

WHAT WE HEARD

Regional Elder Gatherings

For the Nunavut Elders Strategy



Created for the Government of Nunavut: Premier and the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs

Produced by Ekho Inuit Originals and Lichen Consulting Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

About the Nunavut Elders Strategy

The purpose of this project is to create a comprehensive Elders Strategy to address a priority identified in the Government of Nunavut’s Katujjiluta Mandate in 2022: Aging with Dignity in Nunavut. The Government of Nunavut, Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs contracted Iqaluit-based consultants Mary Ekho Wilman of Ekho Inuit Originals and Robyn Campbell of Lichen Consulting to develop a Strategic Plan for Elders in Nunavut, including Inuit elders from Nunavut currently living in Ottawa.

Currently, several Government of Nunavut departments deliver programs and services for elders that are not well coordinated or connected. There are gaps in the support services provided for elders that need to be identified and addressed. Elders find it difficult to navigate the various programs and services delivered by the Government of Nunavut, and the level and quality of support services available to them varies significantly from community to community.

To elicit information from elders on the quality, availability, and suitability of existing government elder support programs, and to seek their input on what additional programs or improvements to existing programs are needed, five regional gatherings were held between February and May 2023.

At each gathering, two elders from each community in the region met to discuss the general need for elder care, and to respond to several questions focussed on the Government’s Katujjiluta Mandate commitment that elders should be able to *age with dignity in Nunavut*.

The information provided and the issues raised by the elders who participated in the five gatherings will be used to inform a strategic action plan.



What We Did

Research

This work takes into account research conducted for this project:

- Jurisdictional scan of senior and elder supports in Canada
- Environmental scan of past documents and media about elders in Nunavut
- Annotated bibliography of relevant Nunavut legislation and policy
- Scan of non-profit and private sector support for elders in Nunavut
- Gap report for elders support
- Scan of governance structures for seniors representative organizations

Regional Gatherings

The five regional elders' gatherings took place in Rankin Inlet, Cambridge Bay, Pond Inlet, Iqaluit and Ottawa. Regional coordinators were hired in each of these communities to support and advise on local logistics and communications with the elders. An elder advisor was selected in each region to provide overall advice and guidance on the approach and discussion topics. Two elders from each community in the region were invited to attend gatherings in the regional centres. At each gathering the elders spent two days discussing the issues of aging and elder care and discussing the focussing questions. Each gathering began with an orientation session and welcoming reception and ended with a feast and traditional games. The elders received an honorarium for their participation.

The regional coordinators identified the elders who were invited to participate in consultation with each community in the region. The elders who participated were recommended by the communities in the respective regions. These recommendations were made by:

- Government of Nunavut Liaison Officers
- Hamlet officials (Wellness Coordinators, Senior Administrative Officers)
- Regional Inuit Organizations
- Local elders who are widely respected.

Each regional gathering was facilitated in Inuktitut with English interpretation. All the discussions were filmed and recorded to produce a reference video and an accurate record of what was discussed.



What was discussed

Topics of discussion *for regional gatherings in Nunavut:*

1. What does aging with dignity in Nunavut mean to you?
2. How are you being helped right now? What support services are you getting, or you know that older elders are getting, in your community: What support services are working well? What support services need to be increased? What support services need to be improved?
3. As people age, what do you think the additional needs are?
4. What are ways that could help elders to feel safe and secure in your home communities?
5. What activity programs would be helpful for elders to be more active and mingle?

Topics of discussion *for the Ottawa gathering:*

1. What does aging with dignity mean to you?
2. What services or support programs are you currently receiving that you could not get in Nunavut?
3. Can you share with us your reason for moving to Ottawa?
4. If you were to move back to Nunavut, how would it be for you? Are there special needs you would need?
5. What are ways that could help Inuit to feel safe and secure in their communities?
6. What activity programs would be helpful for elders to be more active and mingle in Nunavut?



The Situation of Elders Today

The elders who came to the gatherings had a great deal to share about their lives and how to live a good life in the Inuit way. Most of the elders have experienced two ways of life: the life they had on the land when they were younger, and the life they live in communities today. They said that their lives today are of hardship, loneliness, and fear; and that they are surviving through their sheer strength of will, their deep compassion for the future of their families and communities, and their drive to help others to survive.

The elders said that the Government of Nunavut and NTI are not providing them with the services they need and they feel they have no say. They want this strategy to influence change in the development of laws, policies, programs, and services. They want their vision to be accepted with sincerity and respect, and to be seen as the guiding path for the next generation.

Elders were asked what they would like to tell the Premier. They said:

- We are so grateful to be given this opportunity for us to get together and talk.
- We have repeated our needs many times to the Government of Nunavut and NTI.
- We are still waiting to hear back from them, and now have repeated ourselves once again.
- We are living in fear. We are abused. We are struggling with poverty of every kind. Our health needs are not being met. Our housing is inadequate. We are struggling for the necessities of life. This is not living in dignity.
- We don't know what it will take for the government to hear us.
- There has been no action to date. This is the last chance for action.
- We urgently need to see change.

“I want to be safe and in a secure space. I do a lot of thinking about my grandchildren and how best to raise them. It is as if I am jumping from one ice block to another ice block. There is no firm ice to leap onto because my path isn't clear. Before we can begin to have a secure and safe place, firstly, in our community we need to do a lot of improvements. We need to set up a plan of escape from unsafe situations. Our elders are being abused. We need to get forceful on their behalf to make change.”

“Today we have two ways of aging, we have the Inuit way and the Qallunaat way. If we try to use one or the other – they do not understand each other. The Inuit way of life and Inuit way of living are very different and Qallunaat do not understand our ways: they impose timelines and limit budgets. We have to teach Qallunaat because they do not understand us, we must speak in a way that they understand.”

“I felt so alone and lonely, but we have the same thoughts. This meeting is crucial and timely. We have someone who knows our thoughts.”

“Our children and grandchildren have minds that are different from ours: we have so much compassion for them. I want to lift you up and encourage you, and me too. We don’t understand each other anymore and our children don’t understand Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, which is why we don’t have a voice. I appreciate those who ask these questions and ask what we think. Of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, what little we know, it is a very beautiful thing. I am a widow now. We moved into a new house, I cried because I wanted to go back to the way of life we lived. We have to hold onto Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit. We live in a very different time now and we are struggling to maintain our ancestors' practices and values, because we have compassion.”



Translated material presented in this report

In this document, the elders’ comments are literal translations of what the elders said in Inuktitut, not word-for-word. This is to accommodate the different ways in which thoughts are expressed in Inuktitut and English. For clarity, the English translations are also edited for flow and to eliminate repetition while retaining the intended meaning.

In respect of their desire to speak freely and to protect their privacy, the many quotes from elders in this report are not attributed to individuals.

To ensure it represents them and accurately reflects what they said, all elders, elder advisors and regional coordinators who participated in the regional gatherings have had the opportunity to review and validate this report.

The summary reports from the five regional gatherings will be analyzed and synthesized into a strategic action plan. The plan will provide an overview of the current situation, gaps in the programs and services provided for elders, and will recommend actions required to plan and implement high quality elder care programs and services, Nunavut-wide.

MAJOR THEMES ARISING FROM THE GATHERINGS

Elders want to be recognized and respected in the long-term. They emphasized that:

- Elders will feel they are treated with dignity when their vision for the future is respected.
- Elders want their culture, traditions, and knowledge – Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit – retained and actively used in the programs and services offered by all levels of government .
- Elders want their language to be correctly and actively used in all government programs and services: interpretation, communications and education.
- Elders should receive far better care from the Department of Health.
- Elders should be included in programming and policy-making within the government.
- Elders should be included in the Justice System.
- Elders must be respected and protected from mental or physical abuse by family or other people.
- Elders should not have to become babysitters or caregivers for people who require professional health services.
- Housing must be provided according to the elders' needs. Elders' homes must not be overcrowded with other family members.
- Elders' homes are not to be used as a dumping place for people who are unwell.
- Past events, including the dog slaughter, forced relocations, the tuberculosis epidemic, and residential schools, have left many elders and their families with a legacy of intergenerational trauma. We must find a way to deal with this trauma at all levels through education, counselling, and wellness programs; and to help individuals, families and communities heal.

Though not always expressed in the same words, elders at each regional gathering spoke about similar issues and concerns, and had similar ideas on the kinds of government programs and services needed to allow them to age in dignity.

As the gatherings progressed, several recurring themes became apparent:

1. The need for a full range of elder-care delivered in each community
2. The need for adequate and appropriate housing for elders
3. The need for elders to have a leading role in Nunavut's social and cultural development
4. The need for addictions and trauma healing in communities
5. The need for financial supports for good quality of life
6. The need for elders to be involved and contributing to the community
7. The need for mental health services for elders
8. The need for designated transportation for elders and ease of accessibility
9. The need for justice, advocacy, and legal support for elders
10. The need for Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit to be at the core of community life and all government programs.

The elders said that to be able to age with dignity in Nunavut, they want a future where:

- They will be living in a welcoming, safe, and comfortable environment where their physical, mental, spiritual, cultural, and social needs are met, and they are treated with kindness and respect.
- They will be provided with housing that is designed to meet their needs as they age, is safe and secure, where they do not have to live with younger family members, and where they are protected from abuse.
- Their medical care and home care needs are met and appropriate to their physical and mental health. All care and support services they require as they age are available in their home communities, provided by trained support care workers and medical staff, and the special needs of elders with disabilities or dementia are met.
- They contribute to society and the promotion of the Inuit culture through involvement in community affairs and activities, either individually or through funded community elders' organizations. In each community, the elders' organization will have permanently funded support staff and a funded gathering place, dedicated to their use, where they can meet regularly for events and activities that they enjoy, and that reduce stress and loneliness. These elders' gathering places would also be the primary venue for them to meet and interact with youth in their community to provide support, counseling, and pass on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.
- They are provided with a vehicle in each community designated for their use in getting around the community to attend events and activities, medical appointments, go shopping, and get to and from the airport for flights. This vehicle will be equipped to accommodate the needs of elders with disabilities. The driver will be paid through the community Elders' Committee.
- They will also have access to transportation - boats, snowmobiles and ATVs - to take them on the land for traditional activities like fishing and berry-picking, and youth will be involved with them in these activities.
- They will have a reliable, year-round source for country food for their personal use and for elders' gatherings; and will be able to maintain Inuit traditions of sharing food, spending time on the land, and working with the younger generations to show them the Inuit way.
- They will be actively involved in helping resolve conflict and crime in their communities as members of restorative justice committees, and as advisors to the RCMP, circuit court hearings, and the Department of Justice.
- They actively contribute to community wellbeing through involvement in addictions healing programs and the treatment of abusers: ensuring that these programs are based in the Inuit way.

ELDERS GATHERINGS, BY REGION

This section provides a snapshot of what elders said in the regional elders gatherings. The full summaries of these gatherings is provided in an annex to this report.

Kivalliq Regional Elders Gathering

Gathering

February 14-15 2023 at the Catholic Church

Elder participants

Ayowna Emiktowt, Coral Harbour
Annie P. Eetuk, Coral Harbour
Noel Kaludjak, Rankin Inlet
Cecilia Ayaruaq, Rankin Inlet
Susan Nuluk, Naujaat
David Nuluk, Naujaat
Gerard Maktar, Whale Cove
Eva Voisey, Whale Cove
Mark Amarok, Chesterfield Inlet
Philippa Aagarrk, Chesterfield Inlet
Mike Gibbons, Arviat
Lisa Gibbons, Arviat
Martin Kreelak, Baker Lake
Joan Scottie, Baker Lake

Regional Coordinator

Verna Strickland

Interpreter

Bernadette Dean

Team Leads

Mary Wilman
Robyn Campbell



Themes

- Aging with Inuit traditions and surrounded by Inuit culture
- Elder-care facilities in every community
- Home-care for elders
- Better healthcare for elders
- Elders' housing and homeownership
- Safe shelter for elders
- Elder abuse
- Transportation for elders
- Elders are concerned about the younger generations
- Elders need to be heard
- Inuktitut
- Training and education about aging
- Elders are family caretakers
- Elders gathering spaces
- Elders being active in the community
- Inuit food for elders
- Accessibility of community infrastructure and buildings
- Elders' committees and regional gatherings
- Elders in smaller communities are feeling neglected



Kitikmeot Regional Elders Gathering

Gathering

March 8-9 2023 at the Luke Novoligak Community Hall

Elder participants

Mary Ann Agnahiak, Kugluktuk
Jayko Palongayak, Kugluktuk
Anaoyok Alookey, Taloyoak
Simon Oleekatalik, Taloyoak
Miriam Aglukkaq, Gjoa Haven
David Siksik, Gjoa Haven
Celine Ningark, Kugaaruk
Christian Nalungiak, Kugaaruk
Jimmy Haniliak Sr., Cambridge Bay
Jessie Lyall, Cambridge Bay

Regional Coordinator

Navalik Tologanak

Interpreters

Joseph Quqqiaq
Helen Klengenberg

Team Leads

Mary Wilman
Robyn Campbell



Themes

- Elder-care facilities
- Home-care
- Housing for elders
- Abuse and fear
- Elders' gathering space and activities
- elders' link with youth and the community
- Elders contributing to the community
- Transportation for elders
- Inuktitut and communications
- Inuit food
- Urgent need for action
- Health care services
- Impact of family members' addictions
- Financial hardship
- Getting help



North Qikiqtani Regional Elders Gathering

Gathering

March 22-23 2023 at Sauniq Inns North Hotel

Elder participants

Tagoona Qavavauq, Arctic Bay
Shappa Kigutikakjuk, Arctic Bay
Boazie Ootoova, Pond Inlet
Mary Mucpa, Pond Inlet
Laisa Ningeok, Grise Fiord
Annie Audlaluk, Grise Fiord
Mary Kalluk, Resolute Bay
Kataisie Idlout, Resolute Bay
Joseph Iqquk Angutirjuaq, Clyde River

Regional Coordinator

Nina Katuq

Interpreters

Jeannie Maktar
Silas Takalugark

Team Leads

Mary Wilman
Robyn Campbell

Themes

- Elder-care facilities
- Home-care services
- Housing
- Abuse
- Activities for elders – On the land and in the community
- Elders sharing culture
- Elder committees and elders' advocacy
- Transportation in the community and on the Land
- Childrearing responsibilities
- Better communication with elders
- Inuit food for elders



South Qikiqtani Regional Elders Gathering

Gathering

April 18-19 2023 at the Frobisher Inn

Elder participants

George Auksaq, Igloolik
Charlie Uttak, Igloolik
Jimmy Manning, Kinngait
Kumaarjuk Pii, Kinngait
Itee Temela, Kimmirut
Sandy Akavak, Kimmirut
May Lonsdale, Iqaluit
Hanna Kilabuk, Iqaluit
Lew Philips, Iqaluit
Igah Kooneeliusie, Qikiqtarjuaq
Rachel Kakka, Qikiqtarjuaq
Nancy Anilniliak, Pangnirtung
Meeka Alivaktuk, Pangnirtung
Dinah Kittosuk, Sanikiluaq
Lucy Appaqaq, Sanikiluaq
Jobie Kaernerck, Sanirajak
Valerie Curley, Sanirajak

Regional Coordinator

Shuvinai Mike

Interpreters

Innirvik

Team Leads

Mary Wilman
Robyn Campbell



Themes

- Elder-care facilities in all communities
- Home-care for aging at home
- Elders housing
- Transportation in the community
- Elder abuse, fear, and threats
- Health services and supports for elders
- Mental health and healing
- Communication with elders and use of Inuktitut
- Using and preserving Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit
- Everyone caring for elders
- Inuit organizations serving elders
- Elders committees and elder's advocacy
- Activities for elders with gathering spaces
- Elders raising the younger generations
- Inuit food for elders' health
- Financial services and subsidies for elders
- Legal services and supports for elders
- Elders involved in teaching and leading



Ottawa Elders Gathering

Gathering

May 8-9 2023 at Saint Margaret's Church Hall

Elder participants

Aigah Attagutsiak
Jeanie Okalik
Eelee Higgins
Mimi Akeegok
Reepa Evic-Carleton
Sytukie Joamie
Sipporah Enuaraq
Ruth Kadlutsiak
Elisapee Birmingham
David Erkloo
Therese Okkumaluk
Rosalie Alaralak
Eta Kanayuk
Deborah Tagoonak
Jeanie Kanayuk
Pitsiulala Lyta
Koomoo McLister
Mary Alainga-Fraser
Barb Sevigny
Sanija Padluq
John Angnaluak
Meeka Akpalialuk
Charlie Lyall

Regional Coordinators

Joan Cunha
Zippie Nochasak

Interpreters

Johnny Takawgak
Martha Flaherty

Team Leads

Mary Wilman
Robyn Campbell



Themes

- Lack of healing and addiction recovery programs in Nunavut
- Elder gatherings and advice
- Elders want involvement with youth
- Housing for elders
- Access to country food
- Transportation
- Elder abuse
- Urban isolation and neglect of Inuit elders
- Elder ombudsman
- Traditional activities and self-care
- Aging and disability
- Physical and mental medical support and services: home-care; loneliness; access to family doctors, specialists, and services; healing; quality and sufficient healthcare; mental health for the whole family; and education
- Communication and working together
- Elder-care facilities (long-term care)
- Importance of Inuit languages
- Elders want to learn
- End of life preparation
- Displaced elders
- Financial comfort and hardship
- Why elders moved away from Nunavut



Additional Information

Pond Inlet Community Radio, Call-in Show

Location: Pond Inlet Community Radio Station

Date: March 22 2023

Number of calls: 6

What we heard: The residents of Pond Inlet were invited to share their thoughts, ideas and concerns about the situation of elders today, and what the vision is for aging with dignity in Nunavut. Young callers spoke about their interest in being involved with elders: supporting them with errands and home chores, and reaching out for advice about relationships. Older callers spoke about needing more home-care support for elders in local communities, so that elders did not have to leave home.

Embassy West Seniors Living Home, interviews with Inuit elder residents

Location: Embassy West Seniors Living Home

Date: May 11 2023

Number of elders interviewed: 2

What we heard: Two residents of Embassy West were interviewed. They both yearned to return to Nunavut. Each arrived in Ottawa not knowing how long they would stay, or when they would get visitors from home. They had some complaints about the lack of Inuktitut and the quality of the food. They were uncertain about when they could leave.



ANNEX

See the annex report for summaries of each of the Regional Elders' Gatherings.

These reports include individual comments and quotes of all the elders who participated. They are lengthy because they include everything that the elders said.



ANNEX TO THE “WHAT WE HEARD REPORT”

BACKGROUND MATERIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NUNAVUT ELDERS STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

For: Government of Nunavut, Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs

From: Lichen Consulting Inc. and Ekho Inuit Originals

Date: November 30, 2023

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North Qikiqtani Regional Elders' Gathering

Summary Report

The North Qikiqtani Regional Elders' Gathering took place on March 22 and 23, 2023 in Pond Inlet at Sauniq Hotel.

Participants

Elders:

Shappa Kigutikakjuk, Arctic Bay

Tagoona Qavavauq, Arctic Bay

Boazie Ootoova, Pond Inlet

Mary Mucpa, Pond Inlet

Liza Ningiuk, Grise Fiord

Annie Audlaluk, Grise Fiord

Mary Kalluk, Resolute Bay

Kataisie Idlout, Resolute Bay

Joseph Iqquk Angutirjuaq, Clyde River

Regional Coordinators: Nina Kautuq, Elijah Tigullaraq

Facilitator: Mary Wilman

Notetaker: Robyn Campbell

Interpreters: Jeannie Maktar, Silas Takalugark

Reflections from the North Qikiqtani Elders

Following the orientation and opening activities, the elders were each invited to comment on the purpose of the meeting, the quality of support they are currently receiving, and what they envision for the future of elder care and support services in their communities. Here are some of their initial reflections.

The Situation Today

Becoming an elder is very important. The aging process can be joyful and not so joyful. I would like to see elders aging in peaceful and safe places.

Elders are not taken care of as they were in the past. When I was growing up, we had to help the elders. Respecting and helping elders was seen as very important. Today, the young people are not helping. It seems that young people are not caring and respecting the advice and ways of the past. They don't know the principles of our elders, and they are not aware of things that we were taught as young children. I know some young people don't know how to look after elders. They need to be trained and learn about Inuit beliefs and values.

We should be helping elders. We were advised to never disrespect our elders. There would be consequences if we were being disrespectful. We need to help elders; their wellbeing is impacted by the lack of care and support. While our elders are alive, we need to do everything that is possible for them. Some elders do not know where to get help. Elders are very important; we should be grateful that we have their advice.

I am grateful that the Government is asking the elders to have input that is meaningful and uplifting. Elders are so important, their traditional knowledge is important, they are wise, and have a lot of knowledge that we depend on, such as sewing skills and traditional clothing. Once there is an Elders' Committee and a coordinator (Tuttarvik) solely for elder's needs, then the coordinator will be able to assist the elders by communicating their needs. Our elders are precious.

Life is different today. While we are still able, we need to show our respect to young people because today they are sensitive because they feel that they are not being respected. Elders need a home where they are not afraid of the people they are living with. I often think that young people who are living with their parents or grandparents because they can't get housing should be a priority for getting housing – there should be apartments for them. Every day, there are elders living in fear of their children or grandchildren.

I am grateful for this meeting and looking forward to hearing about and discussing elders' needs. Young people today don't have the same respect or response toward elders. It seems they don't honour or respect elders the same way we used to. The young ones should be the ones to look after the elders, but these days it is the other way around. Often elders are looking after their grandchildren, when it should really be the parents. The young people are so sensitive when they are being advised. It is very worrisome and stressful for elders to be placed in overcrowded homes. We grew up around elders and they would scold us - but for a good cause. It was part of training and we even long for it at times.

I want to say how grateful and proud we are that elders are being asked for their input. We would like to hear back from you, receive updates as to where these discussions are leading and to see which recommendations have been implemented. I would like to meet again to discuss future planning. The lifestyle of elders will change by the time the strategy is implemented.

Vision for Aging with Dignity in Nunavut

At each regional gathering, the elders were asked how they would envision a community where they could live and age in dignity. Elders at the North Qikiqtani gathering responded that:

- All elders should have a place of peace: sailittuaqtumiiniq.
- There should be good healthcare and elder-care facilities that keep elders well looked after in their home communities and near their families.
- Each community has an elder-care facility and full-time homecare providers.

- All elders have their own housing so that they can live in the community peacefully.
- Elders have ready access to activities, both in the community and on the land, with transportation and accessibility.
- Elders are aware of the programs and services available to them, and can easily get assistance when they need it.
- Elders are not abused or bothered by young people who place demands on them.
- There is an elder-care coordinator in each community who can advocate for them, and elders are proud and supportive of that individual.
- Elders should have regular access to Inuit food and cultural activities, both in the community and on the land.

Themes Arising from the Discussion

Several core issues or themes were raised by elders at the North Qikiqtani Regional Elders' Gathering. These have been consolidated in this summary as: elder-care facilities; home-care services; housing; abuse; activities for elders – on the land and in the community; elders sharing culture; elder committees and elders' advisors; transportation in the community and on the land; better communication with elders; and Inuit food for elders.

Elder-Care Facilities

Summary

- Elders should be allowed to stay in their home communities for as long as possible, so there should be elder-care facilities in each community.
- Sending elders away for specialized care in other communities or in the south is detrimental to their health, so a range of elder-care services should be provided in each community.
- There is an undesirable and disturbing similarity between tuberculosis (TB) sanatorium relocation experiences from the past and current day long-term elder care relocation. This causes stress and anxiety for the same people at different stages in their lives.
- Elders want respite support services for family members who care for them.

Elders' Comments

It would be good to have elder care facilities in each community. It should be the elder's own choice if they want to be in a care facility. If elders choose to stay in their own homes, the homes must be safe so that they can be comfortable and happy.

I would like to see a facility in our community because this can extend elders' lives. When elders are sent south, their minds are still strong and they grieve and long for their families, so we need to advocate for long-term care facilities in every community.

Today, we see elders being sent away to another place to get care. It is not good to see elders leaving their own communities and being separated from their families. They need to be cared for in their home community. Not all communities have homecare services, when rightly all communities should have them. All elders should be at peace, feeling respected, and be happy in their home community.

I have heard that elders who are physically unable are left alone too long, and usually do not have a care-giver staying with them. It would be so good to have an elder care facility up here where elders can live as they want. Elders are being sent to Iqaluit or elsewhere because they do not have anyone to look after them in their own communities.

I shared my experiences at the tuberculosis sanatorium with our MLA, and that was when I heard about the Ottawa long-term care facility. It brought back memories of my experiences, and I did not agree with it.

I have seen the elder care facility in Arviat. It is well organized, and it is in Inuit land where the resident elders grew up. There was an elder from Chesterfield Inlet there who was being looked after very well. If we had at least one elder care facility in the Baffin Region it would help, but if there were several, then elders could choose which community they want to be in.

Elders should have a place where they can spend their last days in peace. The beds should be electric so that the elders are able to lower them. There should be a (government) department that provides funding for elder support services and that can advocate for elders and find the right services for them.

My late husband had lost a leg and had to go to Ottawa for care. He was asked if he could stay down there but he did not want to, so we had to keep going back and forth for follow-ups. I know elders pass away in Ottawa, and I believe that while they are down there, they crave for their own food and long for their own surroundings. I am grateful that we are discussing this because we can express these thoughts.

We are not looking after the elders as we should while they are active and while their minds are still strong. Many families who are attending to elder's needs are feeling hurt because of the lack of support services.

Home-Care Services

Summary

- There need to be more home-care services for elders in every community.
- These services should include regular and frequent visits to elders in their homes, and should be available evenings, weekends, and at night-time when required.

- Local people should be hired and trained to provide home-care support for elders.
- Specialists like physiotherapists and nutritionists should visit elders in their communities regularly and more often.
- Providing more home-care services will help to keep elders in their own homes longer and will reduce the need for institutional care.

Elders' Comments

Home-care is important to elders for many reasons. Homecare workers see what others do not and they see what kind of help and support the elders need.

In our community we do not have a homecare worker. If I call the health centre when I need help, the nurse will just say it's not her job. My husband was paralyzed. Sometimes, when I was home alone with him, I had to leave him on the floor for quite long periods of time because I could not lift him or carry him. I didn't know who to call for help. At our age, we hesitate to call for help. There is an individual who has mental issues and people do not want to associate with him. But I don't see him that way. He comes to my house and is a lot of help to me. There is a nutritionist and a physical therapist who come into our communities. I called to see if it was possible to get help for physical disabilities, so that someone can come and live with me to give me a break. It's so challenging to care for a paralyzed person. Good support and respite care is a real need. There is a real need for smaller communities to have homecare support for elders and respite care for family members who are providing support to elders.

Many of the elders who are sent away for specialized health care are very unhappy. I believe it shortens their lives. They should be looked after in Nunavut.

All communities should have elders' facilities and care workers. I know that there are elders' facilities in Arviat, Cambridge Bay and Igloolik. I saw the one in Igloolik. Most of the employees were Inuit – only the nurse and the doctor were non-Inuit. The only drawback was the regulation prohibiting country food. That does not reflect Inuit culture. Inuit have a different diet, which consists of country food. Inuit culture has to be respected, that's what I would want to see.

It is such a heavy burden when elders are in Ottawa. When you have a loved one so far away in Ottawa, they are constantly on your mind. I am very anxious to have a long-term care facility – in Iqaluit or Pond Inlet would be good, but it's too slow a process to get one. Preferably, I would want it to be in my hometown where my grandchildren, great-grandchildren and community members are nearby. Every community should have an elders' facility.

It is always better to keep elders in a community where they know the people and are able to eat the foods they prefer. This is the best environment for them. Life is full of different challenges. If we were to fall or have a stroke, we could become paralyzed. Then we too would be sent away to get the kind of care we require. If all communities had a facility, even if it was small, at least our grandchildren and family members could visit. The elders that are away are longing to be in their own home. The facility should provide long-term care for elders, and the

same care services should also be available for those who are physically challenged. We had to look after my late father-law around the clock. When he was asked to go to a facility, he did not want to go because he didn't want to leave me.

