



Suvaguuq

Pauktuutit, Inuit Women's Association of Canada

National Newsletter on Inuit Social and Cultural Issues

Report from the President: Veronica Dewar

Welcome to our first Newsletter of the century. This has been a time of transition for Pauktuutit. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our staff, Board and Executive members, we have addressed certain internal issues that were beginning to have a negative impact on our ability to effectively accomplish our mandate. In part, some of these issues were due to the growing pains of our organization as our list of projects and activities is forever increasing. I feel the process of transition is nearing its completion now and the changes have resulted in a better organized, more effective Inuit Women's Association.

It was gratifying to receive a vote of confidence from the Annual General Meeting with the re-election of myself and the entire Executive of our Board. We have worked well together and there is a good understanding between us. I have attended many meetings this year across Canada and in other countries. Our work has attracted attention from a wide variety of sources, allowing us to share expertise and skills with other indigenous organizations internationally. It has been the policy of our organization to only attend meetings where travel expenses are covered.

This year we have been seriously challenged in our ability to adequately represent Inuit women. This challenge is the fact that Pauktuutit is not recognized by the federal

government as a national organization. This greatly limits our presence and participation in the development of government programs and policies that affect Inuit women and their families. While we have pursued legal avenues to force the government to recognize Pauktuutit as a national organization, there has been pressure placed upon us to drop this case and not disturb the status quo. Our relationship with the national Inuit organization, Inuit Taprisat of Canada, has been strained because of this. However, I believe we must continue our action as it is in the best interest of Inuit women and their families that their voices be heard.

Pauktuutit has continued its work with projects across the north, projects that are identified, developed and implemented through community consultation and participation. The Justice Project, which researched the levels of unreported crimes and policing in Labrador coastal communities, has now been completed. The results indicate that there is a high level of unreported crime, much against Inuit women, and that the lack of a permanent police presence in the communities exacerbated the level of crime. The report and the recommendations for improving community policing were presented to the Newfoundland government. Last year, I attended a justice workshop in Iqaluit and was concerned that there was not adequate grassroots representation in the justice system.

I would like to see law makers undertake a real and meaningful consultation with violators, victims and community workers to see what would work better for our communities. I hope Pauktuutit will be able to participate in such a process in the future.

A particularly important issue that Pauktuutit has been very active on, is that of intellectual property rights. Inuit women tell us that they are concerned about the loss of control they experience over traditional designs in clothing, arts and crafts. This is a complex issue but one in which Pauktuutit has quickly developed a growing expertise. I feel that we have succeeded in bringing this important issue to the attention of the public and I am optimistic that we will continue to be active in moving our agenda forward to protect the work of Inuit designers.

Unfortunately, because of funding shortages, Pauktuutit has been unable to continue the promotion of Inuit fashion. Our efforts had resulted in Inuit models and Inuit-produced clothing being seen in a wide variety of Canadian cities. We hope to build upon this momentum in the future when funding becomes available.

Child care has long been identified as a priority for Inuit women, both as a resource to promote and support Inuit child rearing practices and also to greatly increase women's ability to fully participate in the economic development of their communities. Last year, the project was completed and you will see the accomplishments of the Child Care Project in this newsletter.

Pauktuutit continues to be very active in the area of health and social issues. In this edition of Suvaguuq we have project reports from *Aniqsaattiarniq—Breathing Easy*, Substance Abuse and HIV/AIDS. We are also involved in a variety of other initiatives and proposals, including family violence and child sexual abuse. We are working to ensure Inuit women continue to receive programs and support that address the real needs in their families and communities.

This year has been very busy and exciting and there are no indications that our work load will be getting any lighter in the next year. I know that with community support and with our staff and Board working as hard as they do, that we will be well equipped for any challenges that face us in the year ahead.

Pauktuutit Board March 1999-2000

EXECUTIVE

Veronica Dewar President	Monica Ell Vice-President	Donna Kisoun Secretary - Treasurer
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REGIONAL BOARD MEMBERS

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Pauktuutit National Inuit Child Care



Child care is an essential part of the infrastructure of a community. It supports the economic development of women, provides safe, nurturing day care and enables single mothers to continue their education. Pauktuutit has a long history of involvement in child care. Now, with the completion of the project, we feel it is important to recognize our accomplishments and to reflect the work that got us here. Here is a brief outline of the highlights of the Pauktuutit Child Care project.

