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INUIT TAPIRIIT KANATAMI

Inuit Perspectives on a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy

January 22, 2018

About Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) is the national representational organization for Canada's 60,000 Inuit, the majority of whom live in four regions of Canada's Arctic, specifically, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador). Collectively, these four regions make up Inuit Nunangat, our homeland in Canada. It includes 53 communities and encompasses roughly 35 percent of Canada's land mass and 50 percent of its coastline.

The comprehensive land claim agreements that have been settled in Inuit Nunangat continue to form a core component of our organization's mandate. These land claims have the status of protected treaties under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and we remain committed to working in partnership with the Crown toward their full implementation. Consistent with its founding purpose, ITK represents the rights and interests of Inuit at the national level through a democratic governance structure that represents all Inuit regions.

ITK advocates for policies, programs and services to address the social, cultural, political and environmental issues facing our people.

ITK is governed by a Board of Directors composed of the following members:

- Chair and CEO, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
- President, Makivik Corporation
- President, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
- President, Nunatsiavut Government

In addition to voting members, the following non-voting Permanent Participant Representatives also sit on the Board of Directors:

- President, Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada
- President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
- President, National Inuit Youth Council

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Message from ITK's President

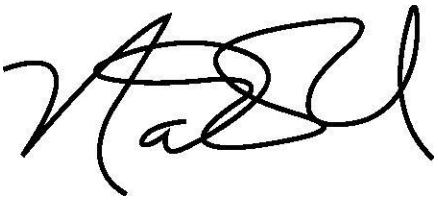
Inuit have lived in our homeland in Canada, "Inuit Nunangat", for millennia, and today we live in all parts of the country. Prior to European contact, Inuit experienced hardship, including situations of scarcity and even starvation. During these times, while we may have experienced a lack of material goods including food, we never regarded ourselves as "poor" in the way that some would today. We were and remain rich in terms of our language, culture and traditions, though we must be vigilant in their continued protection and promotion. Our knowledge of the land and our culture and traditions have sustained us for uncounted generations. While we remain strongly connected to our land, culture and traditions we have experienced a decline in self-reliance across our societies.

Most Inuit now reside in the 53 communities in Inuit Nunangat, as well as in cities and towns across Canada. We continue to pursue our traditions of surviving on the resources of the land, by hunting and fishing for example, but we no longer rely solely on these pursuits alone for our survival. Most of us are now, to different degrees, part of a wage-based economy, and increasingly our communities and people interface with western education systems and participate in an industrial economy that presents itself most commonly in Inuit Nunangat in the form of employment in the public services sector as well as in resource and extractive industries.

Inuit have experienced rapid social, economic and cultural changes in the last century, many of which were forceful and traumatic and have led to the challenges that our societies continue to face today. Our people have experienced much trauma, which is now being carried forward inter-generationally, as a result of settlement in permanent communities, forced relocations, dog slaughter, residential schools, our experiences in southern tuberculosis treatment facilities, and other government policies that have led to many of the devastating social and health issues that Inuit face. These include suicide, food insecurity, poor health outcomes and mental health, inadequate housing, violence, low levels of educational attainment and inequitable participation in the wage-based economy. These are all part of the picture of Inuit poverty today.

Inuit are at the lowest end of all well-being indicators in Canada. We can and we must do better. We must eradicate poverty in all of its forms. We must work together towards social equality through the processes of social equity, through adherence to and respect for the human rights and the values Canadians espouse, and in recognition of the constitutionally and internationally protected rights of Inuit in Canada. I am convinced that, through such actions, the agenda of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians – one that so many are embracing today - can be significantly advanced. That is why I am pleased to provide to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour this submission which outlines Inuit perspectives on a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Nakummek,



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Executive Summary

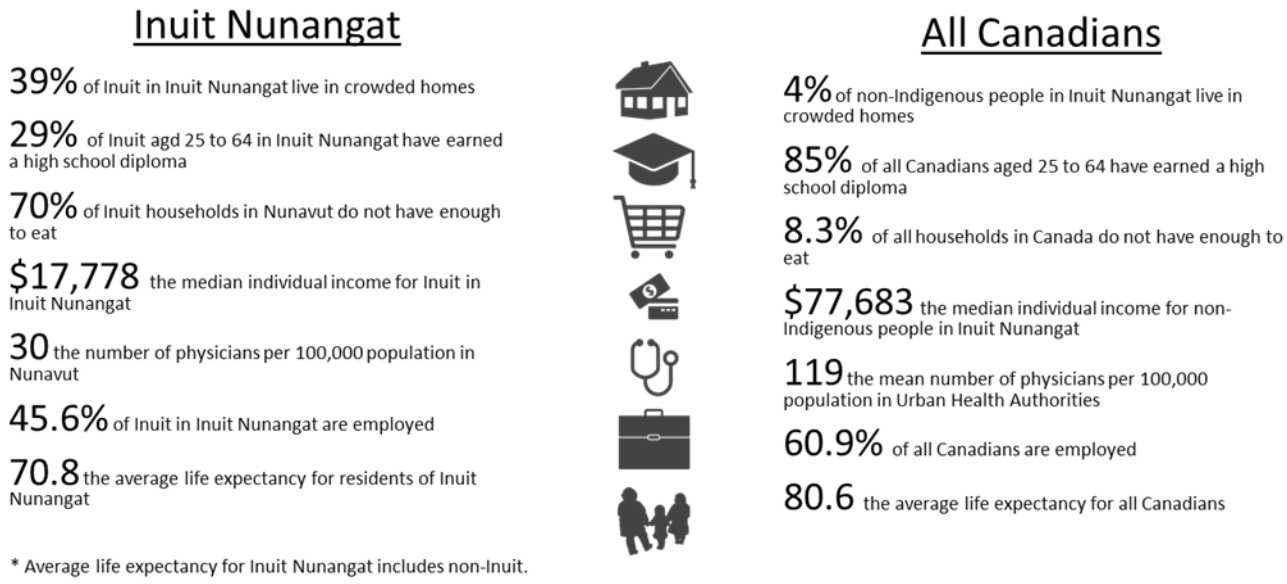
This submission on a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy provides an overview of the current poverty circumstances of Inuit who live within Inuit Nunangat, and Inuit perspectives on poverty reduction and priority actions.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) is the national representational organization for Canada's 65,000 Inuit, the majority (73%) of whom live in 53 communities spread across the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (northern Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (northern Labrador). We call this vast region Inuit Nunangat. Inuit also live outside Inuit Nunangat, primarily in urban centres such as Ottawa, Montreal, Winnipeg, Edmonton and St. John's.

Inuit are among the youngest and the fastest growing populations in Canada. Between 2006 and 2016 the Inuit population of Canada grew by 29% or nearly 3% per year. In 2011, the average age of Inuit was 28 years compared with 41 years for the general Canadian population.

Inuit Poverty in Canada

Inuit are vulnerable to poverty as evidenced in the following comparative profile:



An Inuit Perspective on Poverty

Broad understandings and measures of poverty better align with Inuit worldviews than definitions of poverty that more narrowly focus on financial and economic circumstances. Inuit define poverty as lacking economic wellbeing, lacking human capacities and capabilities, and social exclusion, including loss of self-reliance and connectedness.

A poverty reduction strategy for Canada should be founded upon the recognition that Inuit have long experienced both social inequities and unequal outcomes with respect to economic, social and cultural well-being, and that these outcomes are rooted in our collective experience of colonization, the impacts of which linger among Inuit, and our families and communities inter-generationally.

ITK proposes that a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy (CPRS) be developed and implemented on the foundation of five principles relevant to Inuit.

1. Social equity leading to social equality;
2. Recognition of human rights and Indigenous rights;
3. Self-determination in poverty reduction;
4. The need to address Inuit social determinants of health; and
5. Pursuing reconciliation between Inuit and non-Indigenous Canadians through poverty reduction.

Priority Areas for Action

ITK urges Canada to develop a CPRS that engages with Inuit to address seven priority areas for action as follows:

1. Income Security
2. Housing Security
3. Food Security
4. Early Learning and Child Care
5. Education
6. Health and Wellness; and
7. Livelihoods

Our recommendations for action in each of these priority areas are summarized below.

Income Security

1. There must be Inuit engagement and Inuit decision-making when implementing income support systems for Inuit.
2. Income assistance systems should not create a welfare trap and there should be incentives for Inuit to work and build productive skills.
3. Income support programs should promote the objective of income security and uphold Inuit societal values including self-reliance and providing for one's family and community.
4. Income assistance programs should be strongly integrated with other policy and program sectors including housing, employment and training and food security.

Housing Security

1. Governments should work in partnership with Inuit when developing housing policies and programs.
2. An Inuit-specific approach is needed to ensure housing funding and programs include all Inuit across the four regions.
3. Inuit must have direct access to housing investments and social or other infrastructure investments, including shelters, transitional housing and early childhood development and wellness centres.
4. Inuit require flexible criteria for federal housing funding to meet the diverse needs of each of the four Inuit regions in Canada.
5. A National Housing Strategy must take into account both short-term and long-term needs of Inuit across Inuit Nunangat.

Food Security

1. There is a need to address the high cost and availability of store-bought market food in Inuit communities.
2. Support must be provided for harvesting and consumption of country food through increased investment in hunting and fishing activities, processing, trade, and preservation of traditional knowledge.
3. Food subsidy programs need to be reviewed to ensure they are meeting the needs of Inuit communities.
4. Canada must rigorously pursue initiatives to reduce the impact of climate change and contaminants on Inuit food systems, and build on Inuit knowledge in these areas.
5. A national food policy should recognize the right to food for Inuit and other Indigenous peoples.
6. A national Inuit strategy on food security must be developed.
7. Accountability mechanisms, including clear time frames and benchmarks, should be established to remedy the current state of food insecurity among Inuit.

Early Learning and Child Care

1. Increased federal investment in the Aboriginal Head Start Urban and Northern Communities program and the First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative is required.
2. Family wellness programs should be streamlined and funding provided through transfer agreements.
3. Inuit-specific child care spaces, programs and initiatives must be supported.

Education

1. Prenatal programs, baby and toddler programs and pre-school programs for Inuit must be supported.
2. There is a need to improve services to students who require additional support, especially those children who are most vulnerable to poverty as a result of physical or mental impairments and disabilities.
3. Governments should invest in successful education programs for Inuit, such as Nunavut Sivuniksavut, Inuit teacher training programs, support for academic upgrading and adult education initiatives, and more northern-based university partnerships.

Health and Wellness

1. Intergovernmental and other financial transfers (including for health) need to take account of the processes of social equity in order to achieve the goals of social equality in Inuit health.
2. Increased support is required for the recruitment, training and professional development of Inuit staff in the health care field.
3. Measures must be implemented to promote retention of health care professionals in communities including through improvements to overall working conditions and housing.
4. Investments must be made in health care telecommunications infrastructure in communities to increase access to advanced health care technologies and telehealth services.
5. Investments must be made to improve health care facilities in communities and address infrastructure issues (e.g. limited and inadequate space).
6. A stronger continuum of Inuit mental wellness services that extends beyond the health care system should be promoted. This should reach into our communities and harness the strengths and resiliency that resides there.
7. Services and resources for mental health promotion should be better integrated with parallel education, justice, and family and child services systems.
8. A stable and sustainable source of funding should be provided to support culturally relevant, Inuit-determined healing approaches, initiatives and services.
9. Proper training and education is required for front line workers who provide mental-health related supports in Inuit communities.
10. Social equity should be promoted by addressing the social determinants of Inuit health and wellbeing.
11. Interventions that connect Inuit with land, culture and language to foster healing must be supported and better incorporated into mental health programming.

12. Healthy Inuit children should be nurtured through comprehensive behavioural, cognitive and emotional development of children at all stages of growth.
13. There is a need to better support Inuit families by creating secure, non-violent spaces, reducing the number of children in care, and allowing Inuit children to remain in Inuit homes and communities.
14. Culturally relevant mental wellness services must be available at the community level to follow those at risk of suicide and those who have attempted suicide.
15. Unresolved trauma and grief must be addressed through culturally relevant programs and approaches, including grief related to loss through suicide.
16. Inuit knowledge must be mobilized for resilience and suicide prevention by promoting promising practices that have been developed by and for Inuit.

Livelihoods

1. Federal support for Inuit labour market development services and initiatives should be significantly increased.
2. Inuit labour market development funding should be stabilized for the long-term (i.e. at least 10 years).
3. Canada should work with stakeholders to develop a shared, long-term and holistic approach to labour force development in Inuit Nunangat.
4. Increased support for skills development and work in traditional occupations is required.
5. Canada should work with Inuit organizations to analyze and respond to the labour force development needs of the growing Inuit population that resides outside of Inuit Nunangat.
6. Canada should work with Inuit organizations to invest in research, innovation, and knowledge sharing in Inuit labour force development.
7. Employers in Inuit Nunangat should be encouraged and supported to transform workplaces, including through:
    a) Strengthened support and accommodations for mental illness;
    b) Trauma-informed hiring, career development, and learning practices in workplaces;
    c) Strengthened on-the-job learning, including workplace-based literacy and essential skills development.
8. Investments should be made in innovation and planning to ensure that Inuit are supported to work on construction of all new housing across Inuit Nunangat.
9. Increased support for research into Inuit Nunangat's informal economy is required, particularly in relation to hunting, fishing, and the arts, to strengthen understanding of Inuit Nunangat's economy.

1. Introduction

1.1 Who We Are

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) is the national representational organization for Canada's 65,000 Inuit, the majority of whom live in 53 communities spread across the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (northern Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (northern Labrador)[1]. We call this vast region Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland and it encompasses roughly 35% of Canada's landmass and 50% of its coastline. The map below depicts the four Inuit regions of Canada and the location of the Inuit communities within these regions. Inuit also live in southern locations, particularly urban centres such as Ottawa, Montreal, Yellowknife, Winnipeg, Edmonton and St. John's.

Figure 1 - Inuit Nunangat

Land claims have the status of protected treaties under the Constitution, and we remain committed to working with the Crown to ensure these living documents are fully implemented.

Consistent with its founding purposes, ITK represents Inuit nationally in a democratic governance model that includes all Inuit. ITK is also an Inuit advocacy organization for improved policies, programs and services on a wide

[1] ITK, formerly the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, was founded in 1971 by seven Inuit community leaders who shared common concerns about the status of land and resource ownership in Inuit Nunangat. Since its founding ITK has been involved in advocacy for the settlement of comprehensive land claims, in constitutional processes of the 1980s leading to the inclusion of Section 35 in the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and in other processes related recognition of Inuit rights and Inuit self-determination.

range of social, cultural, political and environmental issues facing our people. In support of this work, ITK produces advice, knowledge, strategies, action plans, policy tools and learning resources that support our mission to protect and advance the rights and interests of Inuit in Canada.

ITK's vision for Inuit society is: "Canadian Inuit are prospering through unity and self-determination". Our purpose is reflected in our mission statement: "Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is the national voice for protecting and advancing the rights and interests of Inuit in Canada".