The applications should be more user friendly. They are complicated and difficult to complete. The wait for support services is too long.

Housing

Summary

- There needs to be housing for elders that is appropriate to their circumstances and lifestyle, especially single houses.
- Elders' homes should not be overcrowded.
- Elders' homes should be easily accessible. There should be no stairs to climb, and external steps and access ramps should be regularly cleaned and maintained.
- So that elders can live peacefully, their homes should be safe in respect to other tenants' behaviour, especially the misuse of drugs or alcohol.
- Elders need homeowner subsidies that are clear and easily understood, not a burden, and available in Inuktitut.

Elders' Comments

Elders said that the shortage of housing and the overcrowding in homes means there is no peaceful place for them to live.

All the communities are not the same. There are different barriers for different people: for example, someone is living in a 2-storey house, but the individual is in a wheelchair.

Elders also stated that not all homeowners are receiving elder subsidies that they qualify for. Some didn't know they qualified, and some have given up because the application process is too challenging – there are too many forms, and they are too long and not clear. There is no real support from the administration, especially in Inuktitut.

Abuse

Summary

- Substance abuse in the community negatively affects elders. It increases elders' vulnerability and the risk of abuse.
- It is important to deal with substance abuse in an Inuit way.

Elders' Comments

The way I see it today, elders are just seen as a source for money by their grandchildren. These elders are vulnerable. Elders should not be abused or treated that way. I really feel for them.

Drunks should not be allowed where there are elders.

Activities for Elders – On the land and in the community**Summary**

- Elders want activities that will promote their physical and mental health. These include on the land activities in cabins or tents; elders' recreational facilities in the community; and access to community events, including transportation.

Elders' Comments

Taking part in activities is very important to their physical and mental health and wellbeing. There are many ideas for elder activities in the summer and the winter, both on the land and in communities, including field trips to be in tents and to be out in the fresh air; a camp where elders can sleep overnight, and ongoing activities throughout the year. We want to start these activities ourselves, but we want and need a coordinator to plan and facilitate them. It would be helpful to have support from the government, the Hamlet or Regional Inuit Organizations.

All elders need to be visited more frequently and we are grateful to have people visit us. We want to have a place to do physical activity. Elders often will not ask for help or say anything, so people need to ask elders what they need and want for social activities. Elders need to be asked, especially those who are not able to go about on their own.

It would be good for elders to be able to participate in Canada Day activities, or go outing for the day to the other side of our community. It would be good to give elders the opportunity to be outside and eat with others.

Elders want to be involved with anything to do with Inuit culture. For those who are more physically able, they can be taken out for boat rides or walks on the land. There should be a place for sewing crafts or any activity for the elders. Sewing programs are always in demand.

I am an elder now, so I have gone on trips as their elder by boat and skidoo. I would stay in a tent like I used to. We would make tea with heather and cook food. I know many elders would also like to experience these things. Elders still like to do what they used to do: travelling by boat or skidoo. It is always refreshing to see where I used to go camping. I would use a qulliq and cook with it. We should encourage other elders if they want to have opportunities to spend time on the land. I used to go fishing by skidoo. I enjoy eating outside and it's good for the mind and wellbeing. Those elders who are still physically able should have opportunities to go out - to sleep in a tent again and use a qulliq. The qulliq was so important, it can be kept alight all night long. It is peaceful, it was our way of life. Being on the land is so good for elders' minds and wellbeing – it makes us feel better. I have experienced this, so I know it is beneficial.

Elders Sharing Culture

Summary

- Elders want to share their knowledge with others.

Elders' Comments

In Pond Inlet, we held a special local radio call-in show about aging with dignity in Nunavut. There was a young adult caller who said if he had a vehicle, he would help out with elders' needs and go pick up ice for them, and do errands etc. He also said he would like to get advice and knowledge from elders, and to get advice from elders about his relationship.

We should give elders a chance to share stories of how life was when they were growing up. They were always out hunting and long for the days they have experienced.

In our community we provide a program in December. We had a program to make winter clothing, and even men joined in. It is important to our generation to have the proper sewing tools. One time I told my sister that she could not marry if she didn't have her own thimble. These programs are very popular and are much enjoyed.

I ran a program for young men to teach them how to hunt seal using a taluaq (white cloth blind). I showed them how they should be walking towards a young seal basking on the ice. How to approach them and know the techniques for hunting during springtime.

The Inuit organizations have funding for such programs.

I attend elder advisory meetings in Arviat. We elders share our traditional knowledge so that the Department of Education can gather information.

Elder Committees and Elders' Advocacy

Summary

- There should be an Elder Committee in every community, with an Elders' Program Coordinator to support elders' programs and participation in community activities, attend to their concerns and improve communication. This position should be government funded.
- Elders want an advocate to speak on their behalf and to get things done with government and the Regional Inuit Organizations.

Elders' Comments

There should be an active elders' committee in every community. These elders' committees would be empowering for elders. They would also be very beneficial for the communities because they would help the elders pass on their knowledge to the young people.

There are more elders now, and more people becoming elders. Elders need an advocate to make sure that there are suitable programs and services for them, and to bring their issues and needs to the government. A position of Elders' Coordinator should be created in every community. This

could be done through the hamlet. The Coordinator's primary responsibility would be to look after elder's needs by finding resources and communicating with government departments. The Elders Coordinator would work closely with the community social worker.

If it was possible to establish a position solely to look after the elders' needs, this would be very helpful. Then all the communities should also have homecare workers to actually provide the support services elders need. The person in this position would know who is having physical challenges in the community. Our populations are small, so we are able to know who is needing special assistance. I am going to go to the Hamlet and to discuss the possibility of making a plan for the next 3-5 years because I know it will take time to plan for such a position. I want to go to the Hamlet and ask them to look for funding for such a position, since they have the resources to find funding.

What is being discussed for an elder advocacy worker is encouraging. For example, the hamlet has sub-committees and if we do get elders' advocates, then they would be the point of contact. I wonder if the advocacy workers could also help individuals with physical disabilities who are not quite elders.

This meeting is so good. The government wants to hear from elders and do something to help them. It will be good for elders to have an advocacy worker to let the government know what they need or if they are being treated unfairly. I am grateful that the government has not forgotten the elders, and that the elders will not just be sent to Ottawa.

Since Covid 19, Inuit are not visiting like they used to. There are elders who do not have visitors for far too long. Once there is a position dedicated to looking after elders' needs, it will be so useful for the elders, especially those who are physically challenged. I help through the church. I am usually the one to inform families of death and people quickly recognize that I am there to inform them. It would be very helpful to have an advocacy worker for elders, because people in the community would know that they are the contact person. Elders would be able to share their experiences or needs through this position. We have social workers, but they do not do home visits. It would be good if the Hamlet had an Elders' Coordinator solely to look after elders' needs. This advocacy worker or Elders' Coordinator will have a lot of responsibilities, and we need such an advocate in every community: tuttarvik, a point of contact person for elders.

There are successful programs for elders in some communities. When we hear about them, we can also do the same. With support, elders can implement the programs they need. We should gather names of those who can share their knowledge on different topics such as hunting, etc. We need a coordinator, a person that can be the point of contact – tuttarvik. We can action the programs and services we need. It might be challenging at first, but that would be welcome.

I want an elder coordinator or advocacy position established. I will be proud and supportive of that individual. I even have said when it comes to the time that I can no longer walk, I want someone to amaaq (carry me) to an area where there are blueberries. And just leave me there to pick berries all day. I love fishing and I would want to be taken to where there's a fishing hole and just left there to fish. I long for those activities and they are part of my vision.

Transportation in the Community and on the Land

Summary

- Elders want transportation within the community (for their appointments, grocery shopping, going to the airport) and on the land.

Elders' Comments

Communities should have a vehicle solely to look after elders who can't get where they want to go because they do not have the means to do so. Community events need to be accessible to elders. A vehicle to take elders to these events would be very useful.

I get calls for rides when they should be the ones helping me instead, but it feels good to be useful. When I was with the Justice Committee, we would take people for a drive away from the community and have tea. I have my own truck, so I would provide what the person was craving for.

We are looking for a driver with a Class 4 license. The health center has a vehicle, but nobody with a Class 4 license is available to drive it.

The school bus should be used but would need a qualified driver.

It would be useful for elders to be picked up and taken out on the land for fresh air. When elders are given a chance to go out, they feel refreshed and happy. It brings joy.

I and an elder's daughter ordered a vehicle that had a wheelchair lift, but it never came in. We ordered it on our own. We wanted to use it to help that elder to get around and it would also be available for other elders' use. We have elders in our communities. We try to help them get out of their homes to have a break – simply to get out of the house.

We need a vehicle for elders to be able to go where they want. I have seen a van in Iqaluit. We would need one like that, but it should be used only for this purpose because when a vehicle is used too much it needs a lot of maintenance. The hamlet garages should have the ability and responsibility to maintain these vehicles. The hamlet is the government of the community, they need to be involved. The elders' vehicle could also be used for outings, etc.

I think it would be good if all the communities can be accessible for the disabled.

The Hamlet does have a van for elders. The van that's specialized is just sitting there and can't be used right now.

Childrearing Responsibilities

Summary

- Elders want to have child-care and parenting supports in each community so that they do not have to be the default caregivers to the younger generations.

Elders' Comments

I don't like the common practice of grandchildren being given to their grandparents for them to raise. The elders themselves are not being looked after, and they have to look after their great-grandchildren. I wish something could be done for them. The elders have already have raised their families and should not be given more children to raise.

When household members leave for medical treatment – for example a pregnant woman and her husband as escort – their children who are 3 or 4 years old are often left with their grandparents. I've often seen this happen. And the grandparents have to dress the children and feed them.

I have seen elders who can't go to the health center because they are looking after children and grandchildren.

There should be Inuit led daycares. It's better to teach children Inuktitut at a very young age. It's very important that daycare programs are offered in Inuktitut.

It's the qallunaaq laws that 16-18 years olds are considered an adult. It's not the same for Inuit.

Better Communication with Elders**Summary**

- Communication with elders should always be in Inuktitut and provided in culturally appropriate ways.

Elders' Comments

These cell phones and technology, there are other ways to communicate. Whenever there's something going on I miss out because events are no longer posted in our local store. And often information about local events is written only in English. And not everyone has a computer or a cell phone. The children know before we know. Elders should be contacted in person about any events that are happening in the community. There should be much better communication.

It would be good to have one advocate, one location and one person to answer our questions, since we are always told to go somewhere else.

Even if elders are blunt towards us, we should not take it personally.

Inuit Food for Elders**Summary**

- For their health and comfort, elders need Inuit food.

Elders' Comments

We need to do more for the elders in our communities. We should be providing for the elders who used to hunt but no longer can – we should be providing them with what they crave for

because they used to get it themselves and for others. I am like that now – I crave certain foods. I want some even though I might not eat a lot. We need to share traditional food, even if it is a small amount. When we eat what we are craving, it gives the body heat and good feelings. Some elders do not ask at all, they just wait patiently, so we need to provide traditional food. It's very easy today to find food – we can even get the food that the elder is longing for from other places. This is our tradition.

Elders enjoy eating with others. It's always better to have company to eat with. There are many delicacies that we use to entice elders to eat, one of them is young seal flippers. Once I was with an elder who was no longer eating well. I shared flippers with her – she enjoyed them so much that she began eating well again.

Kitikmeot Regional Elders' Gathering

Summary Report

The Kitikmeot Regional Elders' Gathering took place on March 8 and 9, 2023 in Cambridge Bay at the Luke Novoligak Community Hall.

Dedication

This summary is dedicated in memory of Jimmy Haniliak Sr. of Cambridge Bay who sadly passed away from cancer just a few months after representing his community at this elders' gathering.

Participants

Elders:

Mary Ann Agnahiak, Kugluktuk
Jayko Palongayak, Kugluktuk
Anaoyok Alookey, Taloyoak
Simon Oleekatalik, Taloyoak
Miriam Aglukkaq, Gjoa Haven

David Siksik, Gjoa Haven
Celine Ningark, Kugaaruk
Christian Nalungiak, Kugaaruk
Jimmy Haniliak Sr., Cambridge Bay
Jessie Lyall, Cambridge Bay

Regional Coordinator: Navalik Tologanak

Facilitator: Mary Wilman

Notetaker: Robyn Campbell

Interpreters: Joseph Quqqiaq and Helen Klengenber

Reflections from the Kitikmeot Elders

Following the orientation and opening activities, the elders were each invited to comment on the purpose of the meeting, the quality of support they are currently receiving, and what they envision for the future of elder care and support services in their communities. Here are some of their initial reflections.

The Situation Today

We know how hard and expensive it is to build an elder-care facility in our community, but this is what we want to provide the services the elders need in their home environment. Elders need local transportation as well as an elder-care facility where members of the family can visit. It's not good for the elders to always stay at home because they have no means to go out. We have waited for so long to receive elder-care services in our community. We have been told we would be assisted in the future, but we are still waiting to hear how this will happen. It is very tiring to not hear back. We want a well-run elder-care facility, with well-trained staff who are trained in elder-care, and good security.

Elders need assistance and to have someone listen to their concerns. It seems that we mostly get help from our family members and not from Government of Nunavut resources. Sometimes elders have no one to help them, because not all elders are receiving help from within their family. Even when elders do get help from their families, they are sometimes physically, emotionally, and mentally abused. Even if elders have a family member to help, the family member doesn't always know how best to assist them. Elders who are chronically ill require daily help and proper assistance. This is a full-time responsibility, but family members also have their own families to look after and often don't have time to visit.

We want help for our elders. We want increased home-care assistance in our community and to train people from our community to do this work for us. The GN should employ them. Also, the government needs to make sure that elders know about the services that are offered, and ensure there is someone to come and help them every day.

We are being looked after in some ways, but the Government of Nunavut doesn't understand our Inuit way of life. It seems they are more concerned about regulations rather than understanding our needs. Inuit culture focuses on the wellbeing of the society. We need to care about our traditions as Inuit. It is not our way to kick Inuit adult children out of our homes. I have been trying to understand non-Inuit ways of thinking, but white people don't know Inuit. Combining two cultures is hard at times. I was born and raised on the ice and in a snow house, even though some Inuit were already living in houses. We know how to make our clothing to suit our harsh environment and survive. We have already told the government many times about our lives as elders. At our age, we are less concerned about ourselves and more concerned about our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren's wellbeing. Today people are getting lost because of the lack of elder's advice. We are often asked: how did we live – way back then? We know that we need to follow our own rules and the values we were raised with.

It is very difficult when elders do not have transportation and they don't walk. It would be good to have someone to provide transportation so that we can be more active and independent. We often hear people asking for help with transportation because it is very difficult when they need to get somewhere. Not all families have transportation to help their elders. This is an issue for many elders.

Elders want to feel welcomed and be in a safe home. Living in crowded housing is a problem. The houses are too small, especially for multiple children and grandchildren. While it is good to have the support and help from our grandchildren and to have people around us, elders need not to lose control of their homes. When elders live in crowded houses it is very hard on their health, especially if a family member is constantly using alcohol or drugs in the house. Some elders will go to other family members' homes just to get away from an abusive household member. This creates sadness and depression for the elder. Also, when elders have nobody staying with them, they experience hardship because there is no one to provide support. Once elders start worrying, their health goes way down. Elders don't want to ask for help from other family members. When we lived on the land, we looked after each other.

It would be good to have an elders' committee. It is good when elders get together. I have been concerned for a long time knowing what elders are going through. If things don't change for the better, what do elders have to look forward to in the future?

With alcohol and drugs now available and widely used, life is more difficult for the elders. We feel more burdens and are concerned for both the young and old. It is hard on the young people as well. We have asked for a building as a safe-house for the children – to escape to be and feel safe. If things don't change in our community and crowded housing continues, if empty units don't get fixed, if the lack of community activities doesn't change, we will continue to have obstacles in our lives every day. The younger generation will have even more hardship down the road.

In the wintertime during the cold weather there is not much activity happening. Elders are really stuck during wintertime because there is no place to hold indoor activities. Winter months are like a hibernation period for elders when there are few opportunities to get together for activities and it is very hard to get country food. Sometimes, after not seeing each other for a long time, we talk about the good old days. During the spring, summer and fall, elders want to get out on the land. Even when we are aging we can do all kinds of things, like getting water or collecting heather to make a fire for tea and bannock. Elders really miss the smell of heather and making tea outdoors. Elders need people to take them on the land so that they can enjoy time together. Food seems to taste better when people eat together. We can make it happen; we can have people to help us to do that. Tell our children and grandchildren to help us do that. We can share our memories with them. Elders don't have transportation to go places, so taking elders on outings should be a big part of our care. It is pitiful to see the elders staying at home with nobody to take them anywhere and nowhere to go.

We are often scared of other people, including younger people. This seems to be part of what aging is about. At our age it's easy to get intimidated and to have less confidence in oneself. I've seen this first hand, but I wish I didn't have to worry about it. Although we have family members, it is sometimes hard to talk with them.

My family wants to help. I get help every day. My grandchildren help me in my home. They provide good support and I just need to explain to them what my needs are. They need to understand what we go through as elders. We need to help them understand our needs and situation as elders. They don't mean to be hurtful, but they just don't know how to look after elders. There are times when they don't seem to want to assist or even to listen. As elders, we need to explain our needs. Our young people do care. They know and they want to help, but they still need to be told and we need to make sure they understand.

Give our elders food – elders should never be forgotten. Elders want to eat their own foods. Sharing food is a big part of Inuit culture. Some people are given food all the time, especially those who have families who hunt. Others go without because they have no means to access traditional food or no money to buy it.

When I was a young man, I didn't think about aging. When you become an elder, it is totally opposite to being a young person. Elders have many thoughts about life in general. We elders think about other community members and our health is deeply affected when we see other elders being sent out of their home communities for elder-care. Our lives would be more manageable and we would have less worry if we could stay in Nunavut for elder-care. Elders are supposed to be looked after.

Elders nowadays seem to have lost their traditional ways of family life due to TV, internet, cellphones, etc. We are being sent away to another community or city to be looked after – not by our family, but by other people. Some elders are well looked after, but some are not. If you are a single elder, you are not well looked after.

When we were children we were carefree, we were allowed to just be children and laugh and play. Now, as old men, we are sometimes seen and treated as if aging is a bad thing. Now I understand what aging is about. It is stressful at times. As you grow older, it just becomes more worrisome. No wonder as we are aging we need more help.

During this gathering we have discussed the things we want to see improved in the future. If things don't improve or no action is taken in the very near future, according to what we have suggested, we can expect things to be worse in the future. What we elders are experiencing today, will be worse for the elders of tomorrow. This is what I predict in the future.

Vision for Aging with Dignity in Nunavut

At each regional gathering, the elders were asked how they would envision a community where they could live and age in dignity. Elders at the Kitikmeot gathering responded that:

- Elders have urgent needs that require immediate action.
- Elders are not afraid and they do not have worries.
- Elders can remain in their homes and in their home communities as long as possible because they can get support from a positive and friendly elder-care facility. This would be a proper continuing care facility in their community close to their families and friends, not just an old folks home.
- Good quality home-care is available and caregivers are financially reimbursed.
- Elders have transportation.
- Elders have welcoming homes that are safe and comfortable, and where they never feel threatened.
- Elders know what support services are available and are assisted in accessing those services in Inuktitut.
- Elders connect with young people who come and listen to their stories.
- Addictions are managed in communities and abuse is dealt with in an Inuit way.
- Elders are living healthily and are physically active in their communities.
- Families understand what aging is all about – so they know what to expect and how to support elders so that they can live well as they age.
- Elders have opportunities to gather in joyful activities: laughing and socializing and having tea.
- Elders are involved in community activities, including telling stories and singing.
- Community members involve elders as part of their lives, with lots of visiting.
- Elders are integrated into the community and not lonely.
- Elders are taken out on the land for activities.
- Elders have committees and other ways to communicate their concerns, and can tell the government what they need for care in the future.
- Elders have enough nutritious traditional food readily available to eat.

Themes Arising from the Discussion

Several core issues or themes were raised by elders at the Kitikmeot Regional Elders' Gathering. These have been consolidated in this summary as: urgent need for action; elder-care facilities; abuse and fear; housing for elders; home-care; health care services; impact of family members' addictions; elders' gathering space and activities; elders' link with youth and the community; transportation for elders; elders contributing to the community; Inuktut and communications; Inuit food; financial hardship; and getting help.

Urgent Need for Action

Summary

- Elders want to see action now. For elders, there is no time to lose.
- When elders are worried their health deteriorates faster. Elders need to get relief from their worries because when they are worried and lose their health, everyone in the family is affected.

Elders' Comments

Elders have been speaking about their needs for a long time. We have spoken to the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and we felt heard at the time. However, we have not seen the action we expected and we have not heard back from these organizations. We are feeling demoralized and despairing of hope. It seems like this is just going in circles. Elders sometimes feel it is pointless to ask for certain services because they never get implemented. There is no time to wait. Unless action happens now, the younger generations who will soon become elders will go through a long hardship.

Prior to signing the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, Inuit were told that things will get better and that services will improve. Elders have yet to see these improvements.

Elders feel that the Government of Nunavut does not understand Inuit ways of living and Inuit ways of thinking. We feel there is always conflict between the Inuit way and the government way. When Inuit ask for certain services, we don't receive them or get any response to our requests. The government systems do not respect the Inuit laws, values, and principles that have always existed. Elders are feeling less worthy because our concerns are not being met.

Elder-Care Facilities

Summary

- Elders want a designated elder-care facility in each community that is large enough for all the elders who need it.

- Residential school survivors are becoming elders now. Too many people are once again removed from their communities and sent away from their family against their will, and once again they have no choice. As children they were taken away from their parents and families who did not know where they were going. It is happening again today when elders need care. Removing Inuit children from their families was unacceptable then, and it is unacceptable to remove them again from their families for elder-care now.
- The designated elder-care facility should be situated where it is peaceful and less noisy, not in the middle of the community.
- The elder-care facility must have 24-hour care, with security to ensure safety during the night.

Elders' Comments

As we are aging, we are being sent out for elder-care. Elders who are sent down south for medical care often die shortly after they leave. Our adult children don't want us to be sent out, but the family is not able to look after us. The doctors in communities send elders out against their will, even those who want to stay with their family. It should not be like this. There must be other options within the community. Every community should have an elder-care facility that can also care for elders with dementia.

Care-giving work can be taught to local workers. This would create more job opportunities in the community so that young people don't need to leave the community for work. It would be so good to have home-care and elder-care facilities to support elders in their communities. Right now, we feel undervalued and are seen as not knowledgeable.

Some elders are not always aware of their state: they can accidentally leave their home and go out into the cold and then freeze. Seeing elders in situations like this is not pleasant. These elders need to be watched. They need to be in a safe and secure place with proper care. When more family members are present, elders have more support.

Families struggle when an elder is sent away from their home community because they don't have the financial means to see them. I would like to see more support services for elders in each community.

Abuse and Fear

Summary

- Elders are living in fear. Some elders are being financially abused and bullied, with their pensions being taken from them. Even after they are gone, sometimes their pension continues to be used. Inuit ancestors lived by looking after each other.

- Elders want a phone number to call where they can speak to someone in Inuktitut about the dangers or abuse they are experiencing. There should be someone in authority available to respond quickly to their concerns.
- Elders don't want to report their families to the RCMP. Elders want to be involved in managing this abuse in Inuit traditional ways.

Elders' Comments

As we are aging, when we become elders, how can we feel safe and secure? We need to feel safe and not be fearful. It is very difficult to live in a community sometimes. Elders should feel welcome and looked after. We need to feel included, not excluded. We want to be able to live a good life without fear.

Elders shouldn't have to live with people who misuse drugs and alcohol.

There is so much elder abuse. When elders get their pension, I see a lot of people go to the elders and ask for money for alcohol and drugs. I don't see so many young people helping the elders anymore.

Some elders don't report incidents even to RCMP because they don't want their family members to be charged. So many young people may go to jail. The elders are always worried about what is going to happen to their family members.

In communities, elders have a hard time every time they get their financial assistance. Their grandchildren use it to buy booze from bootleggers. People are drinking. We need someone to watch over the elders on the day they get money. When elders go to the Co-op or Northern stores, grandchildren are lined up behind them. Elders are looking after the younger people, not themselves. Elders should look after themselves first.

Some elders' pensions are being taken. Family members will go into the computer and get access to the elder's bank account and take money. Elders don't want to report it to the authorities. Even after they are gone, sometimes elders' pensions continue to be used.

Each community has problems with family members taking money from the elders' bank accounts. It would be good for the RCMP to come to an elders' meeting to let us know how to deal with this problem – so we can learn how to better protect ourselves from our children. Even though they are our children, when they are taking our money without our consent it is against the law. It is also against Inuit law. Inuit never steal – we learn to share, we always share.

I just want to say there are many elders and parents who have a difficult time reporting or asking for intervention because they don't want to see their loved ones taken away. For example, a child who does not want to go to school or the person who is abusing an elder's pension does not get reported because of the strong bond or love. Understandably, we don't want to see our loved ones being punished or dealt with by the police. However, we all need to understand that once we have tolerated this behavior it becomes more difficult to deal with

later, when perhaps it would have been easier to deal with it right from the start. We need to prepare our children for the future and for when we are gone, so that they have better coping skills in the future.

Housing for Elders: design and availability

Summary

- Elders need suitable and accessible housing.
- Elders should not have to live in overcrowded housing or live with people who are abusing substances.
- Elders want single housing units that are easily accessible, not inaccessible multiplex homes with shared services.
- Elders want to have a place where they can sleep well without being worried.

Elders' Comments

Better care must be taken when designing housing units for elders – their age and physical abilities must be considered. Housing units should be designed to make elders feel safe and comfortable. I live in a 4-plex building that has 4 doors and a hallway. It is difficult to go in and out. I worry sometimes because the stairs are so steep that it is difficult to use them. Elders are living in 4-plexes that only have one front door and no back door – this does not feel safe in case of fire. Some elders' housing units have stairs to get to the bathroom. The stairs are too high for elders and people with disabilities. It is not safe to have only one door, steep stairs, or stairs to the bathroom.

Elders don't want to be fearful or unsafe in and around their homes. They want to have a good place to go home to. Elders don't want anyone drinking in or near their homes. For those living in multiplexes, there are so many drugs brought into those homes that the smoke goes through into other units and it is really stressful for elders. The smell of smoking drugs comes from outside your own home. Elders need to be in a secure, safe home with a comfortable place to sleep. That's how I want to be treated. I also want to give my great-grandchildren a good home and to teach them a good lifestyle.

For elders to live a good life, their housing should have only a few steps that are not too steep, and should be well maintained and cleaned regularly.

Elders do not want to be overcrowded. When elders are placed in crowded housing it is not suitable for anyone.

We are concerned for our children and grandchildren. Sometimes our grandchildren are told to move out of their housing, when clearly there are no other housing units to move into. It is not

the Inuit way to kick our loved ones out onto the streets. The Government of Nunavut needs to understand the Inuit way of life, and to understand that we look after one another.

There are so many houses that need fixing or renovation. At the same time, our young people need to have something to do. There is no employment for these young people, so they are sitting around being bored. If they could learn how to renovate those buildings, the young people could help elders to have comfortable homes. We need to build or fix up the empty single housing units so they can be used for elders. We need funding to fix those houses. This would help to ease the overcrowding situation.

Home-Care

Summary

- Elders want to see an increase in the number of home-care workers, so home-care can be available for more hours on more days - and so the staff are not always rushing.
- Elders want good quality home visits on a regular basis, daily when needed, so they don't have to leave their home environment too soon.
- Home-care workers need more training to improve the quality of their work and range of services they can provide. These should include basic physical and mental health care, personal hygiene, light home maintenance, and housekeeping.
- Elders want respite care for themselves when they are looking after their spouses or family members. There should also be respite care for family members who are providing care for elders.
- There needs to be more than one caregiver. Caregivers should be available to stay with elders, especially overnight, to provide relief to family members. Elders and families need additional support.

