96).

The community of Puvirnituq has witnessed several fatal accidents due to impaired driving in recent years, which make people very fearful of drunk drivers. This community is noteworthy because the Puvirniturmiut recently voted to abolish all restrictions on ordering alcohol. Henceforth, any adult can order alcohol of any kind, at any time, and as much as he or she wishes. Following this new regulation, many Inuit have noticed an increase in drunk driving and deaths:

> It is good that there is unlimited order now, but it changed a lot; more people are dying from drinking and driving, teenagers. We should inform teenagers that drinking and driving doesn't work well, anything can happen. You can die, or get paralyzed, or get a head injury. For the past year, there are a lot. (#68)

> I am worried about my kids sometimes because of alcohol and violence. Everybody is drinking and driving; I don't let my daughter go outside. […] Since December, there were three accidents; three young people died and one was in his 30s. […] The unlimited ordering is not helping the community. (#75)

When someone is driving on the road under the influence of alcohol or drugs, he or she is endangering the lives of many people; himself or herself, the passengers if there are any, and anyone walking on the road. In the larger communities, some people may even be scared to wander the streets and run into a drunk driver (#81). In addition, people who drive a motor vehicle or boat on the land or water are at risk of having an accident, with little chance of being rescued in time. Therefore, alcohol causes many deaths, but not only because of motor vehicle accidents. Participants reported cases of drunk and frozen people lying on the road in wintertime, as well as murders committed under the influence of

alcohol (#33, 71, 77, 83, 84, 86, 89, 91). Both situations have been reported in Kuujjuaraapik, particularly:

> Two or three people froze in the snow. […] It is scary at times, especially in the wintertime, because you never know if someone is going to freeze in the snow again. It worries me. Because with alcohol, violence becomes murder and suicide. We had quite a few murders in this town. (#92)

More common among the participants was the opinion that alcohol has the effect of making people more aggressive and violent toward one another (#36, 90).[68] Aggressiveness by drunken people often leads to physical attack, and consequently to serious injuries and even death (#89, 92, 95). A participant from Puvirnituq, who knew of about 20 murders over the past ten years, thought the time spent in jail insufficient to deter people from committing such a crime:

> A man who killed someone when I was young is now free in town. Two other murderers are in the South and don't want to come back. The murderers stay only seven years in jail. […] I often hear people who want to kill someone and don't mind to be in jail for seven years, a least the person will be dead. (#78)

Also, an elder mentioned that her daughter had been killed when she was 41 years old. The murderer was in jail for six months. Then, he decided to stay in the South instead of coming back and having to face his family's victim, "even though the family doesn't try to scare him" (#71).

Finally, when alcohol is combined with a sense of despair and confusion, it can also cause suicide. Some women talked about people who had committed suicide under the influence of alcohol (#46, 84, 86, 92). For instance, one Kuujjuaraapik woman had lost her cousin in this way (#82), and one from Kuujjuaq had similarly lost some close friends (#22).

**Narrative: Alcohol abuse as an impetus for family violence**

*RITA[69] is 40 years old and moved several times with her family during her childhood. She met her husband while at high school. She decided to stay with him, and thus never went on to college, whereas two of her children did. She had four kids with her husband. The first one was not planned; she was 18 years old and probably too young to have a baby, but she kept him. Her mother, who lives in another community, has always helped her with advice about motherhood. She has a good relationship with her children; they attend school, take part in sports, listen to her, and talk with her whenever they have problems.*

*About seven people currently live with her: her husband, four of her kids, her older son's girlfriend, and her brother. The last one has just left his wife and his children, who live in another community, because of conjugal problems. He doesn't work but is looking for a job. Both Rita and her husband, for their part, have been working in the same respective*

[68] Bujold uses the Inuktitut word "isumaqanngituq" (literally, "to not have judgment or intelligence") to refer to the state of someone under the influence of alcohol or drugs, when judgment is distorted and someone shows excessive behaviour (Bujold 2006: 163, 184).

[69] Fictitious name.

*positions for many years. Their daughter also works and helps to support the family financially. They have just moved into a five-bedroom house, so they have enough room for everyone.*

*Her husband helps at home sometimes, taking care of the kids, when Rita asks him. However, she is experiencing trouble in her relationship with him because he is a heavy drinker. He is used to ordering alcohol and drinking at home with his friends. They drink everything they order, which may last one or two nights. Then they have to wait for two weeks to order again. She doesn't like to party in her house, so she often goes to a friend's house when partying is going on. She would go to a shelter instead, if there was one in the community. She has had to call the police a few times because her husband becomes violent when he drinks. He has thus spent some nights, one at a time, at the police station. When he sobers up, he usually apologies, even if he doesn't remember what happened. Rita thinks men who are arrested should have counseling at the police station. Some men keep returning and returning there with no consequences and no help.*

*Her husband's alcohol consumption and aggressive behaviour have affected their children a lot. They have grown up in these conditions from an early age and have come to think it is a normal way of life, never developing a close relationship with their father. When they had to call the police, they thought their father would never come back home. They flew to their grandmother's house a few times, for a few days, after a long night of fighting, when Rita could no longer manage the situation anymore. Fortunately, Rita's husband has recently stopped drinking abusively and acting violently, thus helping to improve family life.*

**Conjugal problems with alcohol and drug abuse**

This story shows how alcohol may have an ongoing impact on conjugal and family relationships. As women pointed out, alcohol consumption induces aggressiveness and violence against others, first against relatives, and then more predominantly against the spouse. Moreover, violence is not always visible to everyone and can take various forms: verbal, emotional, physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and so on. More often than not, conjugal violence occurs when there is alcohol, and alcohol tends to increase the degree of violence, sometimes even going so far as to put people's lives in danger (#35, 59, 63). For this reason, conjugal violence against women is a major concern for Inuit women in general (#13, 14, 81, 87, 89, 100), and many see alcohol as one of the first sources of conflict in couples nowadays (#1, 3, 6, 63). As an elder noticed, "because of alcohol and drugs, the relationship between men and women is not as strong as it used to be" (#72).

Regarding the effect of alcohol itself, it was said that it often totally changes a man's personality and temperament. Many men, whether lovers or respectable husbands, fathers, or sons when sober, become violent under the influence of alcohol. Since alcohol is not available all the time in most Northern villages—it is ordered once or a few times a month—conjugal relationships and family life become trickier when alcohol arrives by

cargo and this continues until the stock runs out, usually a few days later. We can then understand why alcohol is seen as the cause of so much violence.[70]

For example, a 19-year-old woman shared her experience of living with a violent boyfriend, the father of her one-year-old daughter (#88). She and her boyfriend often argued and fought, especially when drinking, because he would become violent under the influence of alcohol. After hitting her, he usually apologized and promised never to do it again. Even though she would forgive him, she did not believe him. There was no trust in their relationship. She finally pressed charges against him, and he was now in jail. She no longer wanted to drink with him and was thinking of leaving him. Only one thing could prevent her from leaving: the prospect of having to raise a child alone.

Another woman in her sixties talked about her relationship with her ex-husband who had really been violent towards her, at a time when alcohol was less available:

> When he drank, he would become very violent. In those days it wasn't too often that people had alcohol, so there were times in-between where there was no drinking. In those times I was safe, but in the time that alcohol came in and he was drinking, I was in great danger. (#63)

As with alcohol, addiction to cannabis is really widespread in Inuit communities and, according to many participants, it causes as much violence and conjugal hardship as does alcohol, but in a whole different way. (#6, 72, 74, 85, 86). While alcohol consumption usually makes people become aggressive, use of cannabis, in contrast, tends to tranquilize people. When addiction develops, it is lack of this drug that may generate aggressiveness (#14, 29, 33, 35, 74). A woman who had been abused by her ex-boyfriend pointed out this fact:

> I used to be with a man for seven years, but it was a bad relationship because he used to beat me a lot. I have a lot of cicatrices because of that. […] My ex used to have a lot of accidents because of alcohol. Once he hit the house with his skidoo, and since then he has brain problem, and has beaten me even more. […] He was violent because he is really addicted to weed and alcohol. He used to ask me to find some, and be grumpy if I couldn't find it. (#35)

Notwithstanding the cycle of violence due to the presence or absence of alcohol or drugs, several survey participants expressed distress over an alcoholic or drug-addicted spouse not being able to help out with family expenses, housework, child rearing, and affective and emotional support. When the spouse drinks, the woman feels all alone in the house, having no help to meet the family's needs (#15, 28, 33, 34). Here is the story of one Inuk who broke up with her children's father because of alcohol and violence. He had never helped the family financially:

> My boyfriend was going through difficult times and drinking a lot, every day. One night drinking, one night at home, one night drinking… He used to make 15 to 18 thousand [dollars] every month. Still, he doesn't give me money every month. He has kids. He owns his house. […] He was drinking for a few months and when he stopped, he wanted our daughter to visit him and I didn't trust him, because of alcohol. […] One

[70] A policeman working in Kangiqsualujjuaq confirmed the existence of a cycle of violence in line with alcohol availability.

> day I found out that he was cheating; I saw the picture on the computer, they were playing in the kitchen table with cards, undressed. So I didn't want to send her to him, I didn't want my daughter to see that. We got into argument, fighting. […] Sometimes he used to hit me when he was drunk and I complained that he should be home and raise kids too. (#41)

According to elders, conjugal hardship due to alcohol and drug consumption is very common among young couples. It causes a lot of violence, and many young women have to run away from their homes when there is alcohol.[71] An elder from Kangiqsualujjuaq told us the experience of her daughter:

> Young couples have problem of alcohol and violence. […] My daughter used to come to me about her problem with alcohol and drugs too. Now she is better. She used to run away from her husband at night and come to my place. […] The biggest problem for women, especially teenagers, is drugs and alcohol and it affects a lot the couples. Couples fight a lot together because of alcohol. When there is that kind of problems, women run to another place, run away from her husband. (#6)

Fortunately, in every community there are a few women, often those who have gone through the same kind of hardship, whose doors are always open to women in need (#22, 38, 54, 80):

> If I see someone hitting a woman, I will step in, because I used to see it with my mom and I don't like to see other women going through that. So if a woman needs a place to stay, I give her shelter. (#89)

> When there is too much drinking and violence, women come to my place. Some are not happy to have alcohol in their house, because there can be violence, so they come to my place, sometimes with the kids. […] Sometimes we have to make beds on the floor. (#45)

We should not forget that women too can abuse alcohol and be guilty of violence towards others. Indeed, some women, especially those who just like men have experienced significant problems in their lives, turn to alcohol and drugs and become troublemakers. Obviously, there are also many people who drink alcohol moderately, but the interviews revealed that abuse of alcohol and drugs is an important issue among women (#43, 44, 45, 48, 59, 63, 71, 73, 77, 103). A woman in her fifties, who had suffered in the past from alcohol-induced violence, was now trying to stay away. Nevertheless, she told us about the trouble she had finding friends who do not abuse alcohol and drugs. In her opinion, alcohol prevents people from having healthy relationships:

> As a woman, if you are not drinking and partying, even with other women, you cannot really be a friend with them. I don't have a lot of friends like that. Some of my friends are heavy drinkers; they do drugs. I don't want to live that way. […] I drink, but I don't do drugs. I mostly hang out with my family members. I am very careful about how I choose a friend, because I am scared. I don't want violence. I don't want to be hurt. I protect myself. […] I like to drink and have a good time, but I don't want to be abused or to abuse. There is a big difference. It is hard to be a woman where there is a very

[71] According to one participant, with women starting to learn how to anticipate the violent behaviour of their spouses, running away from home might be becoming a way to avoid abuse (#81).

> harsh environment. […] A lot of women are addicted to drugs and alcohol. It is hard to have good relationships with them. (#65)

With regards to conjugal violence, some women have their share of responsibility, and some men should be considered victims (#45, 56). For instance, a woman who is now working as a counselor related that she had been really violent with her ex-husband and it took a very long time before she realized it. She now understood that her behaviour was rooted in her own personal problems. She wished women would understand that no one deserves violence:

> When my husband left me, I realized that I had been violent with him for so long without seeing it. When we are in the problematic situation, we never see it as a problem and we think it is normal. It is not OK. That is what women need to know; it is not normal to live with violence. They have the right to be respected. Nobody deserves violence; that is what I realized afterward, when my husband left. I realized I was violent with my husband because of problems I had during my childhood and that I never faced. He was like my punching bag to let off steam. (#17)

According to a young woman who worked for local justice committees, because Inuit women have had to endure for so long the heavy consumption and violent behaviour of their spouses, they have begun to drink more and express their anger through violence, even going to jail, as men do.[72] Women have borne too much of this burden for too long, and men should begin to take their share:

> Women are the ones that carry the brunt of all the burdens in the North for everything. We carry children, the bills, all the problems, and try to solve emotional problems, household problems, get out of all the beatings. […] I find it is because that for a long time women were beaten and beaten, and now they manage to just get frustrated and they are fighting back. […] The men would better suck it up and carry their own load from now on, because they put too much load on the women, and beat them up too. Men would better do that and leave the women alone, so they won't get murdered, because that is what the women are starting to do now. It is sad to say, but the women are getting really fed up and some are getting really extreme, start to fight back with the men. But other women are going other ways of fighting back, like taking a stand in a more healthy way. (#64)

This shows how victims can become aggressors, and why they need help before their behaviour becomes criminal. We will return to the question of conjugal relationships in modern Inuit society in Chapter 5. For now, we will examine the impact of substance abuse and violence far beyond the issue of marital problems. To this end, we will look at the story of a woman's family that has been devastated by alcohol and drugs.

<u>Narrative: a family struggling with drug and alcohol abuse</u>

*Jessica,[73] a 46-year-old Inuk, met her common-law partner in her native village when she was 19. The year after, she gave birth to her first baby, who was adopted by her mother.*

[72] Unfortunately, we find a lot of such desperate Inuit women in Montreal, where they have escaped their abusers for good but have ended up living on the streets with serious alcohol problems and have got into new abusive domestic relationships (see Chapter 1 about homelessness in Montreal).

[73] Fictitious name.

*Six biological children followed, and she and her partner kept all of them. Today, they have nine grandchildren and are currently foster parents to some of them.*

*Although she and her boyfriend have been together for 27 years, they have never married. About ten years ago, she left him for five years because he was alcoholic and violent. She pressed charges against him many times, and he used to go to and from jail. He finally went to a treatment centre down South and got better. He doesn't drink anymore and is no longer physically violent. However, he is still an angry and controlling man. He smokes a lot of drug and still goes to prison sometimes. Jessica tries to talk to him when he is angry, so their family can be happy, but he doesn't want to get help.*

*Jessica also used to drink a lot but quit five years ago. She went to a treatment centre in Kuujjuaq. When drinking, she was angry and used to go to her siblings and upset them. She even lost her children to the DYP for a year. Her relationship with her children, who now drink alcohol likewise, is still difficult today. Some have dropped out of school, and one of her sons is under court conditions because of alcohol abuse, and he doesn't comply with the conditions. Also, Jessica feels her youngest son is still bothered by the fact he had been a foster child. She is always having problems with him, and he has recently been suspended from school. She tries to talk with him and is getting slowly closer to him.*

*For about 10 years, she was on welfare because she had neither a babysitter nor daycare, and because she was alcoholic. She is now working, rents a house, and pays the bills. Her husband is working but doesn't really help except to buy food on occasion. Jessica doesn't ask him to do more. Some of her kids are earning money but they spend it on alcohol and drugs. Consequently, at home they run out of food regularly. In this situation, her children usually go to her sister's to eat. Also, they sometimes receive country food from her partner's father, but never go hunting themselves, even though they have a skidoo.*

Family violence: the children suffer

Whichever parent is the instigator, alcohol abuse and violence at home naturally affect the children in many ways. It causes child neglect and, thus, major family issues (#4, 32, 43, 45, 89). Many participants were very concerned about child abuse and neglect (#20, 22, 59, 70, 71, 73, 77, 89, 99). An Inuk who worked for the DYP sadly noted that drunken mothers are unaware how much they make their children suffer when they are violent to them:

> Women have to stop drugs and alcohol; so they will have less trouble. We have to tell the mothers who beat their kids when they are drunk about what they do to their kids and ask them "what would you do if you were the kids and if your parents were alcoholic and violent to you?" Then they can think as if they were in their shoes. They don't realize what they do, because they are drunk. (#43)

Many women shared their experiences of growing up with alcoholic and violent parents and having been brutalized by one of them (#24, 65, 83, 86, 92, 99). The violence is not always caused by alcohol consumption, nor is it all the time physical, but it hurts each time and leaves deep wounds, as this young woman recounted:

> I suffered a lot from verbal violence from my father, not necessarily because of drugs and alcohol abuse, but because he has a secret he has never talked about, but he is better today. […] When I was young, he used to be verbally violent to my siblings and me, and I was the only one to answer back, so he used to be afraid of me. (#49)

Even when a child is not the direct target of violence, but merely a witness to domestic violence, he or she is equally affected. When parents drink alcohol, take drugs, party, and play games at home,[74] children are most often present and aware of what is going on. By making homes unsafe for children, abuse and violence have become a huge concern for many women (#5, 44, 53, 55, 67, 68, 77, 78, 99, 103, 105).

> Some kids are exposed to problems at home; drugs and alcohol addiction, violence. When they drink, parents don't care anymore for their kids, so the kids don't live in a safe place. (#32)

> If [parents] drink, [kids] are not safe. Alcohol or anger is the main reason to get the baby in danger. […] The parents have to stop what they are doing. They have to learn to prioritize their kids, instead of alcohol. (#22)

In a situation of alcohol abuse and violence, sometimes accompanied by their mother or their siblings, children may look for another house to spend the night, or a few days, until there is no more alcohol. Some cannot find a place (#105), but many go to their grandparents' or to other relatives (#32, 38, 46, 47, 48, 68, 76). They have no choice but to take care of themselves and try to console each other:

> A lot of my siblings take a lot of drugs and are alcoholic, and when they drink they tell their kids to go sleep somewhere else. So I often got nieces and nephews who come to my place to sleep over. We don't like when their parents are drunk, some of the children cry, others don't talk at all. (#78)

Generally, beyond the dangers surrounding partying and violence, alcohol and drug abuse make men and women inattentive, or unable to meet their children's needs, i.e., children are left to themselves and neglected because they do not get as much food, sleep, and parental attention and upbringing as they need (#5, 65, 89):

> When parents drink too much, they are not aware that their kids are in danger. […] They don't cook, so the kids are starving. They pass out when the kids are still awake, so they cry and they are alone. Kids cannot make a phone call, so they are just there. That is what happens to my sister's kids. (#68)

In fact, participants were of the opinion that people who have a drinking problem are less involved in raising their children (#4, 28, 32, 35, 43, 68, 72, 73). This crucial lack is reflected in the children's attitudes and skills at school, at least when they continue to attend classes, as a teacher pointed out. She thought something should be done to help parents take responsibility:

> In school, we have to deal with kids with behaviour difficulties. […] They lack sleep because of just Facebooking [sic.] all night. Some students are just sleeping in class, or they don't want to work. […] Their parents just let them be. We would need to talk about parenting, maybe on the FM [local radio]. These kids need to learn to sleep, to have a good home, not just having parents who are arguing or fighting in the house, or

[74] Interviews suggest that parties and poker games are frequent when people drink at home.

> being drunk, taking drugs. There are a lot of parents, any age, who are into drugs and alcohol. It is sad for a kid to hear parents making party in the house, they hear the music all night and they can't hardly sleep. (#41)

Furthermore, children may worry about their family situation and even take the blame for it (#3). When no one takes responsibility, they have to carry a lot on their shoulders. For instance, some older children see themselves taking on their parents' role with their younger siblings (#20, 24, 62, 65, 78, 83, 95). Children living with such problems need to talk to someone they trust and who is outside the family unit. They may be deterred from doing so out of fear that their words may break up the family through intervention by the DYP (#25). Since it is not so uncommon up North to see children removed from their homes, most of them have probably seen or heard about such intervention in their surroundings. Even when removal of a child is the only way to get him or her out of danger, separation from the parents necessarily adds to the burden of sorrowful experiences (#38, 73, 74, 82), as we will see in the next chapter.

Losing one's children, or the risk of losing them, often motivates women to quit alcohol. Many participants managed to quit or cut back on their consumption, only then realizing how much their children had suffered. The following woman had gone to a treatment centre because of a court order. She was still drinking every week, but she felt she was no longer endangering her children. Still, she felt guilty:

> I drink alcohol often; sometimes I drink too much. But my kids have seen that I changed; they say that I don't drink anymore because I don't drink when they are awake anymore. They have been affected in the past and I regret. […] After being in the South, the judge gave me no choice but to go through a treatment centre in Oka, and I completed the six weeks. […] I was sober for a month after, and then started again. But being in a treatment woke me a lot, about how much danger I put my kids in. […] I would like to stop drinking; I am hurting myself now. When you drink, the next day it is the guilt, even if you didn't do anything, the hangover and the feeling… I don't want to feel guilty anymore. (#68)

When children grow up in a context of constant alcohol and drug abuse and family violence, they may end up thinking this is a normal way of life (#24, 47), and repeat the same pattern when the time comes to start their own families (#28, 66). Thus, the problem can easily be passed on from one generation to the next, as we saw in Jessica's story. As a matter of fact, some participants who experienced problems with alcohol abuse had grown up with alcoholic and violent parents (#45, 89, 95, 97): "The thing is that when you see it, when it is so much in the home, for a lot of people it is a way of life. If your parents are doing it, it must be OK, even though they don't like what is happening. But because it is so there, they start doing it." (#21)

A woman talked about the bad effect of alcohol consumption on her relationship with her boyfriend, recalling that she had grown up with parents who used to drink and fight at home. For a long time, she did not want to have a spouse, believing that all marital relations were confrontational. Indeed, experiences during childhood shape our visions of life:

> My parents used to drink and fight a lot when I was young. […] From my parents, growing up, I saw them drunk and fighting. I didn't want to have it in my own life.

> That is why I didn't want to have a partner. […] I thought it is easier for women to be alone, and I wanted to be like that. […] My relationship with my boyfriend was not stable at the beginning, and alcohol was involved at the time and I didn't like it. We used to fight a lot. […] But I have no regret anymore, because I have my son. I am proud to have him in my life. (#59)

Other women shared their fear of Inuk men, particularly fear of the violence they impose on women, in addition to their alcohol problem:

> When I was growing up, I watched my uncle and family members being very violent toward their wives. I have seen my mom be abused by an Inuk man. So that made me fear to be with an Inuk man. Although I dream about it; I see good Inuit men, they go hunting, they have boats, skidoos, they come back with animals, they provide for you. That to me is so beautiful, but I fear the person, I fear to date an Inuk man, I am afraid to be put smaller. (#25)

According to an elder who was working as a counselor, people need to recognize that they can choose to stop repeating the pattern: "Even though your family has done a lot of horrible stuff, it is their problems, it is not you. On the opposite, a lot of people who come from alcoholic family think that they have to drink too" (#21). A woman in her sixties noted that some children who have experienced abuse of alcohol and violence at home, as she had, likewise wish they will never drink alcohol. Indeed, several young women had refused to replicate their parents' model and, consequently, did not drink at all or did so moderately (#9, 15, 24, 35, 36, 47, 59, 69, 92). Nevertheless, there are many ways to become dependent on alcohol, and just as many reasons. A lot of people end up with this problem:

> I think that part of [addiction is due to] education, part of it is in the home; how you drink. And part of it is just when you take that first drink and it goes on. You become an alcoholic. For me, when I was a kid, I never wanted to be a drinker, because we saw our parents drinking and fighting and it was not fun. I think every child says: "never am I going to do that". But when you are a teenager, you start to think it is fun. You try it, and then you get addicted. (#66)

Since alcohol abuse is widespread among Nunavimmiut, their relationship with alcohol deserves to be discussed.

### The relationship with alcohol and how to cope

Back to the past

In most societies, abusive consumption of alcohol can sometimes be seen as an age-related behaviour; in adolescence, people try out a lot of things, often in excess.[75] Fortunately, with age comes maturity and responsibility, and most people reduce their consumption so that it no longer interferes with their daily social life and ability to work. If

[75] There is neurobiological research that explains the risky behaviour, bad decisions, and impulsiveness of adolescence. In humans, the cause seems to be the late development of the prefrontal lobe (associated with cognitive control and emotion management), coupled with over-activation of the limbic system (associated with evaluation of incentives and emotional information) in adolescence (Casey *et al*: 2008). Together with alcohol abuse and impaired driving, among other risky behaviours, this neurobiological model could also help us to understand the prevalence of suicide in Nunavimmiut teenagers.

they continue to drink to excess, addiction is diagnosed and it usually hides other personal and social problems. In the case of Aboriginal people, the problem is often approached differently because of the prevalence of overconsumption among adults, and the accompanying violence and crime. The inability of Aboriginals to tolerate alcohol has long been given as an explanation, but this explanation does little to shed light on solutions to the problem. We cannot clarify everything here, but we will try to put forward the participants' thoughts and opinions about the relationship that the Inuit have with alcohol.

First, some interviews focused on overconsumption of alcohol and drugs, and the aggressive behaviour that these substances induce in youth (#10, 33, 43, 51). As the following woman mentioned, some were of the opinion that young Inuit must be taught how to use alcohol: "It is the teenagers who don't know how to drink and don't understand that drinking and driving is not good. We have to inform and educate our young ones that it is not the way to live. Just drinking and drinking, it is not life" (#68).

Among young Inuit who develop an unhealthy relationship with alcohol, many of them still maintain it in adulthood. A woman stated there are a lot of people of her age, i.e., the fifties, who started to drink alcohol during their adolescence and who are still heavy drinkers (#66). She is now observing the same pattern among younger generations. As we mentioned earlier, alcohol abuse may become a normal way of life when you grow up in an environment where almost everyone drinks. At the same time, in her opinion, many people who are struggling with addiction to alcohol became addicted from the very first sip, with the result that they cannot drink only one or two drinks at a time. The problem is thus innate:

> If you don't have a problem with drinking, and you can have one or two drinks, that is fine. But if you start to have a problem, drinking more than whatever, maybe you have to think about what you are doing. But when you are an addict, it is very hard to just say: "no, I am not going to do it." Some of us were almost born with this addiction problem, so when you have your first drink, it is like… It is not that you have to drink like 20 million beers every single day, but when you drink we have to drink more than one or two. (#66)

According to some women, very few Inuit can drink without going crazy and without swallowing everything they have on hand (#92, 96), and this is the difference from White people: "The difference between the White culture and the Inuit culture; the Inuit tend to, I know it, I have seen it, to drink everything once they got the alcohol. They could drink and drink until they pass out. I have seen that too much, it is not good. There is no casual drinking" (#16). Of course, there are people who can drink moderately, and they need to choose who they drink with, as two women in their twenties said:

> When I was a child, my mom was an alcoholic. […] I don't think my mom passed it to me; I am not a hard drinker. I don't drink every day; once every weekend, but it doesn't jeopardize my relationships. I don't drink on weekdays; it is just during weekends, with friends, socializing. […] I choose whose friends I drink with, not people who go crazy when they drink. Some people think that when you have a few beers, you don't have a filter, they think it is the time to let everything out, not being happy; just be mad. They have no control; they drink as much as they can; as long as you have alcohol in front of you, you have to finish it. I don't hang out with those drinkers. (#9)

> I drink sometimes when I need to, but I cannot get to the point where I lose my head like everyone else here. I don't even know how they are able to do that. […] There is very few who are able to drink without losing their head. A lot of my friends are addicted to alcohol. They can't grow up; they get every opportunity to not be themselves, to get their head into drugs or alcohol or anything else they would do. Let's say they have a job, and anytime they get money, they spend all of it on alcohol. (#15)

The difficulty many Inuit have drinking moderately, and without showing aggressiveness or anger and losing inhibition,[76] is attributed by some to the fact that alcohol is relatively new in Inuit society:

> Alcohol put a big impact on you. It didn't come here a long time ago. When people started to drink, it had a big impact on them. Inuit never used to drink before Whites came. […] You have to know how to handle alcohol if you start drinking, but there are not many people who are able to do that, because it was introduced as "OK you can drink this and you get drunk, and that is how it is going to be." (#92)

Some like to recall that because Inuit ancestors had a healthy lifestyle without alcohol, Inuit today should live without it. Elderly and younger Inuit describe the new way of life in one big community and in large and crowded households as a source of tension and violence (#50, 57, 102, 103). Today, even parents and leaders are into alcohol and violence, so that the whole community no longer has any models and guidance (#27):

> Violence; it is way more today. There are even more killings, more murders this time because of alcohol and drugs. Also because there is no good leaders, because back then they had good leaders. When there was a dispute or problem, even the parents used to talk to their kids. But these days, alcohol took everybody, so there is no leader. […] The mayor or the leaders, when they are involved with drinking in town, it affects the town because people lose their trust. (#56)

According to an elder from Kuujjuaraapik, the solution would be to teach kids and teenagers the old way of life on the land to make them discover how life can be without alcohol. While in most communities teachers and elders are used to organizing such activities for students once in a while, some participants suggested these activities should happen more frequently:

> Teenagers are drinking more today, and I would like them to be taken out of the community for camping or hunting, to show them it is OK to live without alcohol and make them know how to live outside town. […] At school, we used to hear that teachers are taking out camping teenagers at a certain grade for spring, for about a week, but we never hear that anymore. (#84)

Of course, the elders' perception of alcohol is often distinctive from the perception of younger generations, who are more accepting of alcohol as a part of life. With them it is more reasonable to work on a better relationship with alcohol than to wish for its disappearance (#85). Whether we are talking about indigenous or Western people, heavy alcohol consumption is often a way for someone to handle personal problems. As we can

[76] While control of emotions, and especially anger, is important to Inuit (Briggs 1970; Fienup-Riordan 2005; Kingston 2008), alcohol consumption has the effect of releasing this usual inhibition.

see in the interviews, among Inuit excessive alcohol consumption is directly related to a series of traumas through which they passed in the last century and which have affected everyone. Moreover, these traumas, which accompanied a radical change in lifestyle, occurred at a time when alcohol became accessible more frequently and more regularly. According to some participants, when Inuit saw their sled dogs slaughtered and their kids sent off to residential schools, where many of them were molested and sexually abused, alcohol became a way to escape reality and to medicate oneself (#21, 29, 59, 63). This is where it started, and that is how it perpetuated itself through generations of abuse and violence.