ITK is governed by a Board that is composed of the following member organizations:

- Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
- Makivik Corporation
- Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
- Nunatsiavut Government

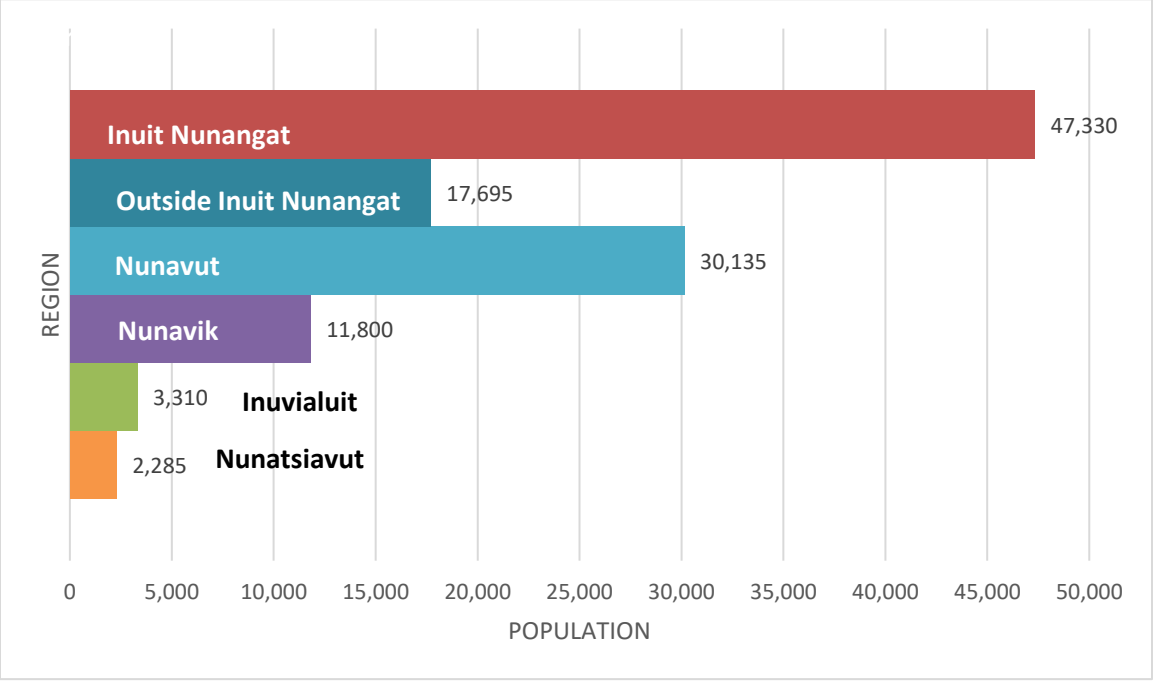
In addition to voting member organizations, the following non-voting Permanent Participant Representatives also sit on the Board:

- Inuit Circumpolar Council of Canada
- Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
- National Inuit Youth Council

1.2 Population Profile

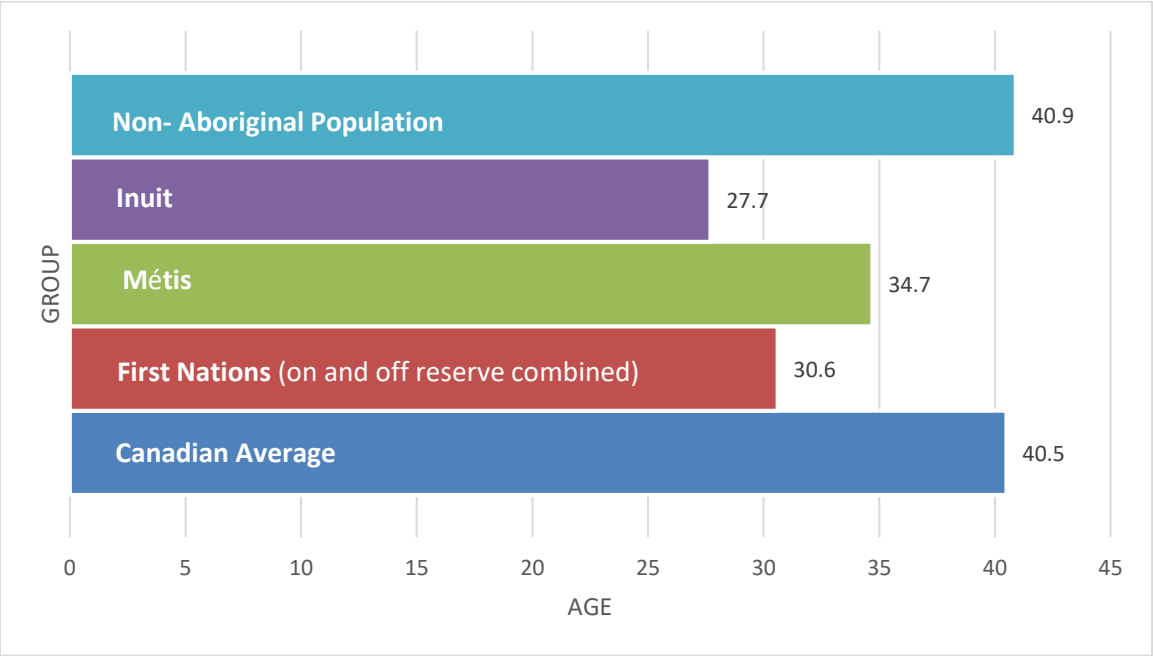
The Inuit population in Canada, as reported in the 2016 Census, is 65,030. Approximately 73% (47,330) of Inuit live within Inuit Nunangat and 27% (17,695) live outside Inuit Nunangat, primarily in urban centres. The largest concentrations of Inuit are found in Nunavut (46%) and Nunavik (18%) with smaller populations in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (5%) and Nunatsiavut (4%), as shown in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1
Inuit Population, By Region, 2016
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census



Inuit are among the youngest and the fastest growing populations in Canada. Between 2006 and 2016, the Canadian Inuit population grew by 29%, or nearly 3% per year. In 2011, the average age of the Inuit population was 28 years compared with 41 years for the general Canadian population.

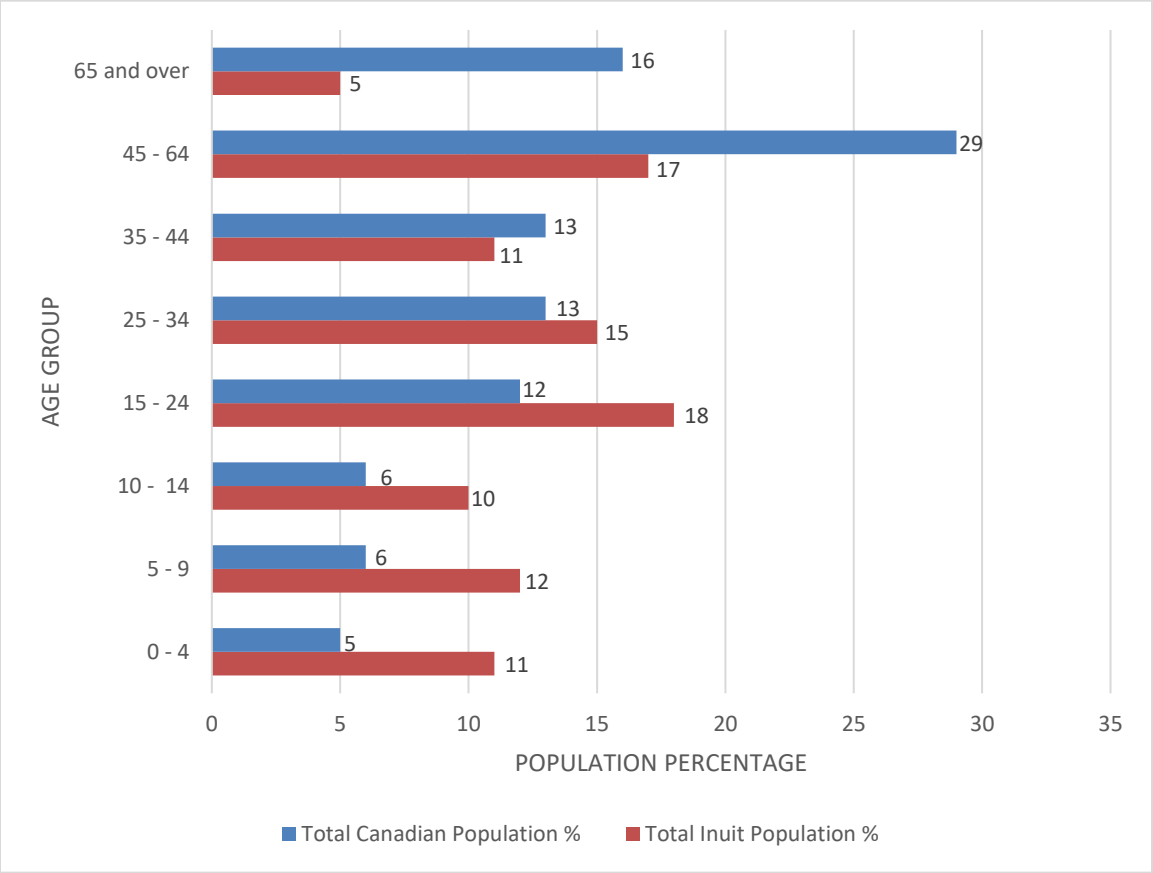
Chart 2
Average Age of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Canadians
Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey



In 2016, 33% of the Inuit population was in the age category 0 to 14, compared to 17% for Canada as a whole. Inuit under the age of 24 represented 51% of the Inuit population in 2016 compared with 29% for Canada as a whole[2].

[2] Statistics Canada. 2016. Census of Population.

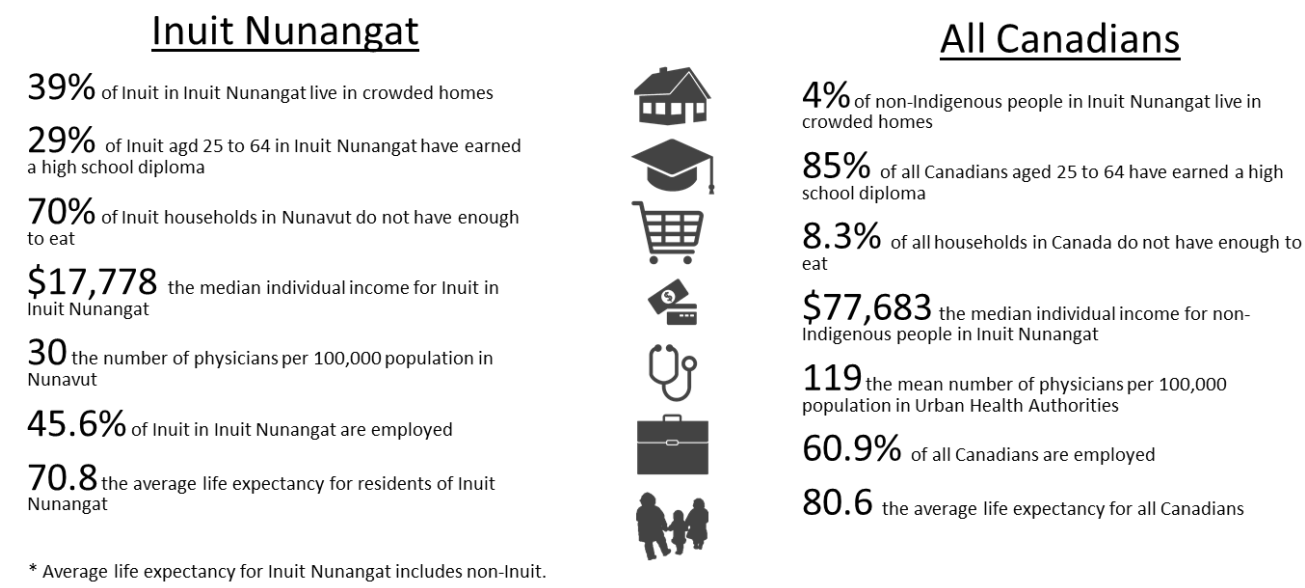
Chart 3
Age Distribution of the Inuit Population and Canada
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census



1.3 A Brief Profile of Inuit Poverty

The vulnerability of Inuit to poverty is evident in the demographic and socio-economic profile of our people. While Inuit make up less than 1% of Canada's population, Inuit consistently experience poverty across a wide range of indicators and at levels that surpass those of the general Canadian population.

Across a number of potential measures, poverty is a prevalent condition throughout Inuit Nunangat[3]



From an income perspective, reliance upon government support payments by Inuit households is high. For example, just over half of Nunavut's population received such payments in 2008-2009. Income measures show that median income for Inuit (i.e. the level of income above and below which there are an equal number of people) is the second lowest in Canada.

Food insecurity is a major issue tied to poverty in Inuit Nunangat. For example, close to 70% of Inuit preschoolers living in Nunavut have been reported to be living in food insecure households.

Inuit poverty is also evident in housing conditions. A very large number of Inuit depend on public housing. The overall condition of housing is poor in all regions, with the majority of families living in substandard, overcrowded, often multi-generational homes – a large percentage of which are in need of major repair.

Other indicators demonstrating vulnerability to poverty in Inuit Nunangat include poor educational and population health outcomes. Inuit have much lower levels of educational attainment than non-Indigenous people and many do not complete high school or participate in post-secondary education.

Across Inuit Nunangat, life expectancy can be anywhere from 10 to 12 years lower than in other parts of Canada, and Inuit generally experience higher infant mortality rates and lower average birth weights. Cultural poverty has become another feature of poverty in Inuit Nunangat, with the erosion of Inuktut and Inuit culture and traditions

[3] Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. 2017. *Towards Health Equity for Inuit: A Presentation on the National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy.* These statistics are drawn from a number of sources.

as a result of the massive and disruptive social and economic changes experienced by Inuit over the past six decades.

The demographic, socio-economic, cultural, health and other circumstances of Inuit are highly relevant to any consideration of poverty related interventions by governments and the crafting of a national strategy for poverty reduction that can truly address the unique poverty circumstances of Inuit.

1.4 Poverty Reduction in Inuit Regions

Poverty reduction is a concern of all Inuit in Canada. Within Inuit Nunangat and also in urban centres where we live, Inuit organizations, together with Inuit communities and other partners, are taking action to address the poverty. While not necessarily linked together under the umbrella of poverty reduction strategies, these include initiatives in areas such as early childhood development, health and wellness, housing, environmental protection and management, employment readiness, and improved food security. Many of these interventions are supported through funding under federal, provincial and territorial programs and initiatives or through intergovernmental fiscal transfer arrangements. Others are more directly supported by Inuit organizations.

In Nunavut, the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., in collaboration with many stakeholders and partners working through the Nunavut Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, developed a territorial poverty reduction strategy. *The Makimaniq Plan: A Shared Approach to Poverty Reduction* was originally developed and implemented in 2011. In 2017, Roundtable partners introduced a second iteration, known as *Makimaniq 2*. Both Plans identify anticipated long-term outcomes for addressing the complex and overlapping challenges of poverty in Nunavut. As noted in *Makimaniq 2*:

"At the heart of *Makimaniq 2* is the belief that to address the systemic causes of poverty in Nunavut, we must all work together more often and more effectively. The Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principle *Piliriqatigiingniq* refers to working together well, motivated by shared values and goals and our care for each other. With a shared approach to poverty reduction, we will progress more quickly with our available resources and increase our momentum together."[4]

Makimaniq 2 is premised on a conclusion of the Roundtable that poverty in Nunavut is a condition of colonization and is experienced overwhelmingly by Inuit. It is an outcome of past government policies that shifted Inuit from living with self-reliance and resourcefulness on the land to permanent settlement with associated dependencies on a wage-based economy and assistance from agencies outside the communities. Poverty is defined in *Makimaniq 2* in the following terms:

"Poverty is a situation that exists today in Nunavut when people cannot access the supports they need to maintain their connection to the land or to participate fully in the wage-based economy."[5]

Makimaniq 2 identifies eight anticipated outcomes with respect to poverty reduction in Nunavut in the next 5 years.

1. Strengthened foundation through *Piliriqatigiingniq* (working together);

2. Increased community decision-making;

[4] Nunavut Roundtable for Poverty Reduction. 2017. *Makimaniq Plan: A Shared Approach to Poverty Reduction 2017-2022.*
[5] Ibid, p. 8.

3. Strengthened local economies;

4. Strengthened support for healing and well-being;

5. Strengthened life-long learning;

6. Increased food security;

7. More supportive income assistance program; and

8. Increased access to housing.

Makimaniq 2 includes a detailed action plan for each outcome area, and identifies responsibilities among partners for these actions. It also establishes proposed indicators of planned outcomes and associated measures. Nunavut's poverty reduction strategy is further embedded in territorial legislation, the *Collaboration for Poverty Reduction Act (2013)* which establishes accountability requirements with respect to monitoring and reporting on progress towards the goals of the plan and implementing it in collaboration with others in a manner that is consistent with the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*. The Act also establishes a special purpose "Poverty Reduction Fund" from which funds may be dispersed for the purposes of promoting collaboration in implementation of poverty reduction action plans as well as for community-driven initiatives for poverty reduction.

Nunavut remains the only Inuit region in Canada to have a poverty reduction strategy that is specifically oriented to Inuit realities. However, all other territories and provinces that encompass Inuit Nunangat – the Northwest Territories, Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador have their own poverty reduction strategies. These generally do not directly address the poverty circumstances of Inuit within these jurisdictions, but rather consider poverty reduction and associated measures and interventions within a broader context. In other words, they do not specifically address the circumstances and unique needs of Inuit within these regions.