Elders' Comments

It is very difficult for people in the household to look after a family member who has a long-term illness. It is exhausting to be the only ones looking after the person who is ill. The government should not place these heavy responsibilities solely on other members of the family. The government should provide home-care and make regular visits. The family is there to comfort the elders and ensure they are well taken care of.

Home-care worker training should be available. We need more support and more training for the young people so that they can learn how to look after the elders.

Services from home-care workers should increase because the number of elders is multiplying. There are still only two staff working in our community. We need more full-time home-care workers with increased working hours - so the few home-care workers we have don't get

stressed out by the increased workload. We don't want them to hurry or rush doing things for us during their visits. We don't want them to have such tight time constraints. Home-care is an important job in our community, so that our elders are well cared for.

I would like to see a well-run program that provides necessary services for those who live on their own – shoveling the steps, for example.

If the Government of Nunavut is unable to build an elder-care facility in each community, then at the very least they should increase the number of home-care workers in those communities. There are now more and more elders in each community, and the home-care workers are already working to their limit. We need more funding to train and hire more home-care workers. They must take time off too. It would be good to train home-care workers at Nunavut Arctic College.

We only have two home-care workers in our community and all they do is cleaning. Home-care should also include caring for the elders. They should increase the number of home-care workers so they can provide more help for elders who are sick. The living conditions for elders today are not suitable. Elders never get proper rest in these conditions due to the lack of proper space. There are too many people in one household and a lack of home-care services or support.

Health Care Services (interpretation, escorts, access to services)

Summary

- Elders want to stay in their home community until the end of their lives. Elders are much happier and healthier when they are around their families. However, they do not want to depend on their children or grandchildren to take care of them. It is too much responsibility to place on their family members. Elders see this as the responsibility of the Health Department.

Elders' Comments

Elders are worrying a lot which is not good for their health. We are getting more elders in the community and the current services have not kept up with the increasing population of elders. Services need to be expanded to accommodate more elders and to offer more programs and activities.

There is an issue with Canadian North leaving escorts behind when there is no room on the plane. Some of the elders arrive in Yellowknife or Edmonton and they are lost because they don't have an escort to help them. Elders need escorts with them. We have brought this issue up with the airline. It's still an unresolved issue.

Elders need better interpreter escorts for medical travel. Elders want a good interpreter available to go with them on medical travel – not just a family member. They want a knowledgeable medical interpreter who will look after them at the boarding home and during

their medical appointment, instead of an escort who is someone to go shopping with. Better care should be taken when choosing escorts, so that the escort is reliable and will do a good job of assisting the elderly patient. Because most medical travel arrangements are usually made at short notice, enough time isn't given to finding a good escort. All too often it's whoever is available at the time.

Interpreters at the health centres must know medical terminology so that they can help elders understand clearly. I know of one incident where the health centre provided poor interpretation about the prescribed medication, and that elder needed to be medivaced because he didn't understand when to take the pills and how many to take. We have brought up these concerns at the NTI meetings in Rankin Inlet and Iqaluit. When I was in Rankin, I made sure the Minister of Health was listening to my concerns about interpretation, but we haven't heard anything back from him.

We want to see the telephone operated by an Inuktitut speaker during the health centre's operating hours. The health centre has a telephone, but when you call it always goes to the answering machine and the messages are only in English. Nobody answers the phone, even though there are two or three people in the office. Some elders don't understand what the answering machine is saying, and they have difficulty leaving a message.

Impact of Family Members' Addictions

Summary

- Elders are deeply concerned about their family members using alcohol and drugs. Elders need to feel safe and not threatened. Elders are afraid. This is unacceptable.
- Elders are compromised when their addicted children and grandchildren live in their homes. It prevents elders from resting properly and having peaceful lives.
- When they are afraid, elders don't want to report their children or grandchildren to the RCMP because they don't want them harmed or in trouble with the law. The RCMP has discouraged elders from reporting non-dangerous incidents because they are overloaded with callouts.
- Elders' health and their financial and social wellbeing is negatively impacted by family members' addictions.

Elders' Comments

I am the only elder in my family. Having intoxicated people living in the same home is very uncomfortable. Having adult children around who are not sober is not good for the mind. When elders get older they need their own housing unit so they don't have to see their family members in this state. Seeing them in this state is very worrisome. Elders need their rest.

We often talk about elders leaving their homes because a member of the family is using alcohol and drugs. More support services are needed in the community to deal with these issues. Alcohol and drugs have affected every community.

The police can't do much about it unless young people have broken the law or are a danger to themselves or others. We are told to not talk to the police about these things, unless the behaviour is dangerous – and the police can't hold them unless it is dangerous. I feel sorry for these children. We can only let our children know what is right and wrong and try to fix their lives.

Young people need to get more training about the pros and cons of drugs and what impact they have. I worry about a lot of young parents in town and across Nunavut. People who take drugs and alcohol need to be told how they affect your body and slowly put your health down. Three years ago, the police had a meeting with parents to inform them about young people who are using drugs and are mad at their parents or grandparents. We want this education again.

It is sad to say when people get a pension, grandchildren want their money for financial gain. We want the elders to be sure that their money is looked after through the bank. The money is being used for cigarettes and for alcohol – which is unacceptable to elders.

We should have elders as advisors for the Justice Department.

Elders' Gathering Spaces and Activities

Summary

- Elders want a building with a safe gathering space in each community to meet and socialize.
- Elders want to go out on the land, especially when it is not too cold. They need help with getting country food and transportation to campsites. Many elders want to get out on the land but need assistance to do so.
- Elders in each community would like to be able to go back to their traditional places out on the land, especially in summertime.
- Elders need transportation to help them go out on the land.

Elders' Comments

Elders need a big building in their community that is a gathering place for them, and a vehicle for transportation. Elders need their own space where they can be together and where they can have visitors. The building needs to be big enough for gatherings. This would be good for all communities, and would really benefit elders in Nunavut.

It is extremely important to have a facility for the elders to meet daily and mingle, get together, and share ideas and stories. Socializing with others improves their health and wellbeing. To feel well, elders need to participate in activities. In this space, elders could receive traditional food, and eat with people who are hungry. It is so important to be around other people. Allowing elders to tell their stories is a form of healing. This was practiced in the past.

My greatest concern is that elders are being left on their own, alone in their house. Elders may get physically weak but their mind never stops thinking. When you are alone, things will start popping up in your head. To keep their minds active, elders need to interact with others regularly. Being together and socializing with others strengthens an elder's mind and spirit. Being alone in the house with no one to talk to creates loneliness and affects the mind and spirit, and their health deteriorates faster. Everyone can encourage people to tune on their radio to learn more about the elders, and to let elders share their stories or what they are experiencing.

Delivering different programs and traditional activities for the elderly that allow them to socialize with others is very important for elders' wellbeing. It is necessary to have frequent activities and gatherings for the elders – to keep them motivated and feeling positive.

I would like to see elders and young adults taught about moving and exercising. As elders, it is very important to keep active. Physical activity is very important for the body. When people become older, they tend to stop moving or doing active things. I feel sorry for some of the men who are widowers or on their own; they are not exercising and simply not being active. They are unable to do strenuous things. This is from a lack of doing things – it makes them weak and sickly. People who are aging should know that to stay healthy they need to keep moving and keep busy.

It would really help to have a cabin out on the land with transportation provided to take us out there. We want an employee to go out hunting for us. If there was funding for home renovations or maintenance, it would be great to hire young people who have skills to do this work. A cabin out on the land near the community would be nice for visits, activities, and elders' gatherings. When activities are arranged for the elders, they could also include the young people. There is so much to do within our community that could keep our young people busy and, at the same time, the elders would benefit.

In our community, we don't have an elder's cabin. Outings on the land are very important because they get elders out of the house. Some communities have good programs and some don't. It seems very sporadic across Nunavut when it should be supported across the board.

I would like to see elders being together out on the land. I like going out on the land in the springtime - going someplace nearby for fishing and getting together with other elders. There are so many places we could go, but they can only be reached by vehicle or by boat. It's always good for our bodies and souls to set up tents, cook outdoors, share stories and use traditional knowledge. Simple outings away from the town where it is peaceful and quiet do wonders for the elders. This is what elders appreciate most.

We share our stories when we are on the land. It is also an excellent place to teach young people survival skills and about life in general. Sometimes young people feel they have no way out, and they too appreciate getting out of town and away from city life. We need to train our young people to understand the land – the facts of life. Drum dancing is an Inuit tradition that must be practiced – it really helps. Singing traditional songs and drum dancing is a form of therapy for the sick soul and is uplifting at the same time. It’s no wonder that elders are ill when they are stuck in houses and never get to enjoy their natural surroundings where the healing comes from. Elders’ drum dancing can really benefit people. People should take elders out on the land.

In Cambridge Bay, the elders’ advisory committee has had gatherings. We gather for food and games at the Elder’s facility and invite school children, police, and teachers to come to see us and eat with us. When the weather is warmer, we go out of town and the elders and young people are together to share their stories. This is so healthy.

Elders’ Link with Youth and the Community

Summary

- Elders want more connection with young people, who should be told about their stories and their lives.
- Elders are concerned when their adult children and grandchildren can’t really look after themselves, and about fostered or adopted children who are taken out of the community.

Elders’ Comments

The youth are very willing to help, but they don’t always know how best to help if we don’t communicate with them. We need the young people to understand how it is as we age - to understand our needs as elders. There is a communication breakdown. It can seem that young people are being disrespectful, but when we explain to them what we are going through as we are aging, they are respectful and very willing to help. There is a lot of disconnection that has created distance between youth and elders, which can seem like disrespect for our culture. Sharing a common language is critical in communication. Sometimes it is difficult to have good and strong communication between young people and elders because, even though our young people are Inuit, they are thinking in English. This is the case in our community.

The bond between the elders and their grandchildren is too strong to be broken, so when elders are sent away for health care there is real hardship for the family. If there was an elder-care facility in every community, it would be great for the whole community. It would allow family members to visit the elders on a regular basis.

It is extremely important to keep the link between youth and elders, so that elders have opportunities to pass on their traditional knowledge (Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit). Older elders are becoming few in number – we should make sure the younger generations are gaining

knowledge from these elders. We elders who are well want to contribute our traditional knowledge. We want to have daily visits to the schools. We want to share Inuit parenting skills and show a better way of living. We want to talk about how to have a healthy family and a good home – good family units – but even trying to do that can be stressful at first.

Those young people who are becoming parents don't visit the elders and will have a hard time when they become parents themselves. Inuit elders are thoughtful and have a lot to teach. Many young parents have a lot of anger and that affects how they are raising their children. This is not a good way to raise a family. These young people need to be more exposed to elders.

Sickness is a big burden on the mind and very stressful. In my community, when the women's shelter workers don't have much to do, they go to visit the people who are sick and help those family members. Maybe the Department of Health could give more support and funding for communities to help in this way. More funding would help provide more support, so the caregivers can get some relief in mind and body .

When we send people to penitentiary or jail, there are healing sessions for them that they benefit from. But for people who are in and out of jail, it is their children who struggle most. When you separate young people from their parents, it is hard – very hard. Parents are the foundation of the family. When you are a child you can get scared, especially when your parents are not around. Many years ago, when Inuit were governing themselves, we never had a situation where one parent got sent away for punishment; when a husband and wife had a dispute or conflict they were never taken apart. So you never had children left behind without parents. The family should be seen as a whole unit. Once you take away a father or a mother, the family unit is broken. Today, we have children who are hurting because either their mother or their father has been taken away to jail. We know there are other ways to provide punishment.

So many of our children are being adopted by others – non-Inuit. Some elders don't know what is happening to these children. We have heard that some of these children are not being well looked after. Some Inuit children never know who their biological parents are. Elders are not happy about this. There are so many children who don't know who their fathers are and continually hear who their fathers might be – all based on speculation. Some children are desperate to know who their fathers are, and it is very hard on them. How can these children be helped?

We feel sorry for our children. Some people don't make the children go to school because they feel sorry for them. We need to talk to them about the need for more education and tell them it is wrong to do that. We must tell them that saying "I don't want to send my children to school because I love them" is wrong. Children need hard love – we know that we can't just let them decide for themselves. They need education, so even though they don't want to go to school we need to make them. We have to think about the future.

The younger generation don't really understand about growing old. Instead of helping us, these days they just want money from us for TV, drugs & alcohol.

Transportation for Elders

Summary

- Elders need transportation in the community for appointments, for grocery shopping and visiting, and so that they are not homebound.
- Elders need transportation for medical appointments in larger centers to take them to their appointments safely and on time.

Elders' Comments

There is no transportation in our community. Every time the elders' group gets together, we talk about our need for transportation in the community – but no one seems to hear. We need a vehicle to transport elders. The Hamlet was asked but there was no answer. We heard that the KIA is trying to get a van.

I want to make it a priority for elders in Kitikmeot to have a ride for medical appointments and travel. I have medical travel every three weeks, and most times I need a ride. Elders need to have consistent support that is also available for early morning and late-night flights.

When elders need to go to the health centre for their regular checkups, they often miss their appointment because they have no one to take them. They know that they have to go, but there is nobody to take them and no transportation. It would be good if the health centre staff could provide transportation to help get elders to the health centre. The problem is the same for elders who have no means of getting to the airport for medical travel. Having no transportation and no one to assist them is a real problem for elders in the communities.

There needs to be transportation that is only for elders. We know it is expensive, but it is necessary. Elders need transportation for health appointments and going to the stores. If they have a contract, maybe the hamlet, the co-op or a business could provide this service. It does not benefit anyone's health to keep missing appointments because of the lack of transportation. It is getting harder and harder for elders to get around.

When it is too slippery on the road it is hard for elders to walk. Today, elders' children or grandchildren have to walk long distances to run errands for the elders. If the elders want to go to the store, they have no transportation and often they don't know who can give them rides.

Once the elders in each community have a vehicle, there should be one phone number to call for service.

As I'm aging, I think about my fellow elders - their different needs and their need for transportation with a vehicle that is suitable for their needs. I have difficulty with most vehicles

because they are not made for the handicapped – a handy-van is easier for elders to get in and out of. Elders need a vehicle that is accessible and fits their needs.

The elders' bus in Kugluktuk was running well, but then too many other departments in the hamlet started using it and it broke down. The elders were left without a bus. The bus needs to be designated for elders only, not for any other use. Every time there was a big event, the recreation department took over the bus. That is not acceptable.

We don't have elders' gatherings because we don't have transportation. We are always just waiting to be picked up. Even though some of us are not sick, we are just waiting. We all need a place to go to, and we need the means to get there.

We would like to see the health centre have a vehicle for pickup. We have the ambulance, but for issues that don't require an ambulance, the health center should pick up elders. There is no taxi service.

I feel for those elders who have no one to take them out. It's sad to know they are homebound. There is no transportation for elders, and we are aware of those elders who are stuck at home. Some elders are not demanding and will not seek help – but we know who they are in our community. The lack of transportation for the elderly must be looked at.

Transportation is also very important when elders must travel outside of the community for medical appointments. At Kitikmeot Larga, they don't have bus access for their appointments. They have to go by taxi, and sometimes taxis don't come to pick them up.

Even when the elders can travel around the community, it would be good for them to have a vehicle to transport them when the weather is not good.

Elders Contributing

Summary

- Elders want to contribute to the community, and to be engaged and participate in community affairs.
- Elder compensation for their contribution should be well-paid and respectful.

Elders' Comments

Contributing to society is so important for the wellbeing of elders. It is very important to know that even though elders may look fragile and weak physically, their minds are still very strong and they are resourceful teachers in passing on traditional Inuit knowledge. Many elders are still able to participate and contribute their knowledge in schools, recreational activities, and hamlet affairs. Elders are still very resourceful in their traditional knowledge (Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit), and they can still help in many areas.

Some elders are often asked to provide their knowledge of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, and they are very willing to do so. However, they are paid very little for it. If a consultant is paid very well, the elders should also be paid well. It seems like the elders are just being used and not adequately compensated for their knowledge and insights. We want to see elders adequately compensated for their contributions to their communities.

Inuklut and Communications

Summary

- All meetings with elders should be facilitated in Inuklut.
- Elders will advocate for Inuit families and Inuit culture using Inuklut, and need to be respected and heard.
- Elders need to know what services are available to them. The government and all other service providers must communicate with elders using Inuklut.

Elders' Comments

Inuit have their own culture and their own ways. The government does not understand Inuit or Inuit ways. Now that we have Nunavut, we should be able to do things in our own way, and the services we get from the government should be more suitable to our needs and based on our culture. We should be able to communicate with the government in our language without need of interpreters.

Communities in the north are totally different from communities in the south. Those of us who live in the north have a different outlook on life. Qallunaat (non-Inuit, and the non-Inuit system) have a different outlook – where rules and policies must be followed regardless. Their rules are foreign to the Inuit way of living. We still follow our ancestors' guidelines and policies which are according to our way of thinking. Inuit are not understood, our way of thinking is seen as contradictory to the law. It is because they don't know our language and culture. They don't understand Inuit ways.

Tell elders exactly what services are available – sometimes we don't know what kind of help is there for us. Service providers should be able to understand who needs help, and elders have to be able to ask questions. Communication is the key. Providing information on what is available is essential. We hesitate to ask because we are afraid to offend anyone. We also want to be able to help people in our community.

It is important to utilize the resources that are available in our community. Government employees, in their respective roles, are here to provide services for the community, and they have a responsibility to the community to do so. We sometimes try to work in isolation and it is too much for one individual – but as a group we may come to a solution. We need to reach out to the resources we have in our communities, and by working together find solutions from within. We may not always find a resolution, but it's often faster for us to resolve a situation

ourselves than for the government. There are many things that the elders can help to improve. The issues are so great in our communities. We can't deal with them on an individual basis. We are stronger when we work to find solutions together. Together we make stronger voices.

Sometimes the elders have a hard time getting an identification document for travel. We need to have better communication with the Government of Nunavut and the RCMP. We do get help from RCMP with travel identification documents. Every time an officer switches over, it becomes a different story.

I feel that we are forgotten in the Kitikmeot. Down the road, I want to see people from Kitikmeot bring issues of concern for discussion at our meetings. There should be one regional elders' committee.

Inuit Food

Summary

- Elders want regular access to traditional Inuit food that they yearn for.
- Elders do not want to be charged for traditional Inuit food. Instead they want paid hunters to hunt for them.
- Elders want better coordination among hunters and a plan for delivering traditional Inuit food to them.

Elders' Comments

Elders are not able to hunt anymore and they don't have the funds to buy the foods they crave. If hunters can access funds to get the necessary hunting equipment then they could hunt for the elders. The government should provide hunting equipment, so that the young can hunt for the elders.

It would be so good to have assistance to get traditional foods. There needs to be better coordination among the hunters, hunters and trappers organizations, and the community to have a planned program for harvesting country food and delivery to elders. Many elders long for and miss eating their traditional food.

Elders need to be given the foods they like to eat and that can benefit their health. Elders are having a hard time getting country food. We have to pay for it. There is something wrong. Elders provided food for the young people when they were growing up, and the young people should have the same respect for us elders now. Give us the food without cost.

I have been a board member with the hunters and trappers organization for over 30 years. Right at the start of our organization, we wanted to do something for the community. We train young hunters to know the land and where the animals are, and we send them out on a daily pay rate

and also pay for the musk ox and caribou they harvest. We find the funding for the community to do that. It is working well today.

We should make sure that elders are being looked after by many people in respectful ways. Elders want fresh food, yet sometimes they are given inedible food – meat meant for dogs, old meat or meat that is not butchered on time. Elders should be cared for respectfully.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit says not to be stingy, to help families through sharing, cooking, and food. Food is meant to be shared – eating alone is not sharing. I was always told to share my food, to help people who gather that food for us. Even if it is a small amount, we help them out.

Financial Hardship

Summary

- Elders are still holding responsibility for financially supporting their families. Elders put themselves last after their family members, which has a negative impact on their financial security.
- The cost of living has increased and elders are feeling the hardship because of the high prices for food, travel, clothing, TV, and phones.

Elders' Comments

Sometimes it is not easy to grow old in the Kitikmeot because of the high cost of food, the high cost of flying, and the high cost of living. Everything is so expensive in the Kitikmeot. The Government knows that everything continues to get more expensive. Our region has the most expensive food. It seems that everything that we earn is used to pay for the high cost of one thing or another. Everything needs to be paid for - all those expensive things: food, clothes, TV, cellphones. Young people want a lot of expensive things, and it needs to be recognized that elders are paying for a lot of that. I was brought up where money was no concern to me. I didn't know what money was until 1960 when I started school.

The pension payments elders receive are not enough to cover the high cost of living in the North. It is not enough to live on and doesn't even cover the general necessities of life when you think about the cost of food, general household goods, essential services, and clothing. We must seek other sources of income to live on until the next payment. But if I bring my son with me when I go for meetings outside of my home community, his social assistance will get reduced when I receive an honorarium. This is not helpful.

It's usually the elders who are on old age pensions who must help their families with what little they have. As a caring person, it is hard to ignore when someone is in need, so the elders feel obligated to help. This is a very common situation – it is like that with many families in Nunavut.

The Nutrition North program was meant to lower the prices of food right across Nunavut. Lately, this is not working at all. Food prices have been going up and up and up. Pilot biscuits used to be \$2.99 and now they are \$8 or \$9 dollars. Is Nutrition North working? I would like to know.

Elders share essential equipment – like snowmobiles and ATVs – with their families. People know that elders are helping to pay for these machines from their old age pensions. When an elder purchases a piece of equipment they always share. Elders don't just think about themselves. Some elders are being used to help pay for all that equipment. It's difficult to always have to pay for things, and to help our young people. Elders should be assisted somehow because this is so expensive.

When elders receive earned income from participating in meetings, our pensions will be reduced. That is hard when you don't earn all that much to begin with. We don't understand why this is happening now. It started this winter – it didn't used to happen. It is not right for them to be deducting money in this way.

Northern Stores are not helping the elders. When elders want to cash a cheque, they are forced to use the WeCard. Instead of giving cash, the Northern Store makes the elders put their money on a WeCard. The elders don't know how to operate that. If it is more than \$200 then they are told to open a WeCard account.

Getting Help

Summary

- Elders need everyone to help, and for people to better understand how to help them. There need to be many kinds of support readily available to elders.
- Elders experience more difficulties in life than they experienced as young people. There is more mental, emotional and physical hardship that they need help with.
- Elders need companions and to not feel isolated or lonely, especially if their children live far away or if they have no children.

Elders' Comments

I wish I could get more help. We know the young people of today are less helpful, but we must understand the young people today are busier than before because they have more things to do. Our grandchildren or great-grandchildren are willing to help if they know our needs. Communication is difficult because they don't speak and understand Inuktitut; they only speak English so they don't understand us. But once they understand what I need, they are not lazy to help me. The older ones are happy to help once they know what to help with: they can help with getting ice and bringing groceries. Some elders don't have telephones and they don't know how to use cellphones which are very new to elders. It is also our responsibility to seek help from outside of our immediate family.

It is very lonely for elders who live on their own to have nobody to talk to and nobody checking that they are OK. Elders appreciate seeing their children and grandchildren – it brightens their day, especially when they don't see them often. It is always good for the family members to call elders and chat with them often. When visitors come in, it helps the elder's mind and body, and lessens their loneliness. It would be good for children to call their parents, because phone calls can make a lot of difference. When elders don't hear from their family members, they start to wonder how things are with the family and worry about them.

There are not that many elders in our communities. They need help and they should be able to get help. Elders should be able to get help from their family for doing things around the house, but they don't ask because they feel like a burden. It is hard to ask for help when you are used to doing things on your own. Maybe the hamlet or Department of Health, mental health workers or social workers could help? They may get help from them, but elders get pointed in different directions for where to find help. Elders need to be provided with good, consistent support.

Sometimes we don't totally understand the service that we need. Some elders don't know what assistance they can ask for. Sometimes they think they are forgotten. We need to make them aware of what assistance they can get. Elders can make up their own minds. Elders with severe disabilities are more prone to depression where they don't have family members readily available to assist them.

We need to find other solutions for assistance outside the family. How are we going to help the elders as they age and become less physically able? It is not a good thing to sit around all the time - in that way elders get sick. We tend to look to a member of the family or the grandchildren for support or help, because there are no resources or services within our communities. We don't always want to be immobile, but we do what we can as we age. Your mind never stops – it is important to have a good mind and a good body.

When we are aging, we are more likely to feel vulnerable because we are less confident and feel helpless because we are needing so much help. We feel it is too much to ask for and that we are a burden on family members. Elders are very self-aware, and there is a greater need for self-acceptance.

Kivalliq Regional Elders' Gathering

Summary Report

The Kivalliq Regional Elders' Gathering took place on February 14 and 15, 2023 in Rankin Inlet at the Catholic Church Hall.

Participants

Elders:

Ayowna Emiktowt, Coral Harbour
Annie P. Eetuk, Coral Harbour
Noel Kaludjak, Rankin Inlet
Cecilia Ayaruaq, Rankin Inlet
Susan Nuluk, Naujaat
David Nuluk, Naujaat
Gerard Maktar, Whale Cove

Eva Voisey, Whale Cove
Mark Amarok, Chesterfield Inlet
Philippa Aagarrk, Chesterfield Inlet
Mike Gibbons, Arviat
Lisa Gibbons, Arviat
Martin Kreelak, Baker Lake
Joan Scottie, Baker Lake

Regional Coordinator: Verna Strickland

Facilitator: Mary Wilman

Notetaker: Robyn Campbell

Interpreters: Bernadette Dean, Verna Strickland

Reflections from the Kivalliq Elders

Following the orientation and opening activities, the elders were each invited to comment on the purpose of the meeting, the quality of support they are currently receiving, and what they envision for the future of elder care and support services in their communities. Here are some of their initial reflections.

The Situation Today

I want you to know that we are living in a difficult time. Our children and grandchildren have minds that are separate from ours, and we have great concern and compassion for them. Older and younger Inuit don't understand each other anymore – and our children don't understand Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. That is why we don't have a voice today. I appreciate those who ask these questions and ask what we think.

Today we have two ways of aging. We have the Inuit way and the Qallunaat way, and they are very different. The Inuit way of life and Inuit ways of doing things are very different, and Qallunaat do not understand them – they impose timelines and limit budgets. We have to teach Qallunaat because they do not understand, and we must speak in a way that they understand.

We were born in snow houses and sod houses, and raised on the land hunting with dog teams. We moved into settlements at different times and for different reasons. Some of us attended residential schools in Chesterfield Inlet and Churchill. We have many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Each community is different.

The life that elders live today is one of hardship. We have deep compassion for our children and grandchildren. We help others to survive. But for many elders life is unkind – we are lonely and fearful, and we have nowhere to go and nobody to talk to.

Life today is so different from 50 years ago. My mother died in 2011. When my mother grew old, I could not understand what she experienced. She felt such hardship and had deep feelings of desperation and loneliness. She lived alone. Sometimes when I went to visit her I found that she had been crying and I asked her what was wrong. She said: “I’m so tired of being alone. I’m lonely and missing people.” I had never experienced that, so I didn’t understand.

Elders need a place to socialize so we can overcome loneliness. We want a building for elders. Our children and grandchildren do not speak our language anymore, they only answer in English. We need to revitalize Inuktitut in our communities. We need to sew fabric and materials – we need to learn to make clothing using caribou and seal skins. In the summertime, we elders long to go on the land or boating on the water. I am forgetting how to tan seal skins. Once we are gone, the youth will forget - so what are we going to leave behind for them? We have to leave behind the traditional skills of making clothing with skins, and how to budget our monthly income. When I go, my grandchildren will need more financial support and know how to handle their income. There is a lack of employment and there are many needs.