For men, much of their pain and frustration came with the loss of their dogs, which were their means to travel and hunt, and thus to provide for their family. Losing their dogs meant losing their value and pride. Here is the thought of an elder and adult on alcohol consumption among men:

> Nowadays people say, "He is drunk, he is fighting, he is in trouble." Now I understand why, because in that there was also the dog slaughter. Because the dogs were killed, there was alcohol; they were taking alcohol. That is why there is violence. No wonder this man is angry and sad and he drinks alcohol, because of what he went through, because he is hurt inside. […] After that dog slaughter, there was no more motivation to go hunting. It has affected everybody. And there was alcohol available at the same time. (#33)

> Alcohol is the cause of so much violence, and men are very angry and it goes back to generations. It is a learned behaviour. If you look at the Inuit history, Inuit men's pride was taken away from them, with the dog slaughter and the residential school. Men cared for their families by going hunting by dog team; they had no way to provide for their family anymore. […] Then, people came and took their kids to residential school, and men had no way of protecting them, of fighting back. They lost their pride and that has been passed down unfortunately. (#28)

When alcohol is used as a way to medicate oneself, the need to drink becomes a disease in itself, and that is why it is so hard to quit, as an elder who worked as a counselor explained:

> When they have their story, some of them try to forget, they self-medicate with alcohol and drugs to forget what happened when they were going to school. […] We would just like to shake everybody, but as a frontline worker you have to be patient; you can't solve everything. They have to first recognize "yes, I have a problem". Sometimes they don't realize how much hurt they are, because they keep medicating. First it numbs the pain, but then the body gets addicted. Even though they are so tired of the addiction, because the body is so addicted and it is all out there. (#21)

The suffering of those who experienced the sled dog slaughter and the residential schools, the suffering of grandparents and parents, has been passed on to younger generations through violence, alcohol abuse, suicide, and sexual abuse. Now, everyone carries a burden; everyone has his or her own family or personal drama, and many take refuge in alcohol. The death rate is high among young Inuit, as a result of accident, suicide, or murder, with the result that the death of a close friend or relative has also become a common cause for depression and alcoholism (#14, 40, 55, 62, 83, 96). With drinking, they

get to alleviate a little of the pain they have inside, often violently, because there is so much anger (#63, 70). The loss of inhibition often makes people disclose experiences of violence and sexual abuse (#68). Otherwise, as we will see later, most Inuit remain silent about their personal suffering, thus likewise helping to perpetuate violence.

Controlling access to alcohol

Given the relationship that the Inuit have with alcohol, various measures can be taken to try to limit abuse. These measures, which divide Inuit women, come in two opposite forms: either minimize access to alcohol or make it as freely available as everywhere else. Alcohol can be obtained by various means: by individuals ordering it in markets or bars and, less legally, by bootlegging. Opinions vary greatly on the effectiveness and legitimacy of the different measures of control, and each community votes for its own measures. In all communities except for Kuujjuaq and Kuujjuaraapik, alcohol is not sold; the only way to get it is to order. In most communities once again, there are limitations on ordering alcohol. Adults can order up to a maximum amount about every two weeks.[77] In Kuujjuaq and Kuujjuaraapik, bars are available, thus broadening access to alcohol. Since 2013 in Kuujjuaq, beer and wine have been sold in stores.[78]

Although many women agreed with limits on the amount and frequency of alcohol orders as a way to lessen abuse, and even wished for stronger restrictions (#14, 28, 36, 71, 83, 84, 87, 90), others pointed out that the more restrictions there are, the more bootlegging there will be. Indeed, in all communities, bootleggers resell alcohol illegally at a very high price, so that more money is spent on alcohol. Being able to order is thus essential to limiting bootlegging (#22): "If we put more restriction on alcohol, it would be more expensive and the effects would be worse" (#85).

The following women, like others (#5, 16, 46 63), thought reselling is the real problem, especially because it enables anybody, even minors, to buy alcohol. So there should be more controls to counter it, such as airport seizures and searches, because people who travel bring back alcohol and other substances illegally:

> We would need more drug busting and alcohol seizure. It is the bootlegging that causes the real problems. It is not the alcohol ordering, it is people who sell to people who are not capable of consuming alcohol. They are now selling illegal drugs and alcohol to young teenagers. (#46)

> There should be more security and check-up at the airport to prevent alcohol and drug abuse and violence, in every airport, like in Montreal. […] People order every two weeks, but a lot comes by airplane. (#51)

Since people can order alcohol only every two weeks, the restrictions have the effect of motivating people to order and drink as much alcohol as they can at one time in order to

[77] It appears that every municipality has a list ("black list") of people who, because of reprehensible actions they have committed under the influence of alcohol, are not allowed to place an order.

[78] On March 2, 2015 in Nunatsiaq News, Rogers reported that after two years of retail beer and wine sales in Kuujjuaq "the impact on community peace does not appear to be that great, and alcohol-fueled crime is down a little in Nunavik's largest community" (Rogers 2015a).

get high. Because everyone orders at the same time and tends to drink all they have in a day or two, this creates a cycle of abuse and violence in the community, as we talked about earlier in relation to domestic violence. Referring to the very popular little bottle of strong alcohol (named "miki" – "small" in Inuktitut – or "Mickey"), a woman believed that the limitation creates craziness:

> In small communities like here, we have limits on order of alcohol. Those are very big problems here. […] The council here is trying to control the community or their needs, and people turn to bootleggers or dealers… Because that little *miki* cost $100, and we try to drink quickly before it goes out, and we want to get high. If we had no limitation, it would be more stable, I think too. Because when people move, or when they go for vacation to another town where there is a bar, they are OK, because there is a lot. And when you are here, we try to finish quickly. That is a lot of peoples' opinion, (#85)

Consequently, a solution could be greater freedom to order alcohol. Many thought it normal and legitimate for Inuit to have the same access to alcohol as any other Canadian. It is thus interesting to look at the case of Puvirnituq, where the community members voted for abolition of all restrictions on personal ordering of alcohol. While two women thought the scrapping of regulation had changed nothing (#75, 76), another observed that people ordered less strong alcohol and more beer, and that they drank less avidly (#68). But most of the Puvirniturmiut we interviewed complained about a rise in abuse, accidents, and violence in town, especially among teenagers (#67, 68, 69, 73, 74, 78). Because alcohol had become available to people who formerly had no right to order it, more people were now drinking, even during the day (#78, 84):

> When there was the limitation, it was OK. But nowadays, they can order unlimited, so the problem is bigger than before. More people are drinking. Even people who couldn't order before, they can now. (#77)

> I don't like the new regulation, because it is worse now. My son and her daughter never used to order before, but they can order now and they are more drinking. This is why my son went to detention, because he always breaks his conditions concerning alcohol. (#74)

Yet one can find encouragement in the hope that things will become quieter after a period of adjustment during which the Inuit should become accustomed to having alcohol continuously available (#81). We can make comparisons with communities where alcohol is available in a bar. According to a woman from Kuujjuaraapik, the fact that her community has long had a bar makes the problem of abuse less severe because people "don't go crazy for alcohol" (#85).[79]

The issue of having a bar in town was raised several times. It appears that many women, young and old alike, believe that having a bar in a community can help to reduce the adverse impacts of alcohol overconsumption. Indeed, it is better for people to drink in a place reserved for consumption instead of partying at home and disturbing other residents, such as children (#91). In addition, the amount of alcohol ingested is controlled: a bartender can serve a limited amount at a time and refuse to serve a drink to someone who

[79] An elder and an adult from the same village thought a bar also has the advantage of reducing sniffing of drugs, as some people do in other villages (#85, 90).

is too intoxicated (#62, 84). Moreover, a bar helps to counter bootlegging and thus limits the amount of money spent on alcohol (#92). A woman from Tasiujaq, where people voted for more restrictions on ordering alcohol (#51), even wished for a bar in her community: "There should be bar or lounge in Tasiujaq, because that way they won't order all the time, because ordering cost so much. They have to order a certain amount too, even though if they are not to drink everything. I don't think that people will drink more with a bar, if they have doormen" (#40).

Finally, some women said they felt safer when they drank in a bar than at a house party (#78, 91): "I go to the bar. It is the only place I go to drink. I don't like to be involved in house parties. I don't feel safe. [...] I feel safe at the bar because there is security there" (#65). Yet some thought alcohol abuse is a bigger problem in Kuujjuaq because of its bars (#11, 63). As we said in the first chapter, an alternative to a bar would be a time and place in the community where people can party away from children (#105).

On another note, in order to limit the amount of alcohol that enters communities when the time comes to order, the people of Tasiujaq have come up with a way to control the money available to buy alcohol. An elder explained that the two main employers of the community decided to pay their employees on different days, so there would be less money in their pockets at any one time. Thinking about consumption by youth, the municipality also hired a night watchman to take them home at night. It seems that the best solutions are often local initiatives:

> NV's [Northern village, i.e., municipalities] and KSB's [Kativik School Board] paydays were on the same day. Because anybody has money, they have more money to order beer. They started to realize how it was affecting the community. So they talked about it and they changed it. That has helped a lot. That is how alcohol is lessened. Even the students were affected. Now they got better. And there is a night watchman now; it is new. He goes around town and takes the teenagers home. The NV hires him. There will also be problems, but they can be diminished. They can try to do things. (#33)

<u>Education about alcohol and treatment of alcoholism</u>

However many or however few laws and restrictions there are on alcohol consumption, Nunavik communities will not necessarily change their relationship with it or change their ways of drinking excessively. Consequently, to fight alcoholism, some participants wanted to focus more on prevention, education—particularly among youth (#85), and healing of Nunavimmiut:

> Alcohol is so easy to get, it is easier and faster than anything else. The solution is not to put restriction. Inuit have this body problem, they are different from *Qallunaat*. Physically, they lack something that can tell them when it is enough, to know when they have to stop drinking. They need to find a way to cure from alcoholism. They have to relearn what is alcohol. (#96)

Many Inuit would need to be educated about the consequences of their actions when they drink too much: "The problem is not the lack of restrictions, but the fact that people here don't understand the consequences, what it does to your body and your mind. We need to learn more about the consequences of our actions" (#47). Some prevention workshops are already being held in the communities; they are usually organized by

wellness workers or the KSB, at the clinic or at school (#7, 16, 44, 46, 47, 68, 68). Unfortunately, it is not so easy to convey the information (#44), and people who need it most often fail to show up (#16). Moreover, several participants thought there were not enough of these workshops. They would like more prevention workshops in their communities about the impact of alcohol abuse (#4, 7, 21, 46, 54, 68, 85).

In most communities, elders, and sometimes other people, offer advice and try to educate young people about alcohol through local radio (#51). Once again, those who most need their advice are not necessarily the ones who are listening or open to learning. Thus, people need to show more initiative in getting help from others. This woman recognized that she had long ignored the advice of elders, until she realized they were a great help:

> That's what I loved: having a drink, forgetting about what happened. But now I understand that alcohol is not a medicine, it is making me worse in a lot of ways. That is what I finally figured out. And for elders, they have been saying that, and I avoided that knowledge. I didn't want to hear them or understand them, but now I know that they were trying to help us. Because I went through, now I know. I know they are trying their best to help others to understand. (#59)

For people who are struggling with alcohol addiction and want to take a step towards change, they need more than advice over the radio. They need support and counseling that will allow them to get to the source of their addiction. Generally, there are various ways to find such help: through Alcoholics Anonymous (AA); through social workers or a psychologist; or through rehabilitation programs. In southern Canada, AA groups are present almost everywhere and are well organized, so they can sustain people in need on a permanent and continual basis. There are some AA groups in Nunavik, but they are pretty unstable and seem to be rather randomly organized. Occurrence of group meetings depends on the presence of a person who has the necessary skills and experience and who is motivated enough to organize and facilitate meetings. As well, alcoholics have to be willing to come and attend (#66).

But for it to work, you also need effective communication of information and a facilitator with a good reputation—conditions that are rarely met in such small communities. Information about these groups is also difficult to track down; some women living in the same community could not agree on whether or not an AA group was active in their community. In Kangiqsualujjuaq, women said meetings were not frequent enough (#14) and had to be made more visible and attractive to men (#15). Only one survey participant was really involved in AA, and she was in a Montreal group. It had helped her a lot to get out of her suffering, and she now wished to help AA groups up North to become stronger (#103).

Whether through AA groups or through rehabilitation, most women believed it important to have programs to help alcoholics, and preferably to make them available in each community (#47, 51, 73, 74, 79, 89). Indeed, it is hard for parents to move down South, or to Kuujjuaq (the Isuarsivik Centre), and leave their family in order to get rehabilitation (#73). About the Isuarsivik Centre,[80] a woman who worked as a counselor thought the program was not adapted to Inuit, because it had been created for First Nations people

[80] See George (2009) for more information about the Isuarsivik Centre.

(#30). She herself preferred to go to Oka. Many women who went to Oka end up staying in Montreal; about a third of all the women who lived in Montreal had gone to the treatment centre (#95, 96, 97, 100, 101, 108). Women who went for rehabilitation more often than not did so under court order. It was often the only way to take back custody of their children (#14, 38, 45 68, 74, 95). For some women, the treatment enabled them to realize the cause of their drinking problem: their deep wounds, such as the loss of a sibling (#96), or a sexual assault (#103).

Unfortunately, many women did not complete the treatment program, or started to drink again after being sober (#24, 38, 66, 68, 97, 100, 101). Of course, it was the same for men, and some people had even gone in and out many times. In fact, a person needed to be ready and willing to get help to stop drinking:

> Usually when there is rehab, there is a whole bunch of people and when they get out of rehab, they drop off; they go back to drinking. Then they are afraid to come back. It is a non-judgmental place, but when you fall off, that is what you feel, so you don't go. It is not AA or the rehab that is going to cure you and make you stop drinking. It is you who has to decide, and it is a hard concept for a lot of people, not only for Inuit. Even in the South, you have rehab and people go in and out, it is the way it goes. […] I went to rehab in Montreal. I helped myself. Luckily, I could somehow, I don't know how I did, but I did. […] We have a rehab centre in Kuujjuaq: Isuarsivik. There are some people who succeed to quit after going to rehab here. Some have to do it many times to get it. Some people just drink or drug forever. And there are some people like me who don't want to be like it, and make sure they don't go to a place they can fall down. Some just drink less and they are careful and can manage very well. But it is a big problem, because there are few people who make it a priority. (#66)

In Montreal, people often first go into hospital for detoxification, and then have to apply for the rehabilitation program, with the help of a frontline worker. According to one Inuk who lived in Montreal and worked as a community worker, it is too long and complicated for a person to get into the centre, so many give up:

> When people want treatment, we try our best to help them, but it is very hard to get them into a centre right away. We go get them to hospital for detox, that is no problem, but to the treatment, we have to fill the form, sometimes it takes two-three months for them to go in, so they give up. If it was very fast, it would be more successful. But because of time and waiting, we lose them. [81]

Because there are usually fewer therapists up North, and because most people do not like to leave their community for too long, it must be even harder for people living in Nunavik to go to rehab. However, some participants believed that treating a personal alcohol problem is not enough. A real healing treatment, offered in Nunavik by and for Inuit, must involve the whole family: "What Inuit really need, to overcome alcoholism and violence, is family treatment up North. We have to treat the whole family, not only alcohol" (#96). As we talked earlier, alcohol abuse is only the tip of the iceberg: it is a widespread symptom of deep trauma and malaise related to the history of colonization. Consequently, we cannot just dwell on consumption itself. Healing of Inuit requires going back to Inuit

[81] The interpreter of the interview effectuated in July 2013 shared this information.

history and disclosing the sources of trauma. When a 20-year-old girl heard from an elder's mouth the history of her parents and grandparents, her eyes were opened to the current state of her father and Nunavimmiut in general, and their way of consuming alcohol. She understood her father's pain and anger, and believed that everyone should hear this story, for a better understanding of their people and for healing:

> I think that alcohol abuse up North is related to the history. […] I don't know the whole story of my dad, but I know that he was adopted and when he was young, the RCMP came and shot their dogs. That was their transportation, dogs were part of the family, the only way to get food. That time it was hard for people who lost their dogs and I have learned that they just turned to drinking, from that point. They had too much anger; it was too hard for their ancestors to go through the pain of losing their dogs. […] An elder recently told the story why my dad turned to alcohol, and then it goes on to the younger generation, because they don't share their story, the reason why alcohol became a really big problem. Before I met this elder from Quaqtaq, I really thought alcohol has been always in Nunavik for long, but I recently learned that it is only from the forties and the fifties that it became a big problem. And after learning the reason why, I believe there is a way to help prevent that. We can be lucky to still have our elders. Before they go with their story of the past, they could share with all of the youth, so they can understand. It was eye-opening for me. (#47)

Retelling and disclosure would lead to a stronger identity and a stronger community, where people help each other, as many women wished for. And there is hope for change among younger generations:

> Today, a better community will be everybody communicating and helping each other, counseling each other. […] Thirties people are learning that alcohol is not helping, because, in the past, there was no alcohol. It was introduced and everybody started to take it. But now they start to think about helping each other. […] Youth are learning from watching their parents; they realize that they don't need to go into violence, to get mad, just because there is no drugs or alcohol. They started to think. (#33)

We will return in Chapter 5 to the subject of the healing and counseling that Inuit need in their communities in order to learn from their past and get cured.

**Conjugal violence: living in fear and silence**

As we have already seen in the section on alcohol abuse, a lot of women are struggling with abuse at the hands of their partner. It is such a big issue that it has come to be normal, as candidly stressed by this woman: "Yes, violence is a problem for a lot of kids and women…women with their boyfriend. It is normal to see a girl with a black eye: 'Oh, Bobby bigger. She should be back with him next week.' It is so normal to see it when it shouldn't be" (#24). Besides the influence of alcohol in many cases, aggressiveness is rooted in past and present distress and reflects anger, inability to communicate one's pain and frustrations other than through violence, and lack of trust in one's partner. As with men, most women unfortunately remain silent about suffering and abuse (#53, 55, 59, 62, 64). As an Inuk stated: "A lot of women suffer from violence in their home and their relationship.

Sadly, they are and they suffer in silence, and fear" (#63).[82] According to the following participant, this could be due both to fear of the abuser (#55, 59, 108) and to mistrust of other people:

> Some women who experience violent and sexual abuse talk about that, some press charges, some might not want to talk because they are scared of the guy, who can get back to them. So people can talk to someone they trust, but most women have trust issues; they don't trust anyone. (#7)

Most victims never press charges against their abusers. Due to the small size of the communities, they may fear retaliation both from their assailant and from his family (#62). Women's silence could also be understood as a way to take responsibility for their abuse. They thus endure their suffering in the hope that things will eventually improve. At the same time, many men are convinced that they are never wrong and that their wives just have to be obedient, so the fault is put on the woman and/or on alcohol (#21). This clearly shows a denial in men of their own problems, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. A woman shared her thoughts, based on her experience:

> The violent man is always right; so he feels it is me who is the problem, who should be the one trying to do something about why I make him so angry. The man blames the woman usually; it is her fault. I have to be obedient and do everything he asks; otherwise it is serious trouble for her. So I felt "I did something wrong, that is why he is angry at me. So I have to try harder, be better." And the more we try, the harder it is to please the man. Because the men don't see that they are wrong, they don't realize they need help too. (#63)

In addition to not laying charges, a woman will often stay with a violent man because she feels she cannot make it without his support, especially financially (#88). The following Inuk is used to having women coming to her home when they flee husbands who have become violent. Unlike many of her fellow women, she does not fear men and confronts them. This is probably why battered women seek refuge in her home. To her, her life has clearly improved since she got divorced:

> They come to me, running, saying "my husband is behind, lock the door". But I don't, I confront the guy and sometimes I fight with the guy. […] I tell [the women] not to be scared, they are in my house, he is not going to get in, that they are all right in my house. […] Some press charges, some don't. They just go back to them the next day or after a few hours. […] What they have been telling me is "I can't really break up with him because he is my means of support, he helps me a lot". […] I think my life is better since I divorced. I can do whatever I want. (#54)

It is really hard to get out of an abusive relationship, partly because Inuit still attach great importance to the sacred bond of marriage. It is still frowned upon and uncommon to divorce. At the same time, as in Western society, fewer people are marrying among younger generations, as we will discuss in Chapter 5.

Eventually, the consequences of persistent, long-term verbal, physical, emotional, and sexual violence is destruction of the victim's self-esteem, which is particularly low among

[82] Sometimes, violence against women also comes from their children (#10, 28, 29).

Inuit women (#21, 29, 51, 65). Many of them live in fear and intimidation, having to flee again and again, but always coming back, and repeating the same pattern (#103):

> Some women live a life of fear and intimidation, and violence, and sexual abuse by their own spouse. And it is very hard because the villages are small; most of them have nowhere to go even if they want to leave. And most of them have small children. (#63)

The next story gives a good example of such a repeated pattern of abuse. The woman had been single for more than ten years and now felt much better:

> I had been in a very abusive relationship with the father of my first kids, and I had to take off. I moved to Montreal for 13 years with my kids. […] The second year I was in Montreal, I met another guy…, who was very…I didn't know he was abusive because he wasn't drinking. He was a Cree guy. I have a scar; he was trying to kill me and scarred me for the rest of my life, but thank God I have my face. […] The police took him; I had my lesson right there. I was not in a relationship for a while. And then again, I met another French guy, he looked very nice, and at the end I found out that he was coke-addicted. I left him. I left every man who has a problem. I didn't want to live…because my father was abusive verbally. He was drinking heavily, cheating on my mother. But until I was in danger, I would not leave a man. […] After 1994, I became single again and then I met somebody again after two years. We have a daughter. He looked like a very nice guy, but he had a very attitude…very controlled emotional abusive. […] We broke up because he wanted to party, meet any women, he was abusive. I kicked him out. He found another woman; they broke up again. I was hurt. […] Again, my daughter became fatherless. But my faith says they are not fatherless; I have faith in God. That gives me the strength to go on as a single mom. (#65)

According to a woman who worked for a local justice committee and another one who worked as a counselor, Inuit women need to learn that they are not to be blamed for assaults on them and that it is not normal to be assaulted, and thus men have to take responsibility for their actions:

> Women need to know that it is not their fault that they are being beaten, that they didn't cause it. Because that is the negative feedback that women get today. That is how they are keeping the cycle going, why they are keeping quiet, because they feel so guilty, because everyone is putting them down for it. And it is not true, we need to stop saying that it is their fault. People need to take responsibility for their own actions. Women don't take other men's fists and make them hit them; they don't make their legs kick them in their face. They don't force them to make their voice come up and yell at them. It is logic. Men have to say "I hit the women, I did that, no one made me do that." And the women have to say "I yell at the husband, yes, but I didn't make him hit me, I didn't put his hand to my face." That is the message I want people to learn. (#64)

> When we are in the problematic situation, we never see it as a problem and we think it is normal. It is not OK. That is what women need to know; it is not normal to live with violence. They have the right to be respected. Nobody deserves violence. (#17)

Women also need hope: hope that they can make their lives better, that there are people out there who can help. From her own experience, a woman who got divorced from her abusive husband thought women need the support of their families and of people who will not judge them:

> There is a way out from your abusive situation. Because we are so much in the abuse, we forget that there might be a way out. They live so much chaos. So we need someone to say "hey, you don't have to live like that." The way is very hard, but there is a way out. You don't have to live being afraid day by day. There is life past abuse where you can live free and enjoy life. And there are people who can help you make it out of your abusive situation. […] The support I really found is people who don't judge me; for those people that judged me it was very hard. But for those who supported and understood me…The support of the family is very important, especially our children. If we want to change our situation, the best is to let our children know. (#63)

Although the matter should be handled within the family, women also need places and people outside the family to support them. Unfortunately, a lot of women do not know where to go when in need. Many participants believed such resources are lacking, as we shall see in the next chapters (#34, 41, 62, 65). We will now turn our attention to the issue of sexual abuse and suicide among youth.

**Narrative: How social issues stem from one another**

*Helena[83] is 51 years old. Her parents passed away when she was in high school. From then on, she dropped out and started to drink a lot. Without a diploma, she feels she can't do anything else than work as a janitor; at least, she has a job.*

*She had two daughters with her first boyfriend. They split up when she realized he was cheating on her. Then, she moved to other towns, and went into many different abusive relationships. She had kids from different places. She lost some of them through Youth Protection. Once, her older daughter told the social worker she had been sexually abused by Helena's boyfriend, a White man. Helena didn't want to believe it, so she protected her boyfriend instead of her daughter. Her daughter was sent to her biological father and, later on, she went to a group home[84] because of family troubles and gas sniffing. She then committed suicide.*

*Helena started to drink a lot because of feelings of guilt; she even put her life in danger, hurting herself. After a while, she decided to stop fleeing and look for help. She went to rehabilitation. Altogether, she went to rehab five or six times. It helped her, but she has been going through the same story over and over for many years. She just quit alcohol again last year, after her husband came back from jail. She has been living with him for many years now, and they had a son together. Still, it has been another really unhealthy relationship.*

*Her husband was in jail for 18 months because he forces her to have sex. Helena used to be afraid of him, so she agreed most of the time, while crying. He would then apologize but do it again afterward. She had to go to the women's shelter in Kuujjuaq a few times. She finally got help from a friend, went to social workers and police, and charged him. It was very hard because it took almost a year before he was incarcerated.*

[83] Fictitious name.

[84] The group home is a centre in Kuujjuaq and Puvirnituq where young offenders are sent and live with educators.

*Her husband hasn't changed since he got back from jail, except that he has quit alcohol. He is particularly aggressive and sexually abusive when he is out of drugs, because he is really addicted. She does not trust him so much; she does not like to leave the children alone with him at home when he has no drugs. So she usually stays home.*

*Even though both Helena and her husband work, they often run out of food. The problem is that she spends a lot of money on drugs, for her husband. She does it because he is always asking her, and she is simply used to it. She would rather buy drugs and have everybody happy at home. However, she recently decided to save some money, without letting her husband know. She told him: "You want it, you get it yourself." She is not afraid of him anymore.*

*Sometimes, she would like to shake him, wake him up, and tell him: "You are not getting any younger, and your kids are getting older, come on! Look at your sons, your beautiful kids. Don't mistreat them!" She feels her son is really affected by the relationship between his parents, and by the fact that his father is not responding much to his needs. She thinks her husband was too spoiled as a kid. He is used to having someone do everything for him and he wants everything his way. As well, like too many Inuit men, he is very much a control freak and jealous. She has to tell him all the time what she is doing, where she is going, and what time she is coming back. She can see anger in him, and she would like him to look for help, but he is too stubborn. She thinks there are not enough resources for men in town.*

*Helena has wanted to divorce for a long time. She doesn't know where to go or where to stay. There is no house for her; that is why she stays with him. She is still struggling, but she feels a little bit better. She has to, for her children. She has recently lost a second daughter because of illness; she was 28 years old and had four kids.*

**Sexual abuse of children**

Helena's story is another good example of the impact of alcohol and drug addiction on conjugal and family life. Also, it shows that younger and older women alike can be victims of sexual assault, and the aggressors are often living in the same house as their victims. Too often, victims fall into alcohol abuse and depression, and when they fail to find the support they need, they commit suicide. Because of its prevalence, participants made a point of mentioning sexual abuse as a very important issue in Nunavik. According to many, there are more such assaults in modern Inuit society than there were during traditional times. The main causes may be overcrowded houses (#25, 28, 57, 102), alcohol and drugs (#67, 71, 72, 77, 78, 90), and traumas due to colonization (#50, 71). In addition, children and teenagers are reportedly the victims more often than not.

The traumas of colonization include sexual assault, which seems to have been particularly recurrent during the time of the residential schools, not only in the schools, but also in the communities. At least some of the assailants were White people (#21): "From the old days, the offenders were teachers or White workers that came up. Usually there will be one or two men that are doing the perpetrating in the small village" (#63). Several adults had been abused as children, whether by a White person or by a relative (#13, 20, 32, 82).