In addition to poverty reduction in Inuit regions, Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI), an Ottawa-based Inuit organization that provides a range of social and cultural supports to urban Inuit across Ontario, has developed an employment strategy that aims to prevent the increase of poverty among urban Inuit in Ottawa, as well as to work towards culturally relevant and community-based approaches for the eradication of poverty.[6] The strategy has six priorities: mental health and wellbeing, life and navigation skills, employment readiness, employment retention and networking, urban Inuit-specific research, data and advocacy and cultural awareness. Each priority has a number of actions and anticipated outcomes. These priorities emphasize partnerships with other service providers (e.g. in mental health) and include workshops and skills building opportunities for Inuit to help prepare for and retain employment.[7]

TI also led the development of an Urban Inuit Strategy in 2016 following consultations with Inuit living in six cities (St. John's, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg and Edmonton). The Strategy, which is based on the principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) – the Inuit knowledge system and Inuit societal values - dovetails with an Inuit approach to poverty reduction through its goals (e.g. access to safe and appropriate housing, health and wellness services and education) and strategic priorities which include:[8]

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[6] Located in Ottawa, Tungasuvvingat Inuit is a "multi-sector hub" for Inuit of all ages, whether they have just started to unravel the challenges of navigating urban living in the South, or staying connected to their culture in Inuit Nunangat. TI offers more than 20 highly integrated, front-line services.

[7] Tungasuvvingat Inuit. 2016. *An Urban Inuit-specific Approach to Poverty Reduction in Ottawa,* pp.15-16.pp. 15-16.

[8] Ibid. p.2.

- Developing local capacity and infrastructure to help Inuit transition to urban centres from the north and ensure they have a place to call their own and gather.
- Promoting the ability of urban Inuit to speak Inuktut, share country food and pass on traditional knowledge.
- Providing supports for the educational success of urban Inuit.
- Providing consistent funding for Inuit-specific programming and services through a continuum of care.
- Supporting urban Inuit-specific research initiatives.
- Partnership with governments, and stakeholders to discuss how and where to invest and support urban Inuit in Canada through policy and programming.

2. Poverty and Poverty Reduction – An Inuit Perspective

2.1 Defining Poverty

Up until the late 1990s, poverty was viewed primarily from a financial and economic perspective, with an emphasis on income levels and consumption. Poverty was often defined in terms of individuals or families having insufficient income to buy a minimum basket of goods and services. In more recent years, definitions of poverty have broadened, with new but related terms being introduced. For example, the concept of social exclusion, long used in the international community as an alternative way to "talk about poverty" has found its way into contemporary poverty policy discourse, including in Canada.

"Used in its broadest sense, social exclusion speaks to the lack of income as central to all exclusion, but it includes many other dimensions, such as health, education, access to services, housing, debt, quality of life, dignity and autonomy... It allows room for understanding that discriminatory and exclusionary practices may be causes of poverty."[9]

Other definitions of poverty with even wider scope have been proposed. The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, for example, has defined poverty as:

"a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other cultural, economic, and social rights".[10]

These more recently articulated, and broader understandings (and measures) of poverty are more aligned with Inuit worldviews. They are relevant to current discussions regarding a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy (CPRS) as they have significant implications for a wider determination of poverty causes and consequences, and for the shaping of government policies and interventions aimed at poverty reduction across a spectrum of issues and public policy sectors.

In Nunavut (as noted above, the only Inuit region with a poverty reduction strategy) discussions about the definition of poverty have considered the following elements: [11]

- Economic wellbeing (i.e. being able to provide for basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing);
- Human capacities and capabilities (i.e. being able to live a healthy life, make good decisions, and experience a minimal quality of life to be happy); and
- Social exclusion (i.e. processes that exclude individuals or groups from full participation in society – contributing to political, cultural and economic poverty).

Additionally, self-reliance (and loss of self-reliance) has a place within Inuit definitions and understandings of poverty. Although Inuit historically have experienced periods of extreme deprivation through food scarcity and

[9] Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. 2008. *Poverty and Social Exclusion*. In CCPA Review: Economic and Social Trends, September.
[10] United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. 2001.
[11] Nunavut Poverty Reduction Secretariat. 2012. *Understanding Poverty in Nunavut*. pp.13-17

starvation, notions of poverty traditionally did not exist within Inuit societies. However, as a result of the intergenerational and traumatic impacts of government policies, such as permanent community settlements, residential schools, dog slaughter, the apprehension of Inuit children, and income assistance, there has been an associated erosion of self-reliance among Inuit. As noted in a paper by the Nunavut Poverty Reduction Secretariat:

"It is the loss of this self-reliance that may be the most egregious aspect of poverty in Nunavut. Income and consumption are important aspects of poverty, as they are anywhere in Canada, but it is how poverty in Nunavut is linked to Inuit culture and the traditional way of life – the way it erodes both – that really hurts. In this sense, the most appropriate definition of poverty in Nunavut may be simply the "loss of self-reliance".[12]

TI has also emphasized self-reliance as important to understanding Inuit approaches to poverty and poverty reduction. In its local poverty reduction project, TI takes a 'person centred approach', which recognizes the capacity and aspirations of individuals, the importance of social networks (e.g. family and friends), and the goals of empowerment. Inuit are able to exercise individual self-determination and personal resiliency and are active advocates for change with respect to their own socio-economic status.[13] This represents an alternative, strengths-based approach in which Inuit are not seen as "helpless victims" but people with agency, identity and resilience that can be deeply drawn upon.

From the Inuit perspective, contemporary understandings of the root causes and consequences of poverty emphasize not only a lack of economic capability, but also a lack of human and material capabilities such as health, wellness, education and social wellbeing which can lead to a loss of self-reliance and to poverty.

2.2 Poverty Reduction Strategies

In recent years, governments in developed countries have presented integrated, multi-sectoral, multi-departmental action plans and strategies setting out how poverty and social exclusion will be addressed within and by the state. While the details of poverty reduction strategies in Canada and other countries vary, they do share key elements.

Commonalities among all strategies and plans aimed at reducing poverty, addressing disadvantage, social exclusion or health inequalities include that:

- they are multi-year and multi-sectoral;
- they define poverty reduction targets;
- they are pursued on a whole-of-government basis often through partnerships with the private and voluntary sectors;
- they target socially disadvantaged or vulnerable groups as well as children and the elderly;
- they give primacy to income and employment related measures but do incorporate other indicators of poverty reduction including indicators of health and social wellbeing; and
- they encompass existing, enhanced and in some instances new health and social service initiatives, and initiatives in the areas of housing and education.

[12] Ibid, p.17.
[13] Tungasuvvingat Inuit. 2016. *An urban Inuit-specific approach to poverty reduction in Ottawa, Ontario,* p. 13.

The table below shows some of the more common areas of intervention associated with poverty reduction strategies both in Canada and in other jurisdictions internationally.

Table 1
Poverty Reduction Strategies: Common Areas of Intervention

Income and Employment	Social Development
Programs for the elderly (pensions) Child and family benefits Social assistance programs Employment benefits (EI, parental leave, disability and injury benefits) Employment related training and skills development Minimum wage regulations Tax credits	Education Early childhood development Child protection Health Food and nutrition Housing and homelessness Community development

Broadening the range of interventions that can be brought together under the umbrella of poverty reduction strategies is consistent with increased acceptance, including within Canada, of a more inclusive definition of poverty - one which embraces the concept of social exclusion/inclusion and recognizes that sustained human capabilities (e.g. health, wellness, self-reliance) are a necessary part of poverty reduction.

This broader approach to poverty reduction is supported by Inuit in Canada and is consistent with Inuit perspectives on poverty. However, ITK is of the view that any poverty reduction strategy for Canada should also be founded upon the recognition that Inuit have long experienced both social inequities and unequal outcomes with respect to economic, social and cultural well-being, and that these outcomes are rooted in our collective experience of colonization, the impacts of which linger among Inuit, their families and communities inter-generationally. This we believe can be addressed by aligning a CPRS with certain principles that better take into account both the poverty circumstances of Inuit throughout Inuit Nunangat, and the perspectives of Inuit on “what poverty is” and how it can be addressed with and for Inuit. These principles can provide the foundations upon which to build a CPRS. They are outlined in detail in Section 3 below.

3. Foundations and Principles

ITK proposes that a CPRS be developed and implemented based on the foundation of five (5) principles relevant to Inuit. These are described below and include:

1. A CPRS should be founded on ***social equity***.

2. A CPRS should be founded on the recognition of ***human rights and Indigenous rights***.

3. A CPRS should ensure there is space for ***self-determination*** in poverty reduction by Inuit organizations, governments and individuals.

4. A CPRS should be oriented to addressing ***Inuit social determinants of health***.

5. Poverty reduction should advance the shared goal of ***reconciliation*** between Inuit and non-Indigenous Canadians.

3.1 Social Equity

Inuit from Nunangat share with government the goal of achieving social equity between Inuit and non-Inuit Canadians. We seek to close the gap with respect to outcomes in health and wellness, education, housing and infrastructure, access to economic opportunities and quality of life – at the individual, family and community level. We view equality as an important "end goal" for us to work towards collectively over time. However, while equality is a goal, an agenda of change to reduce poverty in Canada should be based on the concept of social equity.

Social equity is about fairness and justice. It is a process, one which a CPRS should be founded upon, in order to address the situations of poverty in which not only Inuit but all Indigenous peoples in Canada find themselves. The principle of social equity should be a primary reference point in the development of Canadian public policy and the design and delivery of *all* government programs and services. This principle should stand at the core of a national strategy for poverty reduction.

By taking a social equity approach to poverty reduction, governments will need to acknowledge the significant differences that exist between Inuit and non-Inuit with respect to historical social and economic disadvantage, our current circumstances and needs, as well as the resources and capabilities we can access. Equity will ensure that Inuit have access to *what we need* in order to seize opportunities and maximize individual and community potential.

Part 4 of this submission calls upon the Government of Canada to act from the platform of social equity in many areas of public policy that are part of a poverty reduction agenda. Once Inuit enjoy a similar level of health and wellbeing, access to economic opportunities and a quality of life comparable to that enjoyed by other Canadians we can shift our focus to ensure that social equity as an 'outcome' is sustained for future generations. When true equity is realized in the social, economic and cultural spheres of life, for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, then we can say that Canada is a more complete country. Inuit must be able to realize and have an opportunity to take advantage of what Canada has to offer, in the same way that non-Indigenous Canadians do.

3.2 Human Rights and Indigenous Rights Framework

"I am often asked what is the most serious form of human rights violations in the world today, and my reply is consistent: extreme poverty." (Mary Robinson, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights)

Poverty is a denial of human rights, and results from disempowerment and exclusion from social and economic opportunities and participation. ITK encourages the development of a CPRS that is situated within a human rights and Indigenous rights framework.

Human rights are inherent to each individual and belong equally to all human beings. International human rights instruments and law (e.g. the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) can provide a framework for practical action to reduce poverty. This is consistent with contemporary definitions of poverty which have moved towards a human rights-based vision – one that recognizes and addresses the many underlying root causes of poverty and not only its economic but also its social and cultural dimensions. It is also consistent with a social equity approach to poverty reduction. Approaching poverty from a human rights perspective allows us to think differently about not only 'what' is to be done, but 'how' and 'why' we choose to take specific actions.

By placing poverty reduction upon a human rights foundation, ITK encourages the Government of Canada to commit to providing adequate funding towards human rights priorities which include Inuit child development, education, housing, food security, protection of the environment, and opportunities to earn a living in accordance with individual choice, which for Inuit includes participation in either or both of wage-based and land-based economies.

Together with its obligations to respect and uphold international human rights, Canada also has obligations to implement our rights as Indigenous peoples as well as our constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), like other international human rights instruments, provides a strong foundation from which direction can be taken in developing and implementing a CPRS. Inuit have been calling upon the Government of Canada to work in partnership with us to ensure that we do, in fact, gain the recognition and realization of our rights, that this is done in partnership and that it advances reconciliation and the goal of social equality for our regions and our communities.

UNDRIP affirms comprehensive human rights of Inuit and establishes minimum standards for our survival, dignity and wellbeing, not only as individuals but as collective actors with distinct rights and status under international law. The Declaration is especially important as Inuit face severe social inequities in Canada, and also as we face, within all our regions, powerful forces such as climate change that seriously threaten our traditional livelihoods and our social, mental, physical and cultural wellbeing and survival.

Full implementation of UNDRIP can support poverty reduction for Inuit in a number of ways. First, it will ensure that Inuit are adequately resourced and collaborate in the development of the government's legislative and policy agenda, especially in the many policy areas that ultimately influence Indigenous poverty in Canada (e.g. health, trade, labour, and environment). Second, with the implementation of appropriate monitoring and compliance mechanisms, we will have a better shared understanding of progress being made towards the objectives implicit in UNDRIP which include social equality. And finally, linking implementation of UNDRIP to a poverty reduction agenda in Canada helps build a robust framework for reconciliation consistent with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

3.3 Self-determination in Poverty Reduction

Inuit self-determination must be reflected as a guiding principle for poverty reduction in Canada.

Since its founding in 1971, ITK has sought to unify Inuit in the pursuit of political, social and cultural self-determination. From early on, Inuit community leaders saw the struggle for self-determination as part of the broader goal to gain control over institutions and systems that had undermined our traditional ability to be self-reliant. ITK continues to keep this goal in focus and sees it as highly relevant to the development and implementation of a CPRS.

The settlement of separate comprehensive land claims agreements in each of the four Inuit regions has helped safeguard the foundation of our culture and society. Land claims agreements also produced new governance structures in the shape of Nunavut, a public government, Kativik Regional Government in Nunavik, also a public government, and the Nunatsiavut Government in Labrador. The Inuvialuit continue to pursue a self-government agreement for the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. These entities strengthen Inuit self-determination over our affairs and today, Inuit enjoy access to social and economic resources that were scarcely available when ITK was formed. Inuit governments continue to be actively engaged in all policy areas related to poverty reduction. They deliver their own programs and services and pursue various strategies and initiatives meant to address the needs of Inuit in areas such as education, food security, early childhood development, and environmental stewardship.

However, our people continue to experience some of the worst social and economic outcomes in Canada and this prevents too many Inuit families from fully enjoying the benefits of these important gains in self-determination. Our people are our greatest resource and their health and wellbeing are essential to sustaining the progress we have made, including through the settlement of Inuit land claims.

This submission on poverty reduction covers many areas where improvements can be made in economic, social and cultural sectors and associated policies and programs. Many of these improvements can be addressed through actions taken by federal, provincial and territorial governments. However, Inuit and our governments and representative organizations must also be actively engaged in determining ways to reduce poverty among Inuit, in our communities and throughout Inuit Nunangat. Inuit need greater *direct* involvement in and control over decision-making that affects us, and decisions need to reflect Inuit knowledge, values and priorities, ensuring that legislative, policy, and program measures that support poverty reduction also are appropriate and viable for Inuit.

At the national level ITK has articulated certain objectives for the next few years. These speak to self-determination in poverty reduction, specifically in relation to:

- Preventing suicide among Inuit;
- Improving access to affordable and appropriate housing in Inuit Nunangat;
- Supporting Inuit self-determination in education;
- Enhancing the health and wellbeing of Inuit families and communities;
- Protecting the Inuit Nunangat environment; and
- Working towards reconciliation.

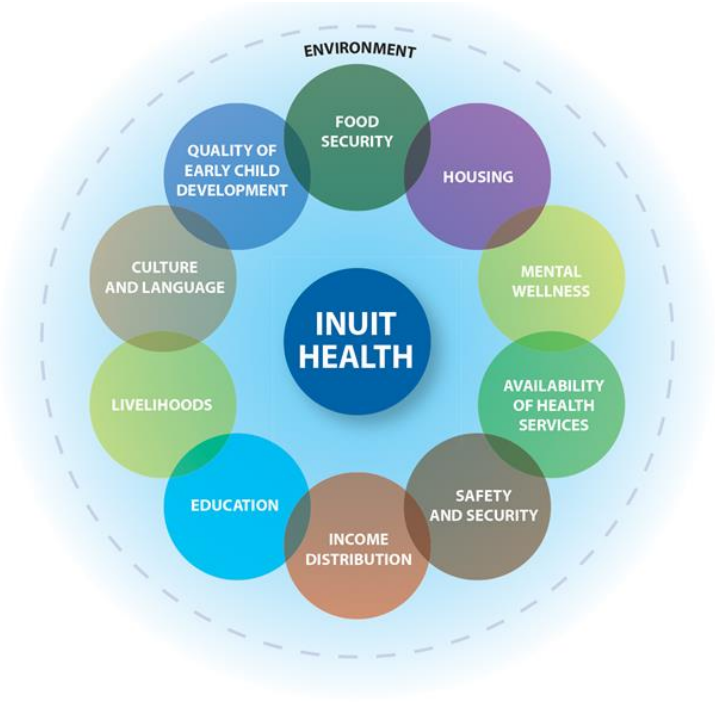
ITK is also actively working towards its objective of strengthening Inuit self-determination in research. Having access to Inuit-supported research findings about issues that are of priority to Inuit, including many issues addressed in this submission that are directly relevant to the poverty circumstances of Inuit, and therefore poverty reduction, is critical to informing the design of policies and programs that impact the quality of life in our communities. Inuit self-determination in research means Inuit have oversight in setting the research agenda in our regions and communities, including the collection of statistical data by governments through census, national and regional surveys. It also means we work in partnership with researchers and governments in the design, implementation and dissemination of data, information and research results.

