

**SUMMARY OF THE FINAL REPORT ON THE
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SYMPOSIUM
IQALUIT, NUNAVUT
JANUARY 18-20, 2006**

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“We must return to our communities and do something to stop the violence. We must act now. We cannot wait for the governments to do this. We know what we have to do.”

SUMMARY:

For two and a half days in January, over 100 people, who live in and are committed to communities across Nunavut, met to discuss violence against women. By noon on Day 3, **78 recommendations** had been made towards a strategy on violence prevention. There was an overwhelming consensus that violence against women was unacceptable, that it was never the victim’s fault that the situation is very serious, and that Nunavut communities are ready to act immediately to eradicate it.

The conclusion was that the solution to violence does not come from outside the community but exists within it. The men and women of Nunavut require training, support, funding and the authority at the community level to prevent violence at its roots when it begins, and before it gets madly out of control. It was also decided that the most important things a community and government could do was to provide locally-based education, counseling and support for the children.

“We Inuit know how to support a child who has seen violence and felt the violence themselves...Children need to be counseled so they can heal or they will grow up to hurt us (and others) with their anger. This (counseling) should be done by people they know in the community.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A STRATEGY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES:

- 1. COMMUNITY AUTHORITY TO INTERVENE AND PROVIDE SUPPORT IN VIOLENCE PREVENTION**
- 2. COMMUNITY RESOURCES UTILIZED, EMPOWERED AND DEVELOPED FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION**
- 3. COMMUNITY MODELS OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION DEVELOPED WITH COMMUNITY INPUT**

COMMUNITY AUTHORITY

Communities require greater authority in order to intervene in issues of violence and abuse prevention. Funding and training must be given to communities in order to train men and women who are interested in and capable of working in community justice and counseling. Local counselors must be available to children, victims and abusers.

PRIORITIES IN THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE & ABUSE

Each Nunavut community must have dedicated abuse prevention services including:

1. **SPECIFIC COUNSELLING & SUPPORT TO VICTIMS, CHILDREN AND ABUSERS:** Training programs and ongoing support for counselors in violence prevention.
2. **COMMUNITY-BASED JUSTICE:** Justice Committees need training and authority to intervene in issues of abuse and violence.
3. **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES:** Increased support, intervention and services for individuals with mental health problems and their families.
4. **ELDER SUPPORT & EMPOWERMENT:** The role of Elder-Advisors must be established in all communities; training and support in the area of violence prevention; authority and respect must be given to the work that elders do.

ROOT CAUSES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Identifying root causes provided a foundation for later discussions on prevention:

1. **POWER AND CONTROL OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN:** Some people (both men and women) believe men have the right be in charge of the women they are in a relationship with, which can lead to the use of force to impose control.
2. **INEQUALITY:** When women are not considered equal to men, they are vulnerable to men who seek to control them. Communities need to teach boys and girls that men and women are equals.
3. **POOR SELF-MANAGEMENT & COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS:** Some people are not able to communicate their feelings and their thoughts. When people are unable to communicate effectively, their behaviour can be violent and abusive. Children who grow up with violence and abuse have difficulty managing their own behaviour and will not solve problems well.
4. **STRONG EMOTIONS:** Some people can not control strong feelings such as jealousy, anger, fear and shame. These feelings build up until they explode in violence and abusive behaviour.
5. **UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS:** Some couples argue and fight and do not resolve their problems. They often behave in ways that hurt their partner and these strong emotions can lead to violence.
6. **PAST ABUSE/ THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE CONTINUES:** Boys growing up in a violent home are more likely to learn controlling and violent behaviour. Girls who see and experience often think they are worthless and accept controlling behaviour from their partners
7. **LACK OF HEALING FROM THE EFFECTS OF ABUSE AND TRAUMA:** When people are not treated for the effects of abuse, they find it difficult to manage strong emotions. Their behaviour can become violent and abusive to women and children.
8. **CHILDREN VICTIMIZED BY ABUSE & NEGLECT:** Children act out in negative ways when they experience abuse and neglect. Without healing and support, the anger quickly turns to criminal activity and violent behaviour. As adults, their anger turns to women and others whom they feel they can control.
9. **LOW SELF-ESTEEM & CONFIDENCE:** Young men suffer from a lack of education, hunting skills and equipment, and of positive roles for them to fill. There is a crisis in self-esteem among young men leading to substance abuse and violence.
10. **DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY DYNAMICS:** Lack of parenting skills and positive role modeling among young parents often leads to abuse and violence in the home. At times,

issues within the family are not properly dealt with through counseling and support and problems fester until violence erupts.