Participants recognized that these abuses still strongly affect people today, and that they are accountable for the perpetuation, over generations, of child abuse, alcoholism, and violence. One of the reasons is that victims will not talk, at least not for years (#7, 45, 62, 86, 89, 100, 105):

> People don't tell about it. But, years later, when they are suffering so much from addiction, drugs or alcohol, or abuse from their spouse, then they would talk about it. There is a lot that has not been told, a lot of pain and suffering. […] One man sexually abused gives to the next generation, because people don't tell. So the perpetrator just goes on and on, until something happens to stop him. (#63)

In the past, even when a child revealed that an assault had happened, it rarely led to a legal process. Moreover, talking about sexual assaults was very taboo (#63), and for this reason even people who were made aware of abuse remained silent (#2, 89). Finally, implementation of the justice system in Nunavik is still very recent and poorly known. An elder who had been abused as a child was scared to talk to her parents because she felt that they were too strict to talk about that topic (#71). A 40-year-old woman who had been sexually abused as a child did not tell her mother, but told her sisters, who did nothing to help her. Today, she can talk about it more freely, because she has forgiven her assailants:

> When I was young, I was sexually abused by my neighbour. I didn't want to tell my mother, because I thought my mother would not want to listen, to believe it. I told my sisters, but they did nothing; they told nobody. They have ignored me since, and I ignored them too, until they came to me for help. […] Today, after time, I talk about it and I forgave my neighbour, because this experience has made me learn. (#2)

Children may still stay quiet about sexual abuse because they are shy and feel guilty (#21): "Those kids don't talk about it, they have nobody. They are scared. When a child is being touched in a way like that, he is automatically assuming it is her fault. […] The molester will make her feel like it is normal, but tell her to not tell anybody" (#25). Obviously, victims who do not denounce are more at risk of being abused again and will likely turn to alcohol and suicide, especially if they live with alcoholic parents who do not support them as much as is needed (#40, 62, 63, 71).[85]

Nevertheless, some participants who were abused as children denounced their abusers right away (#14, 82, 91), as we saw in Helena's story. But many women will disclose they had been assaulted years later, when they cannot keep the secret anymore and need to forgive (#20, 32, 71, 105). The first woman below had been abused many times by a relative. She never denounced him, but recently confronted him and told her mother. The second woman had been haunted by memories of her assault for years; she felt much better after talking and forgiving her abuser:

> I was living in the same house as him when I was young. I confronted him six years ago. […] I feel better now. I finally spoke to my mother a few years ago; she didn't

[85] An elder who worked as a counselor also thought experiences of sexual assault had caused promiscuity among the youth and unstable relationships: "Boys and girls have difficulty to stay with one person. If they have been sexually abused as a child, they get promiscuous; they are looking for somebody's love. They find it in a wrong way, and then they find themselves in a bad relationship" (#21).

> know about it…she felt hurt. […] I never talked back then; I was shy and embarrassed. (#20)

> I was abused when I was very young and I never talked about that until I became crazy because of flashbacks, when I was 37. […] I used to have flashbacks before, but I always tried to forget about that. But suddenly I had to tell it, and I told my sister. I was kind of exploding. I feel lighter now, but I still have flashbacks. (#32)

Because of the silence, for a long time most assailants did not face justice (#63). Now, more people are revealing sexual abuse, maybe because the context is more propitious (#32, 68, 71): "Nowadays, sexual abuse is less; before it was a lot. Before, they were not saying anything, because they were ashamed of what happen to them and they felt shy to talk to other people. But nowadays, they are talking more" (#54). A participant explained that in Puvirnituq there were a lot of predators at one time, and people started to talk and charge them only in 1994, after a 12-year-old boy first came forward (#68). In addition, when governments and Inuit associations began to talk about the residential school legacy, many Inuit started to denounce their assailants (#21, 105).

Nonetheless, several factors still discourage reporting of sexual abuse. First, there is still a feeling of guilt and a lack of trust in others, a fear that the confidant will repeat what has been said in trust. Second, as we will see in the next chapter, legal procedures are demanding and very long (#103, 105). Third, some people are afraid of their abusers, or afraid of creating social problems by revealing the assaults:

> Young people today can more easily talk about their problems, but they don't. They only talk when it is the right moment, when they cannot keep it for them anymore. Sometimes, it takes lot of time. […] The problem is that when you talk to someone, the person will repeat it; there are a lot of gossips going around. […] People don't want to denounce others, because it could create problems for families. (#2)

> Some people would rather not say anything, because they are too afraid to break up the family, or maybe the perpetrator is too powerful or too well known. (#63)

Sexual abuse prevention programs now make it easier for children to denounce (#32). One pilot project, Good Touch Bad Touch, was developed by a team of professionals and Inuit women and started in 2012 in Quaqtaq. It is a joint initiative by the NRBHSS, the Kativik Regional Police Force (KRPF), and the KSB. Elementary school pupils are taught, in Inuktitut, what sexual abuse means and what to do if molested (#21). Moreover, because most Inuit are not used to talking about sex, and because the justice system is poorly known among them, the program teaches both adults and children. They learn about their rights and the laws. According to a woman involved in the project, it has helped a lot of people, although some are still reluctant to speak up because it is a very sensitive issue:

> The program is helping the kids and they like the lesson, and the teachers too. But not everyone is happy about this. […] Maybe it is overwhelming for some people, because sexual abuse is very high up here. So it means a lot of people can't handle being involved. […] People are starting to give more disclosures, because they realize there is somewhere they can bring their sexual abuse incident. […] All the victims were kids when it happened, most of them. There are some adults, of course, but it is kids and teenagers mostly. But they never talked. We were not though disclosing on this thing, so we didn't know how. When having the meetings and training, we realize that us, Inuit, we never talk about sex. At least it is in shame, or embarrassment. […] We come

> from homes where we never talked about anything sexual. […] We don't encourage people to press charges, but we tell them that these are sexual abuses, offenses, and we tell them that according to the law there is no time limit if you have been sexually abused; you can charge the person. And this is information we didn't know before. In fact, we didn't know it had anything to do with the law, to be sexually abused. So people are starting to really get this information in them. (#63)

The program has not been introduced in every community yet, but hopefully everyone will eventually benefit. In addition, many participants thought there should be more resources not only for victims of sexual assaults (#44, 49, 85), but also for offenders, who must have been victims too at one point of their lives and thus need help (#22).

**Suicide: teenage distress**

Suicide is unfortunately a consequence of all the other social disasters that we have discussed, and it has similarly become really frequent in Nunavik during the last few years or decades. It particularly strikes teenagers and young adults—sadly, we now even see children taking their own lives—who carry the weight of their suffering alone.[86] Indeed, participants thought people commit suicide because they do not talk about their problems, be they related to sexual abuse, violence, or relationship breakup for instance (#9, 20, 40, 44, 62, 99).

In high school, a 27-year-old girl lost many friends, one after another, through suicide.[87] She suffered a lot, and many thought she would be next. She was lucky because some concerned people at her school helped her out of her torpor and she recovered. In her opinion, although suicidal people need to open up to someone else, most of the time they trust no one and do not know where to turn for help (#44, 48, 62). Some also end their days under the influence of alcohol (#46, 82):[88]

> Young people commit suicide because they don't know where to look for help, whom to talk to. They keep their problems to themselves and it keeps building and building. Something happened when they were young and they don't have anybody to talk to. This is the reason. […] Just talking to something about what you are going through helps a lot, the fact of letting it out. […] I think that it is a lack of trust too; they are afraid that if they talk to someone, the person will spread it out after. […] They don't know how to cope with their problems. Some turn to drugs and alcohol; that doesn't help. Sometimes they commit suicide when they are drunk, like blackout drunken. Or they become violent towards each other. […] It is just the fact that they don't talk. (#9)

Teenagers are very vulnerable to depression because at their age they feel their problems will never end: "As young people, we think that the problem we are going through is not going to be over. The person who commits suicide, he thinks it is the end of the world.

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[86] The prevalence of suicide in Nunavik has been increasing since 1980 and particularly affects men from 15 to 24 years old, while everywhere else in Canada the suicide rate increases with age (Bujold: 2006: 181).

[87] Two other participants talked about serial suicides (#28, 67). In her dissertation, Bujold analyzed the case of "suicides en grappes" in Nunavik, referring to the role assigned to spirits (*Ibid*.: 2006: 154).

[88] Bujold also reports that suicide is often perpetrated under the influence of alcohol or drugs. These substances distort judgment and promote excessive behaviour (*Ibid*.: 163, 184).

They have problems in their life and they think that it is not going to pass, even though it will" (#27).[89] Interestingly, a woman who considered suicide as a teenager now uses Facebook to reach adolescents and give them advice:

> Teenagers under 19 are the worst. They think they are going through a lot in those years, even thinking they are suicidal. […] I want them to talk. Those years are the most difficult for anybody I think. In my experience, 13 to 19 were the worst for me. I had no respect, no respect for my parents or anybody. I think they gave me so much to do, or from bad experience that they showed me. But they were trying their best to discipline me. That, I figured it at age 19. […] We should try to make teenagers understand that they will understand when they turn 19 or 20. They go on Facebook a lot, those who have problems at home. I try to message them or encourage them: "this will pass." (#59)

Among teenagers, the cause of suicide is quite often related to complications in their conjugal relationships (#20, 83).[90] For instance, one participant talked about a friend who committed suicide after her boyfriend, then in jail, had threatened her with death (#19).

Naturally, suicide can result when depression grows worse and worse because of an inability to find a way out. Fortunately, some women manage on their own to recover from depression, and others find the help they need (#92). A participant who lived in Montreal lost her sister a few years ago; she had AIDS for a long time and committed suicide. The participant then became depressed and tried to kill herself:

> I tried to hang myself, but the rope broke. […] I couldn't handle it, there were too many things in my head. I was stressed out in my body, hurt inside. Crying was not good anymore, so I tried to hang myself just as my sister did. But when I was like that, I realized I love myself, I won't hurt myself. My mother; I thought about my mother. […] Maybe I was too heavy, maybe God told me not to do that. I thought God was not ready to take me home; I am not finished on this planet. So I stopped trying to kill myself. (#97)

Another example: when she was 17 a woman suffered from depression after her boyfriend and other friends committed suicide. She started to take a lot of hard drugs and tried to kill herself. She was hospitalized and met a psychologist in Kuujjuaq. From then on, she started seeing him and it helped her very much. Now, she felt blessed, because not every community has a psychologist and because psychologists always come and go, so it is hard to develop trust (#62). Indeed, as we will discuss more in the next chapter, it is not so easy in the North to get access to effective therapy or counseling (#28, 62). A woman who

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[89] According to Bujold, youth nowadays are the ones most vulnerable to psychological distress, which is part of a socio-cultural, political, and economic alienation and is a delayed effect of the breakup of a society's equilibrium (Bujold 2006: 128, 348-358; Durkheim 1995 [1987]). Youth suffer from social indeterminacy; they face a lack of opportunities and hope for their future, be it employment prospects, limited incomes, availability of housing, and instability in personal relationships (Bujold 2006: 376). Growing up in dysfunctional families marked by violence and abuse, where the parental bond is broken, a lot of them isolate themselves and become addicts to flee their pain (ibid: 328-41, 365).

[90] On her dissertation about suicide in Nunavik, Bujold also reports that today's youth are ill-equipped when facing new kinds of emotional conflict, and they thus find breakup very hard (Bujold 2006: 368-78). Kral also proposes that the introduction of the romantic conception of love, together with greater independence of teenagers in modern life are responsible for a serious malaise among the youth (Kral 2009: 59). Two participants in our study talked about suicides among homosexual people (#21, 61).

had just lost a friend mentioned that even though her friend was looking for help at the CLSC, she did not receive the support she needed:

> My friend who died, she was in depression and she tried committing suicide. She went to the hospital in Kuujjuaq, but they just gave her pills; they didn't even ask her anything. […] There is not enough prevention for suicide; they really need tools, workshops, to get together, support each other; give advice. Even though you don't know the person who commits suicide, it hurts a lot, it touches everyone and it is a big issue. (#40)

This woman pointed out there should be more resources to prevent suicide in Nunavik, and she was not the only one with this opinion (#21, 25, 40, 46, 62). People should work more together and be more informed about suicide in order to recognize distress in someone. Some Inuit who had lost a friend or a relative felt useless because they did not see anything coming and therefore could not act to prevent the tragedy. Conversely, others saw the signals, but did not know what to do at all (#95):

> I have been wondering for long how to prevent suicide. It is hard, because usually it is the last person you think who has thought of suicide who does it, the most silent one, the person who looks happy on the outside. It is hard to tell. Most of the time we don't know who needs help. (#9)

According to a participant, although Inuit do need more trained specialists[91] to prevent suicide, these interventions also need to be culturally adapted, and not simply reduced to giving pills:

> If I go into suicide, resources in our communities are so limited. There are not enough professionals that are trained on applied suicide intervention skills. […] In the South, when you go to a social worker or doctor and you talk about suicide and you want help, they give you a prescription, they will send you to a psychologist for evaluation, because this is the way of doing it. But when it comes to Aboriginal people it is a whole different set, we have our culture, our lifestyle. (#25)

At the same time, some participants thought there are already enough suicide prevention programs (#22, 28, 44, 61, 65, 67). An elder mentioned that some people have talked about suicide over the FM radio but was not so sure of the effectiveness of their words (#27).

**Summary**

In this chapter, we have drawn a portrait of key social issues among the Inuit from the point of view of women's experiences. Violence, alcohol and drug abuse, rape, and suicide are the main problems that make countless victims among those who have trouble finding a way out. More often than not, silence reigns and perpetuates the problems. We will see in the next two chapters, the public, professional, legal, and community resources that are currently available in Nunavik. We will talk about their usefulness as well as their limitations and about ideas for improvement.

[91] The word "specialist" does not necessarily refer to university-trained professionals. It means any community worker who has the ability and skills to deal with the problem of suicide.

1. Among the participants who provided information about consumption, 74% smoked cigarettes, 45% drank alcohol moderately, 39% were recovered alcoholics, and 10% currently drank alcohol to excess. Among the participants who were questioned about experiences of violence, rape, and suicide, 74% were experiencing or had experienced violence at home, 46% were experiencing or had experienced sexual assaults, and 75% had tried to commit suicide or lost a friend or a close relative through suicide.
2. Alcohol abuse among Nunavimmiut was pointed out as a major concern because of the violence and crime that it causes. Indeed, there is a high prevalence in Nunavik of motor vehicle accidents, suicides, accidental deaths, and murders due to alcohol abuse. Just like addiction to cannabis, alcohol consumption is a source of idleness, food insecurity, child neglect, and family violence. It is also seen as a major source of conflict among couples nowadays.
3. Participants were particularly concerned about family violence, i.e., any kind of violence (verbal, physical, economic, sexual, emotional, etc.) that occurs at home and that affects the whole family. Both men and women may be guilty of violence, but the victims are more often women. In all cases, children are affected and often taken away from their parents by the DYP.
4. For several reasons, many women in Nunavik stay in abusive conjugal relationships. They might take the blame for their own abuse, be afraid of not being able to cope with life in terms of money and parenting without a man, feel the pressure of judgment from their entourage, or have no other house to live in. Abusive relationships become a pattern for many women and are sometimes passed on to their children.
5. Participants were concerned about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) because of the impact on the behaviour and learning abilities of children and thought there should be more prevention among young women and more resources to help parents struggling with FASD-affected children.
6. While no market sells alcohol in Nunavik, except in Kuujjuaq, most Northern communities impose certain limitations on individual ordering of alcohol. The participants did not all agree on the legitimacy and effectiveness of such restrictions. Many were of the opinion that they help to increase bootlegging, which is the real problem, and a cycle of violence. Some thought having a bar could help to protect children and women from abuse at home and make people crave less for alcohol.
7. According to participants, the high rate of alcohol abuse and violence among Nunavimmiut is a consequence of the many traumas they experienced during the last century because of colonization. The dog slaughter, residential schools, and sexual abuse are the most serious traumas that still affect Inuit today. Ever since these events, the pain and anger of one generation has been passed on to the next, through abuses of all kinds.
8. Because alcohol was introduced into Inuit communities at the same time as these traumas, it has been used as a way to avoid reality. This may explain why so many Inuit cannot drink moderately and without losing their inhibitions and becoming

aggressive. Despite a few rehabilitation programs (in Kuujjuaq and Oka mainly) where Inuit can heal from their addiction, too many keep struggling with alcohol addiction. These programs should be made more available and adapted to Inuit culture.

9. Although many Inuit suffered from sexual abuse at the time of the residential schools, participants were concerned that it is still happening today and that children and teenagers are more often than not the victims. Fortunately, disclosure of sexual abuse is becoming more common, due to sex education and education about the justice system.

The silence surrounding family violence and sexual abuse greatly helps to perpetuate these social evils and the incidence of suicide, especially among teenagers who are the ones most vulnerable to depression and distress. The silence is partly due to lack of trust in others, feelings of guilt, low self-esteem, fear of reprisal, judgment by others, and ignorance of the laws. Many participants wanted to see more resources and prevention programs not only for victims of abuse and depression, but also for perpetrators.

# CHAPTER 4. SOCIAL SERVICES AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM IN NUNAVIK

> *Today, the way there are social services, they just take our kids. Inuit are mad at social services because there is no explanation about why they are taking our kids. If there were better explanation and better communication, there would be less argument. […]* Qallunaat *don't know how Inuit think, there are two different ways of thinking, and so that is why there is conflict. […] They don't know how Inuit feel. […]* Qallunaat *think that they know better, but we have our own culture too. It would be better if they try to know Inuit culture too.* (#33)

## Introduction

The occurrence and perpetuation of social issues in Inuit society must be understood in light of the historical, social, and cultural background. Bopp *et al*. (2003) and Montminy and Brassard (2012) find an explanation in contributing factors within the community: family antecedents; attitude of leaders toward crimes; absence of consequences for crimes; ability to ensure order and justice and services provided; community awareness of crimes; and, finally, the spiritual climate. These factors, together with family pressure, the prejudices and taboos surrounding conjugal violence, and the socio-economic conditions, greatly influence the decisions by victims either to remain silent or to denounce crimes and abuses. We talked earlier about the limiting context of housing shortage and economic struggle. In this chapter we will focus on the legal system and the public services available to meet various kinds of Inuit needs. The next chapter will then be devoted to the social, family and community context that can help to perpetuate or resolve social issues.

The Canadian federal government started to establish health and social services in Nunavik around the mid-twentieth century to meet the needs of Inuit who were being settled in year-round communities. With the signing of the JBNQA in 1975, Inuit took over the delivery of services by creating various organizations and institutions, such as the Kativik Regional Government (KRG) and the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS). Replacing the Sûreté du Québec, the Kativik Regional Police Force (KRPF) was created in 1996 as a public security department of the KRG. Acting within the Canadian legal system and pursuant to the Police Act, its mission "is to maintain peace, order and public security; to prevent and repress crime and offences under the law and municipal by-laws in the Kativik Region; as well as to apprehend offenders" (KRG 2014a).

Obviously, creation of Inuit organizations has not always resulted in significant representation of Inuit among the administrators and providers of these public bodies. The reason is of course not only a lack of academic and vocational training among Inuit, but also

a lack of interest in positions, such as community worker, DYP officer, and police officer, that are personally and socially very demanding.[92]

Whenever people experience family violence or sexual abuse, or when they struggle with alcohol addiction, lack of money, or depression, they can turn to social services, the DYP, and the police as the main frontline resources locally available. If necessary, their case may then be taken up by Canada's justice system. Since not every community has a judge, an itinerant court travels around Nunavik.[93] Offenders may be sentenced to time in jail in the southern part of the province or get court conditions that allow them to stay at home in Nunavik.

> The Legal, Social-Judicial and Municipal Management Department of the KRG offers legal services that work independently of Justice Canada. It supervises the Crime Victims Assistance Centre (Sapumijiit), which "has the mandate to help the victims of crime by accompanying them through the judicial process." Its agents have the role to "explain rights and legal remedies and refer clients to specialized resources."[94] The department is also in charge of providing reintegration services through Inuit community reintegration officers, who are supervised by probation officers who work for Justice Canada[95] (KRG 2014b). They must ensure that offenders comply with their probation conditions, a somewhat complicated requirement at times because agents are not always in the community. That is why the police often perform this duty.[96]

Those are some of the organizations and institutions put in place by governments to ensure security in Northern communities and to support people in trouble. In our study, we were more interested in how Nunavimmiut experienced and perceived these bodies than in their mere official existence. Interviews showed first that most people are not well informed about the justice system and social services, and second that the latter are not as effective as they seek to be, largely because of lack of resources and sensitivity to Inuit culture. Limited funding and the geographical isolation of Nunavik communities make it difficult to hire and retain sufficient workers, as is the situation with teachers. Furthermore, the principles and values underlying the law, the services, and the programs sometimes conflict with those of Inuit culture, as we shall see later. To illustrate the situation, the introductory quote says a lot about the climate between Inuit and White workers, and how wary Inuit can be of social services and DYP officers.

In this chapter, women's words have been enlightening. Although public services and the justice system were established up North to help Inuit, they have also undermined traditional authority and leadership, and helped to deprive Inuit of their ability to cope

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[92] Refer to page 57 of this report.

[93] According to Catherine Fortier, the director of Legal Services in Kujjuaq, about eight judges travel all over Nunavik. Also, a court clerk, a lawyer, and an attorney general work at the Kuujjuaq courthouse.

[94] There were five agents for all of Nunavik in the winter of 2013 and all of them were Inuit women. Their offices are in Kuujjuaq, Salluit, Kuujjuaraapik, and Inukjuak (Catherine Fortier).

[95] Community reintegration officers are based in Kuujjuaq, Puvirnituq, Inukjuak, and Salluit (KRG 2014b).

[96] Ms. Fortier and a policeman interviewed in Kangiqsualujjuaq gave us this information.

with social issues and conflicts and move forward as a society. Despite the good intentions behind institutions and workers, public services and the justice system are a continuation of a colonial history with ethnocentric and paternalistic foundations. Feeling lack of recognition and respect, Inuit can hardly see a solution to their problems through the eyes of those who say they want to help. This necessarily leads us to the issue of empowerment and Inuit governance, which is touched on only briefly in this report.

**Narrative: How sexual abuse of a child leads to years of struggle**

*Mina*[97] *is 42 years old and moved to Montreal with her daughter many years ago because there was too much suffering in her hometown. Her father passed away when she was three years old and her mother remarried. From 13 to 19 years of age, her mother's husband sexually abused Mina. Because he used to threaten to kill her and her family, Mina was afraid to denounce him. Furthermore, in the eyes of everyone outside her home, he was a good father. She never told anyone, until she got pregnant by him, at the age of 16. She thought her mother would help her and get rid of him; especially because he was physically violent with her mother and her siblings, but her mother tended to take his side against her. Mina wanted to abort, but her mother prevented her, saying that it was not the will of God and that we have to obey. For fear of God, Mina changed her mind, and another family adopted the baby.*

*Mina finally pressed charges against her stepfather when she was 17. It took three years to get a court decision, and to have him incarcerated for good. She had to denounce him repeatedly, and go to court eight times before the judge handed down a decision. During that time, she was either living with her assailant, and still abused, or sent to different foster families, in other communities, and separated from her siblings. She finally felt free when he went to jail. But her mother never turned the page; she is still with him. Mina doesn't mind anymore, but she thinks they are now hiding behind the Bible, thinking that God is going to forgive them.*

*Mina didn't finish high school and got pregnant again at the age of 20, by an Inuk boyfriend. He was abusive to her, and her mother adopted the baby. The third baby was born when she turned 23; she then married a* Qallunaaq. *Because the doctor told her husband he had very few chances of fathering a child, her husband was sure he was not the father. He didn't trust her and was violent towards her. When she was born, the baby girl turned out to look very much like Mina's husband, who died three years later in an accident.*

*Mina met her second husband in Montreal, while she was there for training. They lived there together, with her daughter, until she left him because he was not financially supportive. She is still going through the divorce proceedings. She had a boyfriend for a while, but she broke up when he started to ask too many questions about her activities, and because he was controlling. She is happy to be single and living with her daughter. Moving down South was a way to protect her daughter from violence and abuse. She didn't want her to grow up in the same context that she had grown up in.*

[97] Fictitious name.

*Mina used to drink a lot but she takes better care of herself now. She has belonged to Alcoholics Anonymous for two and a half years and does not drink anymore. She realized she had been drinking since she was 19 because her mother didn't protect her from her stepfather. Mina hit the bottom and is now on an upswing. She has also quit cannabis and cigarettes, and feels way healthier. Now, she wishes to help other people in trouble because she knows what it is like. As a hobby and therapy, she likes to get with friends and do sewing.*

**The justice system**

Police services and attitude

Mina's story exemplifies sexual abuse within a family and the way the justice system works in Nunavik. Participants raised many points about the second point. At least 12 women (#21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30, 36, 70, 96, 102, 103) thought the legal system is not effective at all, although opinions varied on the usefulness of police and jail. On the one hand, many Inuit thought police work makes their town safer and helps people in a lot of situations (#40, 47, 51, 54, 69, 90). Here is the thought of an elder who admitted that police are useful nowadays because violence has increased since the old days: "I think that the police help a lot, that the community is safer because of them, they make the community more stable. […] It is a good thing to have police today. Back then, people were afraid to ask for help. But there was hardly any violence and abuse" (#90).

Some participants called for or went to the police in situations where they faced drunken and violent people at home (#38, 51, 46, 47, 58, 72). Whenever this happened, police sometimes moved the children to another house (usually a relative's) for their safety and communicated with the DYP (#38, 43). Because most police officers are non-Inuit and do not speak Inuktitut, many people cannot go to them for help without being accompanied by a trustworthy person who can translate (#51, 90).

On the other hand, some participants complained about the police officers' bad attitude towards Inuit, which provokes more violence (#40, 89), and about the fact that some of them arrest people without taking the time to understand the situation:

> We don't have problems with police. But I heard some rumours saying that they are not doing their job properly; they should work harder, get every detail instead of taking people right away. They should do more patrolling around town; I feel secure when I see a police officer. (#51)

Some Inuit feel judgmental behaviour and misunderstanding from police officers, as they do with other White officials. These people are often very young and know little about Inuit culture:

> They are just looking for trouble. […] Those new cops are big shots and all they want is to bring you in jail, and it is like that all over Nunavik. And they are so young; like 20. They don't know what Nunavik and Inuit are. Even tough people go crazy for one night and later on they forgive each other, it doesn't mean it will be like that forever. Some White people think that they know everything about Inuit, but they don't even try to understand. They just judge. (#40)

A woman who had a very unpleasant episode with two policemen thought the relationship between Inuit and police would improve if the latter were kinder to Inuit:

> Police sometimes think that Inuit can do nothing, but I know my rights. […] It was very bad what they did. After that, my grandkid was following a policewoman in the store and telling her he doesn't like her. I had to explain the situation. […] I am not against police; they make mistakes sometimes. I guess they need our support too, but they don't need to be tough. People would be nicer with them. (#89)

The inaction of the police in some situations was also singled out. Sometimes, abused women went to them for help, but they seemed to do nothing (#6). One must understand that in the North, where police have limited resources and means, and where justice takes months, even years, to be dispensed, there is often no choice but to let the culprit go as quickly as he is arrested (#103). A woman told the story of another woman who denounced her boyfriend because he had been molesting her children. The man was arrested for a day only, and then he retaliated:

> She went to social services and told them that she found out that her boyfriend was molesting her two-year-old child, touching him improperly. So the social services call the police, the police arrested him, let him out the next day. He went back to the house and beat her so bad, and then he got arrested and sent to jail. This is why women don't trust resources and services that are available. Why will they put themselves at risk? (#28)

An Inuk woman 42 years of age, who worked as a policewoman, talked about the same problem and added that, although many want to see more Inuit in the police, to provide at least more service in Inuktitut (#24), it is clearly not so easy for them to work as police officers in small communities where everyone knows everyone. Indeed, there is a high likelihood of having to intervene in a family member's house or having to arrest a friend:

> It is a really hard job because everybody would say: "I am your cousin, your friend, I grew up with you. They would not think about why I am taking them. They hated me because I won't let them go because I know them. I would say: "I am doing my job". […] I didn't like to see stuff like sexual abuse victim, little girl, or violence towards a wife or kids. And I couldn't really do anything; I would arrest the guy or lady, but I would keep them for a day, not even, because the justice system up North is not good. They would need to care of the stuff like they do down South. […] Once a person charged a guy and they were being told they were going in court in half a year. But they postponed it to another six months because of the bad weather. It took at the end three years to go to court; they had forgotten it. […] Everything about the court system up North is long. If the judge says: "I don't know how to take care of this case, so I would come back next court session." (#103)

<u>Reluctance to denounce a relative or a spouse; the slow system</u>[98]

Going to the police during a crisis is one thing, but taking appropriate legal action is another.[99] In fact, as we saw in the previous chapter, there are many reasons for not laying

[98] See, in a report published in 2014, the findings and recommendations of the Barreau du Québec (2014) about justice in the North. The findings and recommendations support the ones in this report.

criminal charges against one's assailant. Although many participants had denounced an abusive spouse (#11, 14, 35, 55, 74, 95, 97, 101, 107) and thought it important to lay charges in such a situation (#16, 22, 100), several Inuit had not for fear of reprisals or fear of creating family problems (#2, 7, 54, 88, 99, 100):[100] "People are super insecure to press charges; you just feel that someone is going to hate you, because it is someone's father or brother. […] They don't want to go to police; they don't want to go to any White person. But I am proud of some kids who do that" (#62).