In 1985, delegates at the AGM first noted that the lack of day care in the north was a serious problem. The next year a resolution was passed urging day care centres to subsidize single mothers so they may pursue their education.

In June 1989, Pauktuutit published the *Guide to Starting Day Care Centres in Inuit Communities* (revised and reissued in 1994). During the next two years, Pauktuutit conducted Regional Day Care Workshops across the north and assisted communities to develop funding proposals to support Day Care Centres in the communities.

In 1995, a resolution was passed at the AGM stating that Pauktuutit would inform the federal government about the components that

Inuit women consider essential to the new federal First Nations/Inuit Child Care Program (FNICCP). Through the efforts of the Inuit Working Group and community meeting, the FNICCP was delivered to many communities between 1997-99.

These programs are important for Inuit women and their families and can facilitate the growth of healthy families.

Celebrating and Documenting the National Conference on Traditional Inuit Child Rearing Practice

In January 1998, in Kuujuaq, there was a special meeting of elders and parents. During the sessions elders spoke about ways of caring for children. Pauktuutit is very proud to announce the availability of the following collection of materials that were developed from that meeting. They are all available from Pauktuutit.

Four Videos

1. Inuit approaches to childbirth and infant care.
2. Inuit approaches to early childhood and play.
3. Inuktitut languages in early childhood.
4. Children of abuse.

The videos are a resource documenting traditional Inuit child rearing practices and exploring current concerns. Each minute video will run in the language of the speaker with subtitles.

Catalogue

The catalogue is a reference list of Inuit who make things for children and how to contact them. It will be part of the next *Suvaguuq* newsletter.

Book

The 100 page spiral bound book features exclusive portraits of elders and documents Inuit child rearing practices. It is a basic source of Inuit-specific early childhood information.

Tusarannaat

This is a unique collection of 26 Inuktitut stories and songs available on CD and cassette with text.

Aniqsaattiarniq—Breathing Easy Project



In 1994, Pauktuutit launched a national campaign to address the alarmingly high rates of smoking among Inuit. There was strong evidence that tobacco use among Inuit had reached a crucial stage.

The evidence (1991-96) included:

- Smoking rates for Inuit were among the highest in Canada
- In NWT, 69% of teenagers and 72% of adults smoked regularly (women outnumbered men)
- In Nunavut, 78% of 15-24 year olds smoked (compared to the Canadian rate of 32% for the same age group)
- In Nunavik, over 70% of Inuit women smoked before, during or after pregnancy
- There were higher rates of asthma, ear infections and problems with lung development among Inuit children, conditions that can be attributed to tobacco smoke exposure

It was clear that without a change in behaviour, another generation of our Inuit youth would follow their role models and have to deal with the dire consequences of tobacco addiction. Many of our middle-aged Inuit and Inuit elders are living these consequences and their families are seeing them suffer. As a result the *Aniqsaattiarniq- Breathing Easy Project* began. There have been three phases to this project.

Phase One 1994-1995

Pauktuutit began by developing a discussion paper, establishing an Inuit Working Group (with representatives from each region), conducting focus groups with children and youth, and holding consultations with health workers and educators. These activities resulted in two reports: “*Guidelines for Inuit Communities Working on Reducing Tobacco Use*” and “*Inuit and Tobacco*”.

Phase Two 1995-1997

Two resource kits were prepared: ‘*Community Resource Kit*’ and ‘*School Kit*’ and distributed to all Inuit communities. An independent evaluation (1998) showed a very positive response to the material, but recommended that follow up was essential to ensure any reduction in tobacco smoking in the communities. However, it was not possible to find funding for a follow-up project at that time.

Phase Three November 1999- March 2000

This Phase of the Project builds on and consolidates the work previously done by Pauktuutit and others in the North around the issue of tobacco reduction. This involves northern community workers and others committed to tobacco reduction in a process of consultation, training, and motivation about the potential role of Inuit smoking counsellors.

The project continues in close consultation with the Steering Committee members and key contacts in the communities. This includes telephone follow-up, development of training material and cessation counselling in a Northern setting, and production of a special Aniqsaattiarniq edition of *Suvaguuq*. There will also be publication of the proceedings from the training event held in Inuvik on November 14-19th 1999.