Elders hold a lot of knowledge, and we also hold healing. We all have to learn. We have learned from the things that we have experienced in life. Some of our life experiences are depressing, some are hard, and some are very sad – but we need to learn from them. I believe this prepares us for the future. Over 30 years ago, I went to residential school, and I am still on a healing journey to this day. Being part of this gathering and listening to the other elders speaking today is also part of my healing. My residential school experience was not good, and I could not talk to others about the pain that experience caused me.

As long as people are kind, be kind. Even if they are not good to you, be kind. It is a very good thing when Inuit help and are kind to others. Consider all men as brothers or fathers, consider all women as sisters or mothers. Never reject another human being.

I live in an elders’ apartment. It is uncomfortable and tiny and gets really hot. The in-floor heating gets too hot and too cold – and that is why the elders get sick easily. The apartments are too small – just one single room. If you have a child living with you, they have to sleep in the laundry room or living room. When there is something going on in the other apartments you can hear their noise because these units are not soundproof. If there is violence going on in other units you get traumatized, your body feels it even if you are not the one being physically hurt – you feel traumatized just hearing the violence from next door. They should build individual houses for the elderly: this is what we need. I want someone to hear this.

I am really grateful for this gathering. I thought I was all alone – so thank you very much. When I go home, I will go knowing that I am not alone. I feel happier inside already because we are together and sharing our thoughts.

I always think back. We have eyes; use our eyes. We have ears; use our ears. We have muscles; use our muscles. These are the three things we must use. The life of elders many years ago was the best because the only threat they had was the threat of starvation or sickness. When there was hardship, the elders would get together to talk – it was the only way to relieve hardship or heartache.

I want to tell the person who asked elders to share their thoughts at this gathering to keep working on it – it is very important to us all.

Vision for Aging with Dignity in Nunavut

At each regional gathering, the elders were asked how they would envision a community where they could live and age in dignity. Elders at the Kivalliq gathering responded that:

- Aging with dignity means being respected and taken good care of when you are getting old and are alone – not feeling intimidated, fearful or rejected.
- All elders, now and in the future, have programs and services that reflect Inuit culture and societal values because Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is a priority of the government and is valued and applied in all government programs and services.
- Elders feel that they are listened to with respect when they voice their needs and concerns.
- The vision for the future of elders involves thinking of the future generations, not just for ourselves today.
- There is good public awareness of elders' needs. All organizations within the community understand how they can support elders.
- Elders can live peacefully in their home communities as they age.
- Elders are not afraid.
- When elders need help, it is provided without hesitation.
- Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is fully used and valued, and elders are happy. Non-Inuit understand where Inuit are coming from and respect the life experiences of Inuit elders, their culture, and how they see the world.
- Elders are used as advisors and consultants.

- Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is carefully documented and recorded as it relates to family relationships, the environment, seasonal hunting practices, and making clothing for different seasons. This record includes regional differences in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.
- Elders have someone to listen to them who doesn't talk over them. Elders have regular opportunities for sharing their ideas and needs with caring listeners.
- The school curriculum is made in Nunavut and based on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit – not just a copy of the curriculum from a province in southern Canada.

Themes Arising from the Discussion

Several core issues or themes were raised by elders at the Kivalliq Regional Elders' Gathering. These have been consolidated in this summary as: aging with Inuit traditions and surrounded by Inuit culture; elder-care facilities in every community; home-care for elders; better healthcare for elders; elders' housing and homeownership; safe shelter for elders; elder abuse; transportation for elders; elders are concerned about the younger generations; elders need to be heard; Inuktitut; training and education about aging; elders are family caretakers; elders' gathering spaces; elders being active in the community; Inuit food for elders; accessibility of community infrastructure and buildings; elders' committees and regional gatherings; and elders in smaller communities are feeling neglected.

Aging with Inuit Traditions and Surrounded by Inuit Culture

Summary

- Elders want to age within Inuit cultural traditions and close to their extended families.
- The government has to value and respect Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and continue to strengthen it. For Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit to be shared and applied, elders have to be involved. The government should use elders as resources to record Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and apply it in all programs and services.
- For elders, the Inuit language and culture are inseparable. Inuktitut is what is missing today, and communication between elders and youth is breaking down. Elders feel that they have been put aside in this modern world, even though they were the leaders in traditional times.
- Elders want people to learn from good role models and take care of their possessions.

Elders' Comments

In Inuit Societal Values, it is the young children and the elderly that are the most important. Their needs have to be the priority: childcare and early education, and care for the elderly. Government budgets have to reflect that.

We are living a life now that we were not prepared for when we were growing up. We are Inuit and we know the ways of our ancestors. We have to stand up for ourselves, so that as we age we will not suffer hardship.

We come from the land, we are of the land and, to this day, we long to be on the land. The land holds something for us – something that we long for. Being out on the land is the strongest source of healing.

We have to hold onto the strong values and principles we once lived by, and I really believe we still can. We live in a very different time than when we were young. We are struggling to maintain our ancestors' practices and values. We have moved away from our own practices.

One of the things I often think of is that we need to go back in time to the true Inuit way of life, and how we did things then. If the youth and grandchildren are healed by doing this, we will have peace and rest.

When we were children we did not talk back to our parents or elders, and we did not raise our voices at them. We were told never to yell at children because it would make them stop listening to us. When we were growing up, we were told not to give anyone a hard time or cause them hardship.

Elders should be respected. These days, there are many elders that are not respected by their children and grandchildren. Different drugs are changing our youth and they go to elders to get money to buy them. The government has to wake up and fix this. When the younger generation sleeps all day and depends on the government for food – that is not the Inuit way.

As a child I was taught that we should watch and learn from responsible men who took care of their possessions. This was a way our parents and grandparents encouraged us to become responsible for our own belongings as adults – to keep a good working dog team, for example. This was how our parents inspired us to become good, hard working men, to know how to look after our equipment and materials and keep them in good working condition. It also helped us to develop a value system. The same applies today. If we teach our children to be responsible and accountable when they are young, they will become responsible adults. Unfortunately, the teachings of our parents and grandparents are no longer valued. Today, jealousy plays a role and has become a barrier. People who don't look after their belongings become jealous of those who do, rather than respecting them. There is too much abuse and violence instead. Many young people are forgetting what our grandparents taught us about the importance of having good role models as we are growing up.

Inuit have survival skills that are available for ourselves and younger generations. This knowledge needs to be recorded for the future.

Elders and youth must gather on the land to learn from each other, and play and feast together. If elders gather on the land with their children and grandchildren, the future will be better. For Inuit, the connection to the land is deep. There is something on the land - something alive.

We have to stand up for ourselves as elders and not be intimidated. We have to have a strong mind and not let our minds be swayed. We raised our children and we need to be strong. This is Inuit traditional knowledge – to go back to Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit and keep it alive. Inuit traditional knowledge must still be the foundation of our lives.

If we endured hardship or trauma when we were younger, things started piling up or accumulating and they became layers of pain inside us.

Elder-Care Facilities in Every Community

Summary

- Elders want an elder-care facility in every community.

Elders' Comments

We are unhappy when our precious elders have to be sent to Ottawa. They don't last long down there and should not be sent away.

We want elder-care facilities in Nunavut. This would be for those who cannot walk anymore and need care. They could also be for the disabled because they also need a safe place to stay.

It is essential to build infrastructure for elder-care in Nunavut. The Inuit elders now in Ottawa belong at home in Nunavut.

Home-Care for Elders

Summary

- Home-care hours must be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Home-care policies and programs must be updated and include more services.
- The scope of work for home-care services should be extended.
- The quality of home-care services needs to be improved.
- Home-care workers need to be allowed more time for each home visit, and allowed to do extra work after storms.
- Home-care training should be improved so that all home care workers have similar skills.

Elders' Comments

Home-care should include more services. It should not be limited to basic cleaning, but should include a regular, more thorough cleaning of the units, especially for elders who are unable to do any cleaning.

Home-care workers should spend time with the elders and see how they are doing physically and emotionally. They should communicate with the elders to help relieve distress, anxiety or loneliness. Home-care workers are a big help.

It is difficult when you are the only caregiver for a spouse or parent who is an elder. Whoever lives with an elder becomes that elder's caregiver. It is very tiring for caregivers when there is no one to support them or provide relief or respite time. I aged so much because I got really tired. Elders in wheelchairs must always stay at home.

I am going to use myself as an example. When my mother was alive and had cancer, I was the only one who looked after her. My older siblings had their own houses and full-time jobs. I had a job, but I quit to look after her. We had no help whatsoever from the government. I would look for food for her and try to find what she liked, but sometimes I didn't know what she needed or desired.

I will speak about aging because we are all aging. I could not walk for four months last year after I went out fishing and I injured my hip. I learned from that experience and I received home-care. I learned that if no one was at home, the home-care worker could not go in the home and do the work. That policy needs to change. These workers are in a position of trust and should be allowed to work even if the owner of the house is not at home. The job should be done.

The elders' houses have ramps that need to be shovelled when they are covered with snow. There also needs to be a regular clean-up after blizzards – including shovelling and garbage removal.

Home-care said that I am too capable to receive home-care assistance, but I could really use some help.

Training should be provided to home-care workers on how to look after elders and how to understand their needs. The home-care service needs improvement. Home-care workers need to have pride in their work and should be well paid so that they do good work. Some elders who receive home-care get minimal help, and the work is often incomplete. Elders need to be provided with good quality home-care.

Family members who are taking care of their elderly parents at home need relief. Family members cannot do it on their own. They need regular respite time to maintain their mental and physical health, even if it is a short break. It is very difficult and tiring when you become a mother to your mother. It is very difficult when you need help, but there is no one to help you. No one person should be the sole caregiver.

There was an elder who had chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and found it hard to breathe. Her daughter had to be her caregiver. This elder had to stay at her daughter's home, but often got a cold from being too hot in the apartment. We need housing and care that is suitable for elders. We need to look after our elders. They are the ones who tell us how to do better in life, and we should be doing better for them. We need to support them with anything they need.

Better Healthcare for Elders

Summary

- Elders need quality healthcare provided by medical professionals who are knowledgeable about aging and have geriatric training.
- Improve elder healthcare by providing trained Inuktitut-speaking medical interpreters.

Elders' Comments

Elderly patients and medical patients should know their rights. My father broke his hip in a fall, and the doctors used screws to join the hip bone together. Afterwards, he was in a lot of pain, but they only gave him Tylenol. We kept pushing for him to be seen and to have an x-ray examination, but this was not done. We found out later that the screws were protruding from his hip bone and causing his pain. It took time to figure that out, despite it being a standard practice after major surgery to have a follow-up x-ray. The healthcare system neglected him. Elders need to know their rights as patients, and the proper procedures after surgeries. We shouldn't have to fight for this. Elders need an advocate to support their rights.

I know of a elderly couple that go hunting. While the man was out on the land, he got ill and had to be transported to the health centre by truck because he was in so much pain. I spoke to his wife to get an update on his condition. She told me that all he got was Tylenol. I speak English so I can defend myself, but some elders can't speak English, so even if they have an interpreter they are not always well understood or correctly assessed in terms of their health issues. We often hear that they are not properly assessed and are sent home without proper care.

Elders' Housing and Homeownership

Summary

- Elders need help accessing housing assistance programs.
- Elders need better communication about the housing programs that are available.
- Elders want easier processes to access financial benefits for housing, including refunds.
- Elders who are homeowners need more financial assistance and want costs to be reduced, especially land lease fees.

- To relieve the pressures of overcrowded homes, elders want more public housing built for the younger generations.
- Elders need help with household maintenance chores like snow shovelling.
- Elders want more single dwelling units so that they can have peaceful and safe places to live.
- Elders need their housing units to be physically accessible with no stairs.

Elders' Comments

When elders do not have proper housing, their life goes downhill. Elders need to have a good home that accommodates their needs. Elders who are still active in hunting and seal skin preparation also have needs. There has to be enough space. Consider the seal skin when you are working on the floor – it cannot be too hot or too cold, but it is very difficult to properly regulate the temperature in these units.

We do not want to live in multiplexes. When you open the door a big gust of frosty air comes in. We can hear noise clearly from other units, even snoring from other apartments which affects our sleep. There is no room to do anything. We know that we are given these apartments because they are cheaper for the government to build than houses. We need better housing for elders.

I have a father-in-law and mother-in-law who live in a duplex unit. It is so uncomfortable for them – they are short of breath all the time. The steps are an issue. There will be more people becoming elders and we need to provide them with better accommodation.

The expenses that come with homeownership are costly. I am a widow now and I have my own house. No one from the government helps me. I have tried to get financial assistance. Aging homeowners need to receive more assistance for fuel, power, and other utilities. So much of our money goes towards housing costs. In some ways, life in public housing is much easier. I live one day at a time and try not to think too far ahead. I have one daughter who helps me, and that's how I am able to stay in my own house.

Ever since Inuit were moved into settlements, we have been struggling with their mental health and their spirit. After we were gathered into the settlements, we started living a lifestyle that we had never experienced before. There was no turning back. I want to tell our government that the homes that you built – clusters of houses built close together like apartments or condo units – are very distressing for our mental health. Living in a ghetto destroys our mental health.

There is not enough public housing.

When I retired, I knew that housing would be a challenge. I moved to a cabin. I had to pay for everything for the cabin: to build it, to maintain the skidoo and generator, to get fuel, to get helpers to shovel. If I need help, I have to pay. In order to obtain help, I need to keep paying. My

sons and daughters are working and don't help if they aren't asked. Elders have to be assisted in many ways.

Elders should get fuel and homeowner subsidies automatically. The government needs to improve communications with elders to ensure that they have good information about available programs. They need to create clearer and simpler processes. Elders should have a point person – like a social worker or income support worker – to inform them and support them in dealing with government. Also, elders should not have to pay for things up front and then wait a long time for reimbursement. This places unnecessary financial hardship on elders.

We have to stop paying for the land that our houses are on. Why are we as Inuit elders paying for the lot?

When you own your own house and have to shovel your own snow, it is difficult. Elders who are not in elder-care facilities also need assistance.

I want to talk about homelessness. There are too many homeless people. I am not comfortable with this. When we were growing up, we didn't see homeless people. If someone was homeless, we would ask them to live with us. Our parents took them in, if they don't have a home. We can't just watch people who don't have parents be homeless, we need to help them. Yes, they might have addictions, but we still need to assist them. Are we elders losing our love, our family values? If we are going to try to go back to using Inuit knowledge, we need to bring back our Inuit love and values. Everybody has potential, regardless of whether they are into drugs and alcohol. We should look at their potential, see them for who they are, and try to help them.

Safe Shelter for Elders

Summary

- Elders want a place of safety in each community – a building that is safe, calm, and secure – where they can escape from danger and feel welcome, comfortable, and not be afraid.
- The government should make the creation of on-the-land healing programs in all communities a priority, and take action to make it happen.
- Elders want a safety alert button they can press to say they need help.

Elders' Comments

Elders must be separated from the abuser. They need a place to go to escape. Our elders are going through a lot of hardship with their money being taken, and being spoken to in a very negative way. When they are spoken to in a nasty way, or when the violent person is exhibiting aggressive behavior – like slamming the doors – elders get very afraid and distressed. If there was a building or a shelter, the police could take the threatened elders to a place of safety that is away from those angry or dangerous people. In my younger days, if I spoke harshly to an elder, it was considered a very scary thing to do. But today it is a very normal thing.

Elders need a safe shelter to go to if they are afraid or threatened. My cousin was in Winnipeg and ended up living with her children, but she felt very unwelcome. Once she asked me if she could stay with me, and I agreed even though I had no space in my house. I didn't want her to sleep on the floor because she is an elder. Elders need a space to run to when they feel unwelcome or when they are in a scary family situation.

I believe elders shouldn't be fleeing abuse – they should be staying in their homes and should not have to go to a safe shelter. The person who is being abusive should be the one leaving. This is where we feel safe, in our homes. In smaller communities we are very desperate because of the limited resources available.

Elder Abuse

Summary

- Elders want addictions recovery programs for people in their communities.
- Elders need protection from all kinds of abuse: verbal, financial, physical, emotional and substance abuse.
- Elders want treatment programs for the abusers.
- Elders want alternative models of addressing abuse: mediation instead of the law, and interventions that are based on Inuit ways.

Elders' Comments

I want you to know that we are in a difficult time. I have often thought that I am glad my parents passed away because they would be having a very difficult time today. Many elders today are living in desperate times and in desperate situations. I want to live a life without fear.

Some elders that I know tell their children when they are being abused. Once in a while, the abuse is reported to police or a social worker, but many elders are afraid to report their family members – their love is too great. There should be a mediator for such situations. We know that some elders are physically assaulted by children who are suffering from addictions. We know that when we see elders walking around the community it is because they feel unsafe in their home where there is a family member who is addicted. This is why elders need a place of safety.

Elder abuse is real. Elders receive pensions after they turn 60 years old. The younger generation knows when the elder will receive their pension. I have sympathy for those elders, when their children or grandchildren take their pension money. This has to be prevented because the money belongs to the elders.

Not everyone is comfortable talking about what they are going through. Not everyone is trusted. In small communities, it is difficult for people who want to disclose confidential matters to

someone who can be trusted. Confidentiality is extremely important in these situations. Today, we judge others too much, and there is too much gossip. Violence and verbal abuse are unacceptable.

Verbal abuse is very scary and intimidating for elders. The younger generation verbally abuse elders too much.

Elders need help when they are experiencing abuse, and the abusers also need help – even if they have to be taken to court or to the police. Addicted youth and family members often ask elders for cash, and get angry if the elders don't give them any. If there is no help or intervention, this won't stop. There are those young people who have gone for addictions treatment and have gone on to make positive changes in their lives. Everyone is different. Those that are addicted must be helped.

Elders should not be fleeing from their homes. We do not want young people to start thinking that this is something they can do without consequence – that they are more powerful than the elders. I believe that the abusers should be leaving the house, not the elders. Elder abuse must be addressed.

There are problems with alcohol and drugs that are destroying the lives of many people. There are many kinds of addiction now, and we cannot stop them. I tell the young people not to use drugs and alcohol, but I can't control them. I have been intimidated, and my home has been damaged.

We know people who want to overcome their addiction and are seeking help. When addictions make people sick, their brains are affected and cannot be repaired. There are some people who know how to deal with this and could help us with this problem. We need to solve this through communicating with each other and finding solutions together.

Many elders are abused. Sometimes when elders get gift cards, they give them to a younger person who is living with them. Elder abuse must be addressed.

Your mother gave birth to you, your father gave you directions – children have to respect and listen to their parents, and learn from them. Some mothers are living in fear. Even if we fear our child, we cannot let them know we are afraid of them. If we continue to be afraid of our child, their addiction will grow. As mothers who give birth to our children, we should not fear them. Parents have to be in control of their children. Don't show them fear or let them intimidate us. Ask yourself – why am I afraid of my son?

Elders are intimidated and afraid. It would be good to have an emergency call device that you can activate if you have fallen or are feeling threatened in any way. We want devices that can assist us.

Transportation for Elders

Summary

- In every community, elders need an accessible vehicle, dedicated to their use, to transport them in their daily activities: grocery shopping, going to church or health appointments, going to and from the airport, going to community activities, and going on the land.
- The vehicle must be reliable and only available to elders and people with disabilities.

Elders' Comments

Today our elders are living as if they are on an island with nowhere to go. The communities have become larger, and it is more difficult to walk to where we need to go. Elders need assistance to get around the community. If there was a vehicle for the elders and physically disabled, it could also be used to take elders out for activities on the land.

If there is someone elders can rely on to take them where they need to go, in a vehicle dedicated to their use, elders will feel less guilty. Some elders have their own Hondas or snowmobiles, but there are many elders who have no helpers or transportation at all. They have to ask around to see if anyone is willing to provide them with transportation. This is not easy for elders to do. If there could be a vehicle dedicated to elders' transportation in every community, it would reduce the stress on the elders.

Most elders are living on low pension incomes. They don't have enough money to pay someone to help them with their shopping at the local stores.

I have a vehicle, so I often drive other elders. In many communities there are no courtesy or accessible vans for elders to use – no bus or vehicle to take them where they need to go. Many elders walk. I know that walking is good exercise, but when the weather is cold it is too difficult for elders. They were trying to fundraise for a wheelchair van for the elders. Without this kind of vehicle, when elders need to go to the store they have to take a taxi. When taxis are not available, elders have to wait a long time.

Elders are Concerned about the Younger Generations

Summary

- Elders want respect and want children and youth to be respected too.
- Elders want Inuit youth and adults to be active and productive in their lives.
- The friction between elders and youth is strong. Elders feel they are in a foreign culture – their lives have seen a transitional period that has created a huge gap between them and their own children. This has had a negative effect on everything.

Elders' Comments

We used to have one voice and one direction for children. Today, the education system is so different, and it has taken over from the principles and values Inuit once had. The school system encourages students to use computers and cell phones as educational tools. This can cause confusion.

Today, television, the internet and computers seem to be more important – and this is creating confusion. When I tell younger people that these things are not important, they get offended and ignore everything I say.

We can all learn many things from elders. It is always beneficial for elders and youth to spend time together. My sons and daughters are working and don't help if they aren't asked.

Never give up. Even when we are going through difficult times and feel alone, we should never give up. When there is an imbalance of power, it is difficult to work. Having more of a balance is a better way of working.

The younger generation today is numb to verbal instructions because they have been yelled at too much.

It would be beneficial to lessen the generation gap between elders and youth. The younger generation have adopted the Qallunaat way of life, while the elders hold onto the Inuit way of life. It would be good if they could learn from each other.

Elders Need to be Heard**Summary**

- Elders need to be heard by the government.
- Elders need to have an advocate who will listen to them and support their needs.
- Elders need to see action and receive timely help when they ask for it.
- Nunavummiut need to be more aware of what elders are experiencing and how they can be helped.
- Ensure that elders' rights and all program protocols and procedures are respected.
- Elders want an advocate to ensure that their health-care needs are met.

Elders' Comments

The government has not heard the voices of elders and they don't understand our needs. We have to tell the government: When elders speak – listen; When elders speak – understand. I can speak both Inuktitut and English, so I can make a difference. Elders' requests have to be heeded – we have to be listened to. Believe what elders say. When we were moved from the land to the

communities, elders used to be the leaders. When we moved into settlements, elders were revered, not out of fear but from reverence and respect. There were no bullies because we revered elders. Today's elders are silent and no longer respected. Our voices are not being heard. Only Inuit ourselves can revive our way of life. We have to tell the government that respect for elders has to be restored. We are real Inuit, but our values are going by the wayside because we are not applying Inuit principles.

I want the Nunavut Government to know how elders feel. To this day, Inuit elders have pain inside. When white people first started arriving, they just tried to shove Inuit ways aside. I think people are starting to wake up now to what really happened, and I am happy for that because people are sick from the pain they have carried from that time. Now, this pain even affects our children and grandchildren. There seems to be no respect for elders. When our children come home we try to communicate with them, but there is a disconnect between our lives then and our lives today.

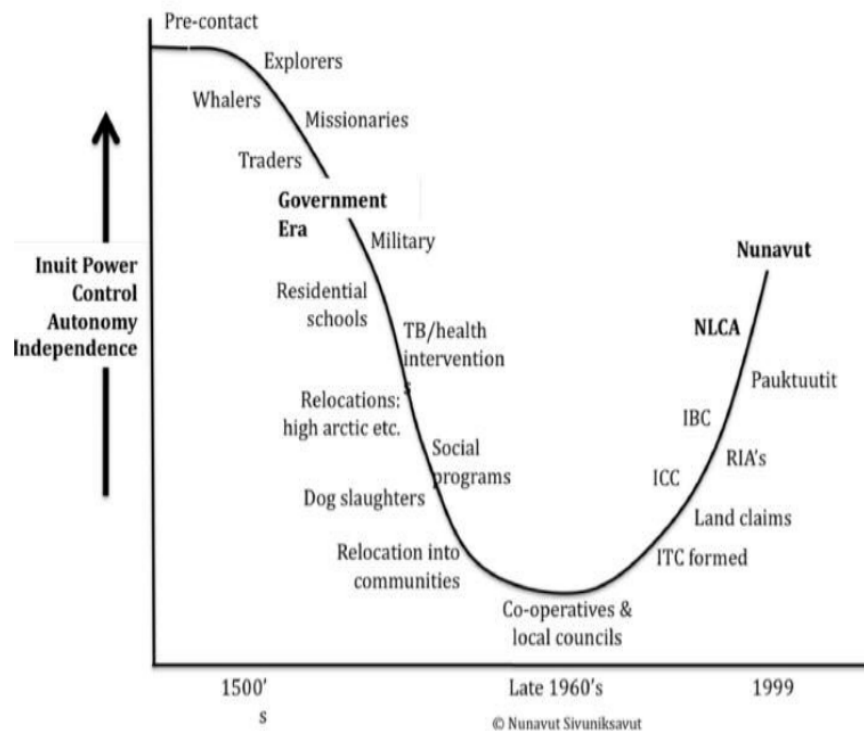
It is hard to work in an environment where there is an imbalance of power. When there is more of a balance, it is a better way of working. Non-Inuit will not listen to us. When our voices are not heard, we stop listening too. And for this reason, we almost lost our language and our way of life.

Elders are not aware of the government services that are available for them. We need to be told what services are available and to have someone to get action on our behalf.

We are trying to be Inuit but we have divisions of government, the KIA, and the Hamlet. The municipality should be our foundation, and the KIA our Inuit leaders. But when we express our needs to the hamlet, they do nothing. The municipal government doesn't seem to help us at all. The Government of Nunavut needs to hear us.

Elders know the timeline [Inuit history power curve] – it shows how life has changed for them.

INUIT HISTORY POWER CURVE



The "Timeline" discussed by elders in this gathering, referring to the Inuit History Power Curve

https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2011/07/Murray_Morely.pdf

Inuktitut

Summary

- The Government of Nunavut must treat Inuktitut as a priority. Inuit children must know their language and be strong in Inuit culture.
- The Government of Nunavut must provide documents to elders in Inuktitut.
- The Government of Nunavut must provide services to elders in Inuktitut.

Elders' Comments

Government of Nunavut employees are working for Inuit. When elders go to government offices, the workers are talking in English, English, English. But they are working for the government so they should be serving us in Inuktitut. Inuit must feel welcome in any office and know what services are available to them.

The government has a lot of offices and services. Across Nunavut, very often documents are not in Inuktitut. This needs to change.

Our Inuit language is very, very important and should be the priority.

We need the government to fix the language barrier between Inuit and non-Inuit.

Those non-Inuit working for the government must learn and respect Inuit Societal Values.

Our language is our identity, so it is important that we keep our language alive. Once you lose your language, so much is lost and life is more difficult.

Training and Education About Aging

Summary

- Elders want training and education for their families and the community on how to support elders and the process of aging.
- People need to learn how to help elders, and communities need to know which elders require help.

Elders' Comments

You are not aware that you are aging, but when your body starts to age – that is when you realize it.

When I was younger I didn't believe my parents, but we are capable of changing our minds and our view of things. When I was young, I thought that things would never change. I now believe what my mother and father told me: elders need to be taken care of. People should know what elders want to eat and know what elders need assistance with.

When you are the only elder left in your family, it is confusing.

Elders are living a very hard life now. What we are experiencing is very intimidating and frightening. Our children have too much freedom – they just want to sleep and always have food to eat at home. It is not supposed to be like that. Yes, they will get offended when we tell them, but they need to listen and be obedient. We have to give our children knowledge.

Elders are Family Caretakers

Summary

- Elders are struggling to be the family's caretakers when they are having to raise children from very different generations.
- Elders are stressed about the responsibilities of caring for the whole family.

- Elders want to have Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit as a foundation, but cell phones and screens are taking over.

