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SUVAGUUQ

PAUKTUUTIT, INUIT WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
NEWSLETTER

National Newsletter on Inuit Social and Cultural Issues

MYTHS OR FACTS

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

By Rosemarie Kuptana

Child sexual abuse is the best kept secret in Inuit society, as it is in China, Peru, the United States of America and every continent where humans reside. Child sexual abuse affects children worldwide, and it crosses all racial, religious, and social-economic lines of our society. It is a subject that makes nearly every individual uncomfortable, because in our hearts and minds we know it is morally and legally wrong.

In recent years, some Inuit sexual offenders have been given very light sentences in some judicial rulings. The reason was simple. The justice system of the time interpreted Inuit traditional values and attitudes as part of the judgement. The three common themes we hear in some judicial hearings are:

"Child sexual abuse is normal in Inuit Society,"

"When an Inuk girl starts menstruation she is ready for sexual activity."

"Inuit do not believe it is wrong to have sex with young girls."

How did these kinds of attitudes become a part of Inuit Society? Not only must we deal with the problem of child sexual abuse, but we must also deal with the perception that other societies have about us as Inuit where the issue of child sexual abuse is concerned. As a people we must have a position on this issue. (continued next page "what are your views?")



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OKA-OUR STRUGGLE, TOO

The following are excerpts taken from a speech given by Pauktuutit President, Mary Sillett to the 16th Annual General Meeting of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) in Ottawa, Ontario on August 3, 1990:

I would like to thank the Native Women's Association of Canada very much for inviting me to address its 16th Annual General Assembly and on behalf of the Inuit women of Canada, I extend to this assembly wishes for a successful Meeting.

While Pauktuutit and Inuit organizations and communities through the North are confronted with a wide variety of problems, worries and concerns - from poverty, unemployment and inadequate housing to alcohol abuse, family violence and child sexual abuse - the issue facing us today and the issue which will have long-lasting impacts on our lives even after it is settled, is Oka. As Chief Ovide Mecredi of the AFN stated, "it is not about a golf course. It is about basic human rights; it is about aboriginal and treaty rights; it is about life." All aboriginal people, regardless of age or sex, are affected by it.

The mood at Oka reflects the political climate of the aboriginal peoples. We are frustrated with this federal government's refusal to exercise its responsibility to protect our interests despite legal decisions clearly upholding that responsibility. We are frustrated with its attempts to undermine our ability to represent ourselves through funding cuts to aboriginal organizations and with its attempts to destroy our communications networks through massive cuts to native newspapers, radio and television broadcasting. We are frustrated with the growing poverty and unemployment in our communities while traditional economies are constantly being threatened. We are frustrated about the federal government's refusal to speak out against racism in this country.



The Oka struggle for the recognition of aboriginal and treaty rights; the achievement of equality and self-determination is our struggle and it is around these issues that the aboriginal peoples across Canada are united. As aboriginal women, we have a major role to play as our people struggle towards these rights. We must use this opportunity to stand up and demand that the federal government exercise its legal responsibility to Canada's aboriginal people and meet with the Mohawks in Oka to resolve this crisis immediately through peaceful means. Annie Okalik, from Pangnirtung, NWT was well known for her wisdom and she served on the Pauktuutit Board for a number of years before her death. She once spoke words which I now remember well - She said, "Life is miraculous and we, as women, are bearers of these miracles and we should never be responsible for the taking of life. It is not our way. It is not the Inuit way." I take the liberty of using her words to apply them to the Oka crisis - if this crisis is to be resolved, let it be done without the taking of lives - let it be done without violence ... And as great grandmothers, grandmothers and mothers, let us work towards peaceful solutions so that our children can live in a better WORLD.

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INUIT LEADERS MEET

37 of Canada's Inuit Leaders met in Renfrew, Ontario from September 4-6, 1990 to discuss current issues facing aboriginal peoples.

After discussing the situation at Kanesatake and Kahnawake and the need for appropriate processes to address aboriginal concerns, a special meeting of the Inuit Leadership issued a statement in support of the Mohawks and condemned the federal government's refusal to exercise its legal trust responsibility to aboriginal peoples.