The risks of retaliation are a strong deterrent when legal procedures are long and when the victim has no choice but to continue living with her assailant until a sentence is handed down. This is not to mention the fact that many victims lose their case and feel all alone (#101, 104). Judgment deadlines are so hard to schedule that the day of the hearing often takes a long time before arriving; the court is overloaded with files, sometimes one has to cancel flights due to bad weather or defer judgment because the accused or the complainant is missing, among other reasons.[101] So there is a lot of postponing: "It takes forever to go to court; it could take up to one or two years. They keep postponing, because of the weather…or they have too many files, or not enough evidence. It is the system…" (#22). According to the following woman who lives in Montreal, the slowness of the system has the effect of limiting and controlling the empowerment of people:

> From what I heard, [the legal system] is so slow up North; they just postpone all the time. Some people are getting old without really having a job because they have a record pending. I hate hearing that; it is a form of oppression. I think it is a way for the government to keep my people from advancing. (#102)

Moreover, the tardiness of the legal proceedings, which is an important cause of the inefficiency of the system in the North (#21, 46), prevents Inuit from resolving their differences, and reaching an agreement. This situation can greatly affect their social and mental wellbeing, and even contributes to suicide. When the day of the hearing finally comes, the victim and the perpetrator have often already moved on, forgiven each other, and even forgotten, but they are now forced back into a painful past (#77).

> One thing that is really hard with the justice system is the fact that the cases are really long to process because the court comes only once a month and there are a lot of postponements. So even if the person has been over the problem, if the victim and the offender have forgiven each other, they still have to get into it with the court, way after. So it is not easy for them to turn the page. Inuit people forgive and don't go back, the justice system doesn't help regarding that. Inuit have their own way to work on difficulties. (#70)

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[99] A policeman in Kangiqsualujjuaq and a social worker in Tasiujaq, Anouk Laroque, shared their feeling that their work in Nunavik is only putting out fires, more often than not caused by conjugal violence, without being able to provide long-term solutions. Police officers usually encourage the victims to lay charges against their assailants, but the victims often change their minds a few days after.

[100] For example, a participant recounted a story about a woman who did not want to denounce the man who sexually abused her because he was the only person to take care of his elderly parent (#2).

[101] Catherine Fortier, the director of Legal Services for the Legal Department of the KRG in Kuujjuaq, confirmed how this postponing causes people to withdraw their lawsuits, particularly when they have to stay with their abusers. She also pointed out that the defendant meets her lawyer only a few minutes before the proceedings, and so has little time to prepare.

> Since they have to wait two years to have to process done, they still have to stay with the criminal, so they don't press charges, and the criminals win their case. The victim cannot do anything. *Qallunaat* don't understand how it is complicated to press charges. […] We call court people "people who make you mad and then leave". […] It can take two years before to go to court after there are charges, and nobody follows up with the criminals, so they think it is OK. We need someone to call them, to remind them the procedures on process and support them. (#96)

Ignorance, and being left on one's own

As we have just seen, another problem with the legal system is lack of knowledge about procedures, laws, and rights (#23, 26, 63, 70, 96), and lack of follow-up of offenders, before court and after court, and during and after incarceration (#26, 45, 54, 56, 96). Many people avoid using the system because they know nothing about it. Also, lawbreakers who do not know the laws may violate them unknowingly. In court, they are also handicapped by lack of knowledge of their rights and the English language. While they should ask for translation, some are too embarrassed to do so, and simply answer "yes" to any question from the judge (#70):

> When people are going in front of the law, they don't know the law. So they don't know that they are offending even if they are. And it becomes a big case because they don't think that…for example if a police officer comes and takes them away for violence, they don't realize that everything they say can be used against them, that they can be breaking the law by howling something to the police officer or resisting arrest. All those things they do are now handled according to the law. So, when they make their first offense, they would be charged with multiple charges. (#63)

Another woman, 46 years of age, had to go through all the stages of legal proceedings, with Youth Court, due to her daughter's delinquent behaviour (#23). She was distraught to see the many flaws in the system. First, when the accused young people appeared at the court, five of them were missing, probably because they and their parents did not take the summons seriously or failed to understand. Her daughter was given conditions and a probation period of one year with community services. The mother expected that someone would follow up on her daughter's case, but no one did. She wondered what message was being sent to young people: "I had to try to correct my daughter's behaviour, but when the judicial system itself is also telling that what she has done is wrong, and gives consequences and they don't even follow up on that afterwards, what the hell kind of message is that giving to the young offenders?" (23).

Even though all kinds of professionals, services, and people (school counselor, nurses, psychologist, Youth Protection officer, Young Offenders agent, police, doctors, friends, and so on) were involved in her daughter's case, it was very difficult to find the support she needed.[102] She thought she finally managed to correct her daughter by dint of her own perseverance, and because she spoke good English. Both good and bad may happen in the system, in her opinion, and the major problem is miscommunication and lack of understanding on both sides: the Inuit and the law enforcement officials. First, Inuit are

[102] Another participant went through this situation. Her son was supposed to get counseling from social workers after his appearance in court, but he and his mother were left alone (#45).

not well enough informed and have misconceptions about the system, with the result that abuses occur. Second, the system does not try to adapt to Inuit culture (#26):

> I think [legal system] is effective to some extent. I think everybody is doing his job; but there is a lot of miscommunication and misunderstanding always along the way, between the people being served and the people giving the services. I think there is not enough information about how the services are supposed to work. I think a lot of blame takes place because there is a lot of misconception about the judicial system, about the criminal court system. […] There is not enough understanding or information on the part of the Inuit. At the same time, I witness not very much understanding from the other part either, not enough exposure to customs and culture on the part of the judicial system. (#23)

To return to the issue of follow-up, many participants seemed concerned that people find themselves alone once the legal proceedings have been completed, although they need counseling, both in jail and after, to prevent repeat offences (#36, 42, 72).[103] Inuit recognize that offenders are people who have been hurt in the past:

> When a person is involved in violence or something, he is taken by police, social services get involved, court gets involved, and when the court day has passed, when everything is done, they have no one to talk too, so they probably need counselors after, follow-up. That is why they usually go back to the same circle, because they are not being counseled. This is very hard for the person and for the families. (#56)

> When a child is molested, the offender should go to jail first, then send that person to counseling, help that person, because this person has also been molested in the past, when we have been colonized. (#25)

People returning from prison clearly need help to correct their violent behaviour and avoid returning from whence they came, especially because some may act vindictively (#54). There is thus a problem of rehabilitation to a normal way of life (#30):

> I really got mad in court once. I told the judge: "It is a circus, it is not justice." Because, when they don't have the entire story, they are so quick to put them in jail, but there is not help there. They learn more tricks; they get more hard drugs. Because when I was with Qajak, I used to go and visit the detention centre in the South, to counsel them. And when they come back from jail, there is nobody to help them. That is what Qajak was supposed to be doing, but right now they don't have a counselor. (#21)

The Qajak Men's Centre in Kuujjuaq was created for this purpose, but, as the participant said, it had no counselor at the moment.[104] The Makitautik Halfway House in Kangirsuk is run entirely by Inuit and has the same purpose.[105] From the interviews, it seems to work very well (#22). Inuit returning from jail have to be referred by a judge to a program that lasts between three and twelve months. However, it is not accessible to any

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[103] Inuit counselors used to go to jail down South to counsel Inuit offenders (#21, 22). As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there are probation officers in Nunavik, but they are overwhelmed and have to manage several villages at the same time.

[104] Another participant talked about Qajak as a men's network that used to give workshops about how to avoid ending up in jail. She thought currently not enough men are getting involved to organize such workshops (#48).

[105] See George 2011.

offender who has been accused of sexual or violent crimes, or who has a sentence of two years or more (George 2009; 2011).[106] The program helps offenders to develop good values and take control of their lives (#48). It is a good way to work with offenders and prevent repeat offences, but this centre is insufficient to meet current needs in Nunavik.

Imprisonment or community intervention: two different methods

About eight participants said they had been to prison (#58, 82, 87, 97, 98, 100, 101, 108).[107] Three women explained that their husband or boyfriend had pressed charges against them during a fight (#95, 98, 100). Nine currently had a son, a mother, a partner, or an ex-partner in jail (#10, 11, 38, 62, 74, 83, 86, 88, 107). Moreover, several knew people who were used to going back and forth to jail (#5, 35, 48, 49, 54, 55, 74, 85, 90, 91, 92). Most of the time, the offence was related to alcohol consumption and/or violence (#10, 11, 14, 24, 35, 46, 54, 55, 58, 74, 84, 88, 90, 96, 101, 107, 108).[108]

When we asked the participants if they thought spending time in jail has a good impact on criminals, they generally acknowledged that it helps a few of them to learn (#33, 38, 44, 49, 54, 84, 86), but that many others fail to change at all, reoffend (#11, 14, 24, 30, 36, 48, 64, 72, 91), and even commit worse offences (#55, 83). Some women thought offenders should stay longer in jail in order to be deterred from committing the same crime again (#55, 83). Moreover, they thought it could be more effective to have a detention centre in Nunavik (#33, 94).

Nonetheless, there is clearly tension between the Western way of imposing justice and the Inuit way of preventing and solving disputes.[109] Indeed, the legal system sometimes operates in contradiction with Inuit values, such as forgiveness or ostracism.[110] Moreover, the system confiscates the ability of Nunavimmiut to resolve their problems by themselves (#77). Many participants thought the elders should take back the role they used to play in this regard:

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[106] See also the Makitautik website (http://makitautikcrc.ca/page2.html).

[107] Six of them were living in Montreal. On the subject of incarceration of women, an elder thought that when Inuit women started to gain legal rights, they also started to get into trouble with men, this being due to a loss of Inuit culture (#77).

[108] According to an Inuk working for the KRPF (#63), Inuit women are mainly sent to jail for impaired driving (#70, 96, 101), and men for violence and sexual assault.

[109] For a discussion about social control and rules and their connection to notions of cosmic order among the Inuit of Nunavut, see Oosten and Laugrand (2002). The two authors stress the need to integrate Inuit, and particularly elders, and their knowledge (*Inuit qaujimajatuqangit)* into the Canadian court system, especially with respect to minor offences. They also point out the importance of reconciliation and integration of wrongdoers, instead of punishment, imprisonment, and isolation from the community, which have negative impacts on the community and the individual (Ibid.: 33-34). See also Hervé (2013), Pauktuutit (2006: 12) and Steenhoven (1962) about traditional methods of social control and social values among the Inuit, and Rouland (1979) about the difference between the Western justice system and the traditional ways of treating and punishing disobedient people.

[110] Social and physical ostracism is still used today against individuals who are considered a danger to others (Hervé 2013: 218, 219).

> In the past, the elders would decide what to do with social problems. I think that the elders have had their leadership taken away by the strangers, who don't listen to them. The legal system doesn't care about what the elders think. (#70)

> I am from the generation of the transition period, and I remember that if a man was cheating his wife, elders would meet him. They would meet with the troublemakers and stop them somehow. They would talk to them. They had no judge or jail system then. (#102)

Here we are faced with the issue of Inuit governance. With the introduction of new political and administrative institutions, based on Western political and societal structures, traditional structures have been weakened and the role of elders diminished.[111] According to an Inuk who worked as a counselor, the Inuit way would be to talk with people and work with them instead of sending them away (#24):

> There has to be more Inuit appropriated measures done; not the White man way, because it is not working. It has not been working for a long time. […] The Inuit way is to take them and to talk with them, make them understand what the situation is, to keep in contact with the elders, to mentor them. That was the Inuit way, but now the elders are put aside, because of all these departments. […] I encourage people to denounce offenders to the police, but they also need help. Because those offenders have been victims of somebody before and then they turn to crime. It is a learned behaviour, or they are maybe FASD [Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder], or sometimes they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. (#21)

The creation of local justice committees in Nunavik communities is an Inuit initiative that may meet this challenge (#96).[112] There are about ten committees in all of Nunavik, and each of them has about eight local Inuit, with a priority for appointment of elders. By means of volunteer work, committee members receive different kinds of training about mediation, justice, empowerment, and so on. As an alternative to police officers, social workers, and DYP officers, the committees aim to work out agreements between victims and offenders outside the legal procedures. However, once charges have been laid, the committees need court authorization to intervene and make recommendations, and they usually obtain it for petty offences only. They therefore offer offenders support and counseling at any stage of the justice process and work with other community workers (#64, 71). Of course the success of their work relies on the offenders' willingness to comply.

The general goal of the justice committees is to help people to take responsibility for their actions and their lives, and to empower them according to Inuit values, such as forgiveness (#64, 83). Wherever a committee has been formed, Inuit think highly of its work (#64, 70, 71, 83), and wherever no committee exists yet, like in Tasiujaq for instance, people wish to see one created (#32, 40, 41). Many participants felt that elders should talk with people returning from jail (#54, 56, 85). According to a woman who worked for the committees, people open up more easily to committee members than to White frontline

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[111] In fact, according to Hervé, although informal practices for social regulation in Inuit society are not recognized by the Canadian legal structure, these practices still exist. Elders continue to play an important role within their families and communities (Hervé 2013).

[112] The committees are funded by the Safer Communities Program (Ungaluk) administered by Makivik (Makivik 2014a).

workers (#64). Unfortunately, the program does not get enough funding, and the committees do not have for the time being much power and recognition from the legal system, partly because of the confidentiality of the service (#30, 42, 44, 64).

Nevertheless, this program helps to restore the Inuit way of dealing with disputes (#102), and it helps to make offenders feel involved and concerned about their community, instead of isolating them:

> People with problems should be more involved in the community, instead of sending them to jail. For a young offender, he could help people with hockey, carry the equipment… They are not scary; they are not going to beat up children. Make them feel that they are part of the community, instead of feeling that they are destroying the community. When we are more part of the community, you don't want to do bad stuff. […] Young offenders are just in their house, drinking alcohol, hiding from the world. Bring them to community events and get them involved in the community, with the children, and the elders. They are going to think more before they do something. […] Our system is so bad. We learn from the White people to do just discipline; put them in a cage, tie them up. In the Inuit culture, we would have to speak to an elder. He would have to go through the community, not to the judge; he doesn't know anything about our life. The community should decide. (#24)

The local justice committees are thus a good example of the tools the community can use to fight major social problems, and they should pave the way for other tools.

**Narrative: Between Montreal and the North; feeling alone as a mother and a girlfriend**

*Emily[113] grew up with very absent parents; her father was alcoholic and violent and went to jail many times, while her mother used to go and visit him there. So Emily and five of her siblings were raised by their older sister. Their fridge was empty pretty often, but their grandmother, living next door, always shared meat with them. When Emily was 12 years old, one of her older sisters committed suicide. Later on, she also lost a brother who was murdered.*

*She dropped out of high school when she was 15 and moved to her boyfriend's house, who was older than her. She also started to work full-time. She thinks she was stupid and really immature then. They were drinking and fighting a lot. Finally, she had enough and decided to flee to her sister's place in Montreal, without letting her boyfriend know. Afterward, she went back to Nunavik to finish high school through adult education. She then found a good job in a regional organization in Montreal.*

*Later on, when on vacation up North, she met an Inuk who became her new boyfriend. She stayed with him in his village for a while, and they adopted her sister's daughter. Unfortunately, their relationship was not good for the baby. They were always partying and fighting. She spent a night in jail once because she was too drunk and because he called the police after she hit him.*

[113] Fictitious name.

*Then, Emily managed to find help in the village and fled again to Montreal. Two years later, he joined her. She agreed to start again with him because she wanted her daughter to have a father, but it was a mistake. After another battle involving alcohol, she pressed charges against him. The judge said he was dangerous for the baby, and Emily had to choose between her boyfriend and her daughter. She made another mistake by choosing to help her boyfriend, and they went back up North. Strangers took care of her baby as foster parents.*

*While she was supporting him, she was watched by the DYP and had to go to rehabilitation. It was very hard because she felt so alone in Montreal, and because the DYP made her feel like a very bad mother. She felt totally controlled by them and helpless. She thinks Inuit women who are living in Montreal also need support when their babies fall into the hands of the justice system.*

*It took more than a year to get her baby back. But she is now happy because she has quit drugs and alcohol and her life is better. For the past year, she has had no more contact with her daughter's father. She is a single mother, and even though she is struggling to survive financially, she doesn't want to ask for any kind of support from him. She wants to preserve total control over her baby. She is still in Montreal, living in a studio apartment with her only child and working for an Inuit organization.*

*She travels up North sometimes, but she can't stay more than two weeks at a time. She won't move back there. Recently, she has been feeling depressed, probably because the loss of two of her siblings is still painful, and she has started to see a psychologist. She doesn't talk to her parents anymore. Her mother left her father, who remains an alcoholic and violent man.*

**Director of Youth Protection (DYP) and Social Services**

The DYP and social services are two different services offered in all Nunavik communities. While DYP officers act under the Youth Protection Act and the Youth Criminal Justice Act and, as law enforcement officials, have enforcement power, social workers offer consulting services[114] to individuals and families on a voluntary basis. Moreover, one service is for children and youth, and the other for adults. In practice, these authorities work closely together in Nunavik because of their physical and social proximity. Their offices are usually adjacent to one another,[115] they know each other well, they have to support each other in their respective duties, and they exchange professional information (#92, 99). As a result, many Inuit confuse the DYP with social services (#17, 40), and tend to be wary of both. For this reason, we present the participants' experiences with both authorities and their opinions of them in the same section. We must mention that in both

[114] Here are the goals of social workers according to the order of Quebec professions: "Assess social functioning, determine a treatment plan and ensure implementation, and support and restore a person's social functioning in reciprocity with the environment in order to promote the person's optimal development in interaction with the environment" (free translation, Ordre des professions du Québec 2014).

[115] The offices are most often located in the nursing station or at the hospital. While one participant thought social services should be in a separate building in order to preserve confidentiality (#73), others held the opposite opinion: the location is more conducive to confidentiality because it encourages people to use the services by creating the impression they are coming for health care (#92, 93).

offices some positions are reserved for Inuit workers in order, among other reasons, to ensure service in Inuktitut. It is really difficult to recruit and maintain Inuit workers for these positions, which stay vacant for a very long time in some villages.[116]

Trust in social workers, not a foregone conclusion

The topic of social services, such as the DYP, is sensitive and arouses some strong reactions and various opinions. Several participants thought the social workers help many people in different ways in their community (#1, 8, 23, 41, 58, 67, 83, 86). Social workers help people in terms of preparing a personal budget (#76, 82, 92), applying for a house (#61, 88), doing government paperwork,[117] dealing with mental illness, searching for a job, and in some cases providing food and diaper coupons (#2, 72, 88, 92).[118] Some people also use social services for counseling when they experience personal, family, or conjugal problems (#46, 48, 54, 56, 82, 83, 85, 92, 93), or when they are in mourning (#5, 20, 67, 83, 92). Social workers are particularly useful for those who want to talk to someone else than relatives or friends (#55, 59, 60, 70), and they refer their clients to a psychologist when they think it is required. The services of a psychologist are available in the South of the province, in Kuujjuaq, or approximately twice a year in each community (#28, 41, 55, 62, 81, 86, 87). Since social workers work hand in hand with the representatives of the law, they must also follow up on offenders and families whose children have been summoned to court (#1, 41, 45, 102). As we have seen previously, follow-up is not efficient everywhere, since some women feel alone after their child appears in court (#23, 45).

Whenever they had gone to social services, many of the survey participants were satisfied with the help they got, but others felt the services were useless because, apart from listening, the workers took no action to remedy the problem (#2, 13). For instance, an elder talked to the social workers once about her son who drank a lot of alcohol. She would have liked them to do something: "I went to the social workers once, to ask them to talk to my son, but they did nothing. […] Social workers are there to listen, but never take any action" (#90). In fact, the ability of social workers to act is certainly constrained by their very limited resources; just like police officers, they often merely put out fires.

For various reasons, many people never make use of social services. Although the services seem well known to people (#51, 92), the biggest obstacle to their effectiveness is lack of trust in social workers, whether they are White or Inuit (#2, 4, 6, 22, 99, 100). A lot of Inuit do not trust them because they are afraid that personal information will be passed on to other people (#44). They are also afraid of losing their children to the DYP if they talk about problems at home (#29, 38, 105). Indeed, social workers are known to remove children for placement in foster families (#33, 40).

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[116] According to Anouk Laroque, a social worker, this was the situation in Tasijuaq when we conducted the interviews.

[117] The issue of the language used by the provincial government to correspond with Inuit was raised several times. Because most Inuit cannot read French, they either never read the letters they receive or look for someone to read the letters for them, such as a social worker (Anouk. Laroque).

[118] The CLSC also hires family helpers who visit houses in order to help with housework and cooking. Elders are the biggest beneficiaries of this service, although many are not eligible because of a limited number of family helpers (#31, 32, 84, 85).

According to a woman, Inuit perceive and feel about public services the way they do because of their experiences during the time of the residential schools, when children were first removed from their families (#24):

> A lot doesn't trust social services here. They are afraid to go to the DYP if they need help with their children. They are afraid to go to these services, because they are afraid that their children are just going to be taken away from home. The whole residential school scenario scared a lot of people; they don't trust. (#28)

Thus, a trusting relationship is very important to Inuit, and any social worker, such as any counselor, has to earn the trust, all the more so because Inuit do not easily talk about their feelings (#21, 29, 92). Of course, trust is not so easy to achieve when staff turnover is high (#26, 28), and when the worker is closely related to the client. The following Inuk recently started to work as a community worker and, acknowledging the importance of confidentiality, believed that not being born in the community helped her to win the trust of people:

> It is better to not interfere with relatives. But for me, I am not originally from here; it might be easier to do my job because I don't know the whole history of the people, as my co-worker. People can talk to me more, because they know that I don't know what they have been through, so they don't have to repeat it over and over. And it just seems a lot more comfortable to talk to someone you don't know. [...] Talking to a complete stranger is easier because they won't judge you or spell out things like your family relatives do. [...] I think that when people come to social services, they trust the workers. Because people know that confidentiality is a good thing for us. And if we break their trust, they won't come anymore. We want them to continue to come. (#92)

Lack of trust and gossip are major issues among Inuit (#2, 3, 7, 9, 11, 12, 62, 70, 73, 86). Some participants had more trust in *Qallunaat*, others, in Inuit. Certain people trust White people more because they are outsiders to the community and less likely to gossip, and because it is easier to talk to someone you do not know (#5, 14, 28, 49, 55, 59, 67, 70, 73, 85, 105).[119] Some Inuit workers fail to gain trust or lose it because they report the words of their clients, because they have personal problems known to the community, or because people see them drink (#14, 62, 67, 70, 73, 85, 96). A 31-year-old woman who sometimes met with social workers to talk about family hardship preferred to say things in trust to a social worker more so than to relatives, who have certainly their own problems, and to a *Qallunaaq* social worker more so than to an Inuk one. Nonetheless, she thought a good worker from the community would be the best choice (#70).

Many concerns were also raised about the professionalism and attitude of *Qallunaat* social workers. Many Inuit felt judgmental behaviour and disrespect from them, and from all *Qallunaat* social workers in general (#39).[120] While some social workers clearly lack

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[119] Two participants mentioned that even though they trusted their relatives, they could not tell them everything about their problems because they did not want to hurt them (#59, 70). Others pointed out that many Inuit do not know whom to talk to when they need help (#2, 4).

[120] A 23-year-old Inuk was upset about *Qallunaat* who come up North to live their own experience and do it without even worrying about Inuit, and without even looking at them: Inuit and *Qallunaat* live separate lives. She thought they do not understand Inuit, and it is thus hard for Inuit to respect them in turn (#24). Another Inuk thought services are really improved when *Qallunaat* mix with the Inuit and organize activities with them. All *Qallunaat* should make an effort to mix (#105).

work and life experience due to their young age, Inuit feel that most *Qallunaat* believe they are always right, that they do not try to understand Inuit, and that is why their interventions fail to work out. Indeed, they want to save Inuit by imposing their own ways (#66), when they should work more in conjunction with them:

> Here we have a bunch of youngsters, social workers; they are my age, they are young and partying. They have never experienced nothing, I have experienced way more than them. You just have a piece of paper [diploma]. I grew up with alcoholics, having no food, being kicked out. If anybody can be a social worker it is us; Inuit too help our Inuit. (#24)

> There are not enough social workers and police officers that take the time to understand our culture and why we are the way we are. […] What social workers study doesn't work here; they need a whole different set of skills to be able to work with us. Because, in order to work with someone, you have to understand the person. […] Professionals need to work more with Inuit that have experiences; they have to work together. We need their help and they need our help in order to help us. The professionals who come here should watch all the documentaries about Aboriginals and Eskimos. Learn about our culture. […] Once, I was having a conversation with a social worker, he was saying that it is not easy to just come here and leave your family, start a life ant try to help Inuit. I said: "Let go of your job and get a full-time job as a cashier, with no house for one year, go from couch to couch, and then come help us. After, you will understand how we feel, before you try to help someone. You can't just do something by the book. You are insulting us if you try to help us without trying to know us". […] They judge easily, they don't try to understand our life, how to help us. (#25)

As the last participant pointed out, judgmental behaviour is clearly due to lack of knowledge of Inuit. According to another woman, this lack could be remedied by forced immersion in their reality:

> My idea was to take the social worker, land her off the plane and tell her "find the ride to town, find a place to live, live with a family for one year, live how we live every day, walk to work. You come from a completely different world, you go grocery shopping." We live completely different lives and they come from South with their methods to help. You can help down South, but when you come here, you have to understand that this is a completely different world. The way Inuit wake up in the morning is different to the way White people wake: "brush your teeth, have your coffee." For us, it is chaos in the morning, there are kids and clothes everywhere, we have to feed, but you don't have cereals, we run out of milk. That is our daily life. […] Everything is different. And for them it is neglecting: "people are coming in and out of the house; you are neglecting your child." "What are you talking about, you have no clue, it is a tradition, it is just our culture; people come, people go, going in the fridge, take what you want, you are hungry? Eat!" We don't say: "don't touch the food, you didn't buy it." (#24)

The cultural difference and lack of knowledge of Inuit among White people clearly cause a lot of misunderstanding and miscommunication, which may be, among other things, a reason for the high rate of placement of children in foster care (#33, 39, 60, 61, 96):

> Social workers; I don't know how it works, but it is really hard to go seek for help from them because they all just look at your bad behaviours, try to take your children from you. […] It is because most of the social workers are not Inuit and we have different

> cultures and different ways of life. That is why there is always a conflict or misunderstanding. […] There are Inuit workers, but not in control. Usually it is a non-Inuk who leads the social workers in the community and they expect Inuit to be like them. We don't ask other cultures to be our way. (#105)

To counter this problem and make social services more adapted,[121] three steps should be taken. First, White people who come to work in Nunavik should have training about Inuit culture (#25, 96, 105). Second, more Inuit should be hired as community workers (#25, 43, 51). Third, social workers should work in partnership with Inuit workers. There must be Inuit in those offices to ensure the possibility of being served in Inuktitut, since many Inuit do not speak English or French, and because Inuit are more likely to understand Inuit's problems and needs (#46, 51, 64). For Nunavimmiut to provide good services, they need to be trained as specialists or counselors, with a view to replacing all White workers over the long term (#25, 28). They must also be recognized for their skills and experiences, and not merely for their diplomas. This way, Inuit who are good counselors can hold positions that otherwise often stay vacant (#105).

But, as we mentioned earlier, it is not so easy to hire Inuit community workers or DYP officers (#4, 26, 99). The worker has to separate personal life from work, even though the clients are often part of both. Also, as someone who works with the DYP, he or she has to deal with some people who get upset and reproachful over losing their children (#99). A community worker explained how she manages to respect client confidentiality and stay mentally and emotionally healthy:

> As a worker, I have to keep everything confidential. When you come to work, you have to leave every single bit of yourself, and you become the image of the government. Everything that you say and hear here stays here. When you go home, you don't mention anything about work to anybody. So you are two people instead of one, and it is very hard to do that, but you have other people that you can talk to as workers if you can't handle it anymore. […] I like this job; I feel I have the tools to do this job, and the experiences. I had lost my fiancé not too many years ago. (#92)

Two opposing visions emerged in the interviews about social services and justice, two visions that were extremes held by only a few women. On one side, there was the idea that Inuit need no services and can help themselves and work together according to their own ways (#24, 34, 36, 66). Indeed, Inuit can easily talk to friends or relatives when they have personal problems,[122] and such people are surely better equipped to help them because of their experiences, their language, and their culture (#8, 23, 24, 39):

Some participants were of the opinion that there are too many inefficient services and that these services are a waste of money because everything is conceived and decided outside Nunavik. A woman thought governments should not be working on social issues, but rather on economic development and home building (#94); that would help a lot more than sitting in an office:

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[121] For example, some Inuit thought the public services, including the police, are too rigidly scheduled; help should be provided 24 hours a day, and not only during office hours (#28, 29, 30, 59).

[122] Many participants told us they would entrust their problems to relatives, friends, or partners and seek advice from them.