Elders' Comments

There are people who think they are young all the time, people with grandchildren and great-grandchildren who behave like young people. There has to be a time when they take responsibility for taking care of their own children. One can't be young forever. Based on Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, when we become elders we should have a life free of too many responsibilities – like raising children – so that we can take time to be happy. I've told my children that they are adults now and they have to care for their children so that they don't suffer hardship. We have to have limits, because we shouldn't have to live with hardship all the time. We still need time to be happy.

We love our children. We want good things for them, but sometimes they don't listen. We have to sit them down to tell them that screens, cell phones, and computer games are not very good. Even if we have to tell them in English because they don't understand Inuktitut anymore, we need to make them listen. As parents, we have to communicate with our children. We need to tell them that over-use of cellphones and computer games is damaging their brain because these things are very addictive. But their typical reaction is, 'You are not my boss.' Elders could suggest that the young people cut down their usage rather than quit altogether. We don't want them to resist and spend more time on their screens. If we become fearful of our children, they will continue to be in control.

Sometimes the elders become the sole financiers of the younger generation. They should not be required to fully support the younger generation. There are many opportunities for younger people.

Elders need more financial support because they have very limited incomes. Many of us live on income support or Old Age Security and it is not enough to support the whole family.

Cell phones have had a negative impact on us all. As children we learn by observing. Cell phones stop you from seeing and observing the world around you. They have moved us away from traditional ways of learning. When you try to tell children something or ask them questions, they don't hear or listen anymore because they are focused on their cell phones. I have a 5 year-old grandson, and when I try to ask him questions he doesn't hear right away. Cell phones are a distraction for children. We need to have solutions and brainstorm about cell phones and computer devices – they are useful at times, but they are doing something negative to our children and grandchildren. I'm sorry I say this, but we have to tell them that we must hang onto Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit and let it be the foundation of our lives – not cellphones.

In the past, Inuit had a good child rearing system where girls and boys were raised and taught life skills based on their stages of development. Girls were raised to learn how to sew and prepare skins for mittens and kamiks. Boys were prepared for manhood – ready to build a snow house. But then the government promised us free housing, food, and education. Free things are not a good way to instruct the young. Today, our youth do whatever they want because they

never experienced hardship. Today many people do not have willpower or determination. Those who want a skidoo, a computer or a nice house need to obtain employment.

The children and others who have addictions don't like to be confronted. I have learned from someone at a healing place to be honest and open about the pain. It helps to be empathetic and caring.

My parents told me that when I start having children I should speak to them in a good way, and that if we love our children we should instruct them in a good way. I was brought up with the belief that even if I get angry with my children, I should never shout at them. I try to apply that and to never intimidate my children. My children are not my own – they have been given to me. I didn't live a good way all the time. But I try to instruct my children in a good way, so they listen more. Tell children the truth, don't lie to them.

An elders' time on the radio could help in teaching lessons and sharing ideas. Today we have to speak English because our children and grandchildren don't understand Inuktitut anymore.

Love is the traditional Inuit way. We must realize that we are loved, useful and worthy, and that people want us to belong.

Recently, I realized I was holding onto my children for far too long, even though they were already adults. I was in distress. I couldn't sleep because, without realizing it, I was thinking too much about my adult children.

Elders' Gathering Spaces

Summary

- Build gathering spaces for elders in communities and on the land. These spaces can welcome everyone taking part in traditional outdoor activities.

Elders' Comments

In our communities we need a place where elders and others can gather and just socialize. In our communities elders need to be taken seriously, because currently we tend to just stay home and do nothing. When families are experiencing hardship, they need a facility that has counselling services. Whenever there are family issues and there is only one elder in the house, it falls on that elder to provide care. In smaller communities, we need a facility that provides all the services we require.

We need buildings in the communities where elders can experience the communal Inuit way of life. We have to go back to our traditional ways. We need a place for traditional Inuit learning where we can share our culture with the younger generation.

We want buildings like Piqqusilirivik [Nunavut Arctic College’s Inuit cultural education centre in Clyde River] in our communities for us to teach and for youth to learn. They must be fully funded to keep our Inuit culture and language alive.

We want a facility where there are different things to do, where families can go to have therapy and counselling. Mental and emotional healing is very heavy. Traditional gathering spaces help with this healing. One way of addressing elder abuse is through family counselling involving the elders, their children and grandchildren, and the abusers.

Elders Being Active in the Community

Summary

- Elders need coordinators to organize activities for them, and to ensure that they are involved in the community.
- Elders want Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit to guide community and government actions.
- Elders want to have activities on the land with youth and children.

Elders’ Comments

Elders’ knowledge and experience has to be utilized. We have to be included and involved in our communities, and in making plans for our communities. I envision Inuit traditional knowledge guiding the future.

When elders are home-bound and have nothing to sew, we want to be provided with materials to sew and to have activities that keep our minds active. This would help elders retain their independence. Elders can’t afford to buy sewing machines. Having some planned activities would help a lot.

In Baker Lake, from 1pm to 4pm every day, the elders have a radio show. They are free to talk about their life experiences, good or bad. The show is only in Inuktitut. This has been very beneficial for Baker Lake. We want the program to continue in perpetuity. Listening to the elders speaking Inuktitut is a good thing for the younger generation, especially for those who want to learn about the traditional Inuit way of life.

I work at the radio station in Chesterfield Inlet and I enjoy listening to elders talk about their life experiences. I like this programming, but because there is not enough funding we can only be on the air for four hours a week. This is too short.

There are so many things that must change and improve for elders. There are many things that can help to motivate elders: like gathering just to share ideas, having tea together, and just getting together for basic activities. I love hunting, but my body is not strong enough anymore. I am grateful to have helpers.

We can experience healing through speaking Inuktitut. It can all come out: the trauma, hurt, shame, and defilement. Our thoughts and ideas are agitated, and while sometimes it may feel that talking does not help, communicating with other elders does help. Elders used to say, 'Face the north - speak facing the north and the pain that is inside will be released.'

I became mentally ill from the trauma of being intimidated and from being afraid. There are no programs specifically for elders – and many elders get tired of always being at home. Some elders who have nobody, and even elders who have family, can feel very alone. We all need help and we need to help each other.

Last year I had a very bad back problem. I was sent to Winnipeg for a check-up, I was down there for three weeks. When I got home and was alone again, I thought to myself, 'As you age, is this the way it is?' Yes, there are cellphones and the internet, but they are not the way to be or to connect.

Inuit Food for Elders

Summary

- Elders need Inuit food delivered to them at home.
- Elders need people to cook and deliver meals to their homes.
- Elders want regular financial assistance to purchase food.
- Increase elders' pensions to reflect the cost of food in Nunavut.

Elders' Comments

We elders need to have country food – mammals, fish and birds. It is important to have a distribution of country food on a monthly basis. Here in Rankin, elders always want fermented walrus. The hamlet often brings some in from other communities. When it is available, the elders go quickly to pick some up so they don't miss out.

The cost of food is high and continues to increase. But the Old Age Security pension elders receive has not increased. Elders want increases to their pension so that they can purchase enough good food to meet their needs. I know that there is a food subsidy, but still the cost of food keeps getting higher. Old Age Security payments must be increased to accommodate the cost of food in Nunavut.

Some elders have nobody to cook meals for them. It would be a good thing to provide elders with meals in their homes. This would ensure that elders have sufficient nutritious food.

The food assistance provided by the Kivalliq Inuit Association has been very beneficial and helpful to elders.

In Baker Lake, they provide country food and deliver it to the elders' homes.

Accessibility of Community Infrastructure and Buildings

Summary

- All infrastructure in the community – buildings, offices and hotels – needs to be accessible to everyone, including people using wheelchairs and other mobility supports.

Elders' Comments

In our community, the only building that has an elevator is the health centre. But there are elders who cannot climb stairs at all. Hotels need elevators to accommodate elders and people with disabilities.

Some of the public buildings do not have wheelchair-accessible ramps because the ramps were built too high. Sometimes the wheelchair ramp on elders homes are filled with snow, and elders have to pay to get the snow removed. This has to change.

Elders' Committees and Regional Gatherings

Summary

- Elders' committees should be active and supported in every community. Elders' committees can organize local programming year round.
- The elders' committees must have a coordinator and permanent funding.
- Elders want regular regional gatherings.

Elders' Comments

Inuit elders were the leaders of their camps before the Qallunaat came. The elders from different camps would gather together and teach each other the best way to live. 90 years ago, Inuit elders would travel from the Arviat area to the High Arctic and would spend the whole winter travelling to gather. They asked questions and exchanged ideas and information. I want the government to understand that they should form elders' committees – to share knowledge and understanding – just like we are doing at this gathering today. This would include elders from far away communities like Cambridge Bay and Pond Inlet. I want to see more of this so that our lives can be balanced.

Elders know our own needs best. There has been an elders' committee in Baker Lake for many years. I was the Chair of the Baker Lake elders' committee. Each time we want to have a get-together, we have to fundraise. We have to pay \$400 to rent the community hall. It costs us \$200 to use the radio station. We used to have an elder's facility in Baker Lake. The elders' committees already know what help and support we need, and what our priorities are. We want permanent funding from hamlets for these events. Operational funding would be beneficial. These committees and the activities they organize make elders feel welcome and safe in their homes and in their communities.

In Chesterfield Inlet there is no elders' committee. We don't know how to start one or who to ask for help. Without enough financial support, it is very difficult. We like the idea of starting an elders' committee, but who can we ask to help us?

Naujaat is a large community now, but there is still not much to do. It is obvious now that elders need to get together on a regular basis, and have a proper gathering place. This is something to strive for. Staying home all the time and not having community gatherings is our reality now. But we want to start an elders' committee.

Not all Kivalliq communities have an elders' committee. We are trying to get funding. We are fundraising through bingo's. But nowadays it is a lot harder to raise funds, and everything is so expensive – buildings or houses – so without funding it is difficult to have an elders' committee. It is very difficult to get an elders' committee going just by fundraising.

If we had enough funding we would hold feasts and games and socialize. That way, elders could celebrate holidays like Christmas, New Years, Nunavut Day, and other community events. It is very beneficial for elders to play Inuit games, rejoice together, sing traditional songs and drum dance, and share stories about Inuit traditional ways.

Elders in Smaller Communities are Feeling Neglected

Summary

- Ensure elders in all communities have the support and services they need.
- Make smaller communities a priority too, just like the bigger communities. Smaller communities need more initial assistance.

Elders' Comments

Many elders are depressed and lonely. They are at home alone just thinking to themselves, and that is how they deteriorate. We need to treat our elders better and actively help them, rather than putting them aside. When need to make sure that elders have the information they need about the activities, programs and services that are available for them.

Politicians need to be more aware of the needs of smaller communities. Small communities need to be given first priority, especially when it comes to programs and support services for elders. In the smaller communities, elders are the forgotten ones. The government must understand that smaller communities need to be treated as the first priority.

I wish they would hurry up and support the smaller communities. When small communities ask for services, they are always the last to receive them. It seems that the bigger communities have to get services first. But it is the smaller communities that lack the services that the elders need.

Smaller communities feel forgotten and left aside. Look at the bigger communities – they have everything and the smaller communities have nothing. Even with government decentralization, the smaller communities are being left behind. The bigger communities have a stronger and

louder voice - this is something I want the government to recognize. In the years to come, smaller communities have to get the help they need.

South Qikiqtani Regional Elders' Gathering

Summary Report

The South Qikiqtani Regional Elders' Gathering took place on April 18 and 19, 2023 in Iqaluit at the Frobisher Inn.

Participants

Elders:

George Auksaq, Igloolik
 Jimmy Manning, Kinngait
 Kumaarjuk Pii, Kinngait
 Itee Temela, Kimmirut
 Sandy Akavak, Kimmirut
 May Lonsdale, Iqaluit
 Hanna Kilabuk, Iqaluit
 Lew Philips, Iqaluit
 Igah Kooneeliusie, Qikiqtarjuaq

Charlie Uttak, Igloolik
 Rachel Kakka, Qikiqtarjuaq
 Nancy Anilniliak, Pangnirtung
 Meeka Alivaktuk, Pangnirtung
 Dinah Kittosuk, Sanikiluaq
 Lucy Appaqaq, Sanikiluaq
 Jobie Kaerner, Sanirajak
 Valerie Curley, Sanirajak

Regional Coordinator: Shuvinai Mike

Facilitator: Mary Wilman

Notetaker: Robyn Campbell

Interpreters: Innirvik Support Services

Reflections from the South Qikiqtani Elders

Following the orientation and opening activities, the elders were each invited to comment on the purpose of the meeting, the quality of support they are currently receiving, and what they envision for the future of elder care and support services in their communities. Here are some of their initial reflections.

The Situation Today

Before our elders pass away, it is critical that they be given an opportunity to provide advice on the programs and services that directly affect them. Priority must be given to accommodating our elders, and making sure their needs are met. Our elders need to feel they are believed and valued. This is respect. Elders want to be involved more while they are still with us.

I'm an old man now. I'm not sure how I can best respond to the question 'What does it mean to age in dignity.' What does it mean to be an elder? In the old days, we were told to take proper care of our elders. When we were children, we did chores around the house, collected ice for water, and provided any help that the elders needed. These days, however, it has become almost impossible to find help. Whenever anyone visits me at home, I have to ask them to help me with this or that. I don't have people to help me anymore.

If I am to live much longer, I would like to have a life that is more serene and comfortable. I have never had a comfortable life. I have been homesick and missed people, especially during the tuberculosis times.

There are many people becoming elders, and they need more help mentally and physically. Young people and old people must help each other and bring out the Inuit culture more. There should be more activities organized that will create opportunities for elders and youth to work and mingle together. We want to see more good things brought out in the future.

The current living situation for elders in many of the communities is not looking very bright. Elders are very worried about the lack of services and support for people with alcohol and drug addictions, overcrowded homes, lack of housing, limited programming, and the lack of care for the elderly. How will we be able to parent our children in a society that is negatively affected by drugs and alcohol? If we continue misusing alcohol the way we do today, I am very fearful about the future. It will continue to be challenging. My feelings are based on what I know and what I have experienced. I have never heard anyone of our age say 'I'm over 60 and I'm drinking, and my life is better.'

Personally, I have anxiety. If there are no changes to the status quo, I will have more anxiety. I see a trend where there is no improvement in Nunavut. It makes me very anxious, and I am afraid to think about the future. We have talked about the services elders need and those that require improvement. If there are no improvements in the very near future, life will not be good for us or for future generations. I have a real feeling of giving up. I don't want to give up, but I am really scared about not being able to cope with the difficult challenges ahead.

We are strongly expressing the need for change and the strong support we need from the governments to improve the programs and services offered in our communities.

When my husband became ill with dementia, he could no longer think and do things for himself. I became his full-time caretaker. The children no longer understood him, and they have been less and less present. It is very challenging for the entire family. Our children found it very difficult to cope with his changing behaviours, and didn't know how to handle it. So, the children stopped coming to see us.

We want to be taken care of properly, here in Nunavut. We feel for those who are sent away from their home communities to receive care, and for those who cannot be taken care of by their children. The questions that are being asked of us, are too late. Our community does not run well for elders. Many elders have passed away and we have very few elders left. Hopefully, what we say here will produce some results for our elders.

We need an elder-care facility in each community in Nunavut. In Igloolik there is a facility for young people and they are happier for it. They have a place to mingle. We also need centres where elders can meet. Young people could go to the elder's facility and listen to the elders talk and share their issues.

Revitalization of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit practices should be continued and be taught to the younger generation. We don't speak to our youth enough about matters that need to be discussed. Elders have good lessons to teach the young, but this is not happening. The youth are technologically advanced, and they tend to want to speak quickly to their peers in the younger generation. They will know something in seconds. In our culture it is important to pass on cultural teachings and respect elders. The lifestyle is changing so fast, and elders are not familiar with the new technology. Elders are not in control and not taking the lead. We hesitate. Despite this, we still need to pass on our knowledge to the youth: our ways, our values, and our culture.

Iqaluit is very different from the other communities and it is difficult to know where to start. We are unique in that this is a multicultural community. I've seen many challenging changes.

What does it mean to age with dignity in Nunavut? For me, in a community today, whether you are young or old, what is happening is that our society is based on money and monetary needs. If we are going to wait for the government to provide funding, it will not happen overnight. I can honestly say we could wait another decade and things will still not change. However, if we as Inuit elders can stand up and take matters into our hands, maybe we still have time to make the changes we need. We still have time to stand up and do something. It has been tiresome to continually hear about the lack of housing when it was discussed so long ago at the federal level. We know that capital investments are only set for five-year periods, all of which are based on the goals and objectives of the current federal mandate.

My grandchildren no longer have parents. I'm having to raise them. Alcohol is a big problem in our community. Even though I don't drink, I am affected by alcohol every day. Sometimes, I have to escape with my grandchildren in the middle of the night: fleeing from an intoxicated person. This is embarrassing and hard.

The RCMP often calls me to see if an intoxicated relative person can dry out at my place. I used to agree to this, but recently I ask if the drunk tank is full. We need to tell the RCMP to stop this practice – it is not a good solution to take drunks into our homes. We are quick to agree to things like this because we care, but it is not good for us to deal with intoxicated people.

Elders are very patient and can tolerate more stress than those who are younger. Elders don't complain even when they are in a bad situation. But when we have a problem, we need to be able to complain about it. Tolerating unacceptable levels of service must stop.

It is important to make sure that elders are fine – making sure they are eating well, living comfortably, sleeping well, and that their housing unit is suitable. Elders need people who check to see if there is anything they need or desire.

We worry about how to pay our bills on time. I don't want any arrears with my bills. I'm grateful that elders don't have to pay rent any more. I am very grateful when I receive food vouchers.

Aging with dignity means being able to take control of how you want to age and deciding how to live your senior years.

The aging population in Pangnirtung needs more support to maintain their mental and physical health. This vulnerable group has been through some very difficult years with COVID-19. The next few years should be enjoyable and memorable. Pangnirtung has a lot of potential for increase in mobility supports and elder programming. We just need the space and materials for such projects.

Vision for Aging with Dignity in Nunavut

At each regional gathering, the elders were asked how they would envision a community where they could live and age in dignity. Elders at the South Qikiqtani gathering responded:

- Aging with dignity in Nunavut means being able to grow old and stay in the community with your family by your side to support you, and having easy access to the resources and supports needed to maintain a healthy lifestyle as we age. It also means having access to a similar quality of life, food security, income security, and housing as individuals aging in southern communities. The safety and security of elders must be ensured as they age: protecting them from violence, manipulation, and exploitation.
- I imagine having a future with my fellow elders where we have a good, peaceful, comfortable and serene life with no worries, so we can end our lives happily in Nunavut.
- Elders are treated respectfully, as valued individuals who are honoured without hesitation.
- There are full service elder-care facilities in every community, and trained interpreters who know medical terminology.
- There are good quality home-care programs that serve the needs of our elders well.
- Elders are not afraid, and instead feel safe and secure.
- Elders are well informed, and their opinions are clearly understood, respected and believed.
- Inuit traditional knowledge is incorporated into government programs and services, and is treated as a priority.
- Elders have safe and secure homes, where family members can easily visit.

- Elders are actively involved in passing on Inuit traditional knowledge to the younger generations.
- There are elders' committees in every community, and elders have a leading role in interagency groups working for the well-being of their communities.
- Inuit elders have good food, sufficient financial aid, and good quality housing that is adequate and suitable for their lifestyle.
- There is a dedicated space in the community for elders to socialize, hold gatherings, and hold social and cultural activities.
- Transportation is available for elders for medical appointments, grocery shopping, and special community events.

Themes Arising from the Discussion

Several core issues or themes were raised by elders at the South Qikiqtani Regional Elders' Gathering. These have been consolidated in this summary as: elder-care facilities in all communities; home-care for aging at home; elders housing; transportation in the community; elder abuse, fear, and threats; health services and supports for elders; mental health and healing; communication with elders and use of Inuktitut; using and preserving Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit; everyone caring for elders; Inuit organizations serving elders; elders committees and elder's advocacy; activities for elders with gathering spaces; elders raising the younger generations; Inuit food for elders' health; financial services and subsidies for elders; legal services and supports for elders; and elders involved in teaching and leading.

Elder-Care Facilities in all Communities

Summary

- Every community should have a full service elder-care facility, with interpreters trained in medical terminology.
- Elders are currently sent away for medical treatment against their will. This needs to change.

Elders' Comments

We know that many elders are currently sent away for medical treatment against their will. This needs to change. If elders do not wish to go, they should have the choice. Elders prefer to be close to their homes and are very reluctant to leave their families behind.

Illnesses such as dementia or Alzheimers used to be rare in Inuit society. Today, these illnesses are becoming more common among the elderly. There is a need for family members and society

as whole to gain a better understanding of these conditions. There should also be training for immediate family members who are most directly affected.

Our communities all need elder-care facilities. My husband is now a resident of Embassy West in Ottawa. The government provides us with a visit, but only for one week a year. This is totally inadequate. My longing to be with him is overwhelming. I want him to be in an elder-care facility here in Nunavut.

If we are to age in a safe and healthy way, services must be available in the community. Elders need to have easily accessible, long-term health care services close to home. These services must be welcoming to elders and must be as good as the services provided in the south.

My daughter had her mother-in-law at her home and cared for her. This was very time-consuming, and became too much for her. So her mother-in-law had to be moved to Ottawa to get the care she needed. Caring for the elderly is a big job and requires special training. This is specialized full-time work, and family members should not be expected to provide the service.

When my husband had to stay in Ottawa, the facility was always short of nurses. During the pandemic, I had to go to Ottawa for a whole month to help my husband who needed help in many ways. When I visited him, I ensured he was always well dressed and in good hygiene. There were few nurses available to help.

We need training for the people who work at elder-care facilities. There is an elder-care facility in Nunavut that has been running for 35 years. When it was new, people came to Iqaluit to be trained in how to take care of elders. They were taught medical terminology. Unfortunately this training has not been provided consistently since then. Care-workers need to know the proper words for body parts and medical procedures.

Embassy West is the elder's facility in Ottawa for people who are unable to look after themselves. Nunavut needs its own proper elder-care facilities, where elders can be closer to their communities and their families can easily visit them. My daughter told me that she will not let me be sent to Embassy West. I don't know when I will have to go to a hospital or old folks' home, but Ottawa is not where I'd want to be. We have always asked that the hamlet prioritize an elder-care facility.

Home-Care for Aging at Home

Summary

- Every effort must be made to provide services so that elders can remain at home as long as possible.
- Elders want home-care hours to be extended to 24 hours a day, 7 days per week.

- Elders want more frequent home-care visits, and an increase in the scope of services that home-care can provide.
- All home-care providers need training in how to care for elders' physical and mental health.
- Families and spouses caring for aging elders need respite care for themselves.

Elders' Comments

Home-care should be available overnight for elders who can't get out of bed on their own. There are elders who require 24-hour home-care. There are elderly people with mental or physical challenges who require specialized help. Currently, these elders are not receiving the care services they need.

Increase the number of home-care visits and the scope of services that home-care can offer.

Home-care support is a vital resource for elders. Some workers are very productive, but others are not. All home-care workers should be trained on how best to provide the support elders need. We don't want people working in home-care who are not welcoming. There should be one or two people doing home-care work together.

As elders age, they need to feel respected, believed, and properly taken care of. Health-care and home-care services should be based on the individual elders' needs, rather than on a one-size-fits-all concept. There are some elders that can no longer take care of themselves because they have a physical issue or some kind of illness. In these cases, more help should be provided.

Family caregivers need respite time when taking care of an elder. There should be a place where the caregivers can have a break for one or two nights. If they live with the elder, it would be good to have a place where they can go to take a break. We are lacking respite spaces like these.

Elders who live alone need to be checked on regularly. Even if they are independent, they still need to be checked on. We need elder support workers across Nunavut.

The hours when home-care is available are too limited. It is hard to know what the home-care worker's role really is because they only provide basic services such as light cleaning and washing dishes. We want to have full-time home-care workers with increased hours of work. The home-care workers only do minimal work – they wash floors, dishes and not much else. The older the elders get, the more assistance they require. It would be good to expand the job description for home-care workers and share the list of job requirements.

Having good home-care is extremely important for the wellbeing of elderly men who don't express themselves like women do. Some men are very hesitant to talk about their feelings or their illness. If they could be visited on a regular basis, they would start to share more of their feelings. Men have a hard time asking for help, even when they should be asking for more help.

Home-care workers need to become more professional in their work: they need training on how to provide proper home-care. The suitability of the individual must be evaluated. Home-care is critical in providing much-needed support for elders. Home-care workers need more orientation on their roles and responsibilities, and should be given guidelines to follow. The hours of work for home-care providers should be arranged to suit the needs of our elders. It would be good to have local, full-time, home-care workers who have certification and might eventually work at the elder-care facility. This is the time to deliver a training program through Nunavut Arctic College.

Elders Housing

Summary

- Elders need to live safely in their homes. Elders need to have housing where they can feel safe and secure.
- Every community needs a safehouse for elders as a shelter from abuse and household violence.
- Elders need housing that is not overcrowded. Many generations have to live in the same unit, but this means elders aren't comfortable.
- Elders need culturally relevant housing designs with built in safety features.
- Elders need help with home maintenance appropriate to their age.
- Elders need better communication about housing and homeownership programs.

Elders' Comments

Elders' housing must be free from exploitation and violence, which is common. We know that some elders are being abused and exploited by their children or grandchildren who are now adults but living in the elder's home. Elders are having money taken from them, being assaulted, unable to sleep in their own room and suffering from food insecurity. Having proper elder housing that consists of a one-bedroom home would be safer for some elders, who are otherwise suffering because they live in three-bedroom homes with younger family members who are taking advantage of them.

Although the number of elders is increasing in our communities, there is already not enough housing for them. Many elders live in public housing, and very few are homeowners. Some elders are living in overcrowded homes with multiple generations of their families. This creates overcrowded homes with too many people living under one roof – including children who have their own children.

It is important that elders have unrestricted physical access to buildings around the community, both in their own homes and when they visit others. For example, elders living with physical disabilities need ramps.

Having eight different tenants living in a cluster of units with only one entrance is not suitable for elders with disabilities or special needs. Each unit should be designed specifically for the tenant's needs - with an individual entrance and equipped with ramps and chairs to allow for comfortable living.

The housing crisis has made it even harder for the elders to live comfortably. My adult children still live with me because of the shortage of housing. Many elders live together with several generations of their families. Our adult children move into our units because they are unable to keep up with the rent for their own houses.

How do homeowners get information? Is any thought given to us homeowners at all? We don't know.

Elders need some special things for their houses. Some elders' housing units do not have a second escape door. In case of fire, there is no second fire exit. The only way to get out would be to jump out through a window. Elders may not move so fast. There is a possibility and fear of injury.

Elders are encountering abuse in their homes from their children or grandchildren who are living with them. Sometimes they need to flee from their own houses to get to safety. Communities need a safe shelter for elders.

People living with physical disabilities should be able to go somewhere in the community to receive help.

Living in a cluster of housing units is not peaceful. When neighbors are drinking, it's hard to sleep. In the evenings, we hear slamming doors and people being violent. This is difficult and uncomfortable for elders to tolerate. We should not have to live in a place where we are bothered with these things. When assigning housing, the housing officers should be more considerate of who is going to live in the units, especially when elders are involved. Multi-unit housing clusters should be more soundproof.

Houses are deteriorating due to lack of maintenance. Elders' homes should be inspected on a regular basis for leaks and general maintenance or needed repairs. It is not healthy for anyone to live in moldy units.

In Pangnirtung, we have been forgotten with new home builds. We try to contact the Nunavut Housing Corporation, but they don't respond to our phone calls or letters. We don't know who to turn to. We have gone to our elected representatives, but they don't respond either.

There is a homeowners' page on Facebook to keep people informed when there is something happening about private homes – price increases, for example.

Transportation in the Community

Summary

- There should be elders' buses in every community to provide local transportation.
- Elders want roads to be improved so they can drive comfortably.
- Elders want walkways to be added so that they can walk comfortably.