11. **SOCIAL PROBLEMS:** including a high rate of substance abuse addictions, overcrowded housing and housing shortages, youth pregnancy, unemployment and the loss of Inuit cultural values.
12. **MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS:** Some of the most serious violence has been caused by those who people are mentally ill and have not been given help.
13. **GOVERNMENT CONTROL: Community-based groups require more control over intervention in abuse and, in particular, need more authority to intervene when the potential of violence occurs.**

“The answer is in us... We can make this violence stop getting worse.”

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

VICTIM SUPPORT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

COMMUNITY-BASED VICTIM CRISIS RESPONSE:

The consensus was that community-based services must **RESPOND QUICKLY TO VICTIMS WHEN THEY ARE HURT OR IN TROUBLE**. The following types of victim support services are required in every Nunavut community:

1. **COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM:** Community Law Enforcement officers for safety and protection *and* Community Counselors for both victims and abusers
2. **IMMEDIATE MEDICAL SERVICES PROVIDED TO THE VICTIM:** Assistance given to the victim to transport and accompany her to get medical help; other support services such as babysitting while she is being treated.
3. **CRISIS COUNSELLING FOR THE VICTIM AND FAMILY:** Emotional support and accurate information
4. **24-HOUR HELP LINE:** Community-based contact for victims when police are off duty; Inuktitut & Inuinnaqtun service.
5. **THE FAMILY INFORMED AND INCLUDED**
6. **FAMILY HOME MADE SAFE: Abuser Removed From Home**

PARENTING TRAINING AND SUPPORT: Greater support to parents and families. Parents need to have the skills to deal with problems and prevent violence in the home, and to teach their children to be non-violent. Recommendations included:

1. **PARENTING SKILLS TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS**
2. **RESPIRE AND SUPPORT FOR ELDERLY PARENTS**
3. **COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT TO PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN ARE VICTIMS OR ABUSERS**
4. **COMMUNITY PARENT NETWORKS AND SUPPORT GROUPS**
5. **ONGOING ABUSE PREVENTION TEACHING TO CHILDREN**

CHILD COUNSELLORS IN ALL COMMUNITIES:

Every Nunavut community must have community-based counselors trained in working with children. Recommendations for children’s counseling services included:

1. **TRAIN COMMUNITY COUNSELLORS** to provide immediate and long-term support to child victims and witnesses of abuse
2. **USE INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT** and the Inuit process of assisting children with trauma & abuse
3. **APPROPRIATE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN** in safe, nurturing homes of families they know within the community, and avoid re-traumatizing them by removal from the community

EDUCATION AND SUPPORT OF CHILDREN:

Children and teens must be taught emotion management, problem solving and skills to prevent violence. Recommendations included:

1. **ABUSE PREVENTION CURRICULUM FOR ALL AGES, ALL GRADES, IN ALL SCHOOLS**
2. **MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE AND CHILDREN WHO WITNESS ABUSE**
3. **USE OF INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT AND INUIT KNOWLEDGE WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN**
4. **ELDER-ADVISORS**
5. **INVOLVEMENT OF THE FAMILY**

LONG-TERM VICTIM COUNSELLING:

Long-term counseling of victims is required beyond the immediate crisis stage including the following services developed at the community level:

1. **COMMUNITY-BASED VICTIM SERVICES IN ALL COMMUNITIES**
2. **EMERGENCY SAFE HOME IN ALL COMMUNITIES**
3. **TRAINING OF COMMUNITY COUNSELLORS IN ABUSE PREVENTION**
4. **OPEN DOOR AND FLEXIBLE COUNSELLING POLICIES, DROP-IN CENTRES**
5. **INTEGRATED SERVICES: MENTAL HEALTH, SOCIAL WORKER, COMMUNITY COUNSELLORS OFFERING A VARIETY OF SERVICES**
6. **ELDER-ADVISORS**

LONG-TERM SUPPORT FOR BOTH VICTIM AND ABUSER

Practical services are required to assist **victims** in healing and building their capacity, including services to support victims with housing, childcare, finances, employment, education, training, physical and mental health and life skills.