> If you are social workers, there is only so much you can do. If a woman comes up to them and presents her situation: I have five kids, I am waiting for a bigger house, I haven't paid my rent for three months because my boyfriend spent it on booze, and he is beating me up all the time, and I have nowhere to go. How can anybody help her? Sit in an office and talk; it is not going to help her. What she needs right now, it is to be getting away from that man, or from her situation. But there is no resource. (#28)

On the other side, because the government wants to apply its laws up North, it should at least provide enough resources to do so successfully (#105). Many participants said the professional services of psychologists or therapists are needed on a more permanent and continual basis[123] because mental health and depression are big issues in Nunavik, especially among the youth (#28, 44, 49, 87). Also needed are specialists for children with learning disabilities and for addiction therapy (#50, 59, 60, 65, 68).[124] At present, social workers are overwhelmed, have trouble building trust, and lack time for follow-up (#26, 30, 81). In addition, they are not therapists. All in all, it is currently really hard for Inuit in Nunavik to get professional services and adequate therapy, unless they can afford a trip to the South.

A 45-year-old woman from Kuujjuaq told us how she had to manage on her own to travel down South for a therapy program. She had to be very persistent and strong-willed while feeling depressed at the time:

> It is a bad circle and it is hard to go out of it. If a woman says "OK, I am done, I am in a depression, I can't get out of it, I don't have help. What am I going to do? I am going to go to the hospital." There is no service available for you. You have to push. I suffered from a depression and I had to push and push to get therapy. Social workers are so overworked and the turnover is so great, so even if you see a social worker, and finally decide to really open up to the her, six months later she is gone, and there is a new one who you don't trust, you don't have this built relationship. […] I went in therapy; I had 24 sessions in Montreal, but the only reason I got it is because I told them they didn't have to pay my plane ticket, my food, my lodging. My parents helped me. Average woman in depression here doesn't have this. I had a lot of support from my family. I am very lucky. […] They don't have the audacity to go see the head of the CLSC and say "I need help right now, look at me, I am dying inside." This is what I had to do. And they only give you five sessions of therapy. It is just unbelievable what I had to go through to have basic services that are not available up here. My point is that the average woman is not going to have the help she needs. There is one therapist for the whole Ungava coast who comes up every six months. It is not a service; it is a title. We need more counseling services, and just more help. (#28)

This story illustrates how hard it is for Inuit to find the help they need, even when they are determined to get out of their misery. Even with the best-intentioned and best-skilled workers in place, resources are greatly lacking. According to another woman, people with diagnosed mental illnesses are given priority, with the result that people going

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[123] A psychologist cannot offer someone appropriate therapy when he or she comes only once or twice a year, and when it is impossible to see all of the people on the list (#49, 81, 82).

[124] According to a participant, a lot of parents are struggling with children who have learning disabilities and they have no support at all. Even though they try their best, being up North the parents lack information and services (#60).

through depression receive much less attention. She pointed to the experience of a friend who went to the clinic before committing suicide, and she said the only kind of help depressive people receive is pills, whereas they need to be heard. This participant suggested an alternative to social workers and psychologists: someone from the community who would be available 24 hours a day at home, on a confidential basis:

> Still today, there are a lot of things that we need help with and I think that every community would need psychiatrists, professional people. Even though you are not diagnosed as a psychopath, you might need help. We have to be able to go to that person and talk about our problems at some point. […] It happened to my sister in Kuujjuaq, they didn't want to help her because she is not mentally ill. So she keeps going to Montreal to see her psychiatrist, paying with her own money. […] Couple of years ago, I was thinking about life, to have someone in town who is not inside the clinic, who is at home, where we can go, call or make appointments during any time, not just nine to five, but evenings too, and secretly. Just to go let everything out. Sometimes we want to say something but we hold it because we are afraid to be judged or discriminated. (#40)

Getting therapy helps many women to regain self-esteem and improve their lives. For instance, a woman from Kuujjuaraapik who used to go in and out of jail saw a therapist a few times in her community and learned how to manage her anger. She acknowledged the need for a permanent therapist in her town and thought such a person would lessen the number of people who go to jail (#87). When we asked the participants if the therapist should be an Inuk or a *Qallunaaq*, opinions were divided. Some preferred to talk to an Inuk (#24, 25, 28, 38, 44, 68, 71), whether from the community (#50, 51, 70) or not (#14); others thought it better to have someone not from the community because Inuit do not trust others and fear gossips (#2, 14, 59, 70, 73, 82, 87, 92, 105).

Narrative: Motherhood, alcoholism, and the Director of Youth Protection

*Anita*[125] *is 53 years old. She grew up as an only child with alcoholic parents and a constant lack of food. She was sexually abused once. She told her aunt right away, but her aunt did nothing. Maybe she was also a victim of sexual abuse. As a teenager, Anita dropped out of school and moved to Montreal for a while in order to flee from alcohol at home, and she met her husband there. Tired of drinking in the city, she came back later on with her husband.*

*She and her husband had five children and kept three of them. They adopted three other children. One of the adopted children comes from another village and was molested as a newborn baby. Anita and her husband used to drink a lot at home. She even used to go out for partying while her children were asleep. She quit alcohol when the DYP started to watch her children.*

*Anita's oldest biological daughter got pregnant at the age of 16, and Anita took custody of the baby. Later, Anita had to care for her second daughter's baby for four years because her daughter and her daughter's boyfriend were drinking too much alcohol. Nonetheless, the youth couple recently adopted a boy from another village. Anita*

[125] Fictitious name.

*believed her daughter when she said she would stop drinking; this is why she helped to convince the social worker to allow them to adopt the baby. But her daughter is still drinking, and Anita constantly worries about the baby's safety. She called the DYP officers to have them talk to her daughter, but she got no feedback.*

*Another of Anita's daughters was raped at the age of 15, lost her virginity, and became depressed. Anita sought help from the DYP and the police at the time, but her daughter didn't want to talk about it.*

Director of Youth Protection (DYP): removing children or working with the families

Owing to the high rates of family violence, alcohol abuse, child sexual abuse, and overcrowding of houses, the DYP intervenes a lot in Nunavik communities. These interventions end up in many cases with placement of children in foster families for periods lasting from one night to the time it takes for them to reach adulthood (#43). At least 14 participants had or used to have one or more foster children in their homes (#1, 2, 60, 67, 71, 73, 75, 76, 78, 80, 82, 90, 91, 93), and seven had lost their children (#11, 14, 38, 74, 83, 95, 98). In almost all cases, the DYP intervenes because of alcohol abuse, which most often goes along with family violence (#11, 14, 38, 71, 73, 76, 77, 87, 95, 108). To get their children back, the parents had to take therapy and quit alcohol for at least six months (#38, 43, 95, 97). Unfortunately, some started to drink again after (#24).

Many women agreed that the DYP officers help families and that, in some situations, it is absolutely necessary for the children's safety to remove them from their homes (#28, 49, 59, 67, 71, 75, 83, 99). At the same time, a lot of the women deplored the placement of so many children (#31, 24, 64, 96). Most thought the best solution is not to separate the children from their mothers (#16, 21, 32, 83, 77, 87). Taking children away from their alcoholic mothers can affect them even more than letting them stay because they lose the fundamental parent-child connection, because they have to adapt to new homes with different rules and ways of life, and because of the high risk of ending up with other alcoholic and abusive parents (#21, 71). In addition, when children are kept away until the age of 18, they feel like strangers when they come back to their birth families:[126]

> When kids arrive in a new family, they are lost, because family rules are different, and they don't have love from their mother… and the new family drinks too. At least, with their real parents, they know what it is, what are the limitations, and they have love. […] Some kids are taken away until they are 18, and when they are 18, they are sent back to their family, but it is no more their family, they are stranger to their family and they move back to a crowded house. There is no place for them, so where do they go after? (#96)

In the opinion of many women, the DYP officers remove a child from the mother too quickly without taking the time to meet and talk with the family (#25, 38, 87, 96). According to the traditional way of solving social problems, it would be better to discuss and counsel the parents (#91, 92), to make the family unit work better first (#38):

[126] See the paper by Lizzie Tukai (2011) about the impact of foster care placement on family bonds in Nunavik.

> I don't like when the DYP doesn't use Inuit ways. I got two grandchildren under the DYP, because their mother is alcoholic. It makes me cry a lot, because I cannot see them anymore too. I now take care of one of them who is four years old. I don't agree with the DYP when they take the kids away from their home. The best way to solve problems is to talk to the person in a good way. (#71)

Some participants thought the DYP officers, especially *Qallunaat*, follow the rules too strictly and should give the parents more leeway (#60, 68, 77). While Inuit officers would better understand the situation of other Inuit and be better counselors (#38), they usually do not enjoy working for the DYP. It is really hard for them to take children away from their mothers (#21), and they are often accused of hurting the children by doing their job (#43, 79, 99).[127]

In situations where it is a necessity to remove children, participants thought the children should stay in their own community (#1, 53, 71, 79, 81), and as much as possible in the extended family (#60, 76, 90).[128] People do not like to see children moved to another town, but the limited number of foster families leaves no other option (#67, 79, 82, 83). For Inuit, child care is no easy task; they may already have many kids at home, and they risk getting into trouble with a delinquent foster child or with the child's parents, who may get mad at them (#67, 73, 75, 82, 91). To keep up with the increasing number of placements, the number of *Qallunaat* foster families is also growing (#68). While *Qallunaat* families usually offer a more stable and affluent home environment (#68), it may be very difficult for children to live with people who have another culture and who cannot speak their language. As well, they may lose their language (#42, 68, 71, 104).

Another major issue is the lack of follow-up and support offered to the parents and children once the latter have been removed. While molested children usually get counseling, parents are most often left alone with little information about DYP rules and procedures, and so they feel unaided and helpless (#43, 44, 77, 95). Yet they usually have serious problems and really need help:

> Sometimes, I see workers who take the child away from the family even though they don't have to do it. When they take the child from the family, the child get the support, but the parents don't get counseling or whatever. They are just leaving like that. I want to see more help for the parents who are in that situation, they need counseling…talk to them. […] As long as they get advice, because they are hurt inside from the past. (#77)

A woman who worked as a counselor thought many Inuit became alcoholics and lost their parenting skills through the residential school experience and other traumas.[129] Parents thus need to be heard, and they must regain their dignity:

> There is such fear, because of what was done to us at the residential schools. It was not that bad, but right now, what is so bad is that our kids are being taken away, because

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[127] A participant who worked for the DYP mentioned that many Inuit think the DYP removes children in order to make money, but this is clearly misinformation (#79).

[128] Regarding the DYP and adoption practices, it was proposed in the Parnasimautik Consultation Report (KRG *et al.* 2014: 55) that: "Traditional adoption rules must be re-introduced into our families and communities and then recognized by government agencies."

[129] See Menzies 2007.

> they lost their abilities to take care and to stay sober. The addiction is so strong that sometimes, they care, but they are so overwhelmed with their problems that they tend to drink, they self-medicate. And their kids are taken away and there is nothing to help the parents to regain self-worth, their dignity. […] The Youth Protection is so busy, they have no manpower to deal with the parents. They are just placing kids. […] What should really happen is the family to be helped to get their problem solved together. But really nobody knows what they have gone through, they don't know their story, they were never given a chance to tell their story of why they are turning to alcohol and drugs, why they are leaving their kids. It is because they have a story in them; they have been sexually abused, they have been through so many traumas after traumas. (#21)

Social workers are supposed to follow up on the parents. According to some participants, the follow-up amounts to a few calls to find out if the parents are still drinking (#74, 92, 98). In this situation, some parents get angry and start to drink even more (#76). A woman talked about a couple who had lost their children and how they felt being left to themselves because there were no appropriate services in their community to allow parents to regain custody of their children:

> Since social workers started to take the children away from their parents, it is causing a lot more drinking. […] You have to go to court to have them back, you have to go to a rehab centre that is not available in the community. You cannot just leave if you have a job and responsibilities. The way they are treated, it is not the reality. If they want to have a treatment in a proper way, they have to have services, but there is no service there. There is a law, but no services. […] If I was up North and my children were taken away, I would be so alone. My family and my friends will feel sorry for me, but I would have nobody to turn to because it is the social services that take my babies. (#105)

So both parents and children, together as much as possible, need proper counseling with the aim of seeing the family reunited again for everyone's sake (#60, 89, 96). Unfortunately, because of miscommunication and lack of follow-up by the DYP in Nunavik, the family is all too often broken up forever (#96).[130]

**Other services and programs provided by Inuit**

In addition to improvement to public services already in place, there is a need for more services, resources, and ways of intervening that are more adapted to Inuit culture and society and that aim to empower Inuit and promote their culture. Of course, there are already several programs that have grown out of local and regional initiatives. These initiatives include the Health Support Workers program for former residential school students,[131] the Brighter Futures Program (part of the NRBHSS), and the Makitautik Halfway House in Kangirsuk. We will further discuss in the next chapter what kind of

[130] An elder raised another concern about the DYP nowadays: because officers have started to move children to extended family members for one night only while the parents are drinking, foster families have become babysitters for young parents who just want to party (#96).

[131] For the whole of Nunavik and based in Kuujjuaq since 2011, three health support workers have been employed by the Health Board for former residential school students, under a partnership with Health Canada (#21, 30).

support and counseling the participants would like to see developed in the North. For now, we wish to present the Neighbourhood Wellness Program and the women's shelters, two important tools in the hands of the Inuit to help their people.

Neighbourhood Wellness Program

The Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) introduced the Neighbourhood Wellness Program just a few years ago.[132] Its mission is to promote Inuit culture and a healthy way of life through different kinds of activities, workshops, prevention initiatives, and training programs for all age groups. Unlike social services and the police, which more often than not manage crises, this program works closely with families and aims to work with many generations and sow seeds for the future. Its long-term objective is to empower all Inuit. In addition to wellness committees composed of about seven community members whose mission is to ensure that local needs are made known, wellness workers are hired on a full-time basis in most communities to organize all kinds of activities and to work hand in hand with other organizations and services, such as social services, the CLSC, and the KSB. Activities cover such themes as sex, cooking,[133] pregnancy, FASD, alcohol and drug use, parenting,[134] child safety, and suicide (#7, 16, 44, 68).[135] There are also women's evenings or women's days, when women can take some rest, talk together, and dance or varnish their nails, for example (#4, 9, 15, 52).

Were it not for lack of funds, all communities would have at least one wellness worker. Moreover, a significant lack of space in communities makes it difficult to find rooms for wellness workers and for activities. Indeed, some communities have no community centre. Another complication is the trouble hiring wellness workers because, as with community workers and DYP officers, they have to be sufficiently educated and role models in the eyes of other people. Wellness workers are leaders for the communities, and leaders are generally involved in many groups or committees on the local or regional level.[136] Many organizations often compete to recruit them. As for the program itself, people generally think highly of it, probably because the officers are Inuit and because the ideas for activities come from the community. Among our survey participants who were asked for their opinion, most had a good impression of the program (#2, 7, 9, 15, 44, 65, 68), although some, for various reasons, never took part in the activities (#8, 12, 14).

Women's shelters

[132] Much information about this program was provided by Louise Fortin, the program coordinator for Ungava Bay.

[133] Some cooking activities have also been organized at the women's shelter in Kuujjuaq or by White workers (#80). The Health Board also offers cooking courses on occasion (#28). Some participants would like to have more cooking activities in their community (#1, 79, 81, 83).

[134] According to Louise Fortin, the program particularly focuses on the mother-child relationship. A well-known project is "Babybook"; it gets mothers interested in scrapbooking for their babies (#28, 68).

[135] In addition, the program is currently supporting a clothing donation project; a second-hand clothes store in Kuujjuaq receives donations and redistributes them all over Nunavik (#65).

[136] Because of their skills and character, these people are often requisitioned without giving them any say in the matter (Hervé 2013).

Three women's shelters in Nunavik[137] take in women who need a safe place to stay for a short or long period. Each of them works separately and has different ways of operating. We could collect information about Tungasuvvik Women's Shelter in Kuujjuaq only, where two Inuit community workers were interviewed (#17, 29). We must also mention the shelter for both men and women in Kangiqsualujjuaq; a few rooms are available in a building run by the Health Board. To use them, people have to ask social services (#11, 16). Among the participants, nine women mentioned having been to one of the women's shelters (#1, 2, 11, 14, 20, 23, 49, 62, 82). At least five of them had gone because of conjugal violence, and three said they had benefited. Many women preferred to stay with friends or relatives in an emergency and thought of the shelter as a last resort only (#22, 24, 41, 43, 70). It is not always easy for families to take in battered women, who are sometimes accompanied by children and sometimes drunk (#33, 38, 45, 56, 73). Thus, the shelters are used by and useful to Inuit women.

In Kuujjuaq, the shelter is open 24 hours a day, and women from different communities use it, although most of them are from Kuujjuaq. The door is always locked and, to be accepted, women should be sober. When they come from outside Kuujjuaq, they have to go through the social services of their community first and stay at least 10 days at the shelter. While there, they are not allowed to go in and out or party; they should be back inside by 11 o'clock at night, wake up at eight in the morning, and never disclose the phone number of the shelter. According to an Inuk who worked there, the shelter is particularly busy on weekends, and during the autumn and spring, when fewer men spend time on the land (#17). Many women from Kuujjuaq come for a night only, after having been battered by their partner, or right before when they can see the violence coming (#29).

Although the shelter opened decades ago, it is not until recently that it has offered counseling services. Previously, women could go there for a night or more without having to talk about the reason for their presence. Now, they have to fill out a form upon arrival, and an Inuk counselor will try to meet them and ask questions in order to deal with their problems and find a long-term solution. A solution can involve applying for a house, separating from an abusive spouse, and/or going to rehabilitation.[138] However, many women have no wish to talk, and they leave the shelter before meeting with the counselor. They are just looking for a safe place to take a short break and relax (#17, 29, 53, 89). Moreover, it is not easy to develop enough trust for them to talk (#21). In addition to five bedrooms and counseling services, the women's shelter in Kuujjuaq is also a place where meetings and activities for all women take place: hairdressing, sewing, cooking, a parenting course, yoga, and so on[139] (#18, 27, 61, 62). Even though attendance at the activities is still low, women who take part would like to have more of them at the shelter (#65).

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[137] The shelters are Tungasuvvik Women's Shelter in Kuujjuaq, Ajapirvik Women's Shelter in Inukjuak, and Initsiaq Women's Shelter in Salluit. Tunngavik Women's Shelter in Kuujjuaraapik closed a few years ago (Pauktuutit 2014).

[138] According to an Inuk woman who worked at the shelter, the biggest problems of Inuit women are the housing shortage and alcohol abuse. Moreover, she noticed that once a woman gets a house, many of her problems are solved at the same time (#17).

[139] Community workers at the shelter also occasionally organize recreational activities on the land.

In all of the communities we visited that had no women's shelter, the participants (28 participants altogether) mentioned the need to have one. Even though all women can go to existing shelters, many cannot or do not want to leave their community. Moreover, they obviously cannot leave their community easily and quickly when their need to escape is urgent. The following participant also mentioned that it is not as easy as it used to be to escape to someone else's house because doors are more often locked nowadays:

> In small communities, women start to see a need for a women's shelter. Because to go to a shelter, they have to leave kids behind. That should be a priority. […] Nowadays, all the doors are locked. So even though women try to run away from violence, they are locked out, they have no choice but to go back. […] A women's shelter will allow women to talk about their issues not in public, a place where they can talk about their feelings. (#33)

We will further see in the next chapter that women need not merely a place to escape to, but also trustworthy and supportive people to talk to, like the counselor who is now employed at the Kuujjuaq shelter. A few participants also spoke of a need for a men's shelter (#14, 43, 56) and a children's shelter—or centre (#67, 77, 78, 81, 105) because men and children also suffer from violence and abuse. A children's shelter could also help to limit the amount of child placement in foster families.

**Summary**

In all of Nunavik's Northern communities, when individuals need help or support for any kind of personal or social problems, they can ask for assistance from social workers, the police, and DYP officers. While the first of the three deliver public services, the others are representatives of the law and have the power to enforce Canadian law. Although they all work for everyone's safety and wellbeing, not only do they clearly lack the essential means, such as staff, to fulfill their mission, but they are also poorly suited to local conditions. Moreover, in the context of Inuit communities, as is the case with all Aboriginal communities, they often subscribe unconsciously to a version of colonial history that does not acknowledge the contributions of the Inuit and that dispossesses them of their ability to act and think for themselves. It is only through empowerment of the Inuit that restoration of pride, social cohesion, and community wellbeing will be possible. For this reason, tenable and adapted solutions should be conceived and elaborated by Inuit for Inuit, within their communities. We will therefore look at community life and local initiatives in the next chapter. Here are the main ideas that came up during the interviews on the topic of social services and the legal system:

1. While many Inuit appreciate the work of the police officers, social workers, and Director of Youth Protection (DYP) agents, a lot also complain about the lack of consideration and respect for and knowledge about Inuit society and culture among non-Inuit workers, who hold most of the positions. Inuit often have the feeling of being judged and not being understood by strangers. The lack of sensitivity to Inuit culture and the language difference also lead to a lot of miscommunication and misunderstanding. Some Inuit think police officers and DYP officers tend to intervene too quickly—such as to arrest someone or to remove a child from his or her home—without taking the time to listen to Inuit and understand the situation. In

this context, and because of the rigidity of *Qallunaat* practices, it is very hard to recruit and retain Inuit as co-workers. Because most of these public servants come from the South, many participants thought they should have training about Inuit culture in order to work in Nunavik.

2. Because of their limited knowledge of English and French, as well as their partial understanding of the laws, their rights, and public programs, most Inuit cannot take advantage of them and may even become victims of them, during arrests and court appearances, for example. Inuit have to be educated in their langurage about social programs and the justice system, and more of them should be hired as frontline workers and translators. We have to consider, however, the complexity of hiring them for such socially demanding positions, and offer better working conditions and benefits.
3. The biggest problem with enforcement of the law in Nunavik is its slowness. The delay in carrying out procedures makes it ineffective at all stages. A victim will be highly reluctant to lay charges against her assailant because she will continue to be in his presence—and often have to reside with him—throughout the proceedings, which may last for years. A victim may fear reprisals both from her assailant and from his entourage. Also, lack of surveillance of and follow up with offenders, at all stages of the legal proceedings, does not allow the system to achieve its goal and prevent repeat offences. While offenders are often left to themselves, without being taught to consider the consequences of their actions, many Inuit think they need help and counseling in order to correct them and cure their suffering.
4. The legal system also operates in contradiction with the way Inuit used to solve conflicts. On the one hand, Inuit usually have time to forgive each other and even forget before they appear in court. Although forgiveness is important to Inuit, the slowness of the legal proceedings often prevents them from moving on. On the other hand, the Inuit used to solve social conflicts through discussion and counseling, and the elders used to be central to social cohesion. For this reason, many are not convinced that incarceration of offenders helps to counter violence and crime.
5. The recent creation of local justice committees aims to restore the beneficial influence and wisdom of elders and community leaders, while offering alternatives to legal proceedings. These committees are really appreciated by the Inuit, who think the committees should have more power. Elders and Inuit who are good role models should be recognized for their experience, skills, and ability as counselors, be it work for social services or for the DYP for instance, even though they may lack diplomas.
6. A lot of Inuit are dissatisfied with social services and feel they cannot deal with the real issues: the need for housing and for therapy. Many Inuit want to see the services of psychologists, or other specialists, made available on a more regular and continuous basis, be it to deal with mental illness, learning disabilities, addiction, or depression.
7. Trust and confidentiality are important issues in the work of social workers and DYP officers, be they *Qallunaat* or Inuit. Gossip, high employee turnover, and the alarming

number of placements of children in foster care account for the reluctance to talk with these officials. All workers have to build trust and ensure confidentiality.

8. Although Inuit are very concerned about their children's safety, they think removing a child from his or her parents is not always the best solution to guarantee wellbeing. It can be very traumatic for the child, who too often will never come back home, and who may be exposed to new abuses. Instead of breaking up the family and leaving the parents—in most cases with serious alcohol problems—unaided and helpless, social workers should first meet and work with the entire family to find concrete solutions. When child placement becomes inevitable, relatives who live in the same community should take the children into foster care. The parents should then be supported and assisted in the process of regaining custody of their children.

Any project or program that seeks to promote Inuit values and ways of solving social conflicts, such as Local Justice Committees, women's shelters, and the Neighbourhood Wellness Program, will need more funding and resources to hire and retain competent Inuit workers and to develop and extend to all communities. More than anything else, the participants asked for a women's shelter in each community.

# CHAPTER 5. SOCIAL BONDS: FRAGMENTATION AND RECONNECTION

> *Right now there is a daycare system, there is a school, and there is the social workers, the police, and the ministry; really, where is the mother and the father, where is the family, where is the elders? That is what is missing. They have to be all in-between them. […] In the traditional way, whoever is having a problem, they were met with by the community leaders and talked over the problem. We keep saying "Our youth is our future." Yes they are, but us, in my age group, we are to be their future, we have to get our act together, so all children can be good, can have a good future. […] Women need to start believing in themselves, and talking to someone.* (#21)

## Introduction

We will now turn to social relationships and community life because they are both the crux of the problem and the heart of the solution to social issues. All through the interviews, we could perceive an erosion of social bonds, and also a hope to see them rebuilt. Whether it was conjugal relationships, parenting, or friendships, among other things, participants talked about lack of communication and trust, and a wish for more mutual aid. Different kinds of events and processes, both historical and present, have been responsible for the loosening of these bonds. First, Inuit lose family members who are sent South for medical care and sometimes never come back. Second, relocation of families has broken the links between relatives and friends. Third, when children were removed from their parents and sent away to residential schools, the emotional bond with their parents could not develop normally; nor could traditional knowledge be passed on. We should also mention the loss of almost all Inuit dogs, which were part of Inuit social life. Today, childbirth in Southern hospitals and foster care also tend to weaken the link between the community and the newborn child,[140] and between parents and their children.

The tenuousness of social bonds is surely connected to the sense of confusion among individuals who have lost their self-esteem and pride through hurtful experiences, and to the weakening of collective Inuit identity. The advent of modern ways of living and thinking has also been partly responsible for the current situation, where individualism is eroding community wellbeing and weakening certain traditional practices of sharing and cooperating. Moreover, with the arrival of the welfare state, Southern institutions have slowly been taking over some of the traditional ways of sharing, helping each other, and resolving social conflicts. The introductory quote illustrates this point. It also shows the elders' role in guaranteeing a bright future for their people and the desire among women to see people talking and working together again.

[140] See Pernet and Dupré (2011) and Parnasimautik Consultation Report (2014: 51).

In this chapter, we will first profile the participants in terms of their marital status and number of children. We will then talk about three different types of relationships that involve different ways of being together: the couple, or marital, relationship between a man and a woman; the parental relationship between children and their parents; and finally the relationship between youth and elders. We will describe what the participants thought about the current state of these relationships in relation to how they were in the past and how they could be in the future. We will then go on to talk about the means at the disposal of communities to strengthen social bonds, and about the need to strengthen these means and create more opportunities for Inuit to talk and help each other. Generally, in addition to appropriate confidential counseling and therapy (as we saw in the last chapter), the participants thought Nunavimmiut would benefit from creation of discussion groups and from organization of healing sessions under the leadership of skilled and experienced people. In this way, through respect and dialogue, youth would be able to learn where they come from and voice their concerns, and older people would be able to tell their personal stories and share their knowledge.

**Participants' profile: marital status and number of children**

Unlike other topics addressed in our survey, the data about marital status and child custody among the participants were collected almost systematically. For this reason, the numbers in the following tables are more representative. Some data are lacking for three specific questions only: whether or not the participants had grandchildren; whether or not they had adopted a child or given a child up for adoption; and their age when they first gave birth.[141] Also, we could not count all of the women's children because adoption and foster care make counting somewhat complicated.

Starting with marital status, half the participants were living as couples, either common law (23%) or married (27%).[142] The "single" category encompassed 16% of all participants and included any woman who had never lived with a man, regardless of her age and whether she had children or not. This category included single women who had never engaged to the father(s) of their children (#18, 34, 44, 49, 56, 58, 80, 81). The next column encompassed women (18%) who had separated from the father(s) of their children. Divorce had affected 14 women (13%) from 35 to 60 years old, while the same number of women were widows.

If we combine the columns "married," "divorced," and "widow," we have the total number of women who had ever been married. The percentage was highest among women 70 and over: 100% of them were or had been married, and none divorced. Then comes the younger age groups: 50 to 59 (76%); 60 to 69 (71%); and 40 to 49 (67%). Fewer women are getting married among those younger than 40: only 17% of all women in their twenties were married, and only 24% of all women in their thirties. Marriage is clearly declining among young Inuit. Divorce has recently become more common in Nunavik. The divorce

[141] Concerning the mother's age when she first gave birth, data are lacking especially for the "sixties" age group.

[142] About six participants had non-Inuk partners at the time of the interviews (#4, 24, 25, 89, 98, 99).

rate begins at 10% (1 out of 10) among ever-married women in their sixties, and rises to 43% (7 out of 16) among ever-married women 40 to 49.

Singlehood (single, separated, or divorced women)[143] is also increasing in the youngest generation, even though the birth rate is still high (see Table 8). The highest percentage of single women is among those under 29 (52%), followed closely by older age groups: 30 to 39 (48%); 40 to 49 (46%); and 50 to 59 (38%). The percentage slowly decreases as we look at older generations until we reach women in their sixties and over, among whom the rate drops drastically to 20%.