3.4 An Inuit Social Determinants of Health Approach

Clearly there are strong linkages between poverty and the social determinants of Inuit health. ITK takes a holistic view of poverty and strongly believes that significant improvements can be made by addressing current Inuit socio-economic conditions. ITK works toward the development of policies and initiatives that are Inuit-specific and which improve economic, social and cultural conditions across Inuit Nunangat. We believe that a CPRS that addresses the needs of Inuit will be strengthened by recognizing the linkages between poverty reduction and the social determinants of Inuit health. These are outlined in Figure 2 and further described below.

Figure 2

Social Determinants of Inuit Health[14]



[14] Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. 2014. *Social Determinants of Inuit Health in Canada* and *Fact Sheets*.

Quality of Early Childhood Development: Early childhood development is considered a key social determinant for Inuit health since a continuum of care for mothers and children is crucial for better health outcomes, from pre-pregnancy to the early days and years of life. Quality early child development is linked to:

- Effective Inuit early childhood development programs;
- Creating environments for healthier pregnancy;
- Better nutrition and food security; and
- Increased access to appropriate and culturally relevant health care services.

Culture and Language: Together, Inuit culture and language are seen as crucial and inter-connected determinants of health. Strong Inuit culture is linked to:

- Supporting Inuit youth to participate in cultural activities such as on-the-land camps;
- Addressing intergenerational trauma associated with the legacy of residential schools; and
- Developing Inuktut as the primary language of instruction in schools.

Livelihoods: Livelihoods are an important social determinant of health and encompass a wide range of social factors beyond employment in order to include all ways in which Inuit families are generating income and supporting themselves, including through informal work harvesting country food, producing goods, handicraft and artwork, and providing voluntary services in communities. Improved livelihoods are linked to:

- Increased consumption and sharing of traditional country foods;
- Increased employment opportunities in Inuit communities and regions; and
- Increased participation in traditional harvesting practices and use of harvester support programs.

Income Distribution: Income distribution is a key social determinant of health since higher incomes are associated with better health. More adequate income distribution is linked to:

- Providing better access to full-time, quality employment for Inuit in professional fields such as trades and the health sector; and
- Addressing the high cost of living for heating, electricity, household goods and grocery foods compared to southern Canada.

Housing: Housing is a key social determinant of health due to strong linkages between adequate housing and positive health outcomes. Adequate housing is linked to:

- Addressing housing shortages and poor quality housing in Inuit communities;
- Increasing efforts to alleviate homelessness;
- Increasing the number of training opportunities for Inuit to enter into trades associated with housing; and
- Recognizing and addressing the social problems tied to overcrowding.

Safety and Security: Personal safety and security are key social determinants of Inuit health and are defined broadly to comprise the concept of personal safety from violence for both males and females and all ages. Improved personal safety and security are linked to:

- Raising awareness of and reducing substance abuse;
- Expanding culturally appropriate, community-based social support services such as counselling and shelter;
- Developing stronger personal and family social safety nets; and
- Minimizing the risk of unintended injuries.

Education: Education is a key social determinant of Inuit health with a strong correlation between education attainment and Inuit well-being. Quality education in Inuit regions is linked to:

- Increased access to post-secondary education;
- Increased use of Inuktut and Inuit culture in schools;
- Community control and parental involvement in education; and
- Higher literacy rates.

Food Security: Food security exists when "all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and health life".[15] Inuit food systems incorporate both market and country food to support overall well-being. Adequate food security is linked to:

- Reducing the negative impacts of climate change and contaminants in the Inuit food system;
- Harvesting and consumption of country food; and
- Addressing the high cost, quality and availability of store-bought food in Inuit communities.

Availability of Health Services: Health services and their availability are considered key social determinants of health since increasing access to culturally appropriate, quality health services will have a positive impact on Inuit health. Adequate availability of health services is linked to:

- Incorporating Inuit values, approaches and perspectives into health and social services;
- Increasing opportunities for Inuit women to give birth closer to home;
- Increasing the number of Inuit health professionals in Inuit communities; and
- Addressing high turnover and persistent shortages of health professionals in Inuit communities.

Mental Wellness: Mental wellness is considered a key social determinant of health and refers to physical, emotional, mental and spiritual wellness, as well as strong cultural identity. Improved mental wellness is linked to:

- Recognizing and addressing the legacy of residential schools;
- Improving socio-economic conditions and employment opportunities in Inuit communities; and
- Providing easier access to a continuum of culturally relevant mental wellness, medical and social services.

Environment: Environment is not conventionally considered a 'social determinant of health' but for Inuit it is a key determinant of health and is defined as the land, sea and air surrounding Inuit communities, including indoor environments within homes and workplaces. A quality Arctic environment is linked to:

- Recognizing and reducing the impacts of climate change;
- Addressing toxic contamination in the food chain;
- Supporting Inuit hunters who are travelling further, or along adjusted routes, as a result of altered migration and travel routes; and
- Food security and the harvesting and consumption of country food.

3.5 Advancing Reconciliation through Poverty Reduction

[15] Definition from Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2006. *The state of food insecurity in the world.* It has also been adopted and utilized by the Nunavut Food Security Coalition in the Nunavut Food Security Strategy.

A final principle that we believe is important to build into the foundations of a CPRS is reconciliation. ITK is committed to working towards reconciliation as called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its Calls to Action. We view a CPRS as an opportunity, and as part of collective broader efforts, to strategically pursue our shared goals for reconciliation between Inuit and non-Inuit in Canada and healing from our shared past.

We have reached a crossroads in Canada where past injustices committed against Indigenous peoples are being openly acknowledged by government and Canadians in general. Importantly, the connection between injustices such as residential schooling and present day social and economic inequity faced by Inuit is more widely understood than ever before. Achieving reconciliation for our people is the next step, and this can be supported through a CPRS that is inclusive of Inuit perspectives on poverty reduction and responsive to the particular social and economic circumstances of Inuit throughout Inuit Nunangat.

A CPRS can promote reconciliation by connecting current conditions of Inuit poverty (and child poverty) with a deeper understanding of the historical legacy of societal trauma brought about not only by the Inuit residential school experience, but other government policies as well (e.g. permanent settlement, relocations, dog slaughter, Inuit child apprehension). It can also establish linkages between government action to address the Calls to Action of the TRC and specific measures that can be taken to reduce the poverty that is experienced across Inuit Nunangat and address gaps between Inuit and non-Inuit Canadians. For example,

- In education, developing a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps (Call to Action #7), and providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation (Call to Action 10.i); and

- In health, acknowledging that Aboriginal health conditions are a direct result of previous government policies (Call to Action 18), establishing measurable goals to close gaps in health outcomes and publishing reports on progress and long-term trends in health status indicators (Call to Action 19), and providing sustainable funding for new and existing Aboriginal healing centres particularly in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories (Call to Action 21).

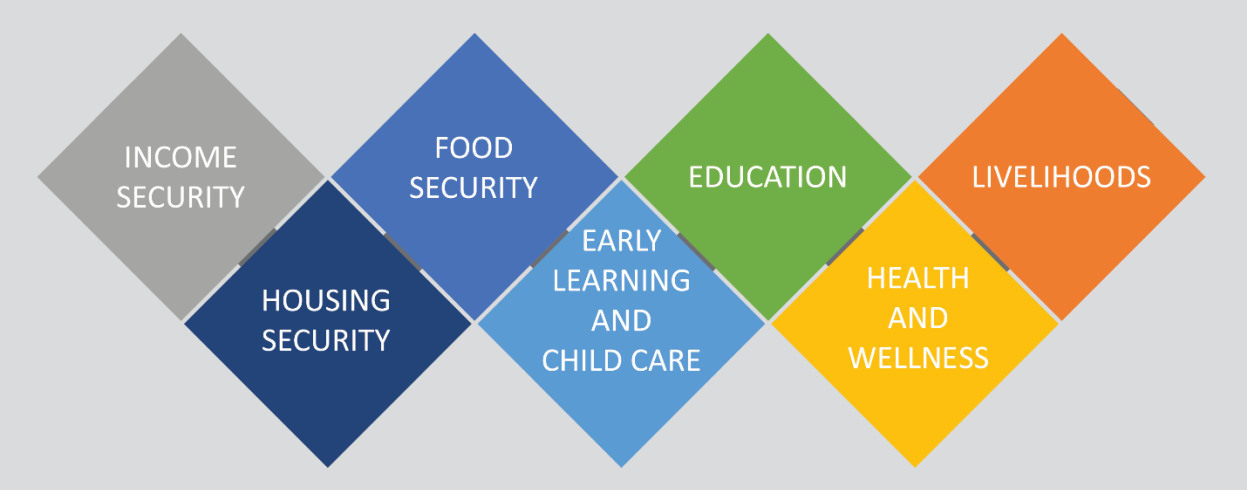
Real and sustained reduction in the poverty experienced by Inuit families, children and communities throughout Inuit Nunangat would contribute to advancing reconciliation. Inuit are seeking true accountability from Canada through a renewed partnership that addresses the social and economic inequity caused by our experiences with residential schooling, forced relocations and other government policies. As such, ITK will be an active partner with governments in facilitating poverty reduction for Inuit.

4. Priority Areas for Action

The broad foundations for a CPRS that can address Inuit experiences of poverty have been outlined above. In this section we focus on priority areas for action that a national strategy should address through processes of engagement with Inuit. Figure 3 below depicts seven priority areas for action to address Inuit poverty within the context of a CPRS.

Figure 3

Inuit Priority Areas for Action within a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy



4.1 Income Security

Income is widely recognized as one of the most important social determinants of health and a primary cause and indicator of poverty. It is therefore a key component of poverty reduction strategies. There is a large body of evidence that illustrates the causal relationship between income and health. Those with lower incomes generally experience poorer physical and mental health, and health outcomes, than those with higher incomes. Statistics Canada has reported that individuals with incomes in the lowest income bracket are more likely than those with higher incomes to report that their mental health is fair to poor.[16]

Despite residing in communities facing the highest costs of living in Canada, the median individual income for Inuit in Inuit Nunangat is $11,000 less than the Canadian average. This difference in median individual income widens to $66,000 when comparing the median income of Inuit in Inuit Nunangat to that of non-Indigenous people in this region.[17] The table below shows median total income of Inuit in Inuit regions compared with total income of non-Indigenous people in the same regions. This data shows that within Inuit Nunangat the total median income of individual Inuit as a percentage of non-Indigenous individual's median incomes ranges from a low of 28% in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region to 50% in Nunavut, and outside Inuit Nunangat is at more comparable levels at 84%.

[16] Canadian Mental Health Association. Retrieved from: https://ontario.cmha.ca/provincial-policy/social-determinants/employment/.
[17] Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. 2016. *National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy,* p.18. As reported based on data from the 2011 National Household Survey (Median Total Income for the Population Aged 15 and over).

Within Inuit Nunangat there remain significant discrepancies between the individual incomes of Inuit and non-Inuit.

Table 2
Median total income (Individuals)
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census

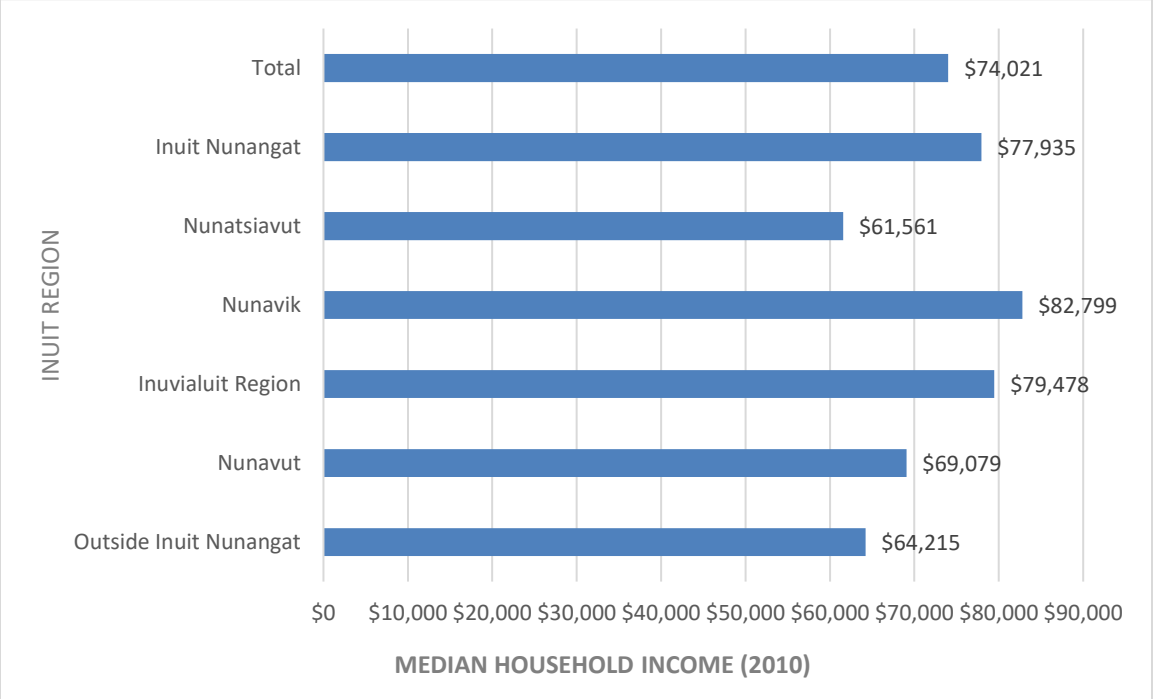
Inuit and Non-Indigenous populations aged 25 to 64, by region, 2015			
Inuit Region	**Inuit**	**Non-Indigenous**	**Non-Indigenous median income is…**
Nunatsiavut	$31,792	$63,872	2 times higher
Nunavik	$35,541	$81,408	2.3 times higher
Nunavut	$31,872	$94,362	3 times higher
Inuvialuit region	$30,199	$106,569	3.5 times higher
Outside Inuit Nunangat	$35,874	$42,921	1.2 times higher

Within Inuit Nunangat, and at a regional level, data on median *household* income shows that in general this is higher than income levels for people outside Inuit Nunangat. However, in interpreting the significance of this data some caution must be exercised as Inuit generally have a larger number of people living in households (and larger families) and also face higher costs of living that must be met through household budgets. For Inuit households, income assistance may also comprise a significant portion of household income.

In Nunavut, the region with the largest number of Inuit, the dependency ratio, which refers to the percentage of people dependent on the productive activities of others, is very high at 82.1% compared with the Canadian average of 59.2%[18].

[18] Impact Economics. 2011. *Poverty in Nunavut: Understanding and Defining Poverty in Nunavut*, p. 5.

Chart 5
Median Household Income in 2010 by Inuit Region, Inuit Population aged 15 and older
Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey



Across Inuit Nunangat, individuals and families rely on income assistance (referred to also as "income support") to meet their basic needs, and in some cases to supplement employment or resources gained through traditional subsistence practices such as hunting and fishing. A variety of programs for Inuit with low incomes are delivered by territorial and provincial governments, and in the case of some select programs such as hunter supports, by Inuit land claims and other beneficiary organizations. Income assistance programs provide income subsidies in the form of monthly payments to individuals and households with low income, and who fall below established income thresholds. These programs are available in every region of Inuit Nunangat and are administered by either territorial (Nunavut and NWT) or provincial governments (Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador). These programs are intended to address the gap that exists between what people have and what they need in order to meet basic needs for shelter, food and clothing. Some programs include a component that supports transition to employment for individuals. Outside Inuit Nunangat, Inuit access provincial and territorial income support programs on a similar basis to non-Inuit.