New HIV/AIDS Network Forming

Community members have been telling us for some time now that there is a need for an Inuit-specific HIV/AIDS network. At the annual general meeting of Pauktuutit last March a resolution was passed directing staff to begin the process of starting the network. The national HIV/AIDS steering committee, which worked on the development of the first six booklets, has agreed to stay on as the founding committee of THE CANADIAN INUIT HIV/AIDS NETWORK. The committee has membership from each region, urban Inuit and youth. This is a big step toward making sure the Inuit voice is heard at a national level to speak to the Inuit communities needs as they relate to HIV/AIDS. Membership in the network is open to anyone interested in getting information and/or providing help to the network.

We held a logo contest in September and received more than thirty entries. All of the artwork we received was of a very high quality, making selection of a logo very difficult. The artwork submitted by **Sammy Kudluk of Kuujjuaq** (shown below) was chosen as the winner. Congratulations Sammy and many thanks to everyone who sent us their artwork.

If you would like more information on the network, please call Todd Armstrong, (Senior Advisor on HIV/AIDS Programmes) at Pauktuutit.



Evaluation of the Aniqsaattiarniq Project

Here is a summary of the major findings from the 1998 independent evaluation of the project:

- it was difficult to contact people who had received and/or used the kits (only 24 of 63 [38%] nursing station contacts and only 5 of 62 [8%] school contacts were interviewed;
- people who had used the kits rated them very positively overall ;
- 27 of 29 kit users (93%) said the project helped them;
- 28 of 29 kit users (97%) said tobacco use is a problem in their communities and 26 of 29 (90%) say others in the community think so too;
- all 29 kit users (100%) say they hear more talk about quitting smoking now than, say, 5 years ago;
- there has been a dramatic increase in smoke-free homes;
- there is a need for follow-up and training in how to use the kits;
- people are ready for smoking cessation services and resources;
- there is great concern about the health of children and youth.

The main recommendations were:

- that regional health boards make smoking reduction a priority;
- to train existing and new staff (in nursing stations and schools) in the use of the kits;
- to proceed with a comprehensive tobacco reduction and cessation campaign (including recognition of community efforts to keep smoke-free homes; personal and professional support for health workers who want to quit; training smoking counsellors; etc.);
- Pauktuutit is well-placed to lead a national northern campaign.

We **know** that smoking is a serious health problem. Let's continue to work together on ways to support our family and friends to quit. We don't want to hand this problem on to our youth.

Substance Abuse Project

New Substance Abuse Coordinator

Reepa Evic-Carleton was recently hired as the Substance Abuse Coordinator. Before coming to Pauktuutit, Reepa worked with Tungasuvvingat Inuit Centre for 7 years as the Family Support Worker for Inuit in Ottawa.

' I am originally from Pangnirtung and I moved south 10 years ago with my family.' She says. 'I returned to Pauktuutit from maternity leave at the beginning of October. I'd like to work more closely with the Addiction Workers in the communities by being available as a resource and support person for those who need it.' Reepa is conducting a needs assessment survey through a telephone questionnaire of Addiction Workers. She also plans to compile a list of addiction resources that community members could access. 'I hope to hear from people with their ideas of work that could be done by the national Pauktuutit Substance Abuse Programme. Please call or write to me at Pauktuutit.'



Art by Oqqi Taqtu from 'Healthy Babies'

Pauktuutit continues Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Effect (FAE)

Prevention work

It is hard to believe that alcohol was introduced to the communities just two or three generations back and only became widely available 10-20 years ago. Hard to believe because alcohol plays such a big part in our lives now. One of the tragic results of alcohol are babies who are born affected by the alcohol drunk by their mother during pregnancy. This is an issue of paramount concern to the Inuit communities and Pauktuutit. Resolutions on FAS/E have been passed at our AGMs since 1995.

What is Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Effect (FAE)?

When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol it very quickly crosses the placenta. The fetus (baby) growing inside her very soon has the same amount of alcohol in its blood as the mother. The baby's liver cannot break down the alcohol in the same way as the mother's liver. The alcohol can cause birth defects by affecting the growth and proper formation of the fetus' body and brain. How much the baby is affected by the alcohol-related damage depends on the amount of alcohol the baby has had during the pregnancy. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can lead to long-term developmental disabilities in the form of alcohol-related birth defects, including FAS and FAE.