Abusers also require long-term counseling, treatment and support in order to learn new skills to prevent a recurrence of their violent behaviour. In many cases, abusers have been victimized or traumatized as children and bear deep scars that only long-term treatment can heal.

Recommendations for support services to abusers include: counseling from within the community at the crisis stage and throughout their healing process and treatment while incarcerated or in half-way houses. This support should include the abuser's family. Elders should be available to provide advice and counseling to abusers, and in the programs that treat abusers. Abusers also require half-way houses in communities in order to be supervised before they reintegrate fully. More recommendations:

1. **INUIT CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC PROGRAMS FOR ABUSERS** Treatment and counseling must be provided by Inuit counselors who understand the culture and language of Nunavut.
2. **EDUCATION, TRAINING, LIFESKILLS & HUNTING SUPPORT FOR MEN** This addresses some of the root causes of violence in men, as identified above.

COMMUNITY-BASED JUSTICE:

The need to intervene at the community-level in abuse issues, particularly before abuse and violence escalates.

1. MORE AUTHORITY AND DISCRETION TO COMMUNITY JUSTICE COMMITTEES
2. COMMUNITY INTERVENTION AT EARLY STAGES OF RELATIONSHIP
3. INTEGRATION OF INUIT CULTURE AND INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT IN JUSTICE SYSTEM
4. INUKTITUT/INUINNAQTUN SPEAKING JUSTICE WORKERS
5. TRAINING OF COMMUNITY JUSTICE WORKERS (INCLUDING ELDERS) IN LEGAL ISSUES
6. RESTORATIVE APPROACH TO LESS SERIOUS CONFLICTS
7. COMMUNITY-BASED SENTENCING FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS

VICTIM-CENTRED JUSTICE:

1. VICTIM REPRESENTATION IN JUSTICE SYSTEM
2. COMMUNITY VICTIM ADVOCATE AT ALL STAGES OF JUSTICE PROCESS
3. INFORMATION AND COUNSELLING TO VICTIM ON JUSTICE ISSUES
4. VICTIM AND ABUSE PREVENTION TRAINING
5. VICTIM'S SAFETY AND CONCERNS ARE THE PRIORITY
6. MANDATORY CHARGING & SENTENCING FOR SERIOUS OFFENCES INVOLVING WEAPONS AND EXTREME VIOLENCE
7. PUBLIC EDUCATION: ZERO TOLERANCE FOR VIOLENCE MUST BE CONVEYED TO THE COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY POLICING & RESPONSE:

1. RCMP WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH THE COMMUNITY ON ISSUES OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION
2. RCMP INCORPORATE INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT AND INUIT INTERVENTION PRACTICES BY WORKING WITH COMMUNITY COUNSELLORS & ADVISORS
3. NEW RCMP OFFICERS ORIENTED TO COMMUNITY BY COMMUNITY-BASED ADVISORS
4. PUBLIC EDUCATION: INFORM COMMUNITY ABOUT AFTER-HOURS DISPATCH SERVICE
5. COMMUNITY LAW ENFORCEMENT DEVELOPED AND TRAINED
6. COMMUNITY GIVEN MORE AUTHORITY TO INTERVENE IN CRIMES OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE
7. IMPROVE RCMP AFTER-HOURS LINE TO ENSURE VICTIM SAFETY

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES:

Participants discussed various topics that related to the need for improved mental health services. While not a root cause for all or even most violence, it was suggested that individuals with mental health issues have not been given early intervention to prevent potentially violent behaviour.

ELDER ISSUES:

Participants consistently raised the importance of including, supporting, respecting and empowering elders in all aspects of violence prevention. Training for elders is required in legal issues, abuse prevention and substance abuse issues. Elder-advisors should be in all communities, public awareness must increase for elder respect, and youth should be encouraged to seek elder support and advice.