Key federal income assistance programs which Inuit access on a similar basis to other Canadians include the Canada Child Benefit, the GST/HST Tax Credit as well as income security programs for seniors such as the Canada Pension Plan, the Guaranteed Income Supplement and Old Age Security. Additionally, Inuit access specialized income subsidy programs that have been established by territorial or provincial governments to target particular populations such as people with disabilities and seniors. In Inuit regions this may include fuel subsidies and supplementary benefits. For Inuit, hunter support programs established under settled comprehensive land claims provide additional assistance through, for example, support for the purchase of equipment and supplies needed for hunting, fishing and related on-the-land activities that many Inuit undertake in order to feed and support their families and communities, as well as to practice their cultural and traditional livelihoods.

Income assistance programs which are widely utilized by Inuit are universally acknowledged as being insufficient to meet needs, especially given the cost of food, goods and services, and shelter in Inuit regions, which can be two to three times that in southern Canada. Inuit families are generally larger than other Canadian families. The median

household size in Inuit Nunangat is five people, while for the total population of Canada the median household size is three people[19]. Income support payments therefore must be used to support larger households, and income per person in a household is generally less than in other parts of Canada. For those who engage in traditional subsistence harvesting activities, the high costs associated with the purchase of supplies, and the maintenance and operation of equipment, significantly affects hunters who are providing for themselves, their families and communities.

While ITK has not to date undertaken a full analysis and assessment of income security programs across Inuit Nunangat, some general observations can be made about their effectiveness and relevance to Inuit:

- Income support programs are not well understood by Inuit. Income-related components of the social safety net are complex and involve multiple jurisdictional authorities and agencies. Navigating the system can be challenging and frustrating for Inuit, many of whom are in positions of extreme vulnerability already (e.g. as a result of age, housing, poor health and low education or literacy, or because information is not readily available in Inuktut).

- Current income support systems often create a welfare trap for Inuit. This is especially the case when the benefits of receiving income support outweigh those of working, such as when there are claw-backs of welfare payments or when the costs associated with work (e.g. child care, transportation) are not considered. Some Inuit avoid being penalized for pursuing employment and remain on income assistance for fear of things such as lower monthly payments that already do not meet basic needs, or rental increases while supporting other family members.

- Statistics Canada data shows that average incomes in most Inuit regions are higher than for the country as a whole. However, these indicators do not take into consideration the value of money in the north and the relative purchasing power of a dollar in Inuit Nunangat compared with the rest of Canada. Inuit throughout Inuit Nunangat face much higher costs with respect to food, energy, housing, and transportation.[20] In Nunavut, for example, food costs can be twice as high as in urban centres, and the cost of electricity five to ten times higher. Because they live for the most part in fly-in communities, Inuit are generally not able to access bigger stores and the lower prices that they can offer.[21]

ITK takes the position that across Inuit Nunangat programs intended to provide income security need to be comprehensively reviewed in collaboration with the federal government and involved provincial and territorial governments. Our more specific recommendations are as follows:

1. Income support system review and reform should identify measures and actions that are required to make these programs more responsive to Inuit needs and circumstances, and also place greater decision making and responsibility in the hands of Inuit governments and organizations. They should ensure there is a strong public education and engagement component so that Inuit can lead efforts to improve programs and the overall structure of the income support systems that affect so many individuals and families.

2. Income assistance systems should ensure that they do not create a welfare trap and that there are incentives for Inuit to work and build productive skills.

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[19] Statistics Canada. *Inuit Health: Selected findings from the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey,* p. 11.
[20] For example, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada reported in 2014 that the cost of the Northern Food Basket – a basket of goods that is needed to provide a healthy diet to a family of four - was $350 to $450 in northern regions, while the same basket of goods was $200 to $250 in southern Canada.
[21] Nunavut Poverty Reduction Secretariat. 2012. *Understanding Poverty in Nunavut. A Report Prepared for the Nunavut Roundtable on Poverty,* p..26.

3. Income support programs should promote the objective of income security and uphold Inuit societal values including self-reliance and providing for one's family and community.

At the systems level, income assistance programs should be strongly integrated with other policy and program sectors including housing, employment and training and food security.

4.2 Housing Security

Prior to colonization, Inuit had access to shelter. However, colonization has created barriers for Inuit in accessing stable, affordable and adequate housing. Specifically, the forced settlement of Inuit into sedentary communities along with promises of health care, education and free housing in the 1950s and 1960s led to Inuit dependence on public housing. As noted in our submission to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development the housing provided has been extremely inadequate, overcrowded and ill equipped for any household, let alone those living in arctic conditions due in part to limited federal investment.[22]

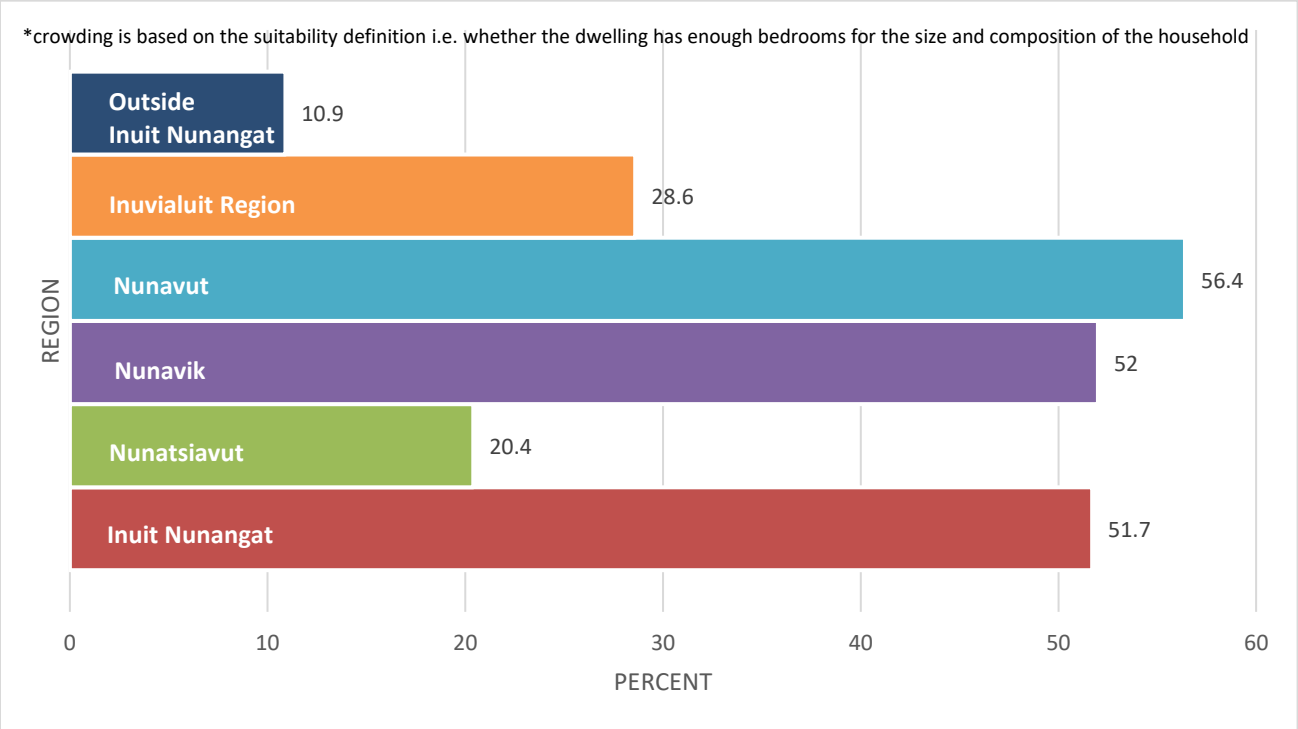
As a result of this history, and Inuit population growth, there remains a shortage of adequate housing—defined as homes that are not overcrowded, and are in good repair and affordable—across all Inuit regions in Canada. Nunavik's housing deficit is critical, especially given unprecedented demand for housing due to the fact that 70% of the population is under the age of 35. In 2010, "despite the construction of 163 units in 2008 and 2009, demand climbed during the same period by an additional 80 units…[and]…the housing deficit in Nunavik stood at 995 units."[23] Nunavut faces a similar housing shortage in which it is estimated that 3,300 houses are needed to address the current housing shortage, and an additional 250 units per year would be required thereafter."[24] Additionally, 15% of Nunavummiut are on a waiting list for public housing.

Compounding the Inuit housing shortage is the fact Inuit are the fastest growing population segment in Canada and communities are running out of space for development due to poor planning during the initial settlement period. The demand for more adequate housing units is increasing at alarming speed in the face of an already considerable shortfall.[25]

Inuit housing shortages have resulted in overcrowded conditions and the emergence of Inuit hidden homelessness. As shown in Chart 6 below, in 2016 more than half of Inuit in Nunangat (51.7%) lived in overcrowded homes, often with seven or more residents, six times that of the non-Indigenous population in Canada. This makes Inuit households the most overcrowded of any group in Canada. Overcrowding is most acute in Nunavut (56.4%), followed by Nunavik (52%), then the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (28.6%), and Nunatsiavut (20.4%).

[22] Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2016. *National Housing Strategy - Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami Submission.* [Letter to the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos], p.2.
[23] Parnasimautik. 2013. *Our Communities*: *Housing Information Sheet 8*.
[24] Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. 2014. *Social Determinants of Inuit Health in Canada*, p. 21.
[25] Inuit Tuttarvingat. 2008. *Homelessness and Housing Realities for Inuit Workshop Report.*

Chart 6
Inuit Living in Crowded* Homes, 2016
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census

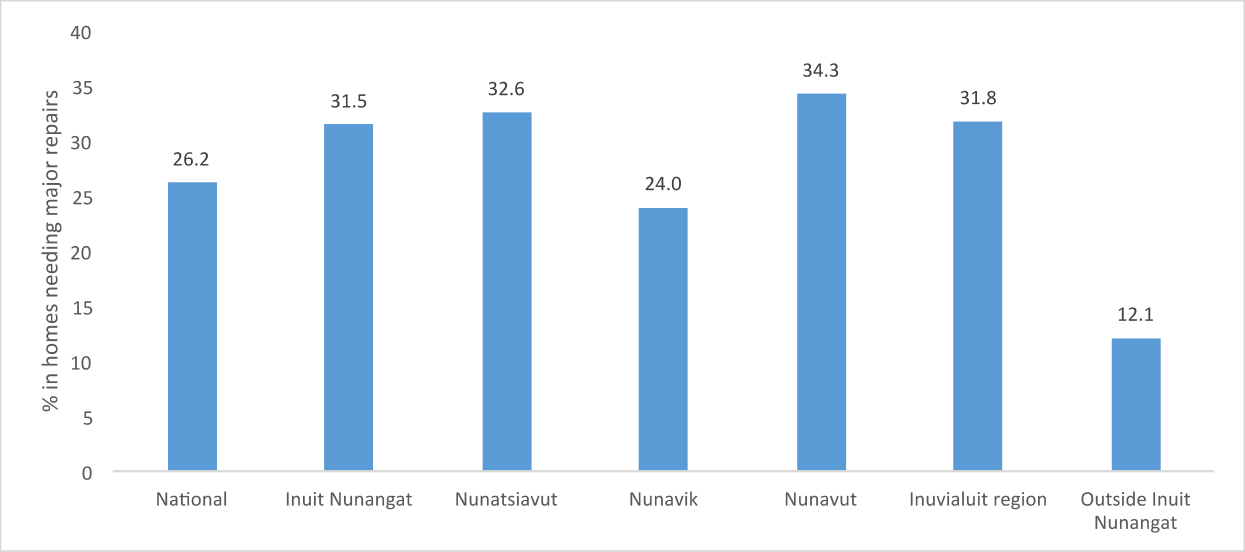


This shortage of adequate Inuit housing has also led to high rates of "hidden homelessness" among Inuit that contribute to overcrowding. In 2007-2008, 20% of Inuit households in Canada were providing temporary residence to an average of 2.3 homeless visitors.[26] Inuit women seeking refuge from family violence and their children are particularly at risk, as there are only 15 emergency shelters across Canada's Inuit regions.[27] In addition to emergency shelters, there is also a critical need for halfway houses, Elder residences, and alternative housing for those whose homes are uninhabitable while being renovated. Absolute homelessness also disproportionately affects Inuit in urban centres.[28] Housing shortages affect the quality and consistency of essential service delivery throughout Inuit Nunangat and contribute to a shortage of nurses, counselors and teachers and other professionals.

The harsh Arctic climate, inappropriate housing designs and overcrowding have accelerated Inuit housing wear and tear. In 2011, 30% of Inuit homes in Canada needed major repairs, such as electrical or plumbing, at an estimated average cost of $150,000 per household. In 2016, this amount declined to 26.2%.[29] However, as show in Chart 7 below, a much higher proportion of Inuit homes in Inuit Nunangat (31.5%) need major repairs than outside Inuit Nunangat (12.1%).

[26] Ibid.
[27] Minch, et. al.. 2011. *Inuit Housing and Homelessness*.
[28] Inuit Tuttarvingat. 2008. *Homelessness and Housing Realities for Inuit Workshop Report.*
[29] Statistics Canada. 2016. *The Housing Conditions of Aboriginal People in Canada*. Catalogue no. 98-200-X2016021.

Chart 7
Inuit Homes in Need of Major Repairs
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census



In urban centres, Inuit experience housing deficits, and access to adequate housing is unaffordable for many. Inuit homelessness in urban centres is also an issue. TI has reported that in Ottawa 0.6% of the general population is homeless or at risk, while for Inuit, 15.6% of the population is homeless or at risk.[30]

Many Inuit access social housing supports —including in Nunavut (85-90%) and Nunavik (almost 60%, of which 99% are Inuit)—because home ownership and even rent is unaffordable.[31] Across Inuit Nunangat, the cost of living, construction, maintenance, municipal taxes and insurance is very high, access to mortgages and loans are limited, incomes are low and there are limited housing markets, except in regional centres like Iqaluit and Inuvik where there is a larger, non-Indigenous population.

ITK has identified seven main barriers to addressing the housing crisis in Inuit Nunangat: [32]

- lack of intergovernmental cooperation (including involvement of Inuit);
- policy gaps;
- inadequate consideration of demographics;
- insufficient or inconsistent funding;
- high housing costs;
- lack of housing markets; and
- trade-offs between sustainability and housing costs.

Housing is one of the most crucial determinants of a healthy life for individuals as well as for communities as a whole. It is hard to thrive in school, perform in professions and to live healthy and harmonious lives without a home, without safe shelter and while living in overcrowded conditions. Collectively, inadequate housing makes Inuit vulnerable to a variety of poor health outcomes, including:

[30] Tungaasuvingat Inuit. As reported in *National Urban Inuit Community Dialogue, Appendix A* (2016).
[31] Nunavut Poverty Reduction Secretariat. 2017. *Makimaniq Plan 2: A Shared Approach to Poverty Reduction 2017-2022*; Impacts Economics. 2012. *Understanding Poverty in Nunavut*; Statistics Canada. 2016. *Société d'habitation du Québec - 2014.*
[32] Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. 2016. *Barriers to Sustainable Housing Delivery in Inuit Nunangat,* p.3.

- food insecurity;
- poor sanitation and ventilation, and the consequential spread of infectious diseases including respiratory tract (especially among infants), skin, ear and eye infections, and tuberculosis;
- psycho-social stresses, including a lack of "alone time" and excess noise, which can lead to difficulty sleeping, anger, irritability and suicidal thoughts;
- higher incidence of family violence, including physical and sexual violence toward spouses and children; and
- low levels of educational achievement.

Additionally, housing supports also have unintended negative consequences, such as encouraging those using housing programs to forgo other important personal, education and employment opportunities and/or stay in unsafe and unhealthy situations in order to continue to be eligible for housing.[33] As noted above, this contributes to overcrowding and hidden homelessness. At the same time, forgoing opportunities and staying in unsafe conditions has also prevented Inuit from becoming more self-reliant and created long-term dependencies that only perpetuate poverty. The "poverty/welfare trap" discussed above in relation to income security also occurs when the benefits of staying on income assistance, including housing support, outweigh those of pursuing available employment to pay for, in this case, private housing. [34]

ITK has identified the need to address the housing crisis as an urgent public health priority for Inuit. In 2016, ITK provided the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development with six key principles to this end. [35] We advance these again in this submission as they are most relevant to development and implementation of CPRS.