Elders' Comments

Our roads are not suitable for elders. In Igloolik, the roads are in disrepair because they were not built properly and have never been upgraded. Every winter the roads are slippery because they are so slanted, and people slip or fall. This is a safety hazard for the elders because as they get older their bones are more fragile and can break easily. Proper maintenance of roads is necessary.

Elders can be encouraged to walk to the grocery store or to an office. Benches could be set up in different locations for them to take breaks: to sit and rest.

Many elders have talked to me about the need for transportation in their communities. There should be a vehicle in each community designated to elders and with a paid position for a driver that is permanently funded. Some elders wait for a long time at the store to get a ride home.

During the winter months the roads get slippery with ice build up. It can become a challenge for elders to start a snowmobile during the cold winter months. Sometimes help is available. Often, they are alone and don't have support from the community or family.

Elders and people living with disabilities are restricted to their homes and unable to take part in community activities and events because of the lack of transportation. It is often brought up that there is no bus service available specially for people using wheelchairs. There should be a shuttle service for elders in every community to go to places like the hospital – just like the service in Iqaluit. We have all – both elders and younger people – had to be patient while waiting a long time for a cab. This has been a challenge for the elderly for many years. In Pangnirtung there are a number of children who use wheelchairs, and providing them with proper transportation has been an unresolved issue for a long time. Without proper transportation, it is bylaw officers who have provided this service to people arriving by plane. Their help was greatly appreciated but is no longer available. We want transportation to be available so people can get around.

Elders in our community have been asking for proper transportation for a long time. This includes having a skidoo or ATV and a small qamutik, so that when elders want to go somewhere briefly, they can call someone to get picked up.

Often people living with disabilities must travel by air which can be very difficult for them. They tend to have anxiety knowing they will have to travel. In the smaller communities there is very

limited assistance to help them get on and off planes. There are no special buses for people with disabilities in Pangnirtung. These types of services need to be looked at for the future.

More accessible and safer roads with sidewalks would allow elders to feel safer as they move around the community.

Elder Abuse, Fear, and Threats

Summary

- Elders want to live free from violence, manipulation, and exploitation.
- Elders need options to escape unsafe and abusive situations.
- Elders want to live in peace, without any fear, intimidation, or abuse.
- Elders want to have addictions treatment services in Nunavut communities so that families can get healing.

Elders' Comments

Some elders have no choice but to live with their adult children who often abuse them, forcing them to give them their pension money and taking over the house. Often, the elders have to remain in one room of their own house, while their adult children control the situation.

We need to set up a plan to escape from unsafe situations. Elders won't call the RCMP because the RCMP officers can't speak Inuktitut. When I need to call the RCMP in an emergency, I get nervous because English is not my first language. When we are upset or emotional, it is very difficult to express ourselves in English – even to spell out our name.

It is extremely stressful for elders to cope when they have to live with a person who has outrageous behavior every day, or with children who display very bad behaviour. My grandchild sometimes intimidates me. I have become scared of him. I admire some people who look comfortable and seem serene – I really want to be like that.

A shelter would really help. Perhaps we can work with Family Services and the RCMP to create a shelter for overnight stays, and pay local people to build it. The elders have no place to go for help when they are in violent situations. They have no place to go for safety.

Elders should not be mistreated or financially abused. They should not be in violent and abusive environments. The ready availability and misuse of drugs and alcohol has the biggest negative impact in our community.

Our community is a “dry community”, and yet some people are driving while intoxicated.

Taking or misusing an elder's pension is against the law. How can this be dealt with? What can be done? There needs to be more public awareness about abuse and stealing from the elders. This information should be widely known in the community.

Elders have a lot of anxiety when they are confronted by their grandchildren every day asking for money. When elders receive their pension, they are often intimidated by their children or grandchildren demanding money to buy alcohol or drugs. So much of the elders' pensions are taken. Then the elders don't have enough to buy groceries, so they go hungry. Maybe income support recipients could have their power bills and rent taken off their social assistance payment since these are essential services.

Educational pamphlets on drugs and alcohol use must be shared with the public to make everyone aware of the effects of these substances. This information must be written in Inuktitut and English, and be published on a regular basis.

There needs to be a proper intervention when a member of a family is exhibiting outbursts of violent behaviour at home. Often the RCMP are called, and the person is taken to the RCMP station. But once that person is at the RCMP, his behavior changes and he is no longer violent. So he gets released and goes home – where the behaviour starts again. When the Justice Committee issues a restraining order, it must be signed by a family member. This becomes a safety issue for the person who signed the order. More mental health and RCMP resources are needed for this type of recurring incident. We should not just rely on the family.

Violent behaviors and outbursts have become common with some young people in the community. There was an incident where a grandmother was attacked and was harmed by a grandchild who was not living with her. Before this incident, the elderly grandmother had reported him to RCMP and to Mental Health, but no one came to assist the family. Often when reporting an incident such as this, elders feel they are not believed and so there is no follow-up by the RCMP or mental health workers. They only act when the situation worsens, or if the individual actually harms someone. This is not acceptable. Elders in the community feel helpless.

Elders in each community need safe houses they can use when they need to get away from abuse. There are more and more young people behaving violently or erratically due to untreated head injuries. Often, when a young person is having a mental health crisis, elders have to flee their homes and have nowhere safe and comfortable to go. This causes a lot of stress and hardship for everyone, especially elders who do not know how to handle the situation.

The RCMP in our communities are supposed to be the protectors – in every instance and for everything. Inuit say, 'Thank god for the police.' If the police were not here, we would be in an even worse situation.

We should write to the Minister of Justice and tell him what the problems with the RCMP are. In the past we complained about issues, but no one responded. But the Nunavut government pays 70% of the costs for the RCMP service, and the federal government 30%. Perhaps we should encourage people to complain directly to the Deputy Minister or the Assistant Deputy Minister. Maybe changes will happen this way.

Health Services and Supports for Elders

Summary

- The government has the primary role in providing health services to elders and their families. While families can help, it is the government's responsibility.
- Families and community residents need to be provided with training on how to look after elders as they age, and with information about dementia and Alzheimer's disease.
- Elders need the services of trained medical interpreters in all health care settings.
- Elders need quality health care delivered by knowledgeable and compassionate people.
- Elders on medical travel need a better patient escort program. Elders always need an escort who is trained to provide medical interpretation and who can support them with travel logistics.
- When people are training to be home-care workers at Nunavut Arctic College or other institutions, elders should be involved as instructors to ensure that correct Inuktitut terminology is learned. Having home-care workers who know the correct Inuktitut terminology will prevent confusion for patients when they are being diagnosed.

Elders' Comments

About Quality

Elders need the right information to allow them to make the right choices. When elders are feeling sick, they go for a medical check-up. The doctor or nurse will examine them, but won't see what the matter is. Then they will say the issue is 'just part of aging.' It is maddening to hear this common response and is very devaluing to the individual. Elders wonder what aging will be like when we are just told that it will keep on hurting. One feels like, "I'll just be sick then for the rest of my life!" It should not be said at all. A medical response should be based on a proper diagnosis to distinguish sickness from aging. When something is said often, unilingual elders believe their health issue is simply related to aging when they might actually be sick with something else.

The government needs to provide proper health-care services to elders in their communities, with relatives and families helping. This would improve the elders' physical and mental health and wellbeing.

We need a doctor that works in the community all the time to provide ongoing medical services. Nurses are not emergency workers. Sometimes health centres have paramedics instead of nurses, but they don't know the Inuit situation. They stay for a few weeks, and then other people replace them.

Not enough services are available for elders living with dementia or Alzheimer's. We have one psychiatric nurse, but that person cannot speak Inuktitut. This must be corrected.

My daughter is a nurse and she often asks me how to best serve elders. We need to tell the nurses and doctors what we need. They are keen to know about our needs and to learn how to provide the best medical support in culturally appropriate ways.

Too often when we go to the nursing station or to the hospital, Tylenol is recommended. Tylenol may take the pain away for a few hours, but it is not the only medication. Perhaps if we were down south we would get better diagnoses and better care. We need improvements to the system here. If we voice these things and not just be intimidated, they will finally hear us.

About Medical Interpretation

Even though I speak English, I can't speak English at the hospital. My heart beats a lot faster, and I end up not being able to speak at the hospital. They need interpreters for everyone in the hospitals. We need to increase the number of people training as interpreters.

Social workers should be paired with an Inuktitut-speaking person, because most only speak English. After regular working hours, there should be an Inuktitut-speaker available.

Often the interpreter does not know medical terms. Sometimes interpreters deliver health information to elders that is incorrect. Interpreters should receive ongoing training in medical terminology.

Community health centers and hospitals should have professional medical interpreters. It should not be just whoever is available, but someone who is trustworthy and reliable. Elders must no longer be embarrassed or intimidated. If they need help, they should feel supported and confident to tell the medical staff what they need.

There are not enough medical interpreters in some communities. Sometimes elders who can provide interpreting are asked to act as interpreters, and even employees who are not interpreters are trying to interpret, even though they don't always know medical terminology.

About Training

Dementia is more common now. Information and support should be made available to families about mental health and dementia. Training should be provided to all members of the family on how to take care of someone who has dementia. We all need to know how to deal with an elder with this condition.

Training must be provided in the communities on how to look after an aging elder. This training can go a long way to assist elderly people in the community. There are too many elders without basic help or support. They have no one to go shopping for them, carry their heavy groceries or do errands for them.

Life now revolves around money. Many people don't want to offer help unless there is money involved. There is no volunteerism anymore. It would be good to have volunteers to check up on the elders. Create a full-time job in the community, just checking up on the elders all the time.

About Medical Escorts

When elders are sent for medical treatment and have to stay in a hotel or boarding home, they might not be able to communicate in English. The language barrier gets elders into difficult situations in boarding homes or hotels. Some elderly patients can only speak Inuktitut, and the staff only speak English. The reading materials and signs are only in English.

There needs to be a better patient escort program for elders who must travel for medical reasons. Whenever elders need to travel outside of their community, either to Ottawa or to larger communities in Nunavut, they must have an escort. Not all elders get an escort, even though it is necessary, and when this happens it causes a lot of problems for the elder. The patient escort policy must be applied consistently whenever elders are on medical travel.

The GN Department of Health should establish a list of medical escorts who can accompany elders: compassionate and caring people who have medical interpretation skills. They should not be too closely related to the elders they are escorting.

Training should be provided for medical escorts on how to handle elderly patients, understand the impacts of what the elders might be told, and in medical terminology so that they can explain this information accurately to the elders.

Tammatarvik should have 100% Inuit employees and a dedicated bus service.

Elders who need an escort should be asked who they prefer as an escort. They will choose someone they are comfortable with.

About Wheelchair Users

More services should be provided for people in wheelchairs.

Wheelchairs and more assistance should be provided for handicapped people. Wheelchairs should be made available to people who struggle walking. Support services should be readily available to people with disabilities in their communities.

Mental Health and Healing

Summary

- Inuit need a place to go to for healing. This should not be just for elders, but everyone.
- The Inuit way of helping and counselling must be used to help families heal.
- Mental health worker and psychologist positions should be filled by Inuit, and these services should be provided in Inuktitut.
- Elders need their own mental health support, provided in Inuktitut by people with similar life experiences.
- When people are in mental health training at the Nunavut Arctic College or other higher education, elder participation should be part of the process to ensure correct Inuktitut

terminology is learnt. An elder language specialist should be taking part in instruction. This is to avoid confusion and to help future patients by learning correct Inuktitut language while being diagnosed for their wellbeing, and to ensure the use of correct terminology that is well-understood by the elders.

Elders' Comments

Elders want a better, healthier life. We lived through the dog slaughter, tuberculosis relocation, relocation to settlements, and residential school. We need a place to gather on a regular basis in our communities: a place where people can meet, talk about what we went through, and begin our healing. Even though we have all suffered from colonization, many Inuit are not satisfied with just an apology. We need action, not just words. Inuit have experienced so much trauma they cannot heal without regular intervention.

I know that Inuit counselling methods and southern methods are quite different. The Inuit approach is to openly deal with the issue, instead of a psychologist dealing with it in private. In the Inuit way, the approach to counselling focuses on the family unit and not on the individual. This is the case across Nunavut where everyone is related in one way or another. The southern approach to confidentiality breaks the family bond and can become a barrier to resolving the situation. In the Inuit tradition, we want to bring together the victim and the abuser. We are not separated; we deal with the situation together to reach a shared resolution. The unwanted behavior is dealt with in a timely manner. The non-Inuit approach is quite opposite because of the focus on confidentiality, and we become separated. This approach prolongs the issue rather than resolving it in a timely manner, and sometimes escalates the issue into a bigger problem.

There are mental health workers or psychiatrists who come to our communities, but they cannot speak Inuktitut and are, therefore, unable to communicate with most of their Inuit patients. Inuit need to be trained to take on these positions.

We need to train Inuit as counsellors. Inuit can be counsellors. We do not necessarily need university degrees to provide counselling.

We should have counsellors available specifically for elders. When our elders are sad and miserable, the young people will be too. It impacts the whole family negatively.

Inuit often think there is no help. We all need someone who is safe and trustworthy to talk about our problems with. There should be resources available.

I would prefer the health centre to have elder counsellors instead of young psychiatrists. Young people don't have the life experience to be a psychiatrist or to deal with elders' issues. How can a young and inexperienced psychiatrist help others when they lack real-life experience?

A child with extreme behavioral problems can be very challenging and there are many children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. One must be patient with these children and ensure that they don't harm elders.

When an individual has been sexually abused, it affects not only the individual, but the entire family. Elders are affected, and their grandchildren and great-grandchildren too.

Sexual violence is a very big factor in peoples' lives. It is not just affecting that one person; it affects their mother, their future children, and their whole family. If there is no healing, those who have been sexually assaulted are still living with trauma: their lives have been broken. They take drugs or alcohol to numb the hurt. It takes time for them to heal. This is really happening; we need to address this problem with actions, not with just words.

People who have brain disorders are very disturbed, especially when they are experiencing the effects of hard drugs. We don't understand the behaviour of people who have been affected by hard drugs. I am worried about my mother because she has someone with a brain disorder living with her. At her age, this is an extremely dangerous situation for her to be in.

It seems to me when we got counsellors and psychiatrists in Kinngait, Family Services stopped providing counselling services. The counsellors and psychiatrists are different every time we meet them. Any help we can get from a psychiatrist is not continuous because they don't stay around long enough. This interrupts the healing process. I want counselling provided by social services workers, like before.

Elders want to be more involved as helpers in mental health and healing. Our ability to help should be recognized. There should be a telephone hotline available – where people can call an elder and have a conversation with us.

I would not be so anxious if there was an elder working to help with mental health issues in the school.

We should have a counsellor for elders: someone they can call and speak to, or who can check-up on them – even just to chat.

Communication with Elders and use of Inuktitut

Summary

- Elders want to be well-informed about government services, and feel knowledgeable in making their own choices.
- Elders want to provide feedback about policies, but to be understandable to us these policies must be available in Inuktitut.
- Elders want the Government of Nunavut and the Government of Canada to deliver all communications in Inuktitut. Elders require the government to communicate with them using Inuktitut as the primary language.
- Banking services must be provided in Inuktitut.

- Elders want better communications from the RCMP.

Elders' Comments

For elders in Nunavut, all federal programs need to be delivered in Inuktitut. We need federal services such as pensions to be provided in Inuktitut.

Government Liaison Officers should be used more effectively. They are here to serve the public, but they are not always trained to provide services or communication with the public.

Elders are overwhelmed with paying taxes. They do not fully understand what the taxes are for, because the tax documents are provided only in English.

Banking services are not available in Inuktitut. Some elders have problems accessing their bank account because the information they need is only provided in English. Elders need to be trained in English so they can understand how to access their account.

The high turnover among government employees creates inconsistency in the services provided for elders, and causes frustration. This is especially true for mental health clients. It is intolerable for them to have to repeatedly explain their state of mind to new mental health workers because of frequent staff turnover.

There is only one psychiatric nurse in the community, but that person does not speak Inuktitut, so the services are only provided in English. Mental health professionals must be able to help Inuit who are experiencing mental health issues, and their clients must receive help in the language they speak best: Inuktitut.

Inuktitut needs to be the working language of the Nunavut Government. Language is such a barrier when the service providers don't speak Inuktitut.

The RCMP reports to the hamlets once a month. This is very useful. In the past they have also shared information on the different drugs being used in the community, and the community appreciates knowing the effects of different kinds of drugs. It is also very useful for the public to have this information.

The federal government must understand that residents of Nunavut communities speak and operate in their own language – Inuktitut. Very important documents are not translated into our language. Elders need to have a better understanding of official programs and services to be fully aware of their benefits and entitlements. Communications from federal departments are not always provided in Inuktitut, but they should be. Service Canada should be available in all the communities.

Inuktitut should be a priority in everything the Government of Nunavut does. The government has a cultural department so that our language and culture can be properly protected. Providing services in Inuktitut should be treated as priority by the government.

Research studies should be written in Inuktitut and shared with elders.

It is very important for Inuit culture to be passed onto the next generation, and youth should be proficient in Inuktitut and Inuit knowledge.

In the past, the Nunavut government said that their employees would be able to speak Inuktitut by the year 2020. However, today there are still no services in Inuktitut. Government workers just say, "Sorry, there is no Inuktitut available." So there isn't anybody available who can serve me in my language. Even though the government says they believe in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, I can tell you it is not being practiced. This needs to change, so that in the future government services will be improved.

There is a shortage of interpreters for elders who can't speak or read English. In order to get service, elders must be accompanied by an Inuk who speaks English when they do their banking or pay their bills because of the language barrier. Sometimes I help elders when their documents are only written in English.

We need better communications, particularly from Service Canada, the RCMP and Justice. We don't always get the information we need from administrators and government agencies.

We feel that the government doesn't understand Inuit. It will have to be explained very clearly to the government what we base our culture on, and that our values should not be changed. We don't want people to die feeling despondent. All elders – the younger and older ones – want to have a peaceful, serene place to live. In Canada there are many sorts of places available for seniors to live peacefully and be well-cared for. Us younger elders expect to have those services in the future.

We want government policies to be written in the language that we understand. The participation of community members is very important. People in the communities must be able to understand government policies so that they can provide feedback.

There is a real need for better communication from government service providers to people in the communities. Improving the communications system would reduce misunderstandings between the government and the people.

When an RCMP has to conduct an investigation that involves searching a home, they must communicate and clearly explain the situation prior to entering the home. Too often, this does not happen. Both parties must understand the situation and what needs to be done. This improves communication and a more welcoming atmosphere for all those involved.

Government employees at the Health Centre are not providing the public with enough information about programs and services offered to the community. Communications with the public are not adequate. In order to be aware, the public needs to be better informed.

Elders need better communication and improved coordination of services. Government employees need to be trained. All the government workers are very young and inexperienced.

The RCMP should help elders access resources that they may be unaware of, including supports like victim services.

Using and Preserving Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

Summary

- Elders want to stop the loss of traditional knowledge: Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.
- Elders want the Government of Nunavut to make Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit a top priority.
- Elders want to have their knowledge recorded and preserved.

Elders' Comments

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit – there are many aspects of the Inuit way. It is not just about saying, “Let’s use it as a technique to say this is how it once was.” We have to say it and apply it. It is not the Inuit way to have certifications. In the old days Inuit didn’t rely on certification. It is the Inuit way to involve the community – and we should do more to involve the community now.

Inuit traditional culture is being lost. There should be more efforts to preserve it. It should be recorded now, so that it will be remembered. I know some Inuit knowledge is being saved, but I would like more work to be done on this. Inuit traditional knowledge should be a priority of the government.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit should become mandatory for everyone. It must be taught in the schools and to the whole community. Everyone should participate.

The dog slaughters have had such a profound impact on Inuit. Once when we went to Kinngait by dog team, it was our last trip for groceries. Dog teams were the only source of transportation for everything that Inuit did then. It was the only way for Inuit to hunt for their daily food. It is incomprehensible that the government did this – the dog slaughter. So many years have passed, but still people tell their stories. After what the government did to Inuit, it should make services available for Inuit because they were the ones who moved us into settlements.

The tremendous knowledge of many elders has been lost when they passed away. We are running out of people to ask about our culture and traditions. Those elders were living dictionaries. Inuit knowledge is going away. There are few now that experienced the real Inuit way of life – our culture and traditions. This should be videotaped and explained.

Everyone Caring for Elders

Summary

- Everyone in the community should take responsibility for supporting the well-being of elders.
- As people in Nunavut age, our families and extended families need to provide help. As more people are getting older, more helpers should be created.

- Everyone should be treated with care, especially elders. This means that all services should be provided using a trauma-informed approach.

Elders' Comments

It is everyone's responsibility to make sure elders are protected. We want all government resources available in the elder's language of choice.

Each member of the community is responsible for the well-being of elders and for providing them with support. The government must provide support so that elders can get the services they need when they need them.

Elders are experiencing hardships in different ways: physically, financially, and mentally. The people around the elders are not always aware of what the elders are going through. It is difficult to know all the signs of aging. It is important for people to engage with elders to seek our feedback. When the elders initiated the talk show on the local radio, we were able to share our feelings.

Inuit Organizations Serving Elders

Summary

- Inuit organizations must communicate with elders in Inuktitut as the primary language.
- Elders want Inuit organizations to provide user-friendly services for elders.

Elders' Comments

Many elders were delighted and appreciated the help we got from Inuit organizations during the pandemic. The food vouchers and gasoline vouchers really helped. Skidoos are the main form of transport within their community for many elders - and also for travel outside the community for hunting and camping. But traveling by skidoo is very expensive. This financial assistance really enabled many people in the community to hunt.

NTI represents Inuit beneficiaries. It is so regrettable that their documents are written in English. All documents and communications must be written in the Inuit language – Inuktitut.

QIA and NTI should provide more services that are user friendly and directed to elders.

NTI and QIA need to improve their communications on Article 32. How is this article being implemented? What is happening with the Wellness Committee created under this article? Beneficiaries need to get regular progress reports.

NTI should work with elders to make sure that they are in a good place in the future. Many articles in the Nunavut Agreement have yet to be implemented. Elders must be updated on Article 7 which relates to outpost camps.

There should be more initiatives for decolonization and reconciliation. Back when Inuit were relocated from outpost camps to settlements, many Inuit children were placed in schools without any orientation to the new system. Many children were taken away from their parents without prior notice, and this caused serious culture shock for the children and their entire families.

Elders Committees and Elder's Advocacy

Summary

- Elders want to form and manage committees in each community that will speak for them, act on their behalf, and protect their interests.
- Elders want community committees or councils with full-time staff responsible for running the committee.
- Elders see Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as the underlying principle of Inuit life, and believe that it is very important that it be passed on to the younger generations. Elders want and need to take the lead in teaching Inuit traditional knowledge.

Elders' Comments

We should form an elders committee that we also manage. We know which elders are in bad situations, and sometimes we know which elders are being abused. The committee can deal with these types of issues.

We believe that it is the RCMP or Family Services' responsibility to provide assistance to elders who are being abused, but they are not doing it. It is difficult for people to see their loved ones being arrested.

Elders want a committee or council with a full-time employee responsible for running the committee.

When we were growing up we were disciplined: taught what to do and what not to do, and to always respect our elders. Today, we hear about what is happening to elders in our society, but we don't do anything about it. We need to help elders and be more mindful of what is going on. We need to visit them, talk to them, and let them know they are cared for. In our traditional ways, Inuit would not allow elder abuse to happen and would deal with it. We should help elders who are abused as much as possible.

The treatment of our elders is a community issue and should be dealt with in a timely manner. I think elders would welcome the idea of an elder's committee. Once they know about it, they will feel that they have more support within their community.

In our community the hamlet receives funding for recreation activities. Proposals for funding these activities are available from the recreation department. This funding should be approved

for several years, instead of having to write proposals each year. Often there is no one to help elders apply for the funding, and so they lose out. Having funding for several years would allow for on-going activities for the elders. We help the recreational committee do fundraising by holding bingos, but we always have to get a license when we need to do fundraising. There are ways to get funding, but the process is too complicated. There should be a simple application process.

There is an elders committee in my community. There is also a justice committee made up of elders. We could perhaps encourage or strengthen the existing committees and give the hamlet stronger powers. This would allow them to work more effectively.

Activities for Elders with Gathering Spaces

Summary

- Elders need regularly scheduled activities to support their mental and physical health.
- Elders need to be involved in recreational activities within the community and on the land.
- Elders need dedicated gathering places. These can be welcoming places for everyone, and a site for recreation, sharing knowledge and learning.
- Elders need to return to old outpost camp sites for healing. They also need to share their experience of living on the land with future generations.
- Elders want programs for men and women that suit their needs and interests.

Elders' Comments

It would be very useful to have a community gathering place for elders that is also welcoming for the young people. Elders and young people need to have more opportunities to visit with each other and share ideas. This would encourage people in the community to engage with elders in a positive atmosphere. We would like a place where we can socialize with young people, mingle with them, and teach them.

Elders need activities geared to them, with programs they can freely participate in. There should be permanent funding for these programs.

It is very difficult to plan activities for elders without a permanent place for them to meet. We always have to look for a place to meet. Every time we meet, we wonder where our next meeting will be. It happens every month. Sometimes we have to postpone the meeting because there is no space.

We want a friendship centre where women, men, and others can hold activities and practice traditional skills like sewing or making tools.

In the community, there is no place to hang out together. On the land, there is no regular access to an available cabin. Elders find peace and relaxation by getting away from the community for a period of time. There is nothing like this set up right now.

Our elders are precious. They should be taken out on the land to a place where they can be calm and relaxed. Doing this for our elders would be very empowering for them, because it really calms them and brings them peace. We need to find the financial means to do this.

Take us out hunting or just walk around with us. I want to go fishing and pick berries. Elders want to be taken out on the land in the summertime. I look forward to that.

If elders have limited access to outdoor outings, and often experience loneliness at home. This is especially true as people visit less and less. Loneliness affects elders' mental well-being, and is becoming more obvious among the elderly and Inuit in general. If people don't interact with each other, especially people living with disabilities and elders who have become less mobile, we will experience more and more loneliness.

There should be more recreation for elders that gets our bodies moving – things like yoga. It can help elders be well in the future. There are not enough services provided to give us physical activity. This became even more of an issue during the pandemic. Group activities also help us not be alone.

I like it when the elders go to the gym to do yoga because they feel better and get stronger when they move around. For elders to be healthy, it is very important for them to be active. Going out on the land makes elders feel better.

More recreational activities should be provided by the health system, as part of general health care. In our community, some elders are involved in delivering a healing program for men.

Elders want to tell stories on the radio. This should be regularly scheduled and generally available.

There should be more facilities made available like Sailivik – a safe place in Pangnirtung – where elders and children can go when they need to escape. Sailivik is a place to be at peace and mingle with people. Sailivik has people working during the night, and is open to those who may need to be in a peaceful place and to get some rest, away from the violent environment. They also have programs. I go there with my knitting. Children can go there to watch movies or learn how to cook. It's not a school, it is a building run by the hamlet. The programs are always successful, but the main issue is that the funding expires. When the funding runs out, it is a waiting game.

People who used to live in outpost camps still yearn to return there. They wish to go see those locations, perhaps with their children, to reconnect with their past. When people are taken back to see their old camps, it is a healing event for the entire family. These activities are very much needed and wanted, and should become regular activities for elders.

Men are not as active as women in our community. There needs to be more for men to do. There are some opportunities for them to teach and share. There are elders who are participating in the radio programs, even if just storytelling, but we need to improve the activities for men so they can get outdoors with our youth. Cut down on cellphone use and have young people get out on the land with the men.

Elders want more training on how to use computers.

Elders Raising the Younger Generations

Summary

- Elders are struggling to continue to raise the younger generations, and are concerned about how children are growing up now.
- Elders want daycares in every community to help take the pressure of having to look after their grandchildren off them, and to support their children who work.

Elders' Comments

Elders should not be guardians of children because some are too weak to handle the challenges.