In view of these recent events, Inuit of Canada will immediately take the following measures:

- Inuit leaders are now reconsidering their cooperation and tolerance of a Canadian military presence in the North in light of Canada's use of its armed forces as a means of harassing and suppressing its aboriginal peoples rather than for defending Canada against hostile foreign powers or fulfilling Canadian NATO or similar international obligations; and
- Mandate the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada to recommend other appropriate measures until the immediate crisis at Kanesatake and Kahnawake has been resolved.

Moreover, Inuit now call for:

- Direct Aboriginal participation in a full, independent, and public inquiry into matters leading up to, and surrendering the recent events at Kanesatake and Kahnawake, including the role of the federal and Quebec governments; and

- Full participation by the Aboriginal People of Quebec in the Quebec Commission on the constitution; and

- The immediate resumption of First Ministers Conferences on Aboriginal Constitutional Reform Process; and

- Full and direct Aboriginal participation in all First Ministers Conferences dealing with matters affecting the Aboriginal Peoples, including any First Ministers Conferences on the economy and fisheries; and

- Full Aboriginal participation in the creation and implementation of an accelerated land claims process which would include self-government; and

- The federal and provincial governments to take a firm stand with respect to the incidents of racism which arose from the Oka crisis.

Child Sexual Abuse continued from cover page.

What Are Your Views?

Do you have strong views about child sexual abuse? Please write to us and let us know what the Inuit values and attitudes are about the following:

What are the Inuit values concerning marriage?

What is the appropriate age of marriage in Inuit Society?

What are the Inuit values concerning sexuality?

What is an acceptable age for sexual activity?

What are the attitudes concerning sex outside marriage?

What was sexual assault or rape in traditional Inuit society?

What was child sexual abuse in traditional Inuit society?

If we as a society are to shatter the myths and begin dealing with the problems of child sexual abuse, we must do it together. Pauktuutit does not have all the answers so we need the help of the Inuit.

We know that child sexual abuse is wrong but what Elie Wiesel author of *The Testament* said is so true about the Holocaust survivors, "What hurts the victim the most is not the cruelty of the oppressor but the silence of the bystander."

Please phone or write your views to:
Pauktuutit 804-200 Elgin Street, Ottawa,
Ontario K2P-1L5 (613) 238-3977

NOTE: Rosemarie Kuptana, originally from Sachs Harbour, has been hired on contract by Pauktuutit to do a Research Project on Child Sexual Abuse (Health and Welfare Canada, Family Violence Initiatives Fund).

A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE ON HEALTH PROMOTION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

On August 2, 1990, Pauktuutit, the Inuit Women's Association of Canada, released the results of a study on alcohol, drug and solvent abuse in the North. "A Community Perspective on Health Promotion and Substance Abuse" reviews the results of a questionnaire sent to all Inuit communities in Labrador, the Northwest Territories and Northern Quebec. The report is based on information contained in 55 completed questionnaires received from 38 Inuit Communities. The project was funded by Health and Welfare Canada's National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program in Ottawa.

Following is a summary of responses to Pauktuutit's questionnaire:

Inadequate housing or housing shortages is viewed as a serious problem by the largest percentage of people responding to the questionnaire. Overall, 72.5% of respondents rated housing "a serious problem"; in Labrador this rating rises to a full 100%.

Unemployment is rated as a serious community problem by 69.2% of respondents.

Drug abuse is the third most commonly rated "serious problem", with 55% of respondents indicating that drug abuse is a serious problem in their community. However, regional differences are significant in this category: 64.3% of Nunavik respondents and 60.0% of NWT respondents rate drug abuse as a serious problem, compared to only 16.7% of the Labrador responses.

Alcohol abuse is viewed as a serious problem by 35.9% of respondents. Regional breakdowns are:
Labrador 66.7%; Nunavik 35.7%;
26.3% in the NWT.

Child Sexual Abuse is viewed as a serious problem by 36.8% of respondents.

Family violence is viewed as a serious community problem by 35.9% of respondents.