1. The federal government should work directly with Inuit organizations to develop housing policies and programs that will meet Inuit needs because Inuit are best positioned to allocate, deliver and make decisions about housing funding in order to achieve the best outcomes programs.

2. An Inuit-specific approach is needed to ensure housing funding and programs include all Inuit across the four regions, as some groups have historically been excluded due to dubious terminology.

3. Inuit must have direct access to housing investments and social or other infrastructure investments generally, including, but not limited to, investments for shelters and transitional housing as well as early childhood development and wellness centres".

4. Inuit require flexible criteria for federal housing funding to meet the diverse needs of each of the four Inuit regions in Canada.

5. A National Housing Strategy must take into account both short term and long-term needs. Given the severity of the Inuit housing crisis and its socio-economic and health impacts on Inuit, there is a need for increased short term federal investment to allow Inuit to catch up with the rest of Canada and address the housing gap. Additionally, long-term investments are needed to ensure maintenance of housing outcomes.

6. Work with Inuit, the provinces and territories to develop innovative solutions to reduce the cost of housing for Inuit.

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[33] Ibid; Impacts Economics. 2012. *Understanding Poverty in Nunavut*, p.22.
[34] Ibid p. 71.
[35] Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. *National Housing Strategy - Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami Submission.* [Letter to The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos], p. 2.

4.3 Food Security

Food insecurity has reached crisis levels in all regions of Inuit Nunangat. Food insecurity exists when a person does not have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.[36] This can range from not having the ability to afford a balanced diet, to not being able to access country foods, to missing meals or not eating for days at a time. Food insecurity is a serious health concern because of its close ties to a person's well-being. Adults in food insecure households tend to have poorer physical and mental health, including higher rates of heart disease, diabetes and depression. Food insecurity also has very negative consequences for children's cognitive, academic and social development.[37]

High rates of food insecurity are recorded throughout Inuit Nunangat. Some research has suggested for example that adults living in Nunavut have a very high prevalence of food insecurity at 70%, and that 43% of adults live with food insecurity in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region[38]. These rates are four to six times higher than the national average [39] and represent the highest documented food insecurity prevalence rate for any Indigenous population residing in a developed country.[40] A 2008 study of Nunavut preschoolers concluded that 70% resided in food insecure households.[41] Data collected through a 2014 survey prepared for Nunatsiavut Government suggests that food insecurity has increased in this region over time, and in some Inuit communities, the prevalence of either moderately or severely food insecure households is between 68% and 75%.[42]

Food insecurity is also experienced by urban Inuit. Several issues have been identified: [43]

- Lack of food diversity in the southern diet which creates a feeling of disconnection from culture for urban Inuit.
- Inuit are not often educated on how to cook nutritious meals with foods more commonly available in the south, so it is hard to buy and prepare meals for families.
- Urban Inuit also face high food prices, and only the least nutritious foods are affordable.
- Inuit who move south often cannot access good paying jobs because of low education and employment skills, and as a result become food insecure.
- Country foods are either not accessible in urban areas and when they are may be too expensive to purchase.

For Inuit, the impacts of food insecurity also extend to cultural well-being because of the continued cultural importance of harvesting and eating country foods such as seal, whale and caribou. Hunting, harvesting and sharing of country foods is integral for providing social cohesion and cultural continuity for Inuit communities. Inuit

[36] ITK Food Security Fact Sheet taking definition from Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2006). The state of food insecurity in the world 2006. Rome.
[37] ITK web-site material https://www.itk.ca/nuluaq-mapping-project/inuit-food-insecurity-canada-background/
[38] Rosol, R., Huet, C., Wood, M., Lennie, C., Osborne, G. and Egeland, G. M. 2011. *Prevalence of affirmative responses to questions for food insecurity: International Polar Year Inuit Health Survey, 2007-2008*. International Journal of Circumpolar Health. 70(5): 488-497.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Inuit Circumpolar Council. 2012. *Inuit and the Right to Food, Submission to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food for the Official Country Mission to Canada*.
[41] Egeland, G.M. et.al.. 2010. *Food Insecurity among Inuit preschoolers: Nunavut Inuit Child Health Survey, 2007-2008*. Canadian Medical Association Journal. 182(3): 243-248.
[42] Nunatsiavut Government. No date. *Inuit Food Insecurity in Nunatsiavut: The community-specific nature of a wide-spread public health issue*.
[43] Tungasuvvingat Inuit. 2017. *Food Security Community Consultation,* pp. 8-9.

culture has historically been, and continues to be, defined by a deep relationship to the environment and the resources it provides. Threats to the Inuit environment from climate change and contaminants also play a role in the food security crisis as access to country foods is negatively impacted.

Market food may be part of the modern Inuit diet, but country food remains at the centre of Inuit identity and well-being. Country food is nutrient-rich and has sustained Inuit for generations. Studies show that on days when Inuit consume country food their intake of important vitamins and minerals is significantly higher.[44] Today, Inuit consume more market foods of poor nutritional value containing high levels of salt, sugar and fat. Consumption of nutrient poor market food, combined with obstacles in accessing country foods and better quality market food, are contributing to the current food security crisis in Inuit Nunangat.

The main Government of Canada initiative related to food security in Inuit Nunangat is the Nutrition North Canada Program (NNC Program), a subsidy program in place since October 2012. The NNC Program aims to improve access to perishable healthy foods in isolated northern communities by providing subsidies directly to retailers. The government pays a portion of the retailers' costs of supplying store-bought market food to remote communities. Higher subsidy levels are given to perishable foods such as vegetables, bread, meat, milk and eggs, while foods with a longer shelf-life, such as flour, crackers and some frozen foods are subsidized at a lower level. Subsidies are not available for non-food items such as hunting equipment, dental care items and infant care products. Country foods are eligible for the subsidy when supplied from a government regulated processing plant registered with the NNC Program. However, there are only a few government regulated processing plants and the price of country foods available from these plants is high.

Additional support for country food harvesting and distribution is not available through the NNC Program. The NNC Advisory Board acknowledges the importance of country foods, but has indicated that initiatives related to harvesting of country foods are not within the NCC Program mandate.[45]

At the provincial/territorial and regional level, there are a number of initiatives that support access to store-bought market foods or country foods. A program in Quebec, the Food and Other Essentials Program, provides discounts of between 20% and 40% on over 1500 food, personal care, household, clothing and footwear products, as well as some camping supplies purchased in Nunavik stores. The discounts aim to bring the costs of eligible food and non-food items more in line with the prices paid for the same items in southern Quebec.[46]

A number of country food harvesting and distribution programs[47] provide financial assistance for equipment and/or provide assistance for harvesting and purchasing of country foods including:

- the Country Food Distribution and Harvester Support Programs in Nunavut,
- the Traditional Harvest Program in the Northwest Territories,
- the Nain Community Freezer Program in Labrador,
- the Country Food Community Support Program in Nunavik, and
- the Mobile Country Food Processing Unit and Methods Training Course initiative in the Inuvialuit Region.

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[44] Tait, H. 2008. *Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006: Inuit Health and Social Conditions.*
[45] Nutrition North Canada Advisory Board. 2016. *Second Report (the Advisory Board's report, findings and recommendations for April 2012 to December 2016)*, Retrieved from http://www.nutritionnorthcanada.gc.ca/eng/1508938932551/1508938956924.
[46] Kativik Regional Government, online at http://www.krg.ca/food-and-other-essentials-program
[47] The Air Foodlift Subsidy of Labrador was discontinued in 2016.

Grassroots initiatives such as *Feeding My Family* on Facebook have been successful at drawing attention to the high cost of food in Inuit Nunangat. In addition, collective kitchens have been effective in many Inuit communities at bringing people together to learn new recipes, eat healthy meals and save money on the cost of food.

ITK works to support the Inuit regions in meeting their food security objectives. In this role, ITK has initiated the *Nuluaq Project* that documents, through the use of an interactive map, Inuit community-based food initiatives. The aim is to increase the information available on community-based initiatives that play an important role in addressing food insecurity among Inuit communities.

The Inuit regions are also taking steps to address the food security crisis. The following is a summary of activities taking place:

- The Nunavut Food Security Strategy and associated Action Plan were released in 2014 by the Nunavut Food Security Coalition with the support of the Government of Nunavut, Inuit organizations, non-government organizations, and the private sector. The Strategy is a plan to assist in achieving the collective vision of a food secure Nunavut and identifies six key areas for action: country food, store-bought food, local food production, life skills, programs and community initiative, as well as policy and legislation.

- The Nunatsiavut Government in partnership with several universities undertook a survey of Inuit food insecurity in each Inuit community in the region in 2014. Subsequently, NG has established community-specific food security committees and is working on a regional food security strategy.[48]

- The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation is completing an Inuvialuit Food Security Strategic Plan.[49]

Addressing food insecurity in Inuit communities is a complex challenge. Food insecurity persists in Inuit communities for multiple reasons including the high costs of food, difficulties in transporting nutritious perishable foods, and barriers to harvesting country foods including environmental changes due to climate change and contaminants.

The principles of social equity, human rights and reconciliation are central to addressing the food security crisis in Inuit Nunangat. The 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the 1966 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* enshrine the right to food in human rights law at the international level. In addition the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* codifies a range of Indigenous peoples' rights, including the collective right to "be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities" (Article 20) and the right to the enjoyment of "the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health" (Article 24).

Inuit self-determination in combatting food insecurity must be recognized in the path forward. Inuit must be at the forefront of planning and actions to address food insecurity to ensure long-term success. A combination of approaches is needed that build on the work of initiatives at the community level and that address policy and program implementation at the national level. Solutions must be informed by Inuit if they are to be meaningful and result in lasting change. The following actions are recommended to address the food security crisis in Inuit communities: [50]

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[48] Retrieved from: http://www.nunatsiavut.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/NEWS-RELEASE-Food-security-survey-results-released.pdf

[49] Retrieved from: http://www.irc.inuvialuit.com/projects-and-programs

[50] Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Inuit Circumpolar Council. 2012. *Inuit and the Right to Food, Submission to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food for the Official Country Mission to Canada*.

1. Address the high cost, quality and availability of store-bought market food in Inuit communities across Inuit Nunangat.

2. Support harvesting and consumption of country food through increased investment in hunting and fishing activities, processing, trade and preservation of traditional knowledge.

3. Affirm food subsidy programs are meeting the needs of Inuit communities by securing accessibility to both market and country food.

4. Ensure income support and social programs meet the basic needs of Inuit.

5. Pursue efforts that reduce the impact of climate change and contaminants on the Inuit food system.

6. Adopt a national food policy that recognizes the right to food for Inuit and other Indigenous Peoples.

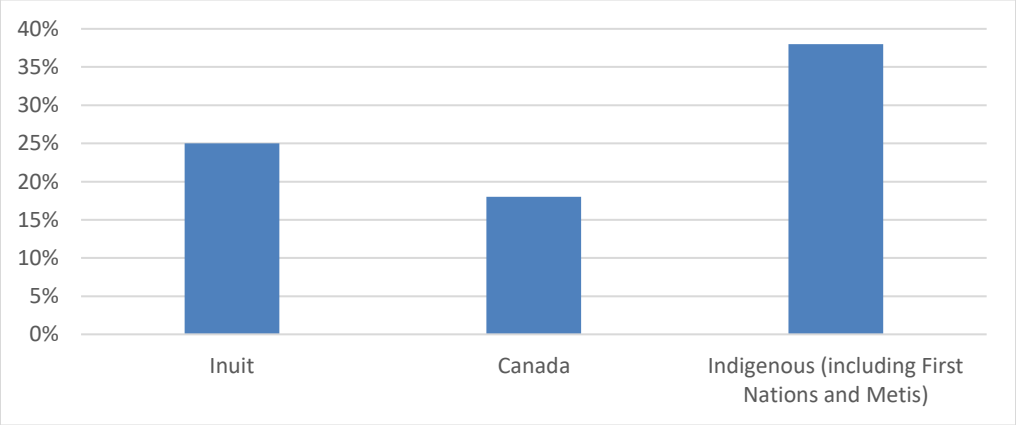
7. Develop a national Inuit strategy on food security.

8. Establish accountability mechanisms including clear time frames and benchmarks to remedy the current state of food insecurity among Inuit.

4.4 Early Learning and Child Care

In 2011, 13% of the Inuit population in Inuit Nunangat was under the age of 5 compared with 5% of the non-Indigenous population in Canada. Indigenous children are more likely to live in poverty than non-Indigenous children in Canada. A 2016 study of child poverty among Indigenous peoples by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives reported the poverty rate for Inuit children to be 25%. This compares with 18% for Canadian children in total, and 38% when all Indigenous populations are combined.[51]

Chart 8
Child Poverty Rates in Canada[52]



[51] Macdonald, David and Daniel Wilson. 2016. *Shameful Neglect: Indigenous Poverty in Canada*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, pp. 8-9. Poverty rates were determined based on an after-tax low income measure, with data derived through a custom tabulation from the 2011 and 2006 Census. It is noted by the authors that this is strictly an income measure and not a measure of cost of living.
[52] Ibid, p.14.

Clearly, Inuit and Indigenous child poverty is a crisis in Canada and a CPRS must include investments aimed at its eradication. Early childhood development has been recognized as a social determinant of Inuit health. From a policy perspective this encompasses early learning and child care, as well as other social and environmental conditions in which Inuit children live, including access to adequate housing and health services, as well as support for language and culture.

Specifically with respect to early learning and child care (ELCC), services and programs vary across Inuit Nunangat. There are nearly a dozen communities that have no child care centres. For those that do have child care centres, there are two main sources of funding. One is the *First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative* (FNICCI), a federally-funded program to address the child care needs of Inuit and First Nations communities. This program has a labour market focus and aims to increase parent access to licensed child care. There are 59 FNICCI-funded child care centres in Inuit Nunangat. Additionally, the *Aboriginal Head Start Urban and Northern Communities* (AHSUNC) program, a federally-funded initiative, supports Aboriginal-specific, pre-school programs. There are 29 Head Start sites across Inuit Nunangat. Funding for both of these important programs supporting Inuit early learning and child care has not increased in more than 20 years. However, some Inuit ELCC centres have augmented their budgets by leveraging other federal and provincial/territorial project funds and by charging childcare fees.

It is widely acknowledged that effective early childhood development programs can mitigate the impacts of growing up in poverty.[53] Inuit understand that early childhood development, including maternal, fetal, infant and children's health and wellness as well as quality child care help create protective factors among children that ultimately provide a foundation for Inuit child wellness and resiliency. These protective factors can mitigate the impacts of poverty and reduce risk for Inuit children for suicide, ill-health and risky behaviours. They can also underpin Inuit success in education and employment.

"It is well known that investment in ELCC is returned many-fold by: increasing the likelihood that a child will graduate from high school and be employed; by decreasing the likelihood of imprisonment; and by increasing mental health and wellness. Pursuing and supporting Inuit-centred ELCC is an important path to building resilience, healing and reconciliation."[54]

When Inuit are provided with good prenatal care, have access to Inuit midwives, breastfeed their babies, have access to healthy foods and live a healthy lifestyle which includes pride in Inuit culture and language, this has a positive impact and contributes to overall health and well-being of Inuit women and children and their families. These protective factors help to buffer the challenges related to poverty and must be part of a poverty-reduction strategy for Inuit.

The critical importance of providing young children with consistent access to Inuit culture and language is another critical success factor. The 2011, ITK's National Strategy on Inuit Education recommended improving access to services and programs targeted to children, youth and their parents. ITK assessed the impact of early childhood program such as FNICCI and made specific recommendations for program improvements across Inuit Nunangat. Those key recommendations remain relevant today and support ITK's position on Inuit early learning and child care as a social determinant of Inuit health and an area of intervention that is important to helping reduce poverty. Accordingly, ITK puts these recommendations forward again:

1. *Increase federal investments in AHSUNC and FNICCI* to increase the number of child care centres, childcare spaces and Head Start sites across Inuit Nunangat in order to provide many of the protective

[53] Ibid.
[54] Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada and Tungasuvvingat Inuit. 2017. *Inuit Submission to Employment and Social Development Canada Regarding National Indigenous Early Learning and Childcare Framework.*

factors that mitigate the predictors of poverty among Inuit. Ensure all investments take into consideration the high cost of living across Inuit Nunangat.