FAS/E doesn't go away. The effects last forever. The child will not outgrow their problems. The child will live with their problems all their life, so will the family and the community. But brain damaged does not automatically mean stupid. FAS/E can lead to behavioral problems because the child cannot process (sort out) information in the same way. For some individuals and families, a diagnosis of FAS/E can help them to understand the problem. However, with understanding, support and a loving community, each child can reach their full potential, as far as they are able.

How Can We Prevent FAS/E?

FAS and FAE are caused by a woman drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

Drinking and binge drinking during pregnancy can both cause FAS and FAE.

Stopping drinking at any time during pregnancy will benefit both the mother and her baby.

If a person refuses an alcoholic drink, just accept their answer. Don't question why or try to persuade them to drink. A woman may know or suspect she is pregnant, but not want to discuss this.

A man may refuse a drink in support of his non-drinking partner. A person may have decided for himself or herself to cut back or stop drinking alcohol. Respect their decision and offer them an alternative to alcohol.

For a woman who is drinking alcohol during pregnancy, it will not help if people try to make her feel ashamed. She may be feeling bad already. She may respond better to support and understanding. Do not try to discuss the problem when she has been drinking. Seek help from other people on how to talk with her.

Partners, family members and the community as a whole can help prevent FAS/E.

Try some of these ways....

- *Promote responsible drinking of alcohol.
 - *Be a good role model.
 - *Support pregnant women not to drink.
 - *Stop drinking if your partner is pregnant.
 - *Support people who are trying not to drink.
 - *Talk about the consequences of alcohol abuse.
-and think of more ways

Pauktuutit has produced two publications on FAS

Ikajuqtigiinniq: a resource for fetal alcohol syndrome prevention and intervention work (1997) and

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: a resource for Inuit communities to understand what FAS is and what they can do to help (1996).

They are both available from Pauktuutit.

Alcohol and Substance Use Helpline

Motherisk is a toll-free, nationwide, confidential information line that was launched in Yellowknife in January 1999. Motherisk will help answer questions about the use of alcohol and other substances during pregnancy and breastfeeding. This is a program of the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

Motherisk can be reached by calling:

1-877-FAS-INFO (1-877-327-4636)

Pauktuutit's Proposal for a Video Presentation:

'Preventing Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Effect in Inuit Communities'

Pauktuutit is seeking funding to develop a video for the prevention of FAS/E and for the support of families living with FAS/E. The target audience will be youth, girls and boys 13 to 18. The content and presentation of the video will be determined through the guidance of a steering committee, bringing together knowledge from community members and professionals with experience in FAS/E. Pauktuutit hopes to be successful in funding this important project.

EXCITING HIV/AIDS EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Have you checked out the latest HIV/AIDS information available for Inuit communities? If not, you can find copies of the new booklets at your health centre.

About ninety community members from across the north put a lot of thought and hard work into developing information about HIV and AIDS from an Inuit perspective. The result is six easy to read booklets about different topics related to HIV/AIDS. There is something for everyone in this series:

HIV/AIDS: The Basics
Your Immune System and Testing for HIV
HIV: The Risks
Protecting Yourself from HIV
Women and HIV
Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV

The booklets are available in English and Inuktitut syllabics. The Labrador Orthography version is in progress. The response was so enthusiastic that we have run out of copies at Pauktuutit and have had to find funding to print some more.

NATIONAL HIV/AIDS EDUCATION SKILLS TRAINING

Pauktuutit received funding to provide forty-two community members with training on teaching HIV/AIDS education in their communities. The training took place in two sessions: one group of twenty-one met in Ottawa the week of January 24th and the second group the week of February 7th. Each region/organization had a representative who was responsible for selecting their own participants. There was also representation from the National Inuit Youth Council, correctional services, health and social services and urban Inuit.

We will report soon on these training sessions and the follow-up of participants.

MORE INFORMATION BOOKLETS COMING SOON!

Part of the funding we received for the skills training has been provided to produce more educational material for Inuit communities. A skills training manual was produced for the training workshops as well as a seventh booklet titled *Living with HIV*. This is a guide for Inuit living with HIV/AIDS and for people caring for family or community members with HIV/AIDS.

We have also been asked by Health Canada to adapt a booklet called *Women, Sexual Assault and HIV*. The second draft of the booklet was sent out to our group of community reviewers in November and we have now completed the final draft. We hope to have the manual and two booklets ready soon.



Suvaguuq

This issue of Suvaguuq was made possible with funding from Health Canada, Human Resources and Development Canada and Canadian Heritage.

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