**Table 7: Marital status of the participants**

| Age group | Common-law | Married | Single | Separated | Divorced | Widow | Total participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Under 20** | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **6** |
| **20 to 29** | 5 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 0 | **17** |
| **30 to 39** | 7 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 0 | **21** |
| **40 to 49** | 8 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 3 | **24** |
| **50 to 59** | 1 | 10 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | **21** |
| **60 to 69** | 1 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 4 | **14** |
| **70 or over** | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 | **6** |
| **Total** | **25** | **29** | **17** | **19** | **13** | **14** | **108** |
| *Percentage* | 23% | 27% | 16% | 18% | 12% | 13% | |

When questioned about their past and/or current conjugal relationships, 33 participants (about one third) answered that their relationships were satisfactory. Many of them mentioned that their partners were used to helping them at home, with the housework and children, and financially (#15, 32, 30, 38, 43, 45, 51, 53, 59, 67, 73, 75, 83, 85) and that they had good communication with their partners (#2, 13, 45, 51, 59, 67, 75, 90, 93). In contrast, those participants who had experienced conflictual relationships talked about jealous and controlling husbands (#11, 20, 48, 65, 68, 74, 98, 103, 108), about cheating (#11, 15, 41, 54, 65, 70, 98, 105), about alcoholism and abuse (#2, 11, 15, 20, 28, 35, 41, 46, 59, 63, 68, 74, 88, 97, 98, 100, 103, 105, 108), and about lack of communication (#2, 35, 55, 59).

Table 8 shows that 88% of all participants had at least one child, and that the percentage was almost as high among youth as it was among older women. Of course, motherhood is slightly less common among women under 30 (61%). Close to 50% of all participants had first given birth before they turned 20, and such participants were nearly equally represented in all age groups. Moreover, most women not included in this percentage were less than 26 years old when they first gave birth.[144] Customary adoption is

[143] About four of the divorced women had found a new partner.

[144] In 2008, the fertility rate of women 14 to 24 years old was higher in Nunavik than in the rest of Quebec, where women from 25 to 29 years old had the highest rate. Thus "teen pregnancies are much higher in Nunavik than in Québec as a whole. The rate is 4 times higher among adolescent girls from 14 to 17 years of age, and more than 3 times higher among adolescent girls aged 18 to 19" (Duhaime 2008: 8, 12). According to the NRBHSS (2011: vi), "the average age of the mothers at birth was 25 years old in Nunavik and 29 years old in Québec for the 2004-2008 period."

still very common among the Inuit; at least 50% of all participants had given a child up for adoption, had adopted a child, or had done both.[145]

The "average number" of children per woman includes all cases where the mother kept custody of the child at birth, regardless of whether the child lived to adulthood or not, and whether the child was still living with the mother or not. It includes adopted children, and excludes children given up for adoption. Of course, as we have said, the data are surely incomplete. The participants had an average of 3.26 children each, but this number is clearly higher among the oldest women.[146] This is partly because women continue to adopt children as they get older and even beyond the reproductive age bracket. For this reason, but also because motherhood and parenting are not defined among Inuit as among *Qallunaat*, we counted some elders as single mothers.[147] According to this definition, 37 participants (34%) were single mothers. Participants 30 to 39 years old were more numerous in this category. Finally, 40% had at least one grandchild; all of them were 40 years old or older.

**Table 8: Number of children, adoptions, and cases of single motherhood**

| Age group | With children | First baby under 20 | Adopted children | Given up children | Average number | Single mother | Grand-children | Total participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Under 20** | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0.5 | 0 | 0 | **6** |
| **20 to 29** | 12 | 10 | 1 | 2 | 1.24 | 5 | 0 | **17** |
| **30 to 39** | 20 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 2.8 | 10 | 0 | **21** |
| **40 to 49** | 23 | 14 | 4 | 9 | 3.54 | 8 | 11 | **24** |
| **50 to 59** | 20 | 11 | 12 | 5 | 3.76 | 8 | 15 | **21** |
| **60 to 69** | 12 | 3[148] | 6 | 3 | 4.78 | 4 | 11 | **14** |
| **70 or over** | 6 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 6 | **6** |
| **Total** | **95** | **51** | **30** | **25** | **3.26** | **37** | **43** | **108** |
| *Percentage* | 88% | 47% | 28% | 23% | — | 34% | 40% | |

Although our data are incomplete when it comes to fatherhood and family planning, we know that 18 participants had babies by different fathers (#2, 14, 22, 23, 28, 41, 42, 58, 64, 65, 68, 70, 80, 93, 98, 99, 105, 106), and 12 had become pregnant by accident at least once (#19, 20, 52, 55, 58, 67, 68, 70, 78, 80, 83, 88). Use of contraceptives among women of all ages does not seem very widespread. When questioned, half of all the women answered that they were using contraception, be it oral contraceptives, condoms, intrauterine devices or Depo-Provera (#43, 47, 55, 59, 67, 68, 70, 78, 106). Whenever a participant, or her parents, had decided to give her baby up for adoption, the baby was most of the time adopted by her parents (#2, 34, 35, 41, 43, 54, 56, 62, 65, 75, 83, 89, 91, 103). Many chose to give their first baby up because they thought they were too young to become a mother at the time (#32, 35, 38, 54, 83, 87, 103, 107).

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[145] See the dissertations by Dupré (2014) and Houde (2003) on contemporary adoption practices in Nunavik.

[146] "The average number of children per woman in Nunavik is one of the highest in Québec with 3.2 children per woman in Nunavik and 1.6 in Québec of the 2004-2008 period" (NRBHSS 2011: vi).

[147] For example, a participant noted that the DYP intervenes in families when children are under 18, yet for Inuit a person will stay someone's child for life (#21).

[148] Data are lacking for half the women in their sixties.

Among single mothers, many talked about their trouble raising children alone (#29, 41, 54, 58, 65, 70, 80, 88), and especially exercising control over teenagers and keeping them at school (#2, 13, 23, 30, 32, 46, 53, 74, 85, 105). Eight participants mentioned they got no support from their children's fathers (#2, 41, 49, 58, 66, 68, 80, 105). However, one third of the participants, including non-single mothers, said their families supported them.

**Conjugal relationship: being a man and being a woman**

We have already addressed the issue of Inuit conjugal relationships in the family violence section, where causes of violence included alcohol and drug abuse, lack of communication, and distrust. We also talked about men's anger and frustration, and women's silence and low self-esteem. Indeed, many participants raised these issues, which make relationships between Inuit men and women very tricky nowadays. In the interviews, we also discussed men's and women's roles and the way Inuit now choose their partners. This brings us to what Inuit women think are the profound causes of marital problems.

Role shifting and imbalance of power

Many authors[149] have already discussed the shifting roles of Inuit men and women throughout colonial history as an explanation for the high rate of conjugal violence. In the past, gender identity used to be defined by a person's role in relation to another person. Thus, a woman was a woman because she was able to perform the tasks a wife should do for her husband, and vice versa for the man, who did complementary tasks. Complementary gender roles, skills, and mutual support were a question of survival for all.[150] When the men lost their ability to hunt—largely when they lost their dogs—and provide for their families, they also lost their identity and value as men, fathers, and husbands. Meanwhile, women have continued to run the household and take care of the children, among other things. In addition, they have also become more successful than men in entering the job market. In doing so, they have become the new providers, economically at least. While many men have remained in a state of helplessness and anger, women have endured and taken responsibility for this situation, and all of them have been trapped in silent acceptance. Rapidly changing gender roles and identities have thus had a direct impact on their ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships based on mutual support and cooperation (#57).

Several participants spoke of the male identity crisis, which makes men feel weak and angry at the same time (#48), to the great dismay of women: "The men got weak when they settled into communities and when the dogs were slaughtered. Because they were the providers, they were everything when they had their dogs. It was their main life, to go out on the land, to feed the family" (#22). When men no longer go out on the land to hunt, they feel stuck at home, and some just do nothing and become lazy (#42, 46, 48). Indeed, a lot of women complained they had to do everything alone, whereas they naturally need support

[149] Among others, Billson (2006), Billson and Mancini (2007), Clairmont (1999), Condon and Stern (1993) and Williamson (2006).

[150] See among others, Hervé (2013: 166) and Guemple (1986: 22).

from men (#48, 77). According to the following woman, the mere fact of doing nothing makes men feel useless and has an adverse impact on them. To strike out against their wives then becomes a way to feel strong again:

> The problem of the men is that they have lost their identity, they have no more a definition of what it is to be a man; they don't feel like men anymore. And then they hit women, because that makes them feel like men. They have lost themselves. […] They need support to redefine what it is to be a man, and it would help women. […] Before, men and women were more complementary, now women complain that men cannot provide for the family. Some just do nothing. […] It is harder for men, they have an identity crisis, but nobody understands what is the problem. If affects men to do nothing, even my son, he is pretty active, does sports, but when he stops doing things, he says he feels useless. I couldn't imagine those men who are always doing nothing. (#60)

As we saw in Chapter 3, many men who hit their wives do not take responsibility for their actions. Because of their feeling of weakness, they see themselves as victims and their wives as tormentors, as with this woman's experience: "I was even more the victimizer. In his eyes, he is the victim, because he feels weak, he can't do anything. That is why men become violent; low self-esteem, feeling powerless, and then being charged, that made them feel even smaller: 'Poor me'" (#63).

When we asked women what the roles of men and women were in Inuit society nowadays, we noticed that the man's image as the hunter and family provider is still strong (#25, 42, 81), as well as the woman's role in making and repairing clothing, in cooking, in cleaning the house, in taking care of the children, and in fishing (#39). When women have jobs especially, men are expected to bring country food home. Indeed, a good and supportive husband is seen as someone who hunts:

> Lots of women support their husband financially, but the husband, when he is not working, he hunts; he is supporting them too. There is less hunters now in the community, because people are more working, they have to pay their rent. But the ones who have a wife who is working tend to hunt. (#81)

> [Women] do everything, they are in committees, they are teaching, they nurture more than men, they do more stuff then men. Well, men, when they can go hunting, they provide. But women, for community activities, do more. They are caregivers in all areas.
> They should not have the problem of being the only provider; men should help too. (#22)

Participants acknowledged that women were not confined to the house anymore, and that they could do a lot more than before, such as hunting and taking part in political and community life. Some thought women were the ones who ran the communities now (#34, 48, 65) and maintained social order (#59). In other words, men have become weaker, and women stronger:

> Inuit women are strong; a lot of Inuit leaders in Nunavik are women, and that goes back generations as well, because women took care of things when men lost their pride. And the men felt helpless because the women could still do what they do, but the men couldn't anymore. So the women became very strong. (#28)

> [Women] are the pillars of the community. A lot more women are in different organizations. They have always been strong, though they seem weak, but the majority are the ones that make up of the community. (#21)

Somehow, men began to stay home when women began to leave (#39, 48, 59). Both on the job market and in family responsibilities, some women thought men were doing a lot less than women were to support their families and maintain stability at home (#59, 65). Nevertheless, nowadays men have to be involved in raising children. Some do, and we can observe a change in the younger generations (#60, 65).

Some participants pointed out that shifting gender roles have meant more opportunities for women, and an improvement in their lives (#81). Modern living also makes the work of women, as wives and mothers, less arduous and demanding than it used to be in the old days, when there were no stores, for instance (#33, 50, 71, 72). Nonetheless, a few participants pointed out that men are still usually the head of the house; many women obey their husbands and thus put aside their desires and aspirations:

> Women used to be in the house; today more women are working, are having salary, a career. It has changed a lot with the society; there are more opportunities for women. But socially, it still needs more improvement. Some women would like to do something in their life, but they don't do it because of their husband; the husband is the man of the house. […] I have a friend who wants to do something else; she wants to apply for a job but she doesn't because her husband doesn't approve it. She listens to her husband. Some women are like that still, but not all of them anymore; it has improved. (#81)

> A lot of women who are very capable of doing a lot of good things are controlled by their husband. They don't go to the best of their potential. Some husbands are really insecure and they control. (#22)

A 63-year-old woman who had lived in Montreal for many years stressed that a lot of men do not let their wives be who they are, as different human beings, and have their own minds and express themselves (#94). Men think a woman should follow her partner's ways (#20), and many women shut down because they are scared (#59). Moreover, unlike men, "women are not allowed to be mad"; this is why "they are carrying their husband's anger" and "have to take orders" (#65). Considering the anger in Inuit men and their relationship with alcohol, we can understand why some Inuit women are afraid to get into a relationship with an Inuk man (#25, 94), and a lot prefer to be single, even though they have children and might be struggling financially (#11, 23, 34, 36, 54, 65, 68, 69, 81, 101).

A wife's obedience to her husband may have been a traditional custom in Inuit society, as in many others (#63). Yet we should keep in mind a comment from an elder who said that, in return, Inuit men used to take better care of their wives (#71). A young woman was grateful to her mother, who showed her how to stand up for herself, but she recognized that most Nunavimmiut women are not like her:

> A lot of women have to learn how to stand up for themselves, not just be obedient to their boyfriend or husband. Because my mother is a very outspoken woman, who stands up for herself in every way, so I learned from her. I never really tolerate things that I think are not right for me, but a lot of women don't do that. It all starts from home, about how you watch your mother. A lot of people are old-fashioned, and in the

> old days you just had to say "yes," whatever it is, to your husband. But now it is different. They are not real men anymore. They are not wise enough to control the house, they are not educated enough. If the guys want to be in control, they have to be well informed what life is. They just do whatever they want, not really taking care of their girlfriends or wives, just giving them babies and not really caring for them. My ex-boyfriend tried to be like that, but I don't want to be like that, so I got out of it. Women have to learn to say "no," and to speak their mind, because you have the right to have your own opinion. (#68)

This supports the idea that, nowadays, men are not well equipped to meet a family's needs, in addition to making the lives of many women infernal. In denouncing this, the participants' goal was less to blame the male for all of the misery than to emphasize his despair and need to heal. On this matter, like Inuit women, Inuit men need counseling and help to rebuild their self-esteem (#15, 46, 73, 87), and they have to do it by regaining or redefining their identity and sense of usefulness. Even more than women, men have to learn to express themselves other than through violence (#45, 63). There have been already a few initiatives by men's networks or associations, such as Qajak or Unaaq in Inukjuak, but a lot of work remains to be done (#30, 44, 48, 60).

In addition to the transformation and imbalance of men's and women' roles, many elders thought that youth are now getting into intimate relationships regardless of what their parents think, this being a major cause of conjugal hardship and fighting, along with deficient parenting. Before we discuss this issue, let us first look at marriage as it used to be among the Inuit less than a century ago, and how it started to change.

Narrative: For better or for worse, until death

*Elisapie*[151] *is 63 years old and married an Inuk man when she was 18. He was from another village, and she didn't really know him before. Their parents arranged the marriage after he expressed his desire to marry her. She was not consulted, but had been taught to obey her parents. From that point on, she quit school and moved to his community in order to live with him and his parents. She then had her first baby.*

*It was very hard to adapt to her new life as an adult and wife in a very different home and family from the one she had known. Elisapie was not used to violence and anger. After only a few months, she felt very homesick but didn't know how she could leave, because her mother told her to stay with this man. And then her husband had his first fit of anger. From then on, she learned to be careful with him.*

*She stayed there for three years, until she decided to move back to her native village because she felt her life was in danger. Although alcohol was not often available in town at that time, whenever her husband began drinking, he would beat her up. After one serious attack on her, she managed to leave. It wasn't easy because there were no regular flights to and from the community back then. She prayed to God to find a way out. Luckily, a plane came that was going to her community. She took that flight out, but her husband followed her. They then settled together in her home village.*

[151] Fictitious name.

*After her mother-in-law died, her husband became colder and more violent. Once, he almost killed her. Because Elisapie's brother witnessed the assault and encouraged her to do something, she finally pressed charges against her husband. It took two years to get a sentence. During that time, he was still in the community, but had to follow court conditions. He has never shown any remorse, even today, and has become more hostile. To him, he did nothing wrong; he was right to attack her, it was her fault. They separated for a while, until she forgave him and he came back. She started to think he could be a wonderful man, until he started to be violent again.*

*He was not drinking alcohol anymore, but rage and anger remained in him. Still, there were a few times when he would have an outburst of rage and then calm down. When he was angry and violent, he always blamed her, because she was disobedient and not responsive enough to his needs. Now, Elisapie knows this to be untrue; so many beaten women are blamed while it is not their fault. But in her husband's eyes, he was the victim because he felt weak and helpless.*

*After going to a healing school in 2008, Elisapie gained the inner strength to stand up and say: "I am not made to live in an abusive relationship, but to be loved." She realized her situation was absolutely unacceptable. She learned that God is her father, that He loves her, and that she can talk to Him freely. After many years of separation, she got divorced three years ago. It was a very hard process because it is so uncommon, especially in a small village. Like all Inuit, she had been taught she couldn't leave her marriage. She was probably the first woman of her age, in her village, to leave an abusive relationship, after many years of fear.*

Marriage, then and now

In the past, Inuit parents used to arrange their children's marriages without their consent, and children followed their parents' wishes. Sometimes, an older man who wanted to marry a woman would also ask her parents for her hand (#3). Most participants over 70, and some between 60 and 70, did not choose the man they had married (#3, 6, 27, 57, 71, 72).[152] Even though some were at first angry and/or afraid of their husband, most ended up getting along with him, staying with him all lifelong, partly because they had no choice in order to survive in the harsh arctic environment. Two women noted that the fact of being constantly busy working and having to feed their children left little opportunity for dispute or complaint (#21, 33).

As Nunavimmiut were introduced to Western education and culture, they discovered a whole different kind of love. Already in her time, a participant 63 years old told us she had refused to marry an abusive man whom her parents had chosen. Although her parents never did agree with their daughter's refusal, she managed to denounce the man to the police and end the relationship. She could then marry another man, who respected her a lot

[152] Two elders never married because their mothers did not want them to. They were told it was too much hard work to have a husband. They still had many children (#18, 56).

more (#94). She deplored the fact that, in the past, an Inuk woman would usually be forced into a man's bed and then expected to fall in love with him after having children with him:

> Before I met my husband, my parents tried to force me to marry an Inuk; like in old time, parents chose husband. I was learning another culture, going to school, and I realized that people fall in love and then get married, from storybooks. My mindset was different and this man was forced into my bed, because that is how it was. I couldn't accept that. […] Five years it took to convince my parents he was not right for me. He stayed in my bed five years. They didn't even consult me. […] I didn't get married because I used to tell the minister "you teach us to not lie to God, so I am not going to lie if you marry me to this man, I would say I don't love this man, I will not marry him." So he used to give up. […] This man used to beat me up. […] He tried to have sex with me every night; to rape me, as *Qallunaat* would say. Most Inuit women have rape experiences when they got married. As if it was normal, but for me it was rape, it was forced. […] Those women hate their husband for long and they finally get a baby out of rape. A very small handful of women used to marry whom they wanted to marry. And they have to get used to this man and to fall in love with him. Hopefully the parents think that if the woman has a baby with him she will fall in love with him. Our parents were like that, they were forced to be together, but they were very close all their life. (#94)

In accordance with the Christian faith, which the Inuit made their own in overwhelming numbers during the last century, a wedding is seen and experienced as a sacred union that is unthinkable to break other than by the death of one of the two partners. For this reason, still today, it is very hard for women who are struggling in an abusive relationship to find a way out. As we saw in Elisapie's story, it is particularly difficult when the fault is put on women (#21, 64) and when the couple is expected to settle its problems and stay together. We should also add the matters of children and money, which make a lot of women feel dependent on their husbands. Whereas divorce was very rare among the generation of women born before 1950, it has slowly become easier with the assistance of Canadian law enforcement officers, and the entry of women into the job market. Still, women need to feel confident in their abilities, as this divorced woman explained:

> When I left my ex-husband 12 years ago, I had five young children and I made the decision to live alone and take care of them by myself. […] At first, people didn't take me seriously, because I had so many young children. Of course, there is always judgment. Some people said that I should go back to my husband, that I should not been struggling so much. […] As a single parent with five young children, I did receive a lot of support. Once people started to know my reason, I got even more support. […] It took me a long time to leave that marriage, to even know what I had already known for long before, that it was not working out. […] I thought I just wouldn't be able to do it on my own, with young children. And finally I realized it would be much easier to raise the children by myself that to try to make that works. […] I think there are more opportunities for women to try different things if they want, not just traditional types of work for women. […] I think women around Nunavik have become more independent in the last 20 years. They are less constrained by what the men think they should be doing. More and more women are willing to leave abusive relationship. […] When I left my ex-husband it was still new, I was still one of the very few people doing that. To leave a marriage in this part of the world is not common. Today, there are

> more common law relationships. And it is less taboo to leave your marriage. […] I see a lot of unhappy women and unhappy relationship, a lot of women using the excuse of their children. I don't know if it is because they don't have the confidence of being able to do it on their own. (#23)

The number of couples getting married has declined somewhat in recent years, although this decline has not prevented young people from having relationships and babies. Marriages are, moreover, very much less stable than they used to be.

"Youth just want to follow their mind"

Although traditional marriages were certainly not perfect, some of the participants recognized that parents and elders usually have more wisdom and knowledge than do youth when the time comes to choose a man and the father of one's children.[153] Many elderly women thought that couples nowadays face serious problems because youth no longer respect and listen to their parents, not merely on matters of intimacy and marital life, but particularly so on such matters. They get into relationships with whomever they want, even with relatives,[154] too hastily and at a too early age (#3, 6, 10, 21, 56).[155] A man no longer cares to get the consent of the girl's parents before having sex with her, and when the girl gets pregnant, he often leaves right away (#50, 71). Here, some elders looked back to the past and noted the contrast with today:

> Before, a relationship between a girl and a boy went better because the parents were involved and people will take their time before they go together. Today, people are too young and try to go together right away. […] They are too young and have babies. And even if parents or grandparents try to tell them what to do, whom to go with, they don't listen, and they become violent. (#3)

> Before, the parents would choose whom their kids go with and kids will take their time before they go with a man. The parents would make sure they don't sleep with each other too fast. Now, people go together too fast and too young and that causes a lot of problems. (#6)

> During my youth time, we used to respect our elders or our parents; we would be scared to try to be with someone. But these days, teenagers see each other and are not consulting the parents. It is no respect to the parents; a boy and a girl just get together and don't think of the parents' feelings. […] In my time, we would just get together and get married and stay together. But these days, the younger kids would be boyfriends

[153] For instance, a participant in her fifties chose the man she married, but she then divorced and regretted not having listened to her mother who had rightly warned her (#55).

[154] A participant who was 64 years old mentioned that many young people do not really know to whom they are related, and they often have relatives everywhere. When they have children with relatives, like cousins, the children may be mentally challenged (#16). An elder added that sleeping with relatives creates more conflicts (#56).

[155] See Dupré (2014) about the evolution of marriage customs among the Nunavimmiut, and the decrease in parental authority in choosing the children's partners. In the 1950s, parents were already blaming each other for the promiscuity of their children (Kral 2009: 195-196). Today, elders blame young people for getting into prohibited relationships with their relatives, while young people blame lack of transmission of knowledge about family relationships (Dupré 2014: 169). Indeed, there is now deficient genealogical and terminological knowledge among youth, which is affecting their relational practices.

> and girlfriends, and they would just split up. When one wants to leave, the other would leave. They just separate. (#27)

As some said, today young people just want to follow their mind (#6, 18), and this attitude means less seriousness and commitment toward others, and more instability in couples (#27, 55, 94, 105):[156] "[Youth] are not serious enough, because they can break up anytime, and they go with somebody else, or they go back together. Some are like that, and having babies by the way" (#22). The consequences: too many parents who are too young (#4, 8, 25, 50); single mothers; and fatherless children. Of course, a solution is often to have children adopted by a relative, or a non-relative, who is better equipped to take care of the baby. As we have seen earlier, customary adoption is still very common, while abortion is very rare.[157]

When a young girl gets pregnant and decides, with the father, to keep the baby, this decision at times puts a lot of pressure on the couple and becomes a source of anger (#61) that is not easy to overcome when maturity is lacking (#48).[158] Among childless teen couples, as we have seen in the previous chapter, heartache may sadly lead to suicide. The following woman thought young girls lack the emotional tools to deal with heartache because they lack a good upbringing by their parents:[159]

> If a girl grows up here, she is not getting the proper education; right there, her opportunities are going to be lost. She is not going to have the self-esteem, confidence in herself to go forward and to be a strong woman. Most of them, these girls, fall in love when they are 15 years old and that is it. "This is my man for life," and if it doesn't happen, so they are devastated, and then you have suicide at 14 or 15 years old. Emotionally, I really believe that most girls don't have the tools to deal with big life problems, especially relationships. And it is a learned behaviour, it is not their fault, they learn it from the parents, who learned it from their parents. (#28)

In the same vein, participants mentioned a serious problem of infidelity and jealousy among young and adult Inuit couples (#1, 18, 20, 21, 27, 41, 48, 54, 80), which goes hand in hand with mistrust, fighting, and arguing (#19, 54, 72). Many women complained that men tend to be very jealous and control freaks (#20, 68), with the result that women become afraid of them:

> Women are afraid of men because they always have to know what their spouses do; men are control freaks and jealous. I have to tell my husband where I go and the time I

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[156] On this subject, Briggs (2001) thinks the importance in Inuit culture of respecting individual autonomy has turned into too much indulgence toward children, with the consequence that youth have become socially irresponsible.

[157] According to our data, we know that one participant had an abortion at the age of 16 (#61), and that another would have liked to have had one but never got her family's consent (#103). An elder also said abortion was not an option for Inuit, who prefer adoption (#57).

[158] In Inuktitut, we can relate the notion of maturity to *isuma*, i.e., intelligence or ability to think, which one develops through childhood (Briggs 1983: 16). According to Briggs (2000), maturity is necessarily related to the capacity to love moderately and without exclusivity; a nurturing love translated by the word "nallik-" among the Inuit of Nunavut, a term also used in Nunavik. This kind of love goes with family responsibilities.

[159] See the writings by Bujold (2006) and Kral (2009) about the vulnerability of youth to instability in intimate relationships, and how this vulnerability relates to the introduction of the concept of romantic love.

> come back, and I have to be back at the exact time. Somebody is watching you all the time. (#14)

Although men are very jealous, many women think men are more often than women guilty of infidelity (#15, 20, 54, 83). A woman, whose relationship had been ruined by jealousy, thought that a man is jealous because he has been unfaithful to his wife or girlfriend, since "that is what the old saying says: when one person is jealous it is because this person has been seeing someone else" (#48). Another woman realized her ex-husband, like other men, used to be violent when he was cheating on her:

> I understand why he was violent, because he was looking…this is the biggest problem for married people: him looking for other girls when the wife is not looking for a man. This is the problem that I had at home. Because every time he is with someone, he used to do that, beating up me more when he is fooling around. […] Some married couples I know, when the husbands are cheating, they start being violent with them or saying bad words to them. (#55)

Therefore, these days conjugal life sadly often consists of violence, suspicion, infidelity, disrespect, unsteadiness—should we remain together, despite the presence of children—and, above all, lack of good communication. Indeed, many couples have broken up because of the last problem:

> My ex and I didn't use to communicate at all. Maybe that is why the marriage failed. Good communication is important to have a good relationship, from my experience. The only communication was fighting, instead of talking. I try to tell the people I care about that, good communication is important. (#55)

Many participants stressed the need to improve communication between men and women, and thus help to increase trust and mutual support, prevent fighting and violence, and improve family life (#2, 5, 35, 48, 55, 57, 59, 60, 94). To communicate, both men and women need to talk more, and be more open towards one another. Several women thought men have trouble expressing themselves and listening to and understanding women (#48). A woman 32 years old thought part of the problem is lack of understanding among men about women in general, so some knowledge should be taught to them:

> I try my best to let men know what women's needs and wants are, because they have no clue. If they have a better understanding, they would start communicating with the other guys and get them to understand women. I think that would help a lot, because, let's say, we have our period every month, and if we don't have it, we get grumpy. Like I am pregnant and I am not having my periods for nine months, I am like very sensitive for anything. I can even cry for a small thing, and that knowledge should be shared because he has no idea. A man should understand the woman and support her because women are weak, but strong in the whole picture. […] I think that they don't support because they don't know how to. For example, my boyfriend didn't know, and he had a child before, that I was working that much. […] These little things about women's needs should be shared. Because if we don't have this communication, there won't be knowledge, it won't build anything. (#59)

Since most people over 20 years old have one or more children, conjugal life is difficult to dissociate from parenting. Furthermore, the bonds of affection are as tenuous between parents and children as they are within couples.

**Parenting: being a child and being a parent**

A few times already in this report, we have referred to deficient parental upbringing and structure as one explanation for many social problems: absence of children at school; immaturity of people in their relationships; disrespectful and violent behaviour among youth; and so on. While we have previously discussed concerns about child abuse and neglect, especially in relation to alcohol consumption and family violence (#73, 99), we now wish to focus on parenting alone—the ability of parents to care for their children and bring them up while giving them the necessary skills to succeed in life, and particularly to succeed in relationships with others. According to many participants, because they greatly lack parental upbringing, structure, and support, children and teenagers nowadays do whatever they want and are disrespectful towards others. They are even out of control, as we have seen in the chapter about schooling (#15, 24, 28, 46, 65).