2. *Streamline and coordinate all family wellness programs and provide funding through transfer agreements.* This includes federal programs such as the Community Action Program for Children, Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program and Brighter Futures. ELCC administrators are over-burdened with administrative and reporting tasks, to the detriment of supporting Inuit children. Funding and reporting timelines must be flexible to offer the type of programming that best meets the needs of Inuit communities.

3. *Support Inuit-specific child care spaces, programs and initiatives.* Since it is proven that children with a strong connection to their language and culture are more resilient and have greater self-esteem, which is one buffer against poverty, an investment in Inuit early child development is an investment in poverty reduction. This need is particularly acute in urban centres outside Inuit Nunangat. Other than the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, there are no urban Head Start or child care centres that meet the needs of Inuit children and families.

4.5 Education

Educational achievement and outcomes have serious consequences for Inuit well-being and make Inuit more vulnerable to poverty. As noted by one researcher, "the lack of even the most basic educational credentials such as a high school diploma is very damaging to both an individual and a community's economic potential."[55]

Statistical evidence shows that Inuit lag behind other Canadians in terms of educational achievement and outcomes. Across Inuit Nunangat, Inuit are less likely to have post-secondary education and more likely to have no high school diploma. For example, the 2011 National Household Survey found that in Nunavik and Nunavut, 60% of the population did not have a high school diploma, compared with 12% of non-Indigenous Canadians. Inuit men are more likely than women to obtain apprenticeship or trades related certificates and diplomas, while Inuit women are more likely to pursue college and university-level diplomas and degrees.[56] As shown in Chart 9 below, across Canada, for Inuit in the age category 25 to 64, lower levels of educational achievement were reported, with 48% of Inuit reporting a high school diploma as their highest level of educational achievement compared with 12% for the non-Indigenous population in Canada.

Low educational outcomes are also reported for Inuit who live outside Inuit Nunangat. For example, among Inuit living in Ontario only 59% were reported in the 2006 Census to have completed high school.

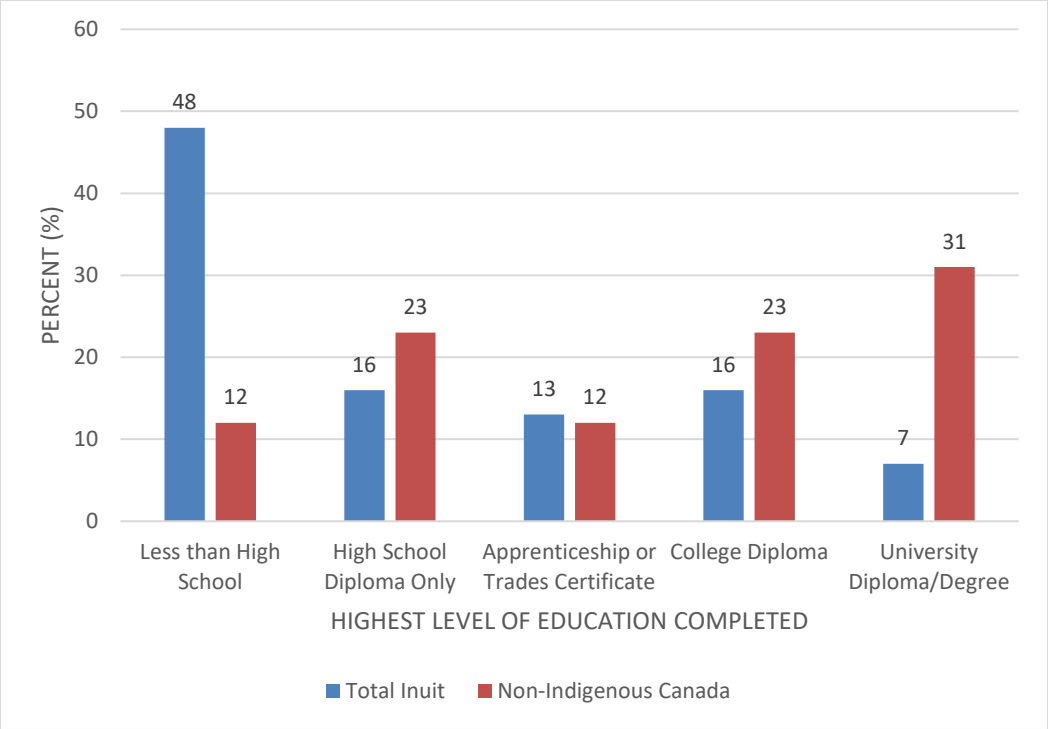
Education is delivered differently across Inuit Nunangat. In the NWT, the GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment oversees curriculum development for all school districts in the territory. There are agreements with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and support for Inuit students through the Inuvialuit Education Foundation. In Nunavut, the Department of Education developed the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Education Framework to ensure that education in the territory reflects Inuit knowledge and values (i.e. IQ). In Nunavik, the Kativik School Board created by the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in the 1970s provides elementary and secondary education for children in 14 schools across the region, as well as adult education and post-secondary education programs. In Nunatsiavut, the Department of Education and Economic Development administers federal funding and supports the provincial curriculum with Inuit specific supports in the region.

Despite increased Inuit control over education, and gains made in making education systems more culturally based and relevant, as statistics noted above show, Inuit still lag behind in terms of educational attainment. This is in part

[55] Palesch, Nico. 2016. *Creating Opportunity for Inuit Nunangat: The Crisis in Inuit Education and Labour Market Outcomes.*
[56] Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey.

because success in school is linked to many other factors including the social determinants of Inuit health. As noted in the past by ITK, there is a strong correlation between education attainment and Inuit well-being. We know that low educational outcomes are associated with "adverse social implications including greater unemployment, greater number of youth entering the criminal justice system and greater incidences of illness and poverty." [57]

Chart 9
Highest Level of Education for Inuit in Canada; Aged 25 to 64 years, by sex, 2011
Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey



Inuit adhere to a holistic view of life in which many inter-related elements contribute to well-being. If a child or youth lives in overcrowded housing, or goes to school hungry, or is exposed to violence or substance abuse or experiences mental or physical health issues in the home, they do not perform well in school. In tackling poverty among Inuit, it is important to address all of the root causes. Education is one component, but a critical one.

There is also ongoing mistrust about the education system among some Inuit, particularly older Inuit who have lived experience of residential schools or who were provided with a substandard western-based education that stripped them of their culture, language and traditions. This legacy can still be felt across Inuit Nunangat and is a barrier for some to support educational initiatives.

In Nunavik, the Parnasimautik Consultation Report emphasized several pre-conditions to increasing Inuit well-being including the fact that "education services in Nunavik require substantial human and financial resources…that are culturally adapted to Nunavik Inuit".[58] Current funding levels for Inuit education, much of which is provided through intergovernmental fiscal transfers to territorial and provincial governments, are inadequate because they do not take into consideration the high cost of living in Inuit regions, the need to develop

[57] Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2014. *Social Determinants of Inuit Health.*
[58] Makivik Corporation. 2014. *Parnasimautik Consultation Report.*

Inuit-specific resources, the lack of trained Inuit teachers, and the need to concurrently address and overcome the legacy of residential schools and other detrimental education policies of the past.

Across Inuit Nunangat, efforts are ongoing to fix education systems and ensure they support a new generation of Inuit who are grounded in Inuit culture, traditions and language and who are well-prepared to enter the labour market.

There are only two post-secondary educational institutions in Inuit Nunangat. Nunavut Arctic College in Nunavut partners with southern universities to offer some diplomas and degrees. In the Inuvialuit Settlement Region the NWT's Aurora College has a campus in Inuvik. But this is insufficient. The cost and difficulties in moving and living in the south deters many Inuit from pursuing post-secondary education. It is well known that, without post-secondary education, Inuit are unable to access many of the well-paying jobs available in government or the private sector within their regions. For example, in 2016, Nunavut's Public Service Annual Report showed that Inuit (female) employees made on average $20,000 less than non-Inuit (female) employees.[59] And while just over 50% of the Nunavut government's workforce is comprised of non-Inuit, the territory itself is 85% Inuit. While many jobs are available (e.g. in Nunavut alone there are more than 1,000 job vacancies at any one time) Inuit are often not qualified to fill these positions because of a lack of education and inability to meet prerequisite education criteria.

ITK's National Strategy on Inuit Education (2011) outlines 10 core investments to improve outcomes in Inuit education. The federal government, as part of a CPRS, can commit to these core investments and work with ITK to advance our recommendations.

1. *Invest in the Early Years.* Details about the importance of investing in early learning and early childhood development are noted in Section 4.4 of this submission above, but Inuit believe that education begins when life begins. Supporting prenatal programs, baby and toddler programs and pre-school programs provide a strong foundation for future Inuit educational success and well-being, and protect Inuit children from some of the major impacts of poverty.

2. *Improve services to students who require additional support.* Children most vulnerable to poverty are those who have physical or mental impairments and disabilities. Investments need to be made in programs and services that will provide these children with appropriate support. Teachers and support staff need to be given the funding and tools to meet the educational needs of students who require additional support. There is a need to invest in collaborations between health, social service and education providers in order to ensure holistic support.

3. *Increase success in Inuit Post-Secondary Education.* There is a growing understanding among Inuit that higher education has become a prerequisite for most of the existing and emerging wage-based employment opportunities available in Inuit Nunangat. Higher education is also directly linked to higher income. The federal government should invest in successful programs such as Nunavut Sivuniksavut, Inuit teacher training programs, support for academic upgrading and adult education initiatives to address the high number of Inuit without a high school diploma, and investment in more northern-based university partnerships to generate more Inuit university graduates throughout Inuit Nunangat.

4.6 Health and Wellness

Poverty and ill-health are inextricably linked within a persistent cycle of cause and effect. In both developed and developing countries, the World Health Organization has noted that poor health follows a distinct pattern: the

[59] Government of Nunavut. 2015. *Public Service Annual Report 2014-2015*.

lower an individual's socio-economic status, the worse their health.[60] For Inuit, both physical and mental health status contributes directly to capabilities and outcomes in many other areas of life including capability to generate income for oneself and family through, for example, sustained wage-based and/or land-based employment and productivity, capability to sustain positive relationships with family and friends, and capability to enjoy a high quality of life through happiness and a strong sense of connection and sense of belonging within one's family and community. Housing, income and food security are interwoven with health status in the cyclical relationship. When physical, mental and emotional health status is compromised, an individual's or a family's vulnerability to poverty, as evidenced across a variety of measures, increases.

Poverty and other indicators of social inequity translate into stress and adversity for Inuit families. These can lead to disparities in health status, as well as increased risk of mental health issues and suicide. With respect to indicators of health and wellness (i.e. both physical and mental health) the following can be noted regarding the health status of Inuit in Inuit Nunangat[61]:

- Inuit, both males and females, have lower life expectancy compared with non-Inuit Canadians. For example, in Nunavut, life expectancy for males is 67 years compared to 77 for Canada, and for Inuit females life expectancy is 70 years compared with 82 for Canada.

- Infant mortality rates in some Inuit regions are more than double the rate for Canada as a whole. Recent data suggests that Inuit infant mortality rates have climbed to 3 times the rate for non-Indigenous infants in Canada.[62]

- Inuit experience rates of death from different forms of cancer, but particularly lung cancer, at rates that are 3 to 5 times higher than in other parts of Canada.

- A large percentage of Inuit report daily or occasional smoking. In 2012 about half of Inuit age 15+ (52%) reported they were daily smokers, compared with 16% of the total population of Canada.

- In 2012, Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat were less likely to report excellent or very good health (40%) than those outside Inuit Nunangat (65%).

- In Inuit Nunangat 50% of Inuit had seen a dental professional in the past year, compared with 69% of those living outside Inuit Nunangat.

- Problematic substance use, substance use disorders and addictions, though not well documented from a statistical perspective, are known to be pervasive throughout Inuit Nunangat and contribute to severe harm as a result of violence, crime, ill health, and the breakdown of family structures. For example, in Nunatsiavut 47% of the population aged 15 and older reported 'heavy drinking', meaning five or more drinks on a single occasion, at least once a month.

- Rates of suicide within the regions of Inuit Nunangat range from five to 25 times the rate of suicide for Canada as a whole.

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[60] World Health Organization. 2008. *Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of Health*, Geneva,WHO.

[61] These statistics are taken primarily from Statistics Canada. 2012. *Inuit Health- Selected Findings from the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey.* Retrieved from: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-653-x/89-653-x2014003-eng.htm; also Impact Economics. 2012. *Understanding Poverty in Nunavut*, and Statistics Canada. 2016. *Inuit: Fact Sheets (Nunavik, Nunavut, Inuvialuit Region, Nunatsiavut).*

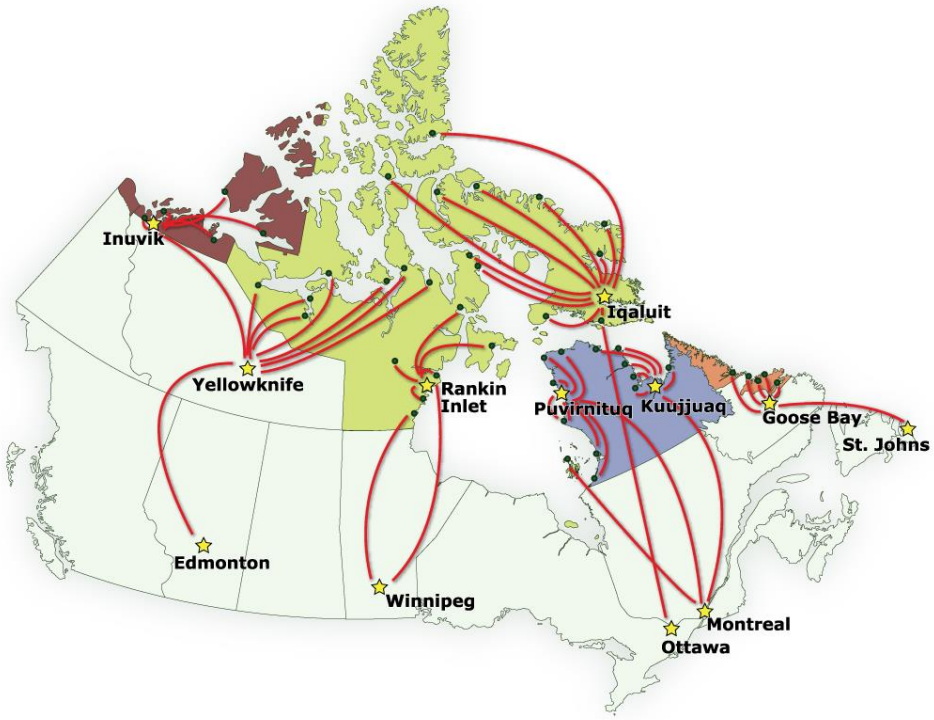
[62] Statistics Canada. *Birth Outcomes among First Nations, Inuit and Metis Populations*. Release November 16 2017. Retrieved from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2017011/article/54886-eng.htm

a) Health Care

Inuit generally lack access to formal health and mental health services at levels comparable to other Canadians, including access to health care professionals (i.e. doctors, nurses, dentists, psychologists and psychiatrists) and more advanced and specialized health diagnosis and treatments. Most Inuit access health care through community health care centres staffed by a nurse or nurse practitioner. As shown in Map 2 below, in order to obtain access to more advanced health services, Inuit must travel either to regional centres within Inuit Nunangat (e.g. Iqaluit, Yellowknife, Goose Bay, Inuvik, Kuujuaq) or in many cases much further south to cities like Ottawa, Montreal, Edmonton, Winnipeg and St. John's.

Map 2

Health Referral Structures in Inuit Nunangat



In many communities, the shortage of Inuit staff makes it difficult to effectively deliver health care and related services in accordance with Inuit values and in the first language of most Inuit (Inuktut). Further, there are challenges with respect to recruiting and retaining health care professionals, including as a result of housing shortages throughout Inuit Nunangat. Further, low broadband and poor telecommunications infrastructure means Inuit are unable to take advantage of telehealth services and the services that can be offered through more advanced health care technologies.

With respect to dental care, Inuit communities typically are served by visiting dental professionals (dentists and hygienists) who have time to see only the most serious cases. On an annual basis, Inuit see a dental health professional less frequently than other Canadians.

ITK advocates for social equity in health for Inuit as an important objective of a CPRS. Measures that can be taken to address inadequate health care and access issues for Inuit include:

1. Ensuring that financial transfer arrangements between the Government of Canada and the two territories which encompass Inuit homelands (NWT and Nunavut), and health and social transfers to the provinces of

Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador take account of the particular needs of Inuit within their jurisdictions, and the need to address serious gaps in health outcomes between Inuit and non-Inuit, as well as gaps in access to health care service in these regions. Financial transfers for health need to take account of the processes of social equity in order to achieve the goals of social equality in health.