Our grandchildren's generation is different from our generation and that of our grandparents. There seems to be more trauma now, compared to our grandparent's era. We don't fully understand why parenting styles are different today from when we were parents.

Children are very much into cell phones, even babies. All they are doing is playing with their phones. Some of them may be in danger. I know this is dangerous for their mental wellbeing. They are spending far too much time on their cell phones.

I do a lot of thinking about my grandchildren and how best to raise them. It is as if I am jumping from one ice block to another, and there is no firm ice to leap onto because my path isn't clear.

People who live in smaller communities feel that they are always the last community to receive services. There is no daycare in the community for example. Not having a daycare means that some people are not able to work, or when people do work, the elders become the daycare providers. Elders who may be sick or tired are still having to fill the role of a daycare workers. Sometimes people can't take advantage of training because there is no daycare available.

Elders' knowledge and traditional practices must be incorporated into programming for elders and youth. We can tell people about our Inuit ways and beliefs, which is the right thing to do.

Inuit Food for Elders' Health

Summary

- To stay healthy as they age, elders need the nutrition provided by country food.

- Elders want community freezers so that more traditional food can be available to them.
- Elders' pensions are not enough to afford food costs for their extended families.

Elders' Comments

Our elders have a traditional diet that is different to southerners, so they need more access to country food. Having more country food in their diet would improve their health.

As we age, we need to have more country foods because they provide excellent nutrition. When I was not feeling well, and after I got better, I started to increase my intake of country food. I found a major improvement to my health.

When elders are aging, they tend to have difficulty digesting solid foods. Elders need to be provided with lots of country foods.

When elders are ill, they lose their appetite and their feelings of loneliness increase. I often think there should be an organization to provide country food. It could be created and managed for people who don't have the means to access country food. Perhaps this would address food insecurity and regularly provide country food to all elders. This would make them feel more included and part of the community; reducing their loneliness. Sometimes leaders don't know how best to distribute food and how to reach out to elders. This is a real need for elders.

Service providers should be more aware that traditional country food is not as readily available as it used to be. Elders should be provided with more country food because it is more nutritious than store-bought foods.

We want a community freezer. Some communities have a local freezer where elders can come and pick up the meat they want.

An elder's pension isn't enough to live on, especially when you have children and grandchildren to care for.

We should be aging soundly, safely, and securely, with a proper supply of our traditional food, not southern foods.

Financial Services and Subsidies for Elders

Summary

- Subsidy programs really matter to elders. Not enough money is provided to offset the high cost of living. More subsidy programs are needed for elders, and the amount of money provided to elders should be increased. The subsidies should be fair and generous in relation to the benefits others receive.
- All subsidy programs must be delivered in a way that makes it simpler for elders to apply and receive the benefits they are entitled to.

- The information about elders' benefits must be provided in Inuktitut so that they can be aware of and understand what is available to them.
- Elders need banking services provided in Inuktitut. Banks in Nunavut should also provide services that specifically support elders with their banking needs.
- Elders are struggling because the cost of food, gas, funerals, and plane tickets is too high.

Elders' Comments

The government needs to increase the financial support it provides for elders. Elders and widows who own their homes need help. The government needs to increase the fuel subsidy program and make it easier to access like it used to be. When the fuel subsidy started it was easy to access, but it keeps getting more complicated each year.

During Covid we received subsidies for food and gas. That was helpful, especially for those of us with grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We would like the financial aid provided for food and fuel to continue and even increase. It is beneficial for us all – it helps the whole family and the whole community. The price of groceries and consumer goods have all gone up. Skimmed milk powder is now \$16 for a small bag.

We are still hearing about individuals in Kinngait who have been waiting a long time for subsidy approvals. There have been really long delays in subsidy payments. The forms were sent to Arviat, but the recipients had to wait so long. This must be improved. In March 2023, we heard there was going to be a subsidy for homeowners – a \$1,000 rebate program – but it is a lot of paperwork and the applications can only be made by computer.

I understand that there is more financial assistance available for elders who own their own home. Even though I own my own home, I don't qualify for the fuel subsidy anymore because they say I make too much money and I have a pension. I worked for the government for a very long time. Now, when Qallunaat from the south are recruited and hired to work in Nunavut, they are given many employment benefits including reduced rent for their house, all utilities paid, and, sometimes, access to a car. Sometimes they can buy a house right away because they are in a well-paid position. It is not the same for Inuit, and this does not seem fair. I have often thought about this scenario – they get so much, and yet elders can't get subsidies because of our pensions and they say we don't fit the criteria. This needs to be looked at.

There should be more subsidies for elders who own their own homes. I know there are many homeowners who don't have insurance because of the expense. Some elders have their own homes. If our home were to burn or be flooded with water, is there insurance to cover such things?

We need to have more funding accessible in communities. It is very difficult for Inuit to get funding because we don't have enough help in writing funding proposals. There are funding programs that are meant for Inuit, but we don't have the ability to write the proposals in English, therefore we lose out. We want more recreational activities and programs. It is very difficult to access funding if you are an Inuk.

My biggest concern is that airline tickets are more and more expensive, especially to our community, Kimmirut. It is only a half hour flight, but costs almost \$2,000. When elders want to come to Iqaluit to see their grandchildren, it is impossible. We want to know if there is any support: can relief be given to elders to reduce the cost of their flights? In Northern Quebec, elders get proper help. They only pay \$60 for a flight from Kuujuaq to Kuujuarapik. Only \$60! And it is not expensive for people to travel to Montreal. I know it might be very difficult, but elders need more assistance with the cost of airline tickets. The rising cost of airline tickets will not stop. When elders need to fly somewhere, having cheaper airline tickets would be helpful.

The cost of a funeral is too high to bear. We know that in Iqaluit a funeral is very expensive. The affected family goes through challenging times. We need to bring people together to grieve. While we are grieving, we also have to fundraise for airline tickets so that our loved ones can attend the funeral. This is too difficult. There is somewhere in the NLCA that says Inuit have the right to be consulted. The federal government has a program that provides financial support for those who have lost a loved one. They should consult with elders about this.

Banking services should be improved to accommodate elders' needs. Many elders are unable to open bank accounts or access their money through banking machines.

There are many elders who are unaware of their benefits because the documents are not written in Inuktitut.

Some things have really helped. Payments from the income assistance program have recently been increased. Thank you for that. The federal government is subsidizing daycare programs. Daycare costs used to be very expensive, but now we only pay \$10/day. It is good that our children who have their own families can now go back to work.

Legal Services and Supports for Elders

Summary

- Elders need to learn about legal wills, and need assistance to complete a will.

Elders' Comments

It is important that elders have a legal will. There are people, including elders, who die without a legal will, and the family members are left not knowing what to do with their money or their assets and belongings. When there is no will in place, the children and the immediate family members are fighting over the parents' money. Elders should make a will, so that everyone is clear as to who gets what. Even though traditionally Inuit didn't have wills, it is necessary to have a will today. Elders should be helped to make a will, so the family will have guidance to follow and make better decisions when they pass away. This will help to prevent disharmony in the family.

If I pass away and if I don't have a will, what will be done with my assets? These days, we must follow laws or official documents. Many people in the Arctic don't know they need to make a will which tells our families what should happen with our personal assets.

Elders Involved in Teaching and Leading

Summary

- Elders want to participate in leading Nunavut. Elders are concerned that Nunavut will deteriorate without their involvement.
- Elders want to share their knowledge, because it is good for them and it is good for society.
- Elders want to help the younger generations learn about Inuit culture and traditions.

Elders' Comments

Once the elders of today are no longer living, so the traditional knowledge will no longer be living. The participation of elders in today's society is still very important. Elders want to be included and feel they can still contribute. Elders who can provide deep knowledge and traditional leadership are disappearing fast.

Inuit need to work together to start taking better control of our culture, and show it and share our stories with the young people. Elders need to become closer to show youth our genuine love, and not just complain that they are no longer understanding our ways. We need to make our youth more aware of our Inuit ways so they can develop a better understanding of them. They have a strong desire to learn. We should be more open: we need to be welcoming and show them love.

Elders should be given an opportunity to be involved in developing the school curriculum and work education or training programs. We have been expecting our current leaders to encourage us to do this. We need to do something before Nunavut deteriorates any further.

Elders have good lessons to share. We need elders to be teaching, and that is not happening. An important aspect of our culture is to pass on cultural teachings and respect elders. We want to revitalize Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit practices, and have them heard by the younger generation. We still need to work at passing this on to the youth: our ways, our values, and our culture.

As I get older, I really want to help young mothers. I want to tell them stories, talk to them. We are not advising those young people with children: we are not sharing all the advice we used to get from our mothers enough these days. I really want to tell and show them these things while I am still able to. I want to help more in sharing Inuit culture and what I know. We learned so much from the people who brought us up, and we need to pass it on.

Elders should work in our schools. This has been said many times before. In some communities elders are hired, but we have to push harder in communities that don't hire elders.

Pijumasaurti is an advertisement to inspire people to work. The advertisement of government jobs should be improved so that it attracts more Inuit to work for the government. For example, when we are fishing, we have a lure that fish wants to bite; we should do the same for government jobs and recruitment initiatives. Many jobs come with special benefits or incentives. The government should identify what benefits or incentives will attract workers – like a ride to work.

Inuit need to know their relations. It would be good for there to be a family tree available. It would be a good teaching tool, and could incorporate the Inuit kinship model and the meaning of namesakes. The connections through namesakes are very important in Inuit culture, and these can help with relationship building. Tuqtuqausiq – the namesake – is a strong principle of Inuit culture, and was widely used by Inuit in traditional times. Inuit have a tradition of naming a child after someone who has died. It is only appropriate about a year after someone dies. This period of time gives the family time to grieve and is considered appropriate.

I have often thought about teaching young children to learn and understand words in Inuktitut. The practice of good discipline should be taught to help children understand better when they are young. When those children get older, they will remember what they have been taught and live by it. Sometimes, we act out of anger and hurt others mentally. But my parents told me many times not to do bad things. They would always tell me the right things: the right way to live. I thought they were scolding me at the time, but they were not: they were trying to form me and teach me the principles and values to live by.

If we want our children to live a good life and be good citizens, we need to discipline them properly. If we didn't take sides when they were younger, we wouldn't be afraid of them today. We need to look at different types of parenting. We all love our children, but when we pamper them at a young age they will grow up spoiled. If we don't help them develop life skills, they are not going to be independent young people. We need to show them love, but we shouldn't treat them like eggs – as though they are soft or fragile. However, we do learn, and we learn a lot as we age. We all have different ways of parenting, of raising children. We have the Inuit way: innunguiniq.

Ottawa Elders' Gathering

Summary Report

The Ottawa Elders' Gathering took place on May 8 and 9, 2023 in Ottawa at Saint Margaret's Church Hall.

Participants

Elders:

Aigah Attagutsiak

Eta Kanayuk

Jeanie Okalik

Eelee Higgins

Mimi Akeeagok

Reepa Evic-Carleton

Sytukie Joamie

Sipporah Enuaraq

Ruth Kadlutsiak

Elisapee Birmingham

David Erkloo

Therese Okkumaluk

Rosalie Alaralak

Deborah Tagoonak

Jeanie Kanayuk

Pitsiulala Lyta

Koomoo McLister

Mary Alainga-Fraser

Barb Sevigny

Sanija Padluq

John Angnaluaq

Regional Coordinator: Joan Cunha and Zippie Nochasak

Facilitator: Mary Wilman

Notetaker: Robyn Campbell

Interpreters: Johnny Takawgak and Martha Flaherty

Reflections from the Ottawa Elders

Following the orientation and opening activities, the elders were each invited to comment on the purpose of the meeting, the quality of support they are currently receiving, and what they envision for the future of elder care and support services in their communities. Here are some of their initial reflections.

The Situation Today

Thank you for inviting us. It is very good to be invited and that you remembered us elders in Ottawa. We usually don't have a gathering as elders, so it is great to have one today. When we are older, we like to be involved, even in gatherings of young people. I know I am getting old, and I am very pleased that I am invited and not forgotten. It tells me that you care and have not forgotten us.

Today there are more Inuit who are aging. The population of Inuit elders is increasing, and this will continue. There is a shortage of housing in Nunavut, and people are moving because they want a better lifestyle and not have so many pressures.

If I returned to Nunavut, I would be homeless living in my homeland. Sometimes, once in a while, I get homesick of course. It took me almost one whole year to adapt to living in the south. I smoked a lot of cigarettes and asked myself what am I doing here? I don't want to get old down here, with disabilities or aging.

I get a lot of help here from doctors who deal with cancer. When I was first diagnosed with cancer, there were some delays in setting up my appointments. There were nurses who were very kind and loving, they helped a lot and cared for me. They also helped me to see specialists and gave me directions, and the names of psychiatrists, psychologists, and specialists. I have more than one sickness now. Mental health services are available here, and there are very kind people who help me. My cancer is shrinking because of the people who have helped me.

It is a shame that Inuit have to relocate from Nunavut because of the cost of living. With our current finances, elders cannot live well in the north. As an aging person, I know for a fact that I am not going back to Naujaat because of the high costs and lack of housing there. Many of us are uncomfortable because of the lack of housing that stops us from returning.

In Ottawa everything is cheaper. The clothing in stores is a lot cheaper. There are better services and sports activities for youth in Ottawa. There are a lot of ways of getting around in Ottawa. Resources are available to deal with water and heat. Seniors and Inuit have a feast once in a while – more often than in Nunavut. Home-care workers are more available. Ottawa offers different resources, and you can choose which ones are best for you. There are also resources available for seniors with physical or mental health problems.

It is getting confusing for us here because we don't know who is responsible to address the issues we are experiencing.

Thank you for inviting me to be involved. I learned a lot from this gathering. It is great to see people from different communities and regions. I have never had a meeting with such a large group before, and I don't want this meeting to be the last one. We can continue to meet through either the Inuuqatigiit Centre or Tungasuvvingat Inuit. It is great to actually hear from other elders in person. It is okay to cry, shed tears, have emotions, this is a good space for that. We can also talk to each other without meeting here. It is good that nobody is interrupting: you can continue to speak when you are talking. It is important to talk about our most difficult and painful times, because we can actually learn from them the most. I want to thank everyone who helped. I feel better in my heart. Thank you.

Vision for Aging with Dignity in Nunavut

At each regional gathering, the elders were asked how they would envision a community where they could live and age in dignity. Elders at the Ottawa gathering responded:

- Inuit elders live in dignity when we experience respect, loving and helping.

- Inuit elders in Ottawa have dignity when we are remembered by the Nunavut Government and Inuit organizations.
- Inuit elders have safe and affordable housing, and transitional housing when we need it.
- Aging with dignity means being able to eat what we want to eat. So elders, both in and from Nunavut, should have food security and access to nutritious food for their wellbeing.
- Elders have increased pensions that cover the costs of daily life.
- Elders have access to regular social activities.
- Elders have support for making end-of-life preparations.
- The police and health workers in the city are helpful, respectful, and supportive.
- Inuit culture is more visible in Ottawa, including clothing and traditional foods.
- Elders have good support from Inuit organizations in Ottawa – like Tungasuvvingat Inuit, the Innuqatigiit Centre – and also from the Wabano Centre.
- Elders and our families have access to respite care and home visits.

Themes Arising from the Discussion

Several core issues or themes were raised by elders at the Ottawa Elders' Gathering. These have been consolidated in this summary as: lack of healing and addiction recovery programs in Nunavut; elders' gatherings and advice; elders want involvement with youth; housing for elders; access to country food; transportation; elder abuse; urban isolation and neglect of Inuit elders; elder ombudsman; traditional activities and self-care; aging and disability; physical and mental medical support and services; communications and working together; long-term elder-care facilities; the importance of the Inuit language; elders want to learn; end of life preparation; displaced elders; financial comfort and hardship.

Lack of Healing and Addiction Recovery Programs in Nunavut

Summary

- Nunavut needs more resources, particularly healing programs. This is for everyone's benefit, not only elders.
- Drug and alcohol abuse is having a major impact on communities in Nunavut. We need more services and support for both the younger generation and elders to help them overcome alcohol and cannabis addictions.

- Elders want more activities and programs for youth in Nunavut.
- Elders in the south want better access to support services, such as addictions treatment programs, assistance for those with disabilities, and specialized education.
- Elders want more healing programs in Nunavut communities, and these programs must support individuals experiencing difficulties in their lives.

Elders' Comments

People want to quit drinking alcohol or using cannabis. There should be more addiction recovery and support programs in Nunavut. Ottawa has recovery centres and Interventions for healing. For me, the best one was Mamisarvik – it was the biggest help. We need treatment and healing centres and effective programs. We must support people who have addictions. There are people who are so addicted, they can't actually control themselves.

Drugs and alcohol affect everyone. We are concerned about the younger generation. More services should be provided for younger people. In Nunavut we need recreation centres, activities, and programs for young people.

In the news, we have heard that in Iqaluit there are people who are working very hard to get an addictions treatment centre going. I know it is not easy to prepare these kinds of programs. Today, drugs and alcohol are used everywhere. They cause a lot of problems, all the way to death. We have children and relatives who need a place to talk about drugs and alcohol. Trying to help builds up lots of problems and worries, and sometimes it feels like we go around and around in one spot.

There are no healing programs in Nunavut. Down here it was more like a dream. If someone needs help in Ottawa, addiction recovery programs are available. There are also a lot of resources available to help people who have been having a rough time. When I was in the healing centre here, I was so happy I was able to complete the program, and especially happy for my children. I got my job back; it was wonderful to return. I learned to accept myself and let it go. I still go to AA meetings today. Now I can help my grandchildren and my siblings much better because I have helped myself. At home, addiction support for people is only provided once a week, but here it is every day.

There are services available for people living with a disability here that are not available at home in Nunavut. When I was 5 years old, we were relocated. Today, I remember what an impact that had on my life. I went through hard times. I had addiction problems with alcohol. It was very tough and difficult to deal with. I used to try to reach out for help, but I never found real resources to help me. I went to Mamisarvik but kept falling off the wagon. The community's alcohol status is something I think about when I go back to Nunavut. Is the community dry or wet? For me, that is a big question about returning to Nunavut. I have to find out in advance so that I can plan and prepare.

I would have to really consider it carefully before returning to Nunavut. The extended family's needs fall on you a lot. I would have to plan and think about how I am going to reconnect with

relatives; not many people in Nunavut make a good living and my family is addicted. There are a lot of alcohol and drugs and other problems in Nunavut communities. I would really have to think about my future wellbeing. All of these are considerations to prepare myself for going back. How could I be most effective in helping my extended family, knowing there is a lack of support?

Elder Gatherings and Advice

Summary

- Elders want the opportunity to have gatherings and offer advice.
- Elders want funding and support to establish regular group gatherings where they can share their needs and concerns, and have them addressed.
- Elders want to play a crucial role in the community, and traditional knowledge to be respected and utilized in policy-making processes.
- Elders value sharing personal experiences, emotions, and thoughts in a supportive and inclusive environment to promote healing and empowerment.
- Elders in Ottawa appreciate the opportunity to gather, exchange ideas, learn from one another, and feel connected to each other and to Nunavut.
- Elders want a gathering place that can provide education, support, and cultural activities for them, and where they can address issues such as elder abuse.

Elders' Comments

Elders need to be respected. It is great that people invited us here, and that we are gathering together for a feast. Sometimes it is good for us and our comfort and wellbeing to just attend a gathering. It's a great opportunity to talk openly about problems and issues, instead of being worried and holding back our emotions. It's great to meet new people and see old acquaintances. Inuit elders in Ottawa don't often meet together.

I don't know how many of us have been invited to meetings like this. We don't hear anything afterwards. We don't find out when the topics were discussed and when they moved forward with our advice.

Many of us have lots of relatives, and our families have gone through a lot of trauma. It is healthy to think about these matters. We need to ask, 'How can we meet more often at gatherings like this – perhaps every six months or every year?' We want regular gatherings for elders. We could be supported by Tungasuvvingat Inuit or Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. How can we continuously improve services for elders, not just for today? That's what I think. I want to attend more gatherings. I want more support for Inuit in Ottawa, and they should be planned at different times of the day. Sometimes I have on-call work which stops me from attending evening gatherings.

When I gather with other Inuit elders, I feel much better: at home and at ease. I can share the issues I worry about. We dealt with some of them here, and I appreciate that. I am getting some help. I learned a lot more from this gathering. We know now that Inuit elders need a group or committee. I'm sure there will be some more help available.

I am grateful to have the opportunity to be included in this gathering. There is a sense of being in a safe place at this meeting. It has been a bit personal, but there has been an opportunity here to talk about everything. This is very important. I have heard some things that personally gave me strength to move forward. It is important to share our thoughts and to share them with other elders. It is obvious there are many Inuit elders going through a healing process. This meeting is a strong indicator of the need for healing.

It would be great if we could create a committee or a group for seniors. It would help if we get together more often. We need to talk about recreation and visits. We should be creating recreational activities and programs. We talked about these issues in the past, but nothing happened. The men want to do carvings and make other Inuit tools. Even though they are seniors, they can still make traditional tools. We need help to make this happen.

Elders Want Involvement with Youth

Summary

- Elders want to support the establishment of youth councils within organizations to encourage young people to participate. Elders stressed the importance of involving young people in the discussions to empower them, educate them about Inuit cultural heritage, and enable them to become future change makers.

Elders' Comments

We are all aging. Maybe it would be good if there was a young person present at our meetings, because the young people are our future change makers. They need to hear the importance of our concerns. Young people are willing to work, willing to take part, willing to understand meaning and concerns, and they can take up the issues we have discussed. I'm sure they would be willing to learn our culture and language. Having them take part in these sessions would empower them. I wish my grandchildren could take part in these meetings so they can take over in the future.

We have opportunities that my mother and my grandparents didn't have. We have opportunity and identity as Inuit. We have to take this opportunity for the benefit and lives of our children and grandchildren. We owe it to them. We know the ins and outs, the politics and the reasons, and we must proceed a little further. Our children and grandchildren are Inuit.

My own daughter will soon become an elder, and she is learning what she needs to know as an elder. We can provide training. Inuit and First Nations people can teach one another. I notice there are now more training activities involving First Nations and Inuit.

We need to make our Inuit culture more visible in Ottawa – including clothes and country foods as part of culturally related programming. This would benefit our youth.

The Inuit community needs to focus on youth and have them participate in sessions with elders, so that they can learn. We want youth councils within our organizations.

I agree and disagree that it is good to be with young people. It is good to have time with them, and also to have peace once in a while and be alone. When there are constantly so many people in the house, it is hard for elders.

Housing for Elders

Summary

- Elders want housing designed specifically for them.
- More housing is needed for elders to resolve overcrowding and difficult living conditions.
- Elders want to establish safe and supportive senior housing facilities in Ottawa, to provide a comfortable and secure living environment.
- Elders need more shelters and resources accessible for individuals who have experienced abuse or are in need of support.

Elders' Comments

More of us are aging. The population in Nunavut is increasing, and this will continue. The people in the north have to be provided with enough housing so that they can stay in Nunavut. I was planning to retire in Nunavut, but I had no housing when I retired. I really disagreed with not being provided with seniors' housing, and I want the government and the housing corporation to look at this issue. I had to move here to get housing. Inuit seniors in Nunavut need to be provided with houses. It is really important for us seniors to have proper, comfortable homes where we can do some healing in peace and not be harassed by anyone.

Elders need to be supported in each community. There are some seniors that have been left out because of the changes to our traditional lifestyle. Elders still tend to be looked after by their own children. I had my mother living with me, and I wanted to keep her in my own house, but there is no housing suitable for Inuit who are aging. This makes it difficult because how are the children going to help their own parents without the right housing available? The government needs to provide housing designed for seniors.

There is much more housing available in Ottawa compared to Nunavut. Here there are more houses to choose from. There are also more resources to choose from. There are a lot of options for housing in Ottawa including elders' housing and accessible housing that is available for people with special needs. It is important to have these options. Many of us here in Ottawa are living individually and independently in rented apartments or with Ottawa social housing. Here, I

can live wherever I want, and I can have anyone I want live with me. I can have a guest room for everybody to visit. This is healthier for us than if we were living in Nunavut.

I'm originally from Iqaluit. I made a decision to move to Ottawa before I retired. If you work for the government, they provide your housing, but this means you are not immediately eligible for public housing when you retire. Social housing is so restrictive; it is based on family income, and if you work for the government you can't apply. If I were to move back to Iqaluit, it's not like I could rent somewhere to live – the rent is too high.

It looks like we will have to remain here permanently. It is not possible for us to go home to Nunavut. If I were to go back up north, we would be like residents who are non-residents. I would have to rely on others and stay with someone else before getting housing. My daughter has asked quite often that I move to where she is. But there is no housing for me, and I can't get on the public housing waitlist until I'm back living in Nunavut, and then it's a minimum of two years. I have learned from my siblings; my sister waited more than 14 years to get a house of her own. And still her family is in an overcrowded house. This is not an isolated case. This is a common situation in Nunavut communities. The other way we could return to Nunavut would be to have transitional housing available. There should be a plan to help us during the waiting period.

There is also no shelter in many Nunavut communities. Many of us women have been abused physically and mentally. Up north there is nothing for us, no place to go. There are also men who have been hurt, and they have no resources or place to go. Here in Ottawa, I have my own house. I am paying for it myself. In Nunavut it would be very different. There are so many people in Nunavut who have to live in one house. I wouldn't want to be one of those people – I wouldn't be able to cope with that environment.

When you become a senior, it is very important to have a proper, comfortable home where you can do some healing in peace and not be harassed by anyone.

Access to Country Food

Summary

- Elders want access to country food when they are living down south.
- Not all elders live in Ottawa; some live in smaller towns where access to traditional Inuit foods is more difficult.
- Tunnasuvingat Inuit and the Innuqatigiit Centre provide important support to seniors in Eastern Ontario.

Elders' Comments

There is a food bank here in Ottawa. We can go anytime we need to get food. There is also an Inuit food bank.

Elders love gathering together to have a feast. It is good for our comfort and wellbeing. Effective gatherings involve sharing food. This is very good for our mental health.

I appreciate my sister who helps me a lot. She comes to my place to make traditional food like bannock. When I am in pain or uncomfortable, she helps me out. This is very comforting, and makes me feel better.

Inuit in hospitals in the south should be provided with country food. They need to have Inuit visitors who can provide them with country food.

I want to be treated with respect. This is how we should be treating all seniors. Not having traditional food can make life difficult. Elders can experience abuse around food security. Country food has to be provided, available, and distributed in Ottawa.

Inuit organizations need to help with sharing country food. It is not good for my aging body to not have country food. When we elders don't have country food for a long time, we can really feel it. We need country food in our system. I would like to see country food distributed or made available in Ottawa.

I crave country food much of the time. It is difficult for me to get country food in Ottawa, and I can't do much about it. I have to order country food from the north. I would like to see a weekly delivery of country food in Ottawa.

I miss the country food – Inuit food – that I used to have. Maybe I miss it because I was so well looked after when my husband was alive; I was given the delicacies as a woman. Now I look outside the window and I think about spring travel with my husband. I wish I could go out hunting like everyone else. I no longer have my husband to support me.

Transportation

Summary

- To live a good life, elders should be able to afford local transportation.
- Elders find the high cost of airline tickets prohibitive. This gets in the way of them visiting or moving back to Nunavut. They want discounted rates for elders negotiated with the airlines.

Elders' Comments

Airline tickets to Nunavut are very expensive. This is wrong. This gets in the way of us having a relationship with our families in Nunavut. I would like to be closer to my family, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Is there a way for airline tickets to become cheaper? I would love to be able to go back and forth while I am still able to fly. I need my family. There are times we need to be present with our family members in Nunavut, but we can't afford to go. We do not have the money to travel. Please reduce the fares.