A question asking respondents to name the most serious problem facing their community resulted in the following responses:


Substance abuse, including alcohol, drug or solvent abuse: 44.4%

Education (Lack of education, drop-outs, etc.) 16.7%

Unemployment: 8.3%

Suicide: 5.6%

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We welcome your letters and comments.
Please write to us at:
200 Elgin Street
Suite 804
Ottawa, Ontario
K2P 1L5
or call:
(613) 238-3977



S P E C I A L R E P O R T

* THREE MAJOR PAUKTUUTIT PROJECTS *

***** CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE *****

The Federal Government's Family Violence Initiatives Fund accepted Pauktuutit's proposal to conduct a Child Sexual Abuse Research Project. Rosemarie Kuptana, former President of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation and a prominent Inuk spokesperson on Inuit and Northern issues, has been hired to do this project. Ms. Kuptana is contacting individuals and agencies in the Northwest Territories, Northern Quebec and Labrador, to find out how great the problem is in Inuit communities and to provide practical information/resources on what to do and where to go in child sexual abuse cases. Ms. Kuptana will be preparing a final report which will be translated into Inuktitut and which will be sent to all Canadian Inuit communities. The expected completion date for this project is March 1991.

***** INUIT YOUTH *****

The federal government's Secretary of State Department has provided funds to Pauktuutit, the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) and the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) to produce 4 public service announcements focussing on Inuit youth. The project "Sivumuut" was borne out of a deep concern amongst Inuit leaders for the serious social problems facing their youth. The objectives of "Sivumuut" are to promote pride in Inuit culture and the Inuktitut language and to assist Inuit youth to recognize the invaluable role they have to play in shaping the present and future life of Inuit. The expected completion date of this project is March 31, 1991.

***** DAY CARE *****

Pauktuutit has received funds from the Federal government's Child Care Initiatives Fund to hold 4 day care workshops in different locations throughout Canada's North. Linda Archibald, a consultant with a long history of working with Inuit organizations and Northern issues, has been hired on contract to complete this project. In these workshops, community representatives will be invited to work with resource people from the provincial and territorial governments, Health and Welfare Canada's Child Care Initiatives Fund and Pauktuutit to develop funding proposals and complete application forms and other documents required to start a day care centre. A tentative schedule and location of the four workshops is as follows:

1. Nain, Labrador - August 21-23, 90
2. Inuvik, NWT - September 25-27, 90
3. Iqaluit, NWT - November 13-15, 90
4. Kuujuuaq, N. Que. - December 11-13, 90





Tungavik Federation of Nunavut and Pauktuutit Begin a new Relationship

Shortly after TFN signed their agreement in principle, Pauktuutit officially requested that it be given an opportunity to participate at all TFN meetings since Inuit women must involve themselves in decisions about the present and future. Paul Quassa, TFN President, agreed that Inuit women have an invaluable role to play in these discussions and when TFN had its Board meeting in Yellowknife during the 3rd week in June 1990, Enooya Enook, the Pauktuutit Board Member from Baffin attended.

Enooya Enook was interested to hear about the land claims developments in Nunavut. She feels that Pauktuutit's representation at TFN meetings will result in a better dialogue between the two groups on common issues. She is grateful to TFN for its invitation to Pauktuutit and she extends a greeting to those reading this newsletter.

PUBLICATIONS

INUIT WAY: A Guide to Inuit Culture

Inuit Cultural Orientation Booklet, which is to provide non-Inuit working in the North with information to gain a greater understanding and respect for Inuit culture, values and traditions, is now available at the Pauktuutit national office. It is printed in English, Inuktitut Syllabics and Inuktitut Roman Orthography and it covers Traditional Law, Family Dynamics, Community Dynamics, Child Rearing and Diet. This Guide is worth buying at \$7.00. Please contact Sophie Tom to purchase copies of this guide at Pauktuutit 804-200 Elgin Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1L5 (613) 238-3977.



What To Do If A Child Tells You Of Sexual Abuse: Understanding the Law This booklet is available in Inuktitut and it is a general guide intended to help you respond to child sexual abuse and understand the legal process. This booklet is free.



Guide to Starting a Day-Care Centre



Pauktuutit published a "Guide to Starting a Day-Care Centre in Inuit Communities in Labrador, Northern Quebec and the Northwest Territories". The guide, printed in Inuktitut syllabics, Roman Orthography and English, is being sent to all organizations and individuals on our mailing list. Extra copies are available upon request.