For instance, what is very noticeable and worrying nowadays is that a lot of children do not have curfew, with the result that they end up sleepless, inattentive in class, and exposed to drugs, alcohol, and crime (#8, 16, 37, 41, 43, 49, 50, 53, 102). A woman recalled how it used to be in the past, and thought parents need to be taught parenting skills:

> The community changed a lot. We used to raise children, we made sure that they are attached to the parents. […] I would like to teach some traditional skills; like how to raise children, because nowadays when students are in school, they have sleeping habits and they don't go to bed early enough. When we were kids, we used to have the rule to sleep at nine o'clock; we had to be in by nine. But now it is different; kids can stay hours up at night, even if they are five or six years old. They need discipline. (#16)

Currently, many factors jeopardize the parents' ability to bring up their kids properly. Among others, as we have seen in the first chapter, is the fact of living in a multi-generational and overcrowded house, which can prevent young mothers and fathers from becoming independent and responsible parents. Next, alcohol and drug abuse obviously limit the parents' ability to invest in the upbringing of their children. Then, there is the lack of maturity of young parents, and the absence of involvement by one of the parents, especially if only one of them is around.

In addition, the parents' ability to raise their children relies on how they themselves were brought up, and more specifically on the parenting skills they picked up from the previous generation. The capacity to develop emotional bonding is also influenced by this past family experience. Finally, the drastic changes in lifestyle and the various traumas still being experienced have had a great impact on family relationships and parental upbringing.

<u>"Babies have babies"</u>

According to the participants, much of the problem arises because the people who now have babies are too young and not stable as couples. As some said: "Babies have babies." Yet we have seen in the participants' profile section that many elders were just as young when they had their first babies. The matter is therefore not age itself, but rather the immaturity of the parents (#102). This is to say that many Inuit now become parents before developing the skills and ability to raise children (#68). Some elderly people were of the

opinion that it had not been the same in the past, when parents used to guide and warn their children about sex and parenthood, and in turn youth used to listen to them:

> The mothers are too young sometimes. They try to raise kids when they are kids. They start to raise their kids mentally, physically at the same time that they are raising themselves. […] Nowadays, there are more teenagers having kids, it is incredible. Before, when we were young women, starting our first time period, our parents would teach us, tell us very strictly: "I don't want you to connect with the men yet because you are too young." They used to tell us "if you deliver a child at a very young age, it is going to batter your back in the future." That is why I never got my baby until I was 25 years old. Because I listened to my mother, to her traditional skills, mind. (#16)

> People are getting kids too young. In the past, it was controlled. Our mother knew that it was time for us to have a man. Then they chose a man for you. But parents today don't even know that their little girl is roaming around with the boy; they don't even see him, meet him. They only find out when the girl is pregnant and they ask who is the father. It is ridiculous, it is sad. (#94)

As the last quote tells us, things are very different today, as teenagers are having sexual intercourse without their parents being aware. Moreover, youth have not made a habit of being careful and using contraceptives (#4, 9, 20, 44). The next 63-year-old woman worried about the babies who are exposed to the immature and violent behaviour of young couples, and wished all girls would protect themselves during sex until they are ready to raise a child:

> I wish that when Inuit want to have sex, they had protected sex. Sometimes I wish that young girls would get their tubes tied until they are able to make up their own mind seriously, and not make babies who are going to be looking at the conjugal violence, who are born from that. When you are young, you tend to express your feelings more violently and you don't consider anybody. (#94)

At that point, a participant stressed that many young people are not conscious of what it means to be a parent, and of how much work it is (#85). Also, having a baby is sometimes motivated by the worst incentives, such as getting the family allowance or forcing a partner to stay in a relationship (#9, 15, 26). For this reason, youth should be made aware of parenthood:

> Lots of parents are neglecting their kids. They think that they just have to give them food and clothes and after they can push them outside and let them do what they want. They just want them out of the house. They even make kids only to have family allowance, to have more money, but they don't care about their kids. […] Babies have babies…Young people need more information about parenting, pregnancy; have a baby is for your whole life. […] I had my first kid when I was 19. I didn't plan it and it was a hard game to play mother. (#85)

Another participant who was 27 years old pointed out that when teenagers have sex during high school and have babies, they fail to realize that life does not end at the limits of their community. So they get stuck with the same person (#28). To her, having a baby for the purpose of staying with a man is a selfish behaviour that leaves out the man and the child. In addition, the consequences are pervasive for women who cannot complete their high school degree and find appropriate work. They therefore have to rely on government handouts:

> Young people meet when they are in high school, of even younger, and they are together for very long, not looking outside. They think that George River is the only world, but they never seek the opportunities. Like you have schools in other communities, or colleges, you can explore before being stuck with one person. You might grow out of it; or just because you have kids together you have to be together. […] People have kids at a very young age just because they are not careful. In high school, I heard a few of my friends who purposely got pregnant to be stuck with the guy, to force the guy to stay with them. It is just for them, they don't think about the guy or the kid. They are just thinking that they want that guy to be with them forever. It is stupid. […] Kids having kids: it is a big problem. Their education is jeopardized, they've lost their youth very young, if they are still in high school, they don't have jobs yet. They have to live on child allowance from the government. (#9)

Multiple sex partners and unprotected sex result in many fathers having children with different women, and many mothers having babies by different men (#21). As a result, single parents, most of the time young single mothers, are likewise common, and participants were very much concerned about their problems and needs (#50, 71). Generally, single mothers need more financial support from the father(s), in order at least to be able to feed their children (#31, 36, 41, 58). Although there is the option of legally getting child support, the process is unfamiliar and may incur costs that women cannot afford (#8, 36, 60). For these reasons, some participants thought single parents need more assistance from the community, such as hunters who would go hunting for them (#28, 30, 41, 54, 56, 59).

Nevertheless, it remains very hard to remedy the situation of many fatherless children. A single mother concerned about this issue pointed out the levity of men who do not see their parental responsibilities as a priority:

> I get tired mentally, emotionally. You get to a point where you are thinking "where is the father." […] The father of my youngest is helping me with child support, but that is not enough. It is frustrating to know that women are losing the men, so they can be free and find any women they want, and a child is helpless with no father around. It is difficult. […] I am frustrated sometimes, because there are too many children who are fatherless. […] It is like they are neglected… I look at it in a positive way even though the father is not there; you try to be a good role model, and guide them in a good life. But at the same time it is very frustrating, because the father is not really there, because he is too busy roaming around with too many women, and drinking and partying. (#65)

A participant clearly stressed the deleterious impact on children of lack of parental stability. She thought that it shows a lack of consideration for children, and that marriage used to counter this problem:

> Today, I notice young people; every time they have problems with a boyfriend or girlfriend, they leave each other, and regardless of how many children they have together. That is wrong. Lot of time I wanted to leave my husband, to run away, but I had children, who are my responsibility to raise. So I put my feelings aside. […] Today, conjugal relationship, I disagree with it, it is very destructive to the children. Hardly anybody gets married anymore. They don't consider marriage as a very sacred thing, as a primeval part of relationship. They should get married to consider the children, to make the children belong to two people. Because, when they are not married, and the

> kids know it, I suppose kids to be always scared that they are going to separate. They don't feel secure. Having a relationship whenever you want, it is very wrong for the kids. (#94)

When parents lack the stability and the emotional and educational tools necessary to raise a child, the consequences will be felt throughout their children's lives. We can now ask why nowadays youth lack these tools, while their grandparents used to have them around the same age. The problem must come from the way their own parents raised them. So, somewhere, something stopped being transferred.

"My mother taught me how to control my emotions"

In the participants' own words, the problems were not merely a matter of childrearing, but also the child's lack of attachment to the parent. There was also the idea that both may originate in the introduction of schooling among Nunavimmiut, and more specifically in the residential school experience. In the past, a girl would stick with her mother to help her around the house, while learning how to take care of a family and be a wife (#65). The boy would be out on the land, with his father, to be trained in how to travel, build a house, hunt, and be a husband. Also, both would be taught how to establish and maintain healthy relationships and how to avoid trouble.[160] All of this changed when children were removed from their families to attend school. They became disconnected from their parents and their identity, as Inuit speaking Inuktitut and living on the tundra. When they came back for the summer, they had trouble communicating with their parents and performing many traditional and daily tasks essential for survival and social life. They thus came to feel like strangers in their homes. Meanwhile, the schools deprived parents of their role in raising their own children. Basic knowledge and life skills could no longer be passed on, such as parental and emotional skills.

Many Inuit of the residential school generation could remember having been taught the traditional way. The ensuing drastic change of lifestyle, on top of the various traumas, made them feel confused and helpless vis-à-vis their children. Because the ways of living and thinking of their children are so different, some parents feel they cannot teach what they were taught.[161] As a result, the children are also confused and lost, and are not well equipped for life. They no longer listen because they no longer know how (#30), and they do not talk much either because they have trouble expressing themselves and communicating their feelings and thoughts. A contributing factor is their trouble becoming proficient in any language (Inuktitut, English, or French) (#81).

In addition to the disconnect and confusion among the parents and their children, the establishment of social services and the DYP has tended, with the schools, to remove authority from the Inuit. According to an elder, while the best way for children to learn is

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[160] On the subject of traditional educational practices among the Inuit of Nunavik, including discipline, punishment, and respect for personal autonomy, see for instance Pernet (2012) and Briggs (2001). See also "The Guide to Inuit Culture" about current Inuit childrearing methods (Pauktuutit 2006: 15-20), and the book by Fienup-Riordan (2005) on the "rules of right living" of Yup'ik in Alaska.

[161] Moreover, according to several women, Inuit used to be very strict with their children (#16, 30, 62, 94).

from their parents, many are taken away from their families, and this disrupts communication:

> Life is way easier if it is taught by the parents; if the parents taught the kids the best way they know. […] The best way is to learn from home. […] And there is hardly any teaching; kids are taken away, even from the community. So, the kid is not learning from the parents; that makes a difference. That is why there is hardly any communication now. (#33)

Survey participants identified another result: some parents now seem to have forgotten that it is up to them to raise their children, and not up to the teachers, social workers, or other third parties (#24).[162] They fail to realize that their children need their attention and love, and, currently, these children are learning to cry or get mad to get whatever they want:

> The bottom line is that the parents are not telling their children a lot of things anymore. They would say: "I can't control my eight year old, can you come and talk to that child?" But they are taking their responsibilities as parents to somebody from outside of the family who has no idea what goes on. They have to have this responsibility to talk to their children. But when they were growing up they just gave them material stuff to keep them quiet, but then, when they become teenagers, even before, kids know that they can do anything, make a little tantrum so their parents can give them something. So, when the parents have no longer the means to take care of material stuff, they don't know that all what the child needed was love, attention, and to be believed in. That is what is lacking. (#21)

According to an elder, when the parents do not talk to their children and/or the children do not listen to their parents, children will necessarily get into trouble: "Kids have to agree with their parents. Now they have more problems because they don't listen to them, they just want to be free. It is one of the worst things today. It is because the kids have been taken away from their parents to go to the school" (#71).

Even though most Nunavimmiut acknowledge the importance of schooling nowadays, what is taught at school will never replace what has to be taught at home. According to a woman, the most important thing that had been lost with the arrival of schooling was the teaching of emotional skills—the ability to control one's emotions—and the teaching of mutual support. She was more than grateful to her mother, who had kept her home at the time of the residential schools, who had made her feel like an important person, and who had given her the best upbringing she could ever receive, an education that was not offered in any school. In this way, she could develop strong family bonds and self-esteem. She could learn the rules of life, how to be a good wife and a good mother:

> My mother always recognized when there was something negative inside me or in my life and she would never let me out of the house as long as I was like that. Because she told me "you are my light, you are my jewel, my shining out to the world. Whatever you do over there, it is because of who I am." That was a big responsibility, and a

[162] This reality can help us comprehend the relationship between Nunavimmiut and service providers, as well as the Inuit conception of public services. Inuit expectations and requests are sometimes out of proportion to the duties and means of service providers.

> secure feeling at the same time; she made me feel important, that I have a role in life. […][163]
>
> My mother told us to live together, to help each other, to be concerned about one another—that was what we got to learn at home. As the only girl, if my older brother needed stuff to go hunting, my parents were collecting money for him. It is not like that anymore in Inuit society. I have never seen families like that anymore, siblings helping one another as we were forced to do in my house. […] When I look back, I had the more valuable education where I was than anybody else put together. Because my mother taught me the facts of life; how I have to polish my thinking skills, emotional skills, control skills. It is all mental skills she made me practise all the time. I learned how to do physical skills too, but emotional, hard skills were the most valuable things I can ever learn in the world. […] People who went South for school were cut off from the relationship of learning skills, because they can only get it from their mom or dad. It cannot be taught in school. Most of them came back and missed two years of this, and that is why we have a lot of problems in Nunavik, because of the disconnection of relationship between kids and family. It is known everywhere; we cannot deny it. The relationship, to be able to be open to your mom or to your father is the most important thing; it is a life skill you have to learn in order to go on with other. […] University and college are not useful if you are not going to use them right. I know a lot of people who went to school in the South who have beautiful skills, good education but they lack how to control themselves. It is very sad. […] You have to learn how to raise your child, how to be a good partner to your spouse, you have to have a good relationship with your family, and it is not given in colleges and universities. […] If you didn't learn this, you have nothing. From the baby to about 14 years old, that is when you take how to follow rules, how to say "yes", how to be able to say "no." (#94)

The same participant thought most Inuit are unaware or deny that the cause of social misery is the loss of their capacity to control their emotions.[164] This is why there are social problems (#60), why people hurt others, whether with words or physically, and why they commit murder. They have to learn at home to control their pain. With the increase in murder and suicide, parents have become afraid to hurt their children and no longer know how to counsel them. Together with the parents, the community has given up its role in bringing up and talking with children, who are left on their own:

> When the murders and the suicide started happening, parents began to be afraid of what to say, of how to counsel children, because sometimes you have to make them cry, to hurt their feelings. Parents stopped doing that and it is their responsibility. Some are afraid to be beat up by their children. Nobody communicates anymore. […] When I was young and my mother was counseling us, it was not fun. It was hard for me and for my mother. It was a common thing, but we don't see it anymore. Maybe a handful of families still do it. It was my mother's responsibility, but if I did something wrong in another family, they would scold me too, correct me too. And they would tell my mother, my mother would agree with them. So I had nowhere to have support; I had to agree with it. Now, if another family sees a child doing something wrong, they don't even consult with the parents. It is wrong. (#94)

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[163] This feeling in parents that what their children are and do reflects their own self-image probably used to contribute to strong parental responsibility (see Fienup-Riordan 2005 on this topic).

[164] About control of emotions among the Inuit, see Briggs (1970; 2000).

Like women and men, parents and children need to reconnect through better communication. First of all, children need to know about their parents' story in order to understand them better and to be aware of where the social problems come from (#44). In turn, everyone should care for children and help them to express themselves.

Help parents to help their children

Because of this critical need for parental support and upbringing, some participants thought parents need help and encouragement to become independent, be able to live on their own, and develop into role models for their children (#22, 65, 105). Parents will thus be able to teach children not only how to be responsible, pay bills, go to school, and get a job (#33), but also how to be respectful and avoid conflict. To do so, they should take more time with their children, work with them, teach them about daily life (#57), and get emotionally involved with them. To be good role models, women also have to stand up and refuse to be controlled by their husbands:

> Women have to be healthy in their mind, their heart and their lifestyle, because they are the only role models for their kids. It is not just to be obedient, just to listen to their boyfriend. And for them to really be there for their kids, to be present, not just physically, but emotionally, to really listen to their kids, what they want, because they are trying to talk. Because we see a lot of kids who are neglected; it is hard. (#68)

Many people thought family outings on the land are a very good way to tighten the bonds and teach children about traditional and modern skills. Parents should take their kids out on to the land more often. The land offers everyone a calm and healthy environment:

> I wish parents become more involved with their children in day-to-day life; make sure they have food and clothes. I wish they could raise their children the way my parents did. Take them out of the community, alone with them, even if it is not for three months anymore. Because these days, people go fishing and leave all their children in town. I think it is better if they bring all of them. (#102)

> When I was a kid, we used to go on the land for three months at a time, during spring and summer, and it helps a lot because there was no drinking people. There were lots of us, the whole family, about a hundred people. It was a good experience to be in touch with nature and there is not enough of that anymore. The nature is the most suiting, calming environment. Here is not calm. Whenever I go to the land, that is when I get back to my child time. (#68)

Many participants thought parenting courses are needed to help parents to improve their skills (#4, 11, 15, 16, 24, 52, 53, 57, 68, 73, 85). Such courses are already made available once in a while in every community (by the KSB), but only rarely and attendance is very low (#22, 24, 41, 79). Consequently, course organizers should find new ways to attract people.[165] In addition to parenting courses, many women thought children and

[165] One participant pointed out that a workshop is probably a better way to teach because it is more interactive and does not leave the impression that the parents are wrong and need to be corrected (#65).

youth should be given more information about sex, contraception,[166] and pregnancy (#4, 16, 21, 24, 42, 48, 51, 57). Teaching how to live healthily would also be beneficial (#16, 30).

As we have said earlier, emotion management is important in a society where the incidence of crime, violence, suicide, and abuse is very high. Considering that anger and violence start at home (#16), this student counselor believed anger management courses would help many people (#45, 87):

> A big issue in Nunavik is anger management. Because there is so much anger, there have been too many suicides and sexual abuses. […] It is caused by not being taught that it is OK to be angry and it is not OK to be angry and hurt someone. It comes from home. They saw too much anger and that is all they know. So they grow up with it and they think it is the solution. […] I deal with kids who have anger issues all the time. I know the family; there is so much anger in the background. Because you let a child alone growing up, you are angry; they are not animals. Like a dog, you say "get out of here." You don't do that to a child, but it happens. There is so much anger because many parents don't know how to teach about anger. (#65)

**Past, present, and future; being an elder and being a youth**

The third and last disconnect we wish to discuss is the one between elders and youth, whether they are related to each other or not. There is obviously a huge gap between the two sides, since older people grew up in a totally different world from that of younger people, and this gap is made worse by there being too little contact. In traditional Inuit society, elders used to be highly respected and listened to. They were the guardians of traditional knowledge and the social order. Their words used to be very precious and used as guides, but with colonization and the change of lifestyle, Western institutions, such as school and the police, have partly reduced their role and their authority (#105). In addition, the arrival of alcohol and drugs, not to mention the rupture of the parental bond, have tended to diminish respect for them (#9, 22, 50, 53). All in all, they have been pushed into a more silent role (#21, 33, 105).

> There is a big gap between elders and young people. There have been a lot of changes in the past 50-60 years. Parents grew up in a completely different way of life. Even me. Now there is more drugs, more accessibility to anything, more technology, more travelling, more opportunities, more suicides. It wasn't like that when they were growing up. […] In every town, elders go through the radio, but it is up to the youth to listen. Some kids are coming from angry home environments, or they have hardly a home, so they have no respect, they are just walking around. (#22)

> I am from the generation of the transition period, and I remember that if a man was cheating his wife, elders would meet him. They would meet with the troublemakers and stop them somehow. They would talk to them. They had no judge or jail system then. […] Nowadays, elders don't do that anymore. I think it all started with people drinking and doing marijuana, people getting stoned and high on those things. People started leaving their traditional ways behind. […] Elders have no more respect; I think that is why they stopped talking. If you are an elder and you try to talk to a young

[166] Some mentioned, however, that there is much more information about sex and contraception at school nowadays than in the past (#23, 34, 44, 68).

> person, he would just say "well, so what?" […] Disrespect comes from alcohol and drugs, from movies and TVs, and from the fact that they stopped going camping in the springtime. (#102)

The change of lifestyle has also brought electronic entertainment and reduced the time spent on the land with the family, thus making youth less interested in their elders (#9, 10, 14, 19, 22, 50, 53, 69, 91).[167] Indeed, most youth do not really know their elders and hardly interact with them. Elders themselves attest that teenagers and youth no longer listen to them (#10, 18, 21, 25, 27, 64, 65, 70, 71, 72, 77), are disrespectful and violent, and talk back (#21, 24, 54, 91). An elder shared her thoughts about the youth and recalled that there is confusion because of the drastic change of lifestyle:

> I am seeing the past, the nomadic past, and I see today at the same time. Today, we have problems and we are confused, but in the past there was good advice, more respect. I would like people to do our way, but they are confused, they don't know who to listen to anymore. I am right in the middle right now. Before, it was calmer, less stress, because we were just thinking about our stomach, never worrying about money, social services, alcohol. It is only through money now. I would like [youth] to listen, but they don't want to somehow. Because they want to do their own way now. (#33)

Women said that because the youth just want to follow their own way, a lot of elders do not even try to talk with them anymore. Here are the words of another elder who thought the youth now just want to do whatever they want:

> These days, we cannot say anything to teenagers, because they won't listen. Young people don't want to listen anymore, they are not afraid anymore; they are more tough. Even if elders try, they won't listen. I don't want to bother about it. They are not going to listen. That is it. […] Maybe I don't even try to give advice, because they are going to talk back. Because it is their life, I don't want to interfere, but just to let them be, because they want to be like that. (#18)

According to a 59-year-old woman, one can stay away from hardship by following the elders' words of advice instead of one's own mind. This is why she was teaching young Inuit to avoid just doing as they see fit and also telling them not to misuse technology:

> Teenagers these days, if they take the advice from elders, they don't have hardship. If they are not just on their own, stay up late at night, if they respect the elders, they are not in hardship. But if someone doesn't want to listen, he is going to have a hard time. […] I tell teenagers to not be scared, to have patience, because our mind is our enemy, don't let your mind win over you. There are people that follow it and are not all there sometimes. So I say: "don't follow just your head, but also your heart. Don't worry, don't be scared, be awake and alert. Don't rely on TV, computer, don't use the phone to go after people with bad words. Don't misuse the equipment towards other people". (#34)

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[167] Today, many elders live alone (#21, 36), and need more help with household chores. Many cannot benefit from the homecare services provided by the CLSC because these services cannot keep up with the demand (#3, 6, 10, 18). Participants who were elders would like also more opportunities to gather and have activities, whether on the land or in a special place in town (#4, 91, 93).

When discussing the respect children and youth used to have for their elders, a 20-year-old woman told us how she was amazed to hear a story about how things had been in the past. An elder told this story at a gathering two years ago, a kind of gathering that should be organized more often:

> When the elder was a kid a long time ago, everybody listened to their parents, it was even scary for the children to say "no" or talk back. Once their parents told them to do something, they had to do it right away, because that was the Inuit way of life back then. Once, her father caught one ptarmigan and cut the meat in many pieces to share all the meat with many people. She was scared of her dad and just had to listen; she took the meat, went out and a dog grabbed it. She was so scared, went home and lied for the first time of her life. She told that the neighbour thanked him. It was the first time the elder shared the story. (#47)

Women thought elders should take back their place and again become more involved as leaders and counselors in order to help Inuit to manage social issues (#21, 24, 54, 68, 70). For their part, young people should go more often to elders to get help and advice because elders often know better how to help than social workers do (#10, 16, 21, 34, 36, 48, 70, 85, 96). Many elders are really willing to help, but do not know how (#38, 91, 96). Some already do, either by going to the people who need help (#56, 64, 91) or by giving advice to those who come to them (#6, 27, 56, 75, 77, 88, 90). In addition, many elders use the local radio to warn people about specific issues, such as alcohol, school, and parenting, to give advice, or to tell stories (#3, 6, 7, 21, 22, 34, 44, 56, 59, 68, 72). In fact, it is the main tool they currently have to make their voice heard, and many people think that, in this way, they help the community. Unfortunately, youth do not always listen (#2, 3, 22, 24, 34, 59, 67).

The participants were of the opinion that elders need to talk more and tell their stories, and in turn youth have to listen to them and ask questions in order to learn from them and make good decisions in their lives (#2, 21, 33, 34, 44, 47, 65), as a young woman said:

> Elders should be the biggest support in the community; they are the ones who know best our story. We stop looking up to the elders, listening to them, wanting to spend time with them and understand who we are and where we come from, and that has a huge part to do with growing up and going somewhere in your life, or not knowing who you are. […] In order for elders to help us, the youth have to ask for help from them. We need to help the elders preach to us and teach us life skills. Most youth don't do that, they are not educated enough, they have lost hope; they have no support and are struggling with drugs and alcohol. (#25)

To do so, elders and youth need more opportunities to meet and discuss (#6, 7, 8, 21, 28, 34, 68, 69). A student counselor and organizer of activities with elders at the school mentioned the importance of passing on stories and encouraging elders to continue sharing them:

> I think they are kind of giving up. It is almost like they are saying "forget them, they are not going to listen." But right now my job is to work with elders for the school. […] I want to see elders… maybe because they think they are not educated in this new modern world, so they are kind of shutting out. They can talk about stories. They

should continue stories. Because, us, we don't want to forget it, we want to pass it on. It is important. (#65)

This participant also pointed out that feeling uneducated in the modern world may contribute to the elders' decision to shut down. Likewise, their painful past must be hard to remember, as we see in the following quote:

> Now there is no opportunity to talk about it, between elders and youth. I was thinking to organize a get-together thing with the youth and elders, in the gym, talk about their story. It could be the first time of getting them together. But I know that talking about the past, for elders is hard. The elder from Quaqtaq told me the reason why they don't share their story of the past; it is because it is still too painful. But we really need to hear it from them. (#47)

Although it is hurtful for them to talk about their story, youth really need to listen in order to know who they are, and where they want to go. Such encounters would also bring back "the culture of talking and listening" and ensure a good future (#25). In addition to telling stories about the past (#5, 68, 91), elders would be good at advising children and youth about how to take care of themselves and how to have a family and raise children, while teaching them various traditional skills that should not be lost (#1).

> Elders should have more opportunities to teach young people because we are losing a lot of elderly people that know the knowledge and skills, they know proper lifestyle. They have to give their knowledge to the other generations before they die off and we should record them, make a document and keep for future living, for younger generations. […] In the past, I remember as a child, when we lived in a small town, we used to have an elder and he used to counsel younger generations, young families, that just start to raise their family, to give them wisdom words, on how to bring up their children, how to lift up, how to have a better life. (#16)

Nunavimmiut say they learn easily by doing things, by working physically, and here again the land furnishes the perfect environment where people can be taught and healed of their despair (#10, 70). [168]

**Community life, and how to work together on reconnecting and healing**

To restore peace and strengthen the social fabric, women expressed a desire to see more people helping each other and working together (#25, 33, 55), and they wished to see more sharing and communication (#59, 62, 71, 72, 86, 96, 99), as there used to be before Inuit society went through its change of lifestyle (#21, 25, 72). Because the ability of Western institutions to provide effective and lasting solutions is very limited, we should focus on the tools available in the communities to help individuals and families in need and on the way that suits them best. Actually, besides social issues, we should not forget the many positive aspects of life in Northern communities, the abundant role models of strong women and men who work for their people, and the many worthy Inuit and local initiatives. Sharing and helping each other is a social practice that still matters a lot in Nunavik

[168] See the study by Targé (2005) in Arviat, Nunavut, on transmission of oral knowledge about the land versus teaching in the classroom.

communities, and people should acknowledge the strength of their cultural heritage (Hervé 2013).

As some participants said, communities should first work to strengthen what is already working well, while attempting among other things to expand their resources and make existing resources more effective. Indeed, although intervention, prevention, and training programs and projects abound in Nunavik, it is still very hard to find the required human and financial resources and the physical space for them (#7). Unfortunately, Inuit organizations are always dependent on the federal and provincial governments for funding. As one participant pointed out, to overcome this dependence, education is surely the key and the first step toward self-reliance (#30, 70, 102). Another constraint on program and project effectiveness is lack of coordination and communication among Inuit organizations at the regional and municipal levels. Effectiveness is confined to the community level. Here again, Inuit need more communication and mutual aid, as well as funding and willpower so that the institutions will not be as neglected as some children are (#23, 33, 60):

> We need more resources, more programs, more support from the government; school, activities, educate the youth properly, so in the future, they will be able to take on the rules. […] More assist trainings on suicide prevention, more conferences and workshops on healing, on culture identity. There is so much that we can do to help, but we are just not supporting each other. For an example, KRG is an organization itself, Makivik, KSB, and we all work on our own parts, but if we mobilize the community and work as a community in a circle. […] We need more treatment, training workshops on how to deal with drug and alcohol abuse, more youth who work with youth, Inuit people who help Inuit to change. (#25)

The communities should thus find ways to restore communication and trust among the inhabitants; they have to create more opportunities and places for discussion, sharing, mutual aid, teaching, and learning. We have already talked in the last chapter about mutual aid programs that have been very important and successful among Inuit, such as the Hunter's Support Program, the Local Justice Committees, the Makitautik Halfway House, and the Neighbourhood Wellness Program. In this section, we will briefly present existing women's groups and community activities, as well as various means at the disposal of the communities to foster mutual aid, with the intention of revealing what women want to see developed to meet their needs. We will then put forward the need for collective healing to restore dialogue and dignity.

### Sewing groups and community activities

The most popular cultural and group activity for Inuit women is undoubtedly sewing.[169] At least a third of the participants frequently sewed, and many thought it important for women to maintain this traditional activity. Not only does it provide families with warm and cheap clothing, but it also offers women a pleasant and rewarding activity. Although some women preferred to sew alone or at home with family members, almost each Nunavik community now has a sewing centre, which is generally very much

[169] In addition to sewing, many women knit and crochet.

appreciated by women.[170] Women of any age usually gather at night, many times a week, to work on personal projects and to help each other (#23). During the day, women who have free time can also work there.[171] Some women, most of the time elders (#70, 71, 77), work for pay to make clothing for people in the community who have no one to sew for them. Otherwise, after school the centre is open to young girls whom elders can teach how to sew and how to cook bannock, among other things (#27, 42, 56).