Airplanes are now only going to my home community once a week. I would have a real problem with that. Many of us need to travel for medical appointments: mostly we go to Winnipeg for health services. Even for emergency appointments, sometimes we are late for our appointments because of travel delays. This makes getting good healthcare even more difficult. With the airline today, most people from small communities have this problem. We need more and better health services in the small communities in the Kivalliq region, so that we don't have to travel. Not enough health services can mean people don't survive – it is very difficult to lose family members.

Here in Ottawa, you can go anywhere by road. It is so helpful. You can travel between communities in a way we cannot in Nunavut. The cost of travelling between communities in Nunavut is incredibly expensive and is difficult because of limited schedules. We need to fix the transportation system in Nunavut. We want subsidized fares for elders. We also want airline discounts for everyone.

There are local events we don't attend because we don't have transportation. When I first moved to Ottawa, I didn't know how to go about my daily travel. If you don't know exactly how to navigate local travel here, it is difficult to know how to go about your daily activities.

One of the drawbacks of getting older is that it gets difficult to always have to ask for help getting around, especially if you don't drive. I don't have a drivers' license, so I rely on taking a taxi or getting a drive. Local transportation is so important, both here and in Nunavut. A person should be assigned to take elders to the church for services.

There are many people who use wheelchairs in Ottawa. There are sidewalks here. There are no sidewalks for people in wheelchairs to use in Nunavut. Communities in Nunavut are not accessible. Taxis are not available. We need taxis with wheelchair hoists. And we want roads in Nunavut to be accessible for everyone.

Elder Abuse

Summary

- Elder abuse is a significant issue that needs immediate attention and action.

Elders' Comments

Elders want security. Elders need to be in a secure place, and live in peace. Issues like drugs and alcohol affect the whole family. Elders are abused by younger people demanding money to support their addiction habits. It is essential that elders are not intimidated by their children or grandchildren. This has to be dealt with. Many elders are feeling afraid and it feels dangerous and scary. This must stop. We all need to be more aware of what seniors are going through. We need to visit seniors more often and contact them by telephone. We need to improve our communications with elders.

I had to move to Ottawa because of my husband's health. He is Qallunaaq, and after 15 years together he told me that he needed to leave. He said I could come with him or not. I followed him. Our children were small, and I worked for social services. Just as we planned to leave, my father died suddenly. I have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from my previous spouse. I had to take trauma counselling. I recognized myself and what I had gone through: spousal abuse, physical and panic attacks, anxiety. I adopted a lifestyle of abuse. I talked to elders who I could trust, and who believed me when I talked about what I went through. I am now very grateful: there is a way that we can heal ourselves and give ourselves hope. We can have a positive life, even if we have been traumatized and abused. One of the most important things is to learn how to deal with the trauma. If I had stayed in my community, I don't think I would have overcome all the abuse I had experienced. I would have had a shorter life, because a hard life can be very tiring. I am grateful for this opportunity to share. It is important to share how our children are being impacted when they see their parents being abused. It can be frightening and stressful for them, and we pass our trauma on to our children. My son is homeless. He is not invited to my home anymore, because we have to protect ourselves and be sure we are living in a safe place.

People are abusing elders by stealing from them. For instance, when my mother was not well and confused, people would take food away from her. The safety of seniors is very important. We need to respect elders as they age. All of us will experience aging. Living in a safe place is the most important thing.

My good friend was recently killed by her partner who was using crack cocaine. Drugs and alcohol are available and used everywhere. It causes a lot of problems, even death. There are times when I would like to run away or go to a shelter for safety. I would be there if there was a shelter for Inuit.

Elders need to gather more often, like we are meeting now. We have many issues to bring up. Sometimes it is difficult when younger people only want to listen to their own age group. I want to help, but sometimes it is impossible to help with their problems. The younger generation should also start learning about seniors. When we were young children, we were not allowed to talk back to our parents. These are values that Inuit children don't learn anymore. I have been asked by younger people about respect. These kinds of things need to be talked about and taught to our people. People used to go to the elders' homes to visit and talk about their families.

I am even afraid of one of my own grandchildren. He used to look for money when staying the night. We would explain that we didn't have cash in the house. I would walk around the neighbourhood at night to get out of the house when he was there.

I am getting uncomfortable with too many young people making too many demands. As we get older, we need some peace. We want a safe gathering place for elders to speak about what is happening in their homes: how they are going through hard times in their own house, and being abused by their own grandkids.

I worry about my daughters getting killed accidentally.

Urban Isolation and Neglect of Inuit Elders

Summary

- Elders feel forgotten and unsupported by the Government of Nunavut and NTI, and want more assistance and support for Inuit from Nunavut living in the south.

Elders' Comments

I want to thank you for not forgetting us, and for coming all the way here because you didn't forget us. Sometimes we feel we are forgotten from our own home. We sometimes wonder if anyone thinks about us anymore, even though we are land claims beneficiaries. It feels good to know we are not alone. Every one of us has had very significant experiences and had other issues. Speaking Inuktitut in this meeting has been the greatest thing, because when you are trying to speak in English you forget things. It seems to be much more meaningful to speak in Inuktitut. This meeting is a very good reminder that we can own our own issues and voice them. Some of our issues should be dealt with urgently.

A lot of people talk about NTI. There are lots of times we talk about issues, but nothing happens. We are Nunavut beneficiaries, we are beneficiaries to the Nunavut Land Claim. I have a beneficiary number, but I don't know how to use it. Does our NTI beneficiary status make any difference in terms of applying for funding? Is there an assumption that beneficiaries living in Ottawa are not entitled to apply? Is there money available for Nunavut Inuit elders living in Ottawa? I need clarification on this. How does it work with land claim beneficiaries – who do we ask? Where do we direct our questions? I want to ask if beneficiaries living outside of Nunavut are entitled to funding under the QIA or NTI. I have a mixed understanding. I need to clear this up so that I understand. I think they should create a new card or something like that, so that we can easily get help. Those of us who don't understand English are in a different situation. It would help if there was a phone number to call and speak to someone in Inuktitut, not only English, when we are trying to get some funding. It is confusing because we don't know who is responsible to address issues that we are experiencing.

The Government of Nunavut and the Nunavut Inuit organizations do not help us whatsoever with money or support. Inuit in Ottawa we are still in Canada like everyone else, but we feel that we are forgotten. We have the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, but they don't help us. When I hear about Inuit in Ottawa or in the south, they are not getting help from any of them. This is not right. They cannot forget us - we are all still within Canada. Sometimes, when I go to Tungasuvinnat Inuit there is no country food. It is difficult to get what we need for food, because we need money. It seems like when it comes to dollars, we are forgotten. I'm very emotional about this issue.

NTI needs to have a link with Inuit in the south. NTI should be more aware of the needs of Nunavut Inuit elders living in Ottawa. I feel abandoned by NTI: financially and in terms of participation.

Elder Ombudsperson

Summary

- Elders want an ombudsperson for Nunavut.

Elders' Comments

There is an ombudsman in Ottawa. We should get one for Nunavut for elders. Why is there no ombudsman in Nunavut for elders? Seniors are so well represented down here in a way they are not in Nunavut.

Traditional Activities and Self-Care

Summary

- Elders want time to relax peaceful moments of time to relax and think clearly.
- As part of their self-care, elders want to share more traditional activities for everyone.

Elders' Comments

We want to be used. We want to talk about what we know from our personal experiences. We have very strong life experiences to share. We have talked about issues in the past, but nothing really happens. It would be good if we could create an elders committee.

Self-care is very important. We need to learn self-care – we were never taught this. Inuit want to improve our self-esteem through learning and using our culture and language. I had to teach myself to light the qulliq - I have a lot of work to do to learn about Inuit ways. I want to take part and be involved in Inuit knowledge.

We need more people to spend time with us, especially those who understand elders and are well grounded in Inuit culture and language. They should have life experience and have worked to heal themselves.

When I was younger and visited the elders, they looked healthier. They were not disturbed by others. I want elders today to look healthier. Elders are a lot healthier when they can get together or when they are taken for outings.

Aging and Disability

Summary

- Elders have physical limitations that are related to aging, such as fatigue, reduced mobility, and the need for rest.
- Compared to Nunavut, Ottawa has far better accessibility for elders and people living with disabilities.

Elders' Comments

There are downsides to aging; it is not glamorous. When you are aging you get tired easily, you get exhausted from just short walks. It is uncomfortable. I get up very very early because of aging. I know that I need to rest, and I try to relax. Someone I know asked the doctor what is it about aging that makes us tired? She was told to do exercises, but I don't know how to do them.

There used to be resources for people with disabilities available in Nunavut, but that has stopped. There is nobody to look after elders with disabilities in Nunavut, so they are referred to Embassy West. Nunavut needs people who have the necessary training to look after the aging and those with disabilities or mental illness. There is training provided here for those becoming home-care and personal support workers. My daughter is trained to help people with autism. This training is not available in Nunavut.

People who are disabled want to see their families. If they are unable to see their families or get help, they tend to give up. It is better to have intervention workers who are not related to the people with disabilities they are looking after. This is very important.

Ottawa is good for job-seekers and FASD-related support. People that are affected with FASD are considered to have special needs and can be trained for job opportunities in the workforce. There is so much training available here for people facing workplace challenges. There is also training provided for those who want to become home-care and personal support workers.

It was helpful being in Ottawa when my mother was in a wheelchair. Ottawa is more accessible for the disabled than communities in Nunavut. There are not enough resources in Nunavut for people who need to use wheelchairs or walkers. The roads are very rough in Nunavut and it is uncomfortable to move about in wheelchairs or walkers.

Medical Support and Services

Summary

- Elders need home-care or personal support workers and organizations that offer assistance.
- Elders need access to elder-care facilities that support individuals with dementia, and their families.
- There is a lack of culturally competent healthcare professionals in Nunavut, and insufficient support for people living with disabilities, needing mental health support or trauma recovery, and who want to live a healthy lifestyle.
- Elders said that it is very difficult to get a timely diagnosis in Nunavut, and that they encountered difficulties in accessing healthcare services in Nunavut. They experienced

long wait times, limited flights, and needed to travel to other communities or cities for medical care.

- Elders want interpreters available for their medical appointments (even with specialists), and to have medication instructions translated into Inuktitut.
- Elders appreciate the Ottawa organizations that provide food, dental services, access to family doctors, and eyeglasses. These are lacking in Nunavut.

Elders' Comments

On home-care

Home-care helps us to take care of ourselves and makes sure we are okay. Elders should get regular check-ins from home-care workers. They can help with our mental health, assist us with grocery shopping, personal care, hygiene, and cleanliness, and can take us out of the house.

Personal support workers offer me everyday help. They can also go to seniors' homes. Elders want visits from people to check that they are okay, and regular visits by home-care workers and people who can take us for outings away from home. These would help us refresh our minds.

Assistance should be available to take elders for a walk each day, or every second or third day. Elders who are not physically active need to get exercise for their mental health.

Family members have to be really considered – it can be very tiring to personally care for your own relatives. If I was to move back to the Kivalliq, some of my needs would not be met.

On loneliness

It is very lonely to be an elder; not too many people come to see you. As a senior, I tire easily. My children and grandchildren sometimes ignore me. But I didn't realize how tired I was. I feel sorry about my late mother and father, I didn't realize they were tired.

We all need someone to talk about the issues we are facing. During the pandemic I felt so alone. I had negative thoughts and feelings, and didn't have anyone to talk to. It doesn't have to be every day but it is important to have someone to talk with about your problems and how you feel. I have had so many worries, it has affected me personally. I want to thank all the people who have been helping me. I feel better now. Too much time alone affects our mental health. Loneliness brings a lack of balance.

On access to family doctors, specialists, and services

When I first got my cancer diagnosis, some of my appointments were delayed. The nurses were very kind and loving – they cared and helped a lot. They also helped me to see specialists. They gave me directions and names for psychiatrists, psychologists, and other specialists. Mental health support is more available here in Ottawa.

Not long ago, I had to go see the doctor for a whole year, and my diagnosis was very negative. But it is easy to get the help you need here, and to see a doctor regularly.

Sickness took a toll on me for two years. My sister came to help because she cares deeply. Those with sicknesses and terminal illnesses should be cared for properly, not just by their grandchildren.

Medical attention is way better here in Ottawa. It is more available and accessible, with less wait time. If I get sick, I can see my doctor and be treated right away; and if I have to see a specialist I can get a referral. They even call us to remind us about appointments. These services are not available in Nunavut.

Elders need access to family doctors and specialized doctors. There are not many services available once you leave Ottawa. Living outside the city, I have had to learn how to get more help: I have had to learn what services are available and how to access them.

There are people who need hearing aids. But in Nunavut specialists visit the Health Centres or hospital only sporadically, especially in the smaller communities.

On healing

I think about healing a lot. We have many issues we need to deal with through healing. We need to find some options, we have younger generations who are following us, and we know the road they are on is very difficult, it will not be easy. There are too many unnecessary deaths. I have heard of many people who have died unnecessarily. Perhaps we should have gatherings to talk about this. We have done that before when there were many issues to deal with.

There used to be more Inuit employed –Tungasuvvingat Inuit used to be over 90% Inuit, but qallunaat are taking over and fewer people speak Inuktitut. Language barriers can cause problems for communication and healing.

The thing I have really learned and understood is how people go through hard times. To heal ourselves, elders need to talk about our concerns. We need group sessions: times for elders to spend together for healing.

Interventions for addictions and trauma healing exist in Ottawa. There are recovery centres available. More treatment and healing centres are needed.

On quality and sufficient healthcare

I first came here for medical reasons because I couldn't get help in Nunavut. There is a lot of help available here. I have children with different disabilities including diabetes, mental health, and a child in a wheelchair. For these we need specialized healthcare. As a family we get help through the school, mental health workers, and many specialists. There are three specialists helping me with my son. I wonder if there is anyone else in the world with the same conditions. I would have to wait a long time in Nunavut to get support, but here it is different. He is here with me, and 911 is available when he needs help. I can go to Tungasuvvingat Inuit directly and get help. If I have problems with medical costs, they can help me right away. I appreciate their work and help. I receive an Ontario disability pension. This would be much harder for people in Nunavut with the same conditions. The referral system is great for me and my family – it is a speedy and thorough way to access healthcare.

Services for pregnancy are important and are available here. There are more services for pregnant women, and family members can attend deliveries. Programs are available to prepare pregnant women and first-time parents. Here, midwives are available so you can deliver a baby at home. These are not available in Nunavut.

The hospitals here are most essential for us: the dentists, eye doctors, and mental health and mental health workers. Specialists are only available sporadically in the Nunavut hospital, and there is very limited access to them in smaller communities. There are not enough services in Nunavut for people who are mentally or physically challenged.

On mental health for the whole family

To survive in Nunavut, I would need medical care and mental health workers. I have thought about suicide. My spouse is looking after me. Sometimes I share these things with him. I get a lot of support for sickness, illness, and mental health.

In Ottawa there are seniors' facilities where I can access trauma-based counseling. Everybody has trauma. I have not met one person who has not had some kind of trauma. Every person needs care at some point, but in Nunavut there is no trauma-based counseling. None! There is some counselling, but it is not really trauma-based. There is a lot of trauma in Nunavut: all of us have been relocated to communities. Most of us lived through the dog slaughter. Most of us were sent to residential schools and told not to speak our own language. All that caused trauma. Our society has been going through a transition for over 50 years: before we lived in igloos and now we live in apartments in Ottawa. There is trauma in Nunavut, but there is no trauma-based counselling. This is needed everywhere in Nunavut. But Inuit ourselves are the resources, and we ourselves have to take the baton and start somewhere: not just wait for governments and organizations to do it for us. We have to start somewhere with trauma-based counselling. If you don't have this, the intergenerational trauma will continue, and we can't allow this to continue into the 22nd century. It is too heavy on all of us. All we need is a little bit of help from ourselves to take care of it.

There are so many more resources available here than in the north. My husband has dementia, and we were told what the future would look like for him. The doctor asked if we had any questions, and told us about the services available here in Ottawa. There are a lot more sources of support and many kinds of help.

There are also resources for people who are having difficulties with their work: they can speak with someone and get the support they need.

I was helped for two years by mental health workers. I wanted to deal with rape and I wanted to learn to forgive. They probably will have a longer life than me, they are younger. I have forgiven them.

There are special services that I get now here in Ottawa that I would also need in Nunavut, but this help would not be available there. I need access to CT scans, MRIs, I need nurses who have been taught about our culture. Up north, there are not nearly enough resources available for mental health.

There are many of us who need healing programs. If we could get treatment, it would benefit us in the community. We need more opportunities to access healing programs. Many of us are experiencing intergenerational trauma which is not well understood. The healing process can be slow, and we can get depressed when we start dealing with issues we have been carrying for many years.

The things that really bother me now are: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the dog slaughter, Inuit with addictions, unmarked graves. Many of us need counselling and therapy.

On education

We know there are more support services available here in Ottawa. The education system is better, and the health providers are more available. We are very happy about the services for children with special needs that are available in the schools. There is so much assistance here for children living with autism, including special rooms for them in the schools.

My son has reading problems and needs special instructors at school. I have a teenage child who has been abused - this has affected her mental health. She needs a special worker to help her, and down here there are professionals who can help our children. My youngest child is 5 years old, and is very gifted. He is studying and learns fast. He would need to be in a program for gifted children, but not many programs like this are available in Nunavut.

What we are really missing is someone who can counsel young people who are having problems. My children sometimes seem lost. People who relocate to Ottawa, especially youth, experience a drastic change in lifestyle from the one they left behind in Nunavut. They are so fond of what they left behind and need an orientation as they are settling into life in Ottawa. During this transition period, they need to talk to someone and learn about living in the city. It is so different from northern living.

People who have special needs need help. After they finish school, they still need additional help. I have been thinking about whether I should go back to Nunavut or not. I have no home there, so I would be homeless. I would have no security. My children have special needs. Here, they have access to work-related training. This doesn't exist in Nunavut.

Communication and Working Together

Summary

- Elders want to see a healthy relationship between Inuit organizations and government agencies to better assist the community and address overlapping issues. Organizations should work together as partners to address the specific needs of Inuit, improve the lives of elders, and plan for the future.
- Elders want more education about the effects of aging, including physical and mental changes, fatigue, slowing down, the need for proper nutrition, feeling vulnerable, and

loneliness. They also need society to better understand how aging affects elders, and know what actions can be taken to support them.

- Elders want contact with Nunavut and other Inuit through access to Inuktitut radio and television programs.

Elders' Comments

It would be great if we could create a list of names of people who are available to help elders when we need it. Here in Ottawa, I have run into a few problems, like getting food. When I am asked, I am open to telling them what needs to be done and to helping where I can. At this seniors meeting we should say what we need, and get to know the services that are available to us in Ottawa. It would be great if we could practice our traditional ways, and also know the resources that are available here.

Are you well looked after? Are you sleeping well? Do you have money? Do you go out once in a while for recreation? These are good questions to ask elders when you are visiting them. It would be ideal if there was a phone number for elders to call to ask for support. There should also be a number for elders to call if there is an emergency and they need a shelter. Sometimes people who are being abused don't want to call for help. We want to see meetings like this happening monthly. It would be great to create this, because it would help fulfill our needs.

We need to share more information on traditional culture. Getting the funding we need to do this is the number one issue – we need help with writing proposals. We need support so that we can share our traditional knowledge of elders and keep the language going. It would be good to have an elders' committee to help us share our knowledge.

Some elders cannot go to the food bank and want food delivered. Maybe we can collaborate more and work with other agencies that support local seniors.

We need to document the things we have been talking about at this meeting. Today I am speaking more than I am used to. Today is very important to me. I want to get a monthly gathering started for the elders and those who are aging where we can discuss what we need to do. Sometimes we don't know who to talk to, and when it is in the idea stage it doesn't take off. Talking about it, our voice can become stronger.

Tungasuvvingat Inuit and Inuuqatigiit should keep in better contact with the seniors. They need to make more announcements about and publicize the services that they provide. We want to know about opportunities to apply for funding they provide, and where else we can get funding.

There is confusion between the Inuit support organizations here in Ottawa. They are all dealing with the same group of Inuit. We want them to provide coordinated services for all Inuit living in the city. We want to have a positive relationship with these organizations, and get the assistance we need. The two organizations overlap, so it would be really helpful and less confusing if they could work in partnership for the benefit of Inuit living here. Tungasuvvingat Inuit staff should work in partnership with Inuuqatigiit – collaborate and communicate with one

another. Both the programs serve the same people. I don't know how many years it has been like this. The workers are appreciated very much.

Here in Ottawa, how can I access CBC Nunavut radio and Inuktitut programming on TV? We can have more access and more activities.

Elder-Care Facilities and Long-Term Care

Summary

- Elders should not be sent south but instead stay in their home communities.
- Elders from Nunavut who are sent to the Embassy West need more support.
- Spouses and families visiting their loved ones at Embassy West should be allowed to stay for longer periods.

Elders' Comments

At our age, we shouldn't have to be shipped out to distant cities for health support. The number of elders in Nunavut has increased and there should be more specialized medical help available there. Caregivers need to be given a break – they need respite time when they are looking after elders.

People from Nunavut shouldn't have to go to Ontario because they are aging, they should stay in their home communities. Personally, I don't want to travel if I am sick. Nunavut has to have places to care for elders at home.

Elders sent to Embassy West from Nunavut need more support and more visiting.

My daughter-in-law and my brother's wife had to visit relatives in Embassy West, and had to pay for their own travel. There have to be more opportunities for families to visit their relatives who are staying there, and they should be allowed to stay for longer periods of time.

Importance of Inuit Languages

Summary

- Elders want Inuktitut to be preserved and promoted. This is vital for cultural continuity, identity, and to ensure that future generations have pride in being Inuit. Elders want more effort put into Inuit language education in Nunavut.
- Medical interpreters are essential for elders' health and wellbeing.

Elders' Comments

It's great to have this meeting in Inuktitut only. We tend to speak in English to accommodate others. Sometimes I don't understand English clearly because the structure of the language is different. It is so much better to have a meeting like this one, only in Inuktitut.

Inuktitut is lacking in Nunavut. Inuit in Nunavut are not provided good education in our mother tongue. There are a lot of Inuit that can speak it – we need to change the mentality. We can learn. We can all learn the Inuktitut language, syllabics, and how to write Inuktitut on the computer. Stop complaining and start learning Inuktitut.

There is lateral violence and bullying in society relating to Inuktitut. My daughter can't speak Inuktitut, because as a parent I never talked to her in Inuktitut. I feel responsible. Most of us know the reasons that our children and grandchildren do not speak Inuktitut. It is not our fault. We have been forced to speak English. The federal government started this a long time ago. Today, my grandchild cannot speak Inuktitut well. He can speak just a little bit and I am teaching him. With some of the issues that people have gone through, some Inuit don't want to speak Inuktitut and they can make a big issue out of it. It is not anyone's fault that they don't speak Inuktitut – not one Inuk's fault. I encourage Inuit to relearn our language. Our children and grandchildren are proud to be Inuit. They really believe they are Inuit, and nobody will ever take that away. We need to give them the chance to learn Inuktitut. If not them, then the next generation. So that the world can learn who we are. We need to revive our language and use it more.

Our children and young people are only speaking English. My grandchildren grew up in the south and can't speak Inuktitut. People losing their languages, some getting bullied and drop out from school. Some Inuktitut speakers get bullied in the school or workplace because they want to speak their language. They are intimidated. We need supporters for bilingualism.

We need good interpreters in Ottawa and the south. We have to see doctors here. Inuit patients want to speak to doctors in their own language. When we need to see a doctor, even specialists, there are interpreters available. When we don't have to request an interpreter, it really helps.

If we can't really read English, the information about our medication should be translated into Inuktitut. This important service is not available.

Elders Want to Learn

Summary

- Elders want to learn to use computer technologies such as online banking in a way that maintains their security.
- Elders need to share and exchange knowledge with each other.

Elders' Comments

It would be great if someone would teach me how to manage my money. We want others to make sure we are okay in terms of money and finances, and teach us or help us with banking. We want to feel secure.

So that we can be more involved with people, elders need access to computers and the internet. It would be great if we could be taught to use computers properly. We need help with this as seniors. We want computer training and learn how to use software programs. I want support – like a workshop. We want to learn how to write Inuktitut on the computer, including syllabics.

There are many of us who are not very confident in operating technology, like computers, at home. When young people are at my home they help me, but when they are not there to help me, I am stuck. We need to have a workshop on computers. It would be very helpful because this is the way we are communicating these days.

I cannot read or write in English. When I moved to Iqaluit I asked to go to school, but my stepfather refused.

Now that I am becoming an elder, my knowledge is completely different from my mother's knowledge. I have lost quite a bit of my mother's knowledge because she passed away when I was young and we were not very well looked after. We weren't taught about Inuit knowledge or traditional foods. I married totally outside of our culture. My own children have gone through a different system. We used to fight over the food - about what is good for them. I took cooking classes here, so now I don't have to feel I am failing my own children. Elders and seniors are the most experienced, but we don't know everything; we are always improving and educating ourselves.

End of Life Preparation**Summary**

- Elders need education and communication about wills and estates.
- Elders need support to budget, create and update their final will and directives.

Elders' Comments

Before I die, what do I need to do? How do I need to budget in preparation for dignity? We need to focus on wills and managing our money. I want an organized plan for the future. None of us know how long we will be here. We need to learn about estate planning to avoid conflict when we pass on. With good planning, it will be easier for everyone. In many cases, elderly people tend to get overwhelmed when their children are having disagreements. Elders need an orientation on making wills and estate preparation.

As Inuit we don't practice preparing for something. I have power of attorney because my spouse has Alzheimers and can't think for himself. We all need wills – that is a good start. I would have to get some help, because I've never had to deal with wills before.

Displaced Elders

Summary

- Elders in Ottawa can feel displaced from their communities and yearn for Nunavut.
- Elders are grieving the distance to Nunavut and trying to overcome trauma.

Elders' Comments

My parents were relocated when I was a child. They had knowledge, so they educated us. Many of us got lectures from our parents when we were young. There are a lot more young people now who take to blaming. As seniors we need to understand more, so we can be an example to our own grandchildren and the next generation.

If I could move back to Nunavut, I would need to bring my health support workers with me: the mental health support team, my nurse, physical therapist, and special needs workers. That way I could have a similar quality of life to here.

Financial Comfort and Hardship

Summary

- Elders need financial assistance that allows them and their extended families dignity. They want more financial assistance from the Government of Nunavut and NTI, and to be paid fair honoraria for attending meetings.
- Elders want discounted airfares for travel back to Nunavut. The high cost of flights have a significant impact on elders' ability to return to their home communities.
- Elders want assistance with banking and financial matters.
- Elders recognize there are many more employment opportunities for youth and adults in the south.

Elders' Comments

Nunavut elders need more financial support. Most of us are retired. We need more support from the federal and territorial government with a higher pension to give us a better standard of living. We are feeling abandoned by NTI. They should be including us financially. We don't have enough money to live a good life. I had to move to Ottawa because the pension in Nunavut was not enough to have a good life.

We need help to learn about all the ways of using money, like budgeting and banking.

Aging with dignity means being able to eat what we want to eat. Dignity is shopping for our own food, choosing our own groceries and being able to afford it. This is food security. Having food vouchers provided makes a big difference. All the groceries in Nunavut and in Ottawa are expensive now, and seniors don't have enough income to afford it. We don't want to rely on food banks.

Sometimes I feel like giving up. My family is having a hard time. I face too many hardships in looking after my children and grandchildren. Some of them are in a shelter. One is addicted to drugs and alcohol, and one was threatened with death. There are too many issues. I am the only one who is making money in the household: I am the one who is supporting my adult childrens' addiction lifestyle and raising my grandchildren. This has to be given serious consideration.

I have worked all my life. Sometimes I think again about getting a full time job to be able to have more money to live on. But I don't think I can work full-time anymore. We have to be respected, and be provided with proper honorarium for attending meetings.

Elders need help with budgeting and financial matters. Elders want to learn, but they have not been taught.