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 NUNAVIK REGIONAL BOARD OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
 RÉGIE RÉGIONALE DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SERVICES SOCIAUX NUNAVIK

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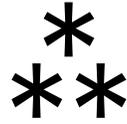
















# Acronyms

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NRHBSS	Nunavik Regional Health Board and Social Services
KRG	Kativik Regional Government
NEC	Nunavik Elders' Committee
JBNQA	James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement
KMHB	Kativik Municipal Housing Bureau
<i>ISQ</i>	<i>Institut de la Statistique du Québec</i>
<i>AQDR</i>	<i>Association Québécoise de défense des droits des personnes retraitées et préretraitées</i>



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# INTRODUCTION

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## Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services

The basis of the development of health and social services in the Nunavik region was established by the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement*. The organization of health and social services remains under the auspices of the provincial system, but it is adapted to the region's characteristics. The Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS), created under section 530.25 of the Act (Order in Council 655-94 of May 4, 1994, G.O., May 25, 1994, 126<sup>th</sup> year, No. 21, page 2669), is responsible for nearly the entire Québec territory located north of the 55<sup>th</sup> parallel in terms of the provision of health and social services.

The Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services is an organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the populations of the 14 communities on its territory. Its overall mission is to adapt the health and social service programs to the population's needs and to the region's realities. It ensures the organization and efficient use of resources granted to the Nunavik region.

However, the NRBHSS has also adopted a specific mission, in line with its values, particularities, rationale and desire to collaborate with its regional partners, to improve the health and well-being of the region's population:

- The regional board's preoccupations and actions are centred on the citizens;
- It unites its partners to help Nunavik citizens, individually and collectively, to recover, maintain and improve their health and well-being;
- It serves a population whose geographic, political, social, cultural and economic reality is distinct from that of the rest of the province. With its resources and in collaboration with its partners, it ensures the organization and management of a sound health and social service system that adapts constantly to the region's unique characteristics.









leaders, they were called *angajurqaaq*. This word still means “leader” or is used to refer to “parents.” These two meanings of the word should remind us that seniority is still associated with authority among Inuit and not with “retirement.” In other words, the identification of elders as culture bearers is not simply a matter of chronological age but, rather, a function of the respect accorded to individuals in each community who exemplify the values and lifestyles of the local culture<sup>13</sup>.

Despite the deep respect elders still inspire among the younger generation, they nevertheless still suffer from the problems increasingly affecting the region since the 1960s, especially the lack of housing and the abuse of alcohol. These create an explosive cocktail that can lead to violent behaviour, abuse and, of course, intimidation. When intoxicated, many people are literally out of control and behave in a way they regret later. The lack of housing also leads to overcrowding, and homes are the place where such problems are the most common. This brief thus focusses on abuse and intimidation at home.



# Intimidation and Abusive Behaviour Experienced by Nunavik Elders

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In order to grasp Nunavik elders' perspective on intimidation, it is of utmost importance to remember that the vast majority of them only speak and think in Inuktitut. The concept of intimidation, as a broader category encompassing different kinds of acts, is very new in Nunavik. So far, it has often been translated as *sunauungititsiniq*. This word existed before as a translation of intimidation. Literally, it means “acting to make someone feel like (s)he is not important, doesn't deserve consideration, doesn't merit attention.” So being intimidated (*sunauungititauniq*) and being abused (*pilukattauniq*), when used during consultations with elders, are not always distinguished as they are by social or health professionals.

In Nunavik, many elders suffer from direct threats and verbal attacks. Most of the time, this intimidation is indicative of broader problems. In fact, intimidation is one of the most common forms of psychological abuse that Nunavik elders have to face on a daily basis. Moreover, psychological abuse seems to be one of the two most common types of elder abuse, along with financial abuse.<sup>14</sup>

In Nunavik, 32.1% of adult women reported having experienced threats of violence during their life, even though this percentage is probably a little bit lower for elders than for other adults. Sixteen percent of men reported having experienced such threats. For both genders however, the global physical index, encompassing all forms of physical violence, is higher than 50%, meaning clearly that threats of violence are to be taken very seriously.<sup>15</sup>

As such, elder abuse is a reality, and intimidation is a part of it. According to the elders, intimidation is often linked to substance abuse, especially alcohol abuse. Intimidation is also clearly rooted in intergenerational dynamics, as elders mentioned that intimidators are often their own children. These family bonds are often the reason why elders express much concern for the intimidators: they do not like to see them appear in court or sent to jail and feel that they also need help, such as healing or counselling. Nunavik elders refuse to understand the problem of intimidation, as well as other social problems they may face, on







The Nunavik elders also often ask to have more activities specifically organized for them, during which they could gather and enjoy activities. The elders' homes already built in four villages could hold day-centre activities within the community, and outdoor activities could be organized more often. Such gatherings provide respite to the elders and safe environments where they could share with other elders or community workers the situations they have to face.

## Conclusion

It is important to counter the intimidation Nunavik elders have to face, but this should be done in the broader framework of elder-abuse prevention. However, countering intimidation and elder abuse also requires long-term structural measures to deal with major social problems. The lack of housing creates many health and social problems and, in a vicious cycle, prevents the application of certain solutions.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.iqqaumavara.com> (Accessed October 16, 2014). In 1953, several families from Inukjuak were transported to the High Arctic to start the communities of Grise Fiord (Nunavut) and of Resolute Bay (Nunavut). These forced relocations were motivated by a desire to reinforce Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic Archipelago, by creating permanent settlements in the area.

<sup>2</sup> <http://nousetionssiloin.ca> (Accessed October 16, 2014). See also the paper of Z. Nungak (2000), "Experimental Eskimos", *Inuktitut*, 87: 3-16.

<sup>3</sup> Nunavik's Makivik Corp. and the province of Quebec signed an agreement 2011 Aug. 8 to recognize the dog slaughters that took place in Nunavik in 1950s and 1960s and their impact on the Inuit culture and way of life. Quebec provincial police officers killed more than 1,000 dogs between 1950 and 1970 without taking into consideration the important role they played in the Inuit way of life. The implication of the RCMP has not been acknowledged until know.

<sup>4</sup> Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2010), *Environmental Scan of Inuit Elder Abuse Awareness*, [http://pauktuutit.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/assets/04-Inuit-Elder-Abuse-Scan\\_EN.pdf](http://pauktuutit.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/assets/04-Inuit-Elder-Abuse-Scan_EN.pdf) (Accessed October 13, 2014)

<sup>5</sup> Source:

[http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/regions/profils/profil10/societe/demographie/demo\\_gen/age\\_moyen10\\_mrc.htm](http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/regions/profils/profil10/societe/demographie/demo_gen/age_moyen10_mrc.htm) (Accessed September 17, 2013)

<sup>6</sup> Source:

<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-pr-fra.cfm?Lang=Fra&GC=24> (Accessed September 17, 2013)

<sup>7</sup> Life expectancy at birth is another striking feature of Nunavik demography when compared to the Province of Québec as a whole. Life expectancy for men in Nunavik was, in 2004-2008, 62.6 years, compared to 78.1 in Quebec as a whole. For women in Nunavik, life expectancy at birth was 67.6 years, compared to 82.9 in Quebec as a whole. See Direction générale adjointe de la santé publique (2012), *La santé de la population des communautés du territoire du Plan Nord*, Santé et Services Sociaux Québec:19. This important difference, approximately 15 years, should be considered when defining the age limit that has to be reached to be considered as an elder, that is, 55 years old in Nunavik.