In addition to the sewing centres, a few participants, mostly in Kangiqsualujjuaq, talked about other women sewing groups: the Anglican group and the Women's Auxiliary group. The difference, and overlap, between the groups remained unclear, as was their relationship with the sewing centre. The Anglican group is affiliated with the Anglican Church and does sewing, cooking, and cleaning for people in need, for example for a family that has recently lost a member (#6, 9, 60). They also have to keep the church premises clean and raise funding to buy material (#1, 2). The Women's Auxiliary group teaches youth how to sew and cook, and sometimes also trains them in doing some land-based tasks and teaches how to raise children (#6). This group also discusses social problems (#10). In both cases, elders seem to be the ones who are most involved. Whether referring to the sewing centre or to one of the sewing groups, participants thought it a good place/time where women can gather, help each other, take a break from home, and talk (#21, 22, 23, 44, 46).

Although most women thought the sewing centres/groups are useful, at least fifteen said they never take part in them, sometimes for lack of time or merely because of disinterest in sewing. These groups are not the same everywhere, however, in terms of the degree of participation and the liveliness of the group. For instance, a Kuujjuaq resident said that involvement by women has significantly declined. People are less willing to volunteer, and funding to purchase material is harder to come by. For this reason, fewer women sew for others, and most of them focus on their own personal projects (#60). Moreover, fewer children come for traditional training courses (#10, 60). Women thought there should be more funding for those groups, and people need to start again to give and share, because giving and sharing serve to build relationships (#60).

Besides the sewing groups, women have many other opportunities to get involved in their community, and many are. There are all kinds of committees and boards (youth committee, cultural committee, justice committee, school board, co-op board, Church board and so on), associations (such as the Saturviit Inuit Women's Association), and chances for political involvement (such as the municipal council). To increase the number of women who do volunteer work to bring positive change to their community, two participants thought they needed to learn more about how to form committees and how to get involved in politics (#16, 65).

If we continue on the subject of municipal life, different types of games and activities are organized, mainly by municipalities, wellness officers, and cultural and youth committees. They usually take place at the gym, at the community centre, at the youth

[170] To our knowledge, only Kuujjuaraapik did not have a sewing centre at the time of the interviews. The centre closed a few years ago, when two elders who were teaching girls how to sew died after having been hit by a snowmobile. Women from Kuujjuaraapik would really like to see the centre open again (#82, 87, 88, 89, 92).

[171] In some cases, the centre has full-time employees (#70).

centre, or on the land. Whereas some participants hardly had time to participate and thought there are already enough activities in their community, others were of the opinion that there could be more. Here again, the situation varies from one community to another. In some localities, the gym, or the community centre, is open only at Christmas time (#55, 79, 80, 81, 91). Generally, participants would like to see more games, sports, and cultural activities[172] with children, elders, and women (#1, 4, 8, 44, 50, 52, 55, 61, 62, 68, 69, 75, 78, 83, 87, 91). They thought such a move would help to prevent alcohol and drug abuse, crime, and suicide, especially among youth (#1, 54, 69, 78, 92). Although swimming pools had already been built in some of the communities, some women wanted to see one in their own community, preferably open all year-round (#32, 61, 70, 73, 75). Because most Inuit do not go out on the land as often as they would like (largely due to their occupations or to a lack of equipment and money) and because they considered such activities essential for their health, participants thought the community needs more outland activities (#10, 22, 44, 54, 62, 65, 70), especially in order that elders may pass on traditional knowledge and educate the youth (#46).

Promoting mutual aid and dialogue for healing

One of the more urgent needs expressed by women is the need for all Inuit to talk about their personal concerns and to find trustworthy people who can listen without passing judgment (#29, 53, 55, 62, 65). As we have already seen, for various reasons, many Inuit have trouble talking about themselves.[173] In this regard, a woman shared her vision of Inuit values that should be put forward to foster openness:

> Respect, honesty, truth, to be talking to one another, to not look down at, to not make fun of, because everybody in all Kuujjuaq, in all the world, even the whole universe, they all have gone through certain problems in their life. But when they were going through that time, they didn't want to be ridiculed, they wanted somebody to believe in them, to talk with and help them. That is what is sometimes missing. (#21)

Inuit already have a few ways to express themselves and find support in their community. For instance, many people offer testimonies at Church, which gives them hope (#33), and are helped by the people involved there (#6, 15, 22, 27, 38, 41, 45, 46). However, this resource is less and less used by youth, who do not find as much comfort and strength in the Bible as the elders do. Some even feel they are being judged by those who preach the Bible (#25). Local radio is also used by Inuit, especially elders, to give testimony, to share knowledge that comes from personal experience, and to advise people on social issues

[172] An Inuit cultural centre is particularly needed for Inuit who live in Montreal and have no place to get together (#96, 104, 105, 107, 108).

[173] As a participant pointed out, many people prefer to stay silent for fear of hurting someone else with their words, such as family members, or for fear of becoming the subject of gossip. Furthermore, they do not want to force someone to listen to them, and it is not well seen to talk a lot (#59). Just as Nunavimmiut do not like to force someone to listen, when someone is silent they respect that silence (Bujold 2006: 184). This reflects two major principles of Inuit social life: the importance of respecting personal autonomy, in other words other people's intelligence or *isuma*, (Briggs 2001; Hervé 2013), and the power given to words (see Therrien 1987: 113-124). Words can heal as much as they can hurt, so they have to be used carefully. In this logic, silence is also a passive weapon of defence and a sign of disapproval (Ibid.). See also Kingston (2008) and Pauktuutit (2006: 10-11) about gossip among Inuit.

(#34, 42, 48, 61, 90). However, it does not reach everyone. Many have no wish to make public declarations and a lot do not listen to the radio, especially the youth (#24).

On the subject of women, participants were interested in something more than what is already in place. As we have mentioned, women need to regain self-esteem and feel they are not alone; to do so, they need attention and support from others:

> Self-respect, believing in who you are; it is lacking. There is not enough support for them, no people to ask them if they are going through problems. Nobody right away goes to them and just says "How are you doing?" just to say that, to show "you are not alone", just to take a few minutes of their time. Especially for single parents; just to say, "Can I take your child for an hour or two, so you can take a little break?" There is not of that enough. (#21)

Participants shared their desire to have a place, a group, and opportunities to gather and discuss with women in an atmosphere of trust and respect. A place where they can help each other, take part in activities, and share skills and knowledge, about sewing for example (#1, 2, 4, 8, 21, 23, 31, 33, 35, 45, 50, 60, 65, 84, 87, 91).[174] In addition to respectful listening, they need guidance and counseling, and they need to be educated about their rights to learn how to develop a healthy lifestyle and healthy relationships, and to be independent (#16, 21, 23, 28, 29, 50, 51, 65, 66, 87). In this way they will be empowered, no longer dependent on government or on others, and able to improve their lives. Women also need to learn to look after themselves because: "the better you look after yourself, the better chance you have to look after your home in a positive way and you have better strength" (#65). In this regard, the Wellness officers organize activities for women that have a beneficial impact on them, even though few of them currently participate. Women also need more opportunities to go out on the land together, for berry picking or fishing for example, because such activities are therapeutic for them, as they are for all Inuit (#22, 65). As we have already stressed, to be able to meet those needs and develop something strong between women, women must first be willing and get involved, and then be able to find funding and space.

Just as women must help women, men also need to get help from other men. So a men's group would be as relevant as a women's group, as would be occasional joint meetings of both groups for discussion.[175] To address growing concerns about social problems, the *Puvirniturmiut* set up an initiative of this kind in 2012. Once a week, the men get together among themselves, and the women do likewise, and they eventually have a joint meeting. All community members are free to come and speak about any issue or situation. It thus offers everyone a platform, a chance to be heard and supported, and it seems to be much appreciated so far (#67, 70, 71, 74). Such grassroots initiatives need to be encouraged and strengthened.

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[174] Most communities already have a sewing centre that partly fulfils this function. However, it focuses on sewing activities, and not all women actually sew. In addition, the centres may be insufficient to attract all women, to carry out other kinds of activities, and to integrate children. The sewing centres may yet be put to other uses.

[175] There is a kind of men's association in Inukjuak, named Unaaq. Its mission is to guide youth to become good hunters and leaders by giving elders an opportunity to pass on their knowledge (see Unaaq's Facebook page).

Besides discussion groups, access to counseling for people from the community has emerged as a clear need. The participants thought that services independent of and separated from social services and the DYP should be developed, and that the counselors should be elders and other Inuit who have the experience and skills to listen to, talk with, and help other Inuit (#50, 68, 90, 94, 105). In addition, even though many people prefer individual counseling (#21), there is a need for family and marriage counseling, since relationships as much as individuals need treatment (#2, 14, 16, 21, 23, 24, 38, 45, 50, 54, 59, 62, 96). A participant remembered that, in the past, couples were advised by elders and parents:

> I remember that, in the past, when couples were in violence, arguments, the parents or some leaders will talk to them and give advice to these couples. But nowadays we are not doing that. Nobody is giving advice to couples who are in trouble or who need help. Nobody talks to them anymore. In the past they used to prepare a meeting to help this couple. (#27)

Many Inuit can work as counselors, and plenty of them are willing to help (#22, 50). Some work already as counselors, for example at the women's shelters, at the Isuarsivik Treatment Centre, at the Makitautik Halfway House, or as health support workers for former residential school students. A qualified counselor is seen as someone who has experienced hardship in the past, who can thus understand other people's suffering, who has furthermore learned from it, who has gone through a healing process, and whose experience is used as an asset to help others (#21, 24, 57).[176] Two women counselors explained this point:

> Even though I had a rough start in my life, to me it was a gift given to me so I can be a better counselor. It was hardship, but my faith was so strong, so that kept me strong and I never turned to alcohol or drugs. With the support of my husband, who believes in me, I am very lucky. […] I use what I went through as a way to help people. I don't know exactly what is the pain they go through, but I have a good idea. I know what it is to be raped, what it is to raise a child alone, what it is to have the father of your child committing suicide. I was hurt, but I moved on. I didn't get stuck in this. (#21)

> I went through a lot of healings before working as a counselor. It was three years ago that I really started healing from residential school, and other issues in my life. […] I learned from difficulty, trauma, and I feel equipped to help other people. […] I have been able to overcome my trauma, help myself, be autonomous and help my family. I just try to be available to people who need help; but I have limitations. We do the best we can with what we have and the time we have. (#30)

The notion of healing is very important here because a lot of Inuit see it as the only way to bring hope and to overcome current social misery (#7, 13, 22, 24, 28, 47, 63, 80).

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[176] In her dissertation about power relationships and mutual aid in Nunavik, Hervé (2013) asserts that Inuit who were deprived in the past, and who experienced hardship, should bring emotional and moral support to others. This obligation to guide, listen, and counsel usually goes along with both trust in others and strong social criticism. This kind of role is thus very restrictive and demanding; people expect a lot from such advisors, who should respect confidentiality and be role models with no vices, such as alcohol consumption. It is important to note that, in Inuit society, being in an advisory position does not mean telling others what to do, but rather knowing how to listen; this is how personal autonomy is respected (Hervé 2013; Kingston 2008: 160).

Everyone needs healing, and particularly those who commit abuse and cause conflicts (#31). Since the issues affect people collectively, the healing should also be collective.[177] Some participants made reference to healing conferences, groups, or sessions that they had heard about or in which they had taken part. These are usually opportunities for youth to learn about a recent past they know too little about, and for older people to disclose their experiences and share their pain. Youth really need to be taught by elders and by those who experienced residential schools and the move to sedentary living in year-round settlements (#25, 47). Youth also need to be listened to by their parents:

> When I was younger, we did a healing workshop with youth and their parents, and it was amazing. I said everything I needed to say to my mother, she left me alone after that. I was 17 and she would check my pocket and go in my room… After hearing of why I am like this… My mother was like that to me because her father was like that. He went to residential school. We don't understand why our parents are so angry, why they are alcoholics. We could do more healing, more understanding of our culture. (#24)

A three-day workshop about historical trauma and cultural identity has sometimes been organized by the KSB; it helps people "to talk and learn about history, and it makes them feel proud because they see how their people is strong" (#60). Even though it is more information than therapy, the participants can talk and it helps them to become empowered. Inuit need more opportunities to understand where they come from (#47, 60), and each community would benefit from more Inuit-led collective healing activities that would last for several days (#14, 16, 46, 87). The sine qua non condition for success is obviously the people's trust in the group and respect for everyone (#16). Some participants talked also about sessions held on the land. An Inuk counselor shared her experience as a leader of healing sessions on the land and explained briefly how they worked. She thought Inuit are now more ready for healing, and more willing to hear the truth and face it. However, counselors have to be very careful and make people feel comfortable. They cannot force people. The latter will decide on their own when is the right time:[178]

> Right now we are beginning to see people who are more ready to receive healing for what has happened in their life, any bad thing that they are beginning to disclose. Before, they didn't want to hear that at all. […] [Before] they were too much hurt, wondering, "What it is going to do, it is going to help me, it is not going to stop what I am going through." They felt helpless and they were very much in denial. They didn't want to hear, they didn't want to see, to feel. […] To help people, we have to do it in a nice way; not ask direct questions. When you are given a direct question "Why do you come here?" It sounds really like, "They don't want me, so what should I tell them?" We have to make them very comfortable. […] Sometimes I do my counseling out on the land. As in Inukjuak, we went to the place where they were taken away to go to residential school; healing where it started. Once back in the community, we did

[177] On the subject of social problems experienced by Inuit from Nunavut, Oosten and Laugrand (2002: 33) also mention "the necessity to share experiences and to bring them out into the open should be emphasized. Inuit collective confession was as a key element in any healing process and the sharing of experiences is thought to be crucial to maintaining harmony and peace within the community."

[178] This is consistent with the importance, among Inuit, of respecting personal autonomy— the ability to think for oneself—by not telling someone what to do; in other words, it is the importance of noninterference (see among others Briggs 2001; Bujold 2006: 37, 341; and Hervé 2013).

> another healing with their children. […] During the healing, we have certain rules; we make an agreement with them, the ones who are ready to just talk about their experiences, what it felt to be taken away, that is what we talk about. We go through a lot of emotions, that it is OK to feel anger and that, but as long as you are not going to hurt yourself or somebody else. They go through that. If they want to yell out, they do. We have activities for them and they open up. They could look so stiff and hard-core people, but on their way back it is like all way soft, like that the flowers had just bloomed. It is so good to see. […] We travel to all the communities to inform people. We can't force them; they have to decide when is the best time to be out on the land, or in the community. We found it so much better out on the land. There is no interruption; there is no kid to bother you. That works best. (#21)

The goal of healing is to make Nunavimmiut regain their pride and control over their lives. It goes hand in hand with reconnecting to the past and their identity, and with a reweaving of social bonds. In doing so, it will make possible a revival of traditions considered important to Inuit, traditions that are, in themselves, fundamental ways to weave and maintain family and community relationships. There are for instance traditional midwives (*piarartaatitsiji/ nutarartaatitsiji*) and godmothers (*sanajik/arnaqutik*).[179] It will also make Inuit remember that they used to have their own ways to govern themselves and maintain social cohesion, and that they can still follow these ways. According to the same woman, this revival is already under way, and so there is hope:

> Although we didn't have a government, we were good governing people, from the youngest to the oldest. We all had a chore to do, we have all responsibilities. The family's dynamic was very strong, but it got dispersed when we got colonized. […] The traditional way and the Canadian way were not going together, they were collided, not respecting each other. Our midwifery was almost gone, but it came back, even throat singing is coming back. Our pride to be Inuk, it is really coming back. Before, they were ashamed. Even to have traditional food was a shame. It is all coming back because it has to come back, because it starts from who you are. You have to be really proud of who you are, even though you have had problems, even though your family is not the most popular family, but you are who you are and you can survive and become something. (#21)

In short, Nunavimmiut are in the best position to help Nunavimmiut to look at themselves in the face, to believe in themselves, to be empowered and to restore peace in their communities.

**Summary**

1. At the time of the interviews, half of the participants were single, while 23% were living common-law and 27% were married. Altogether, 50% had been married, but 13% later divorced, and 13% were widows. About 88% of the participants had at least one child, and 34% were single mothers. Close to half were less than 20 years old when they first gave birth. The average number of children per woman was 3.36.

[179] See Parnasimautik Consultation Report (2014), See Peter about the socializing role of rites of passage that are rooted in tradition and are now being actualized (Pernet 2012; 2014). Also see Dupré (2014: 211-232) about the production of family relationships and identity through the *sanaji*.

Finally, 50% had practised customary adoption, either by giving up a child or by adopting one.

2. Most participants thought their communities are growing weaker through lack of communication and mutual aid among people. They attributed this weakening to the drastic changes in lifestyle, the experience of various traumas, and the weakening of parental and elder authority through the introduction of Western institutions, such as schooling, social services, and the legal system. All social bonds have been affected and need to be strengthened.
3. Fighting, infidelity, instability, and distrust more often than not affect conjugal relationships. This is partly due to a feeling of helplessness and anger in men, which in turn is caused by an imbalance in their gender role in modern Inuit society. Elders attributed problems in conjugal relationships nowadays to a general loss of respect for parents and elders, who used to advise youth about intimate relationships and marriage. Youth are now often left to themselves and get into relationships with whomever they want too quickly and without being ready to become spouses and parents.
4. In addition to suffering from conjugal violence, many participants pointed out that most women continue to be controlled and made to obey by their husbands. Some thought women need to be educated in order to be able to stand up for themselves and become more independent in life. In turn, men must recognize their responsibilities, face their personal problems, and learn how to express themselves. Finally, couples need to communicate more.
5. Children are not taught anymore to listen to their elders, to express themselves properly, and to control their emotions; these are the emotional and relational skills that serve to maintain healthy relationships. They now simply do as they wish and are disrespectful and violent. The consequences are harmful.
6. Inuit parental skills have been jeopardized by, among other things, overcrowding of houses, abuse of drugs and alcohol, immaturity of young mothers and fathers, conjugal instability, and, finally, by a rupture in the parent-child bond that occurred at the time of the residential schools. Participants were very much concerned about the needs of single mothers, who struggle to feed their children, and the needs of the children who are left alone, confused, and emotionally unequipped. Parents, elders, and the whole community have to talk again to the young and teach them emotional and relational skills.
7. The relationship between elders and youth and communication between them also need to be restored. Elders have to start talking again and telling the stories of the past in order for youth to learn where they come from. They also should take back their role as leaders and advisors with youth who are in trouble, and they should regain their power to maintain social cohesion. In turn, young people need to show respect for and interest in elders. Communities must organize more joint activities to promote dialogue and the passing on of traditional knowledge.

8. More than any Western institution, the communities and the Inuit possess the abilities to restore social bonds and peace in Nunavik. Already, many Inuit practices, programs, and institutions promote healthy and strong social bonds through sharing and mutual aid, thus resolving social conflict. They have to be valued and strengthened, specifically through better cooperation among Inuit organizations, through involvement by all Inuit, and through more funding and resources.
9. Communities should furthermore create more opportunities for people to talk trustfully about their suffering and to help each other. In addition to individual therapy—which women and men alike require to regain self-esteem—Inuit need family and marriage counseling, discussion groups, and collective healing sessions. Elders and other experienced and skilled Inuit—who have been cured of their own wounds and are role models for others—are in the best position to provide counsel and guidance. Healing sessions would thus be an opportunity for people to disclose their stories, for youth to listen to them and voice their own concerns, and for everyone to regain their pride in being Inuit.
10. In addition to sewing groups, which women consider to be essential, the participants thought women need more opportunities to get together, discuss, help each other, and take part in activities. They would also like to have a place where they could go to have confidential counseling and learn about how to improve their lives.
11. Going out on the land is one of the best ways to promote exchange, teaching, and learning, whether among women, between women and elders, or between youth and elders. It is also the most suitable environment for initiating a process of collective healing among Inuit.

Finally, education, both at school and at home with parents, is the key to empowering Nunavimmiut and giving them back control over their lives. They have to learn about their history, about social programs and the legal system, about conjugal life and parenting, and about how to express themselves properly in all circumstances.

# CONCLUSION

In this report, we hope to have successfully and properly put forward, in all their complexity, the experiences and thoughts of Nunavik Inuit women with regard to different social issues. We have also attempted to present their concerns in order to improve the living conditions of each and every Nunavimmiut. Our goal has been to give these women a voice and to familiarize the reader with their lives and needs. Although this study is largely about the negative side of current Inuit life, we hope the reader will also remember the strength of will, lucidity, and hope that these women have expressed through their words.

Restoring peace to Nunavik communities is a collective responsibility that concerns not only each individual but also each local or regional organization, and each level of government—municipal, provincial, and federal. The urgency to protect children from violence and addiction is unquestionable, and concrete measures have to be taken now to make sure Nunavik children grow up in a safe and healthy environment. It is everyone's duty to protect and support each coming generation at its own level.

Nunavik women have to be protected from all of the kinds of violence that affect them and be given the resources that will guarantee their equality with men. They have to be supported to preserve their central role at home and to continue bringing positive changes to their communities.

More communication, more resources, and more money are not only necessary to reduce the gap between Nunavik and the rest of the province in access to services, but also essential to ensure a peaceful future for coming generations. Initiatives must however be more culturally relevant; in other words, they have to respect Inuit worldviews.

Based on the initial findings of this survey, participants at Arnaliat Nipingit 2015, the women's conference held in Akulivik in March 2015, were asked to identify five solutions to improve gender equality and empower Inuit women. Dianova, a non-profit organization active in developing initiatives and programs with the objective of promoting personal self-reliance and social progress, invited Saturviit to present the five solutions at a panel on gender equality and empowerment of women during the 59th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, in New York City, on March 17, 2015:

1. To provide Inuit families with a healthier environment and to help Inuit women become more independent, we wish to emphasize the urgent need to increase the number of social housing units in Nunavik communities; in addition, the accessibility, suitability, and affordability of housing in general must be improved.
2. To diminish crime in Nunavik communities and to better protect victims of crime, we suggest that governments and regional organizations work together to implement culturally and socially adapted programs designed to assist and rehabilitate Inuit sentenced to prison, both while serving time and after release.

3. To enhance Inuit access to post-secondary schooling, to support women in the fulfilment of their aspirations and independence, and to offer young people a better future, we suggest that a post-secondary educational institution be established, such as a college or a university, in Nunavik.
4. To decrease the number of foster care placements of children, to promote family harmony, strength, and unity, and to restore parenting skills among Inuit men and women, we suggest that more child advocacy centres be built in every Nunavik community; furthermore, we believe it would be advantageous to promote Inuit knowledge as an alternative to intervention by the Director of Youth Protection.
5. To break the silence that has shrouded the past and present hardships of the Inuit, and to foster dialogue between family and community members, we recommend that family-healing centres be established in Nunavik and located on the land; they would serve to convey Inuit elders' knowledge and wisdom.

The above recommendations, from the March 2015 women's conference in Akulivik, and all of the needs mentioned by survey participants will help Saturviit to develop its priorities for the future. The Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik will continue to speak out on behalf of Nunavik women and children and act to ensure their wellbeing. It is hoped that this report will give a broader impetus to regional and local actions to restore peace and happiness to Inuit families. Future initiatives and actions should be developed by considering all of the cultural, historical, social, and political specificities of the region and its inhabitants. This report contains only the main findings of a longer report, which can be downloaded from Saturviit's website (www.saturviit.ca). By taking time to listen to women's voices, we may envision holistic solutions and bring more wellbeing into their homes.

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## APPENDIX 1 - SCHEDULE AND PARTICIPANTS

* Exact age unknown.

**KANGIQSUALUJJUAQ**
January 26 to February 1, 2013
Participants: 16 women, 2 *Qallunaat;* 1 teacher (Manon Fournier) and 1 policeman (unknown name)

**#1**: 54 years old
**#2**: 40 years old
**#3**: 77 years old
**#4**: 35 years old
**#5**: 51 years old
**#6**: 64 years old
**#7**: 25 years old
**#8:** 28 years old
**#9**: 27 years old
**#10**: 69 years old
**#11**: 41 years old
**#12**: 40 years old
**#13**: 38 years old
**#14**: 51 years old
**#15**: 20 years old
**#16**: 64 years old

**KUUJJUAQ**
February 1 to 11, 2013
Participants: 14 women

**#17:** 50s*
**#18:** 85 years old
**#19:** 19 years old
**#20:** 36 years old
**#21:** 60 years old
**#22:** 53 years old
**#23:** 46 years old
**#24:** 23 years old
**#25:** 23 years old
**#26:** 40s*
**#27:** 67 years old
**#28:** 45 years old
**#29:** 40s*
**#30:** 62 years old

**TASIUJAQ**
February 11 to 14, 2013
Participants: 11 women and 1 *Qallunaaq* social worker (Anouk Laroque)

**#31**: 23 years old
**#32**: 49 years old
**#33**: 67 years old
**#34**: 59 years old
**#35**: 26 years old
**#36**: 19 years old
**#37**: 29 years old
**#38**: 49 years old
**#39**: 28 years old
**#40**: 30 years old
**#41**: 46 years old

**KANGIQSUJUAQ**
February 15 to 21, 2013
Participants: 18 women

**#42**: 56 years old
**#43**: 33 years old
**#44**: 36 years old
**#45**: 36 years old
**#46**: 40 years old
**#47**: 20 years old
**#48**: 36 years old
**#49**: 30 years old
**#50**: 66 years old
**#51**: 57 years old
**#52**: 19 years old
**#53**: 48 years old
**#54**: 41 years old
**#55**: 53 years old
**#56**: 66 years old
**#57**: 74 years old
**#58**: 46 years old
**#59**: 32 years old

**KUUJJUAQ**
March 11 to 14, 2013
Participants: 7 women, 2 *Qallunaat*; 1 coordinator of the Neighbourhood Wellness Program at the Tulattavik Centre (Louise Fortin) and 1 director of Legal Services for the Legal Department of the KRG in Kuujjuaq (Catherine Fortier)

**#60**: 40 years old
**#61**: 23 years old
**#62**: 23 years old
**#63**: 57 years old
**#64**: 34 years old
**#65**: 53 years old
**#66**: 54 years old

**PUVIRNITUQ**
March 15 to 20, 2013
Participants: 12 women

**#67**: 38 years old
**#68**: 24 years old
**#69**: 18 years old
**#70**: 31 years old
**#71**: 69 years old
**#72**: 32 years old
**#73**: 79 years old
**#74**: 32 years old
**#75**: 40 years old
**#76**: 25 years old
**#77**: 53 years old
**#78**: 34 years old

**IVUJIVIK**
March 16 to 23, 2013
Participants: 3 women

**#79**: 18 years old
**#80**: 35 years old
**#81**: 45 years old

**KUUJJUARAAPIK**
March 24 to 28, 2013
Participants: 12 women

**#82**: 40s*
**#83**: 48 years old
**#84**: 60 years old
**#85**: 49 years old
**#86**: 53 years old
**#87**: 48 years old
**#88**: 19 years old
**#89**: 40s*
**#90**: 72 years old
**#91**: 65 years old
**#92**: 22 years old
**#93**: 57 years old

**MONTRÉAL**
July 8 to 12, 2013
Participants: 15 women

**#94:** 63 years old
**#95:** 29 years old
**#96:** 53 years old
**#97:** 45 years old
**#98:** 39 years old
**#99:** 54 years old
**#100:** 38 years old
**#101:** 52 years old
**#102:** 52 years old
**#103:** 42 years old
**#104:** 45 years old
**#105:** 49 years old
**#106:** 62 years old
**#107:** 47 years old
**#108:** 47 years old

# APPENDIX 2 – NUNAVIK INUIT WOMEN'S MANIFESTO

## August 5, 2005

Nunavik Inuit Women's Manifesto

**STOP VIOLENCE**

*From August 1 to 4 2005, one representative from each Nunavik community met at a camp near Puvirnituq to discuss violence in their communities. These women adopted the present manifesto.*

For too long now we have been witnessing the rise of violence and its impact on us, our children, and our society in general.

We can no longer watch from the sidelines as violent acts continue to permeate our society. We wish to break the walls of silence surrounding violence!

The future of Nunavik lies with our children. We wish to assert the right for our children to grow in peace and security, and only in this way will the cycle of violence be put to an end.

We, Inuit women of Nunavik, demand that violence directed against women and children must stop. Child sexual abuse is absolutely intolerable and must end. All types of violence, whether physical or psychological, against women and children must cease to occur.

If we continue to not act against violence, we and our children will continue to bear the scars, for inaction perpetuates the cycle of violence.

When a violent perpetrator is being forgiven, the forgiveness must not translate into immunity for abusers.

Authorities must act against violence and end the impunity.

The women of Nunavik demand social justice for their communities.

Our organizations – Nunavik local and regional authorities as well as the Federal and Provincial governments – must deal with the epidemic of violence.

All Nunavimmiut are invited to reflect on this manifesto, adopt it and act against the violence that affects our communities, so that our hearts, our souls and our lives may focus on creating a better life for all Nunavimmiut.