2. Increasing support for the recruitment, training and professional development of Inuit staff in the health care field.

3. Increasing retention of health care professionals in communities through improvements to overall working conditions and housing.

4. Investing in health care telecommunications infrastructure in communities to increase access to advanced health care technologies and telehealth services.

5. Investing in improvements to health care facilities in communities to address infrastructure issues (e.g. limited and inadequate space)

b) Mental Health

The overall mental health and wellbeing of Inuit is closely tied to poverty. Poor mental health, which has been associated with loss of self-esteem, language, culture and identity, can affect all aspects of an individual's life – from personal relationships, community acceptance, belonging and connection, to educational achievement and access to employment and other productive activities, including engagement in a traditional, land-based economy.

Throughout Inuit Nunangat, Inuit mental health and wellness is supported through a variety of measures and programs. These take several forms. One involves formal systems-based interventions that are available through territorial and provincial health care systems and, as in the case of Nunavik and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, through regional health authorities. These interventions include access to professionals such as psychiatric or mental health nurses who can offer counselling and support and low level medical interventions at a community level, as well as referrals to other professionals working within the system, such as doctors and psychiatrists. Mental health supports (and interventions such as referrals) are also available from those who work on the front lines in health-allied sectors such as justice and family and child services. In general, however, Inuit experience is that health systems-based mental health supports are not well integrated with other systems and programs, and as a result individuals simply 'fall through the cracks' or receive services on a fragmented basis.

Secondarily, Inuit mental health and wellness is supported through community based wellness programming activity. In all regions, Inuit communities receive funds transferred under a variety of agreement mechanisms (between the federal and provincial or territorial governments) for wellness-related programs such as the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP), Brighter Futures, the National Native Alcohol and Addiction Program (NNADAP) and the National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention (NAYPS) program. These funds eventually filter down to the community level and are utilized for community-based program activities that can 'fit' within applicable program criteria. Many of these wellness activities are led by Inuit communities, community organizations, front-line service delivery staff in health and other sectors, and volunteers. As it concerns mental health and addictions, most commonly funding is used to support community initiatives for:

- Alcohol and drug use prevention and awareness (e.g. information campaigns)
- Addictions support (e.g. informal counselling and access to Elders)
- Traditional/cultural skills (e.g. kamik making, sewing groups)
- Elders' engagement (e.g. with youth)
- Peer-to-peer counselling (e.g. youth supporting youth)
- On-the-land activities (e.g. hunting, fishing, berry picking)
- Suicide prevention resources and programs such as Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)

- Youth life skills
- After school programs

Federal funding for these community-led activities are important to promoting positive mental health and wellness among Inuit across Inuit Nunangat. However, it is clear that funding is not adequate to meet needs, as Inuit mental health and wellness is recognized by all as a serious, pervasive and ongoing public health crisis across our homelands. Often, funding for community interventions in the area of mental health and wellness is intermittent and unpredictable, and when available generally must be stretched and economized in extreme ways. Administrative reporting requirements place extra burdens on community organizations and volunteers and distract from actual program delivery.

ITK believes that an integrated and robust continuum of mental wellness services and funding to support Inuit community-led initiatives in wellness promotion is needed to ensure that Inuit who are impacted by trauma and adversity, which makes them vulnerable to poverty, are provided with the supports they need before the risks they face lead them to further mental distress, suicide and the dissolution of social, familial and community relationships. Recommended actions to be considered within a CPRS are outlined below.

6. A stronger continuum of Inuit mental wellness services that extends beyond the health care system is needed. This should reach out into our communities and harness the strengths and resiliency that resides there.

7. A stronger continuum also requires that there is integration of services and resources for mental health promotion directed into parallel education, justice, and family and child services systems. Better coordination across these systems will help create a mental health 'safety net' for Inuit that can identify those who are most vulnerable and link them with appropriate supports that both reduce their risk of poverty and/or increase the possibility and opportunity to remove themselves from these circumstances.

Current programs and funding are not helping Inuit deal with the loss and grief that has been suffered across generations and continues for countless families as a result of the historical and intergenerational trauma that has been experienced by Inuit. Historical and intergenerational trauma is deeply rooted in many 'causes' which have been noted above (e.g. permanent settlement in communities with (ongoing) poor housing conditions, forced relocations, dog slaughter, residential schools, TB sanatoriums, acculturation and associated loss of language, culture, traditions, social and family structures). At present, there are limited resources and services that address the effects of trauma, or even help us understand what might be appropriate ways of addressing historical and intergenerational trauma through, for example, community and other healing activities (such as were supported through the former Aboriginal Healing Foundation). To address this situation, ITK recommends the following with respect to mental health and wellness for Inuit.

8. Culturally relevant, Inuit-determined healing approaches, initiatives and services need to be developed and given a sustainable footing in order to ensure that we can *begin* the process of addressing unresolved trauma and grief stemming from colonization and rapid social change. This includes investment in Inuit-specific healing and recovery programs for individuals, families and communities, and investment in traditional-type residential treatment facilities as well as alternatives such as land-based and mobile addictions and trauma treatment approaches.

9. Front line workers who provide mental-health related supports in Inuit communities must receive proper training and education in trauma-informed care and service delivery and there must be improved coordination of mental health programs.

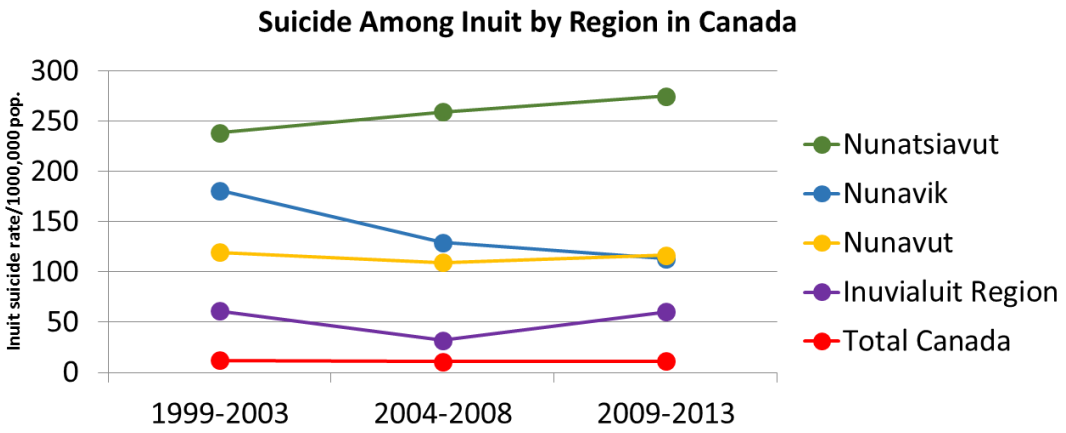
By taking action in areas related to mental health and wellness, the federal government can promote the shared agenda of reconciliation between Inuit and non-Inuit Canadians, and also support Inuit self-determination – two pillars supporting a CPRS that takes into consideration Inuit perspectives.

c) Suicide

For ITK, suicide prevention across Inuit Nunangat is one of our highest priorities. As noted above, elevated rates of suicide are evident throughout Inuit Nunangat and dramatically exceed rates within the Canadian population as a whole by 5 to 25 times. Inuit youth and children, and males aged 19 to 25, are at increasing risk. Suicide is deeply rooted within the experience of poverty and also tied to the social determinants of Inuit health. Heightened levels of suicide risk among Inuit are grounded in intergenerational trauma, adverse experiences in childhood, mental distress and acute stresses (e.g. caused by loss of relationships).

The goal of reducing Inuit suicide to levels lower than that for Canada as a whole is relevant to a CPRS because we know that the underlying causes of suicide among Inuit are embedded within conditions of poverty, social inequity and the social determinants of health including poor housing conditions, lack of quality early childhood education, loss of language and culture, poor health and mental wellness (and access to services), limited opportunities for meaningful and productive engagement in the wage- and land-based economies, and low incomes.

Chart 10
Suicide Rates Among Inuit by Region and Canada
Source: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy



ITK has highlighted the importance of improving Inuit resiliency, and creating protective factors for individuals who are at risk of suicide, particularly children and youth. Protective factors include family strength, cultural continuity, mental wellness, safe and nurturing homes, capacity to deal with distress and access social supports, and social equity in areas like health and housing. Through the National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy ITK has identified priority areas for action and intervention as necessary to guide all efforts for suicide prevention in Inuit Nunangat. These priorities are relevant to a CPRS and can be supported through specific measures that form part of the Strategy and plans for its implementation. These interventions affect Inuit of all ages and include[63]:

10. Creating social equity by addressing the social determinants of health and wellbeing and connecting suicide to these. This means investing in early childhood development, culture and language, livelihoods, income distribution systems and programs, education, food security, health services, mental wellness and the environment as well as addressing the underlying contributors to suicide risk (i.e. trauma).

[63] Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. 2016. *National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy*, pp. 28-37.

11. Creating cultural continuity by supporting interventions that connect Inuit and particularly Inuit youth with our land, culture and language to foster healing, and incorporate these into mental health programming.

12. Nurturing healthy Inuit children through comprehensive behavioural, cognitive and emotional development of children at all stages of growth.

13. Supporting Inuit families to create secure, non-violent spaces for children and stop the intergenerational transmission of trauma. This also involves actively working to reduce the number of Inuit children in care and ensuring cultural continuity by allowing Inuit children to remain in Inuit homes and communities.

14. Addressing mental distress and illness including depression and problematic substance use, which are suicide risk factors, and making culturally relevant mental wellness services available at the community level to follow those at risk of suicide and those who have attempted suicide.

15. Addressing unresolved trauma and grief through culturally relevant programs and approaches, including grief related to loss through suicide.

16. Mobilizing Inuit knowledge for resilience and suicide prevention by promoting promising practices that have been developed by and for Inuit. This can occur through better sharing of strategies, programs and interventions that help develop coping skills, resilience, healing and wellness.

4.7 Livelihoods (Employment, Training and Labour)

For Inuit, our livelihoods include all the ways in which we and our families generate income and support ourselves. This includes work in the wage-based economy and it also includes traditional work connected with the land, Inuit culture and community life, such as harvesting country food and making tools, equipment and clothing, producing handicrafts and art, and providing voluntary services. But today, many working-age Inuit are not able to access work in the wage-based economy and are also unable to fully participate in the range of traditional work that is an essential component of Inuit livelihoods.

In many Inuit communities, there simply are not enough jobs available and, where there are good employment opportunities, many Inuit do not have the education and skill levels to access them. Inuit face multiple other structural barriers to work, including inadequate access to child care, inadequate housing, and mental health challenges. There are also multiple barriers to land-based work, including not having had access to traditional knowledge or learning traditional skills, lack of money for equipment and supplies, and limited community infrastructure to prepare and store country foods.

Finding meaningful work and sustained employment is also a challenge for urban Inuit. As noted by Tungasuvvingat Inuit:

"There is a need for services that prepare Inuit for employment within contexts that are fundamentally different from Northern work environments. For many Inuit, working in a corporate and highly professional space is something new. Moreover, such spaces are often not reflective of Inuit-culture and sensitive to the work ethic of Northern Inuit communities." [64]

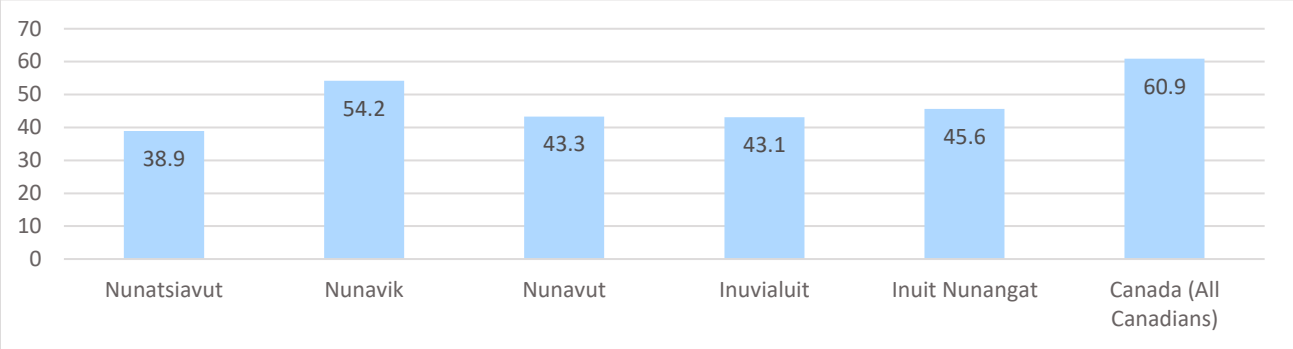
Life and navigational skills are noted by TI as proving to be a significant part of one's ability to feel empowered and self-reliant – key elements in poverty reduction. This is especially so with respect to employment. For Inuit, life and

[64] Tungasuvvingat Inuit. 2016. *An urban Inuit-specific approach to poverty reduction in Ottawa, Ontario*, p.17.

navigational skills support individuals to maintain their cultural traditions irrespective of geographic location. They also allow Inuit to be resilient within work places that are not culturally familiar.

Despite economic growth across Inuit Nunangat, in all regions Inuit continue to experience much lower employment rates than Canadians overall. In 2011, the Inuit employment rate across Inuit Nunangat was 45.6 per cent, while the national employment rate for all Canadians was 60.9 per cent.

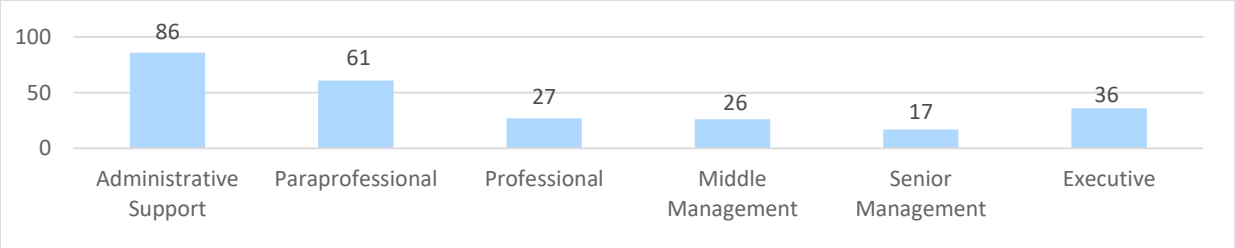
Chart 11
Employment Rate of Inuit and Canadian Population, Inuit Nunangat by Region, 2011
Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011



By far, the largest and most stable source of wage employment across Inuit Nunangat is the public sector, which includes public administration, education, and health care. The public sector comprises about half of employment opportunities.[65] In the private sector, resource extraction industries have potential to create thousands of jobs, but offer an unstable source of employment, primarily due to the volatility of commodity prices. Other, smaller industries, such as fishing, the arts, and tourism, and locally-owned business that provide goods and services, provide some employment and have the potential for growth.[66]

In the public sector, Inuit fill the majority of administrative support positions and other entry-level positions, but only a small portion of professional and management positions. For example, in the Government of Nunavut, 86% of administrative support staff is Inuit, while only 26% of middle management and 17% of senior management positions are held by Inuit.

Chart 12
Percentage of Nunavut Inuit Hired by the Government of Nunavut, by Employment Category[67]



[65] Palesch, Neil. 2016. *Creating Opportunity for Inuit Nunangat: The Crisis in Inuit Education and Labour Market Outcomes.*
[66] Ibid, p.1.
[67] Government of Nunavut. 2017. *Towards a Representative Public Service as of September 30, 2017*.

In the four mines operating in Inuit Nunangat today, Inuit employment follows a pattern similar to Inuit employment in the public sector. Inuit mainly fill lower level positions, while the majority of jobs in the mines, which require high skill levels, are held by non-Inuit from outside of Inuit Nunangat.[68]

In the long-term, there is much potential for growth in Inuit employment in higher-skilled positions across Inuit Nunangat, but many Inuit face major structural barriers that must be overcome, including levels of educational attainment. As described in Section 4.5 above (Education), two-thirds of Inuit do not have a certificate, diploma, or degree (compared to 13 per cent of Canadians overall).[69] Only 2% of Inuit across Inuit Nunangat had completed a university degree at the bachelor level and 14% had attained a high school diploma.[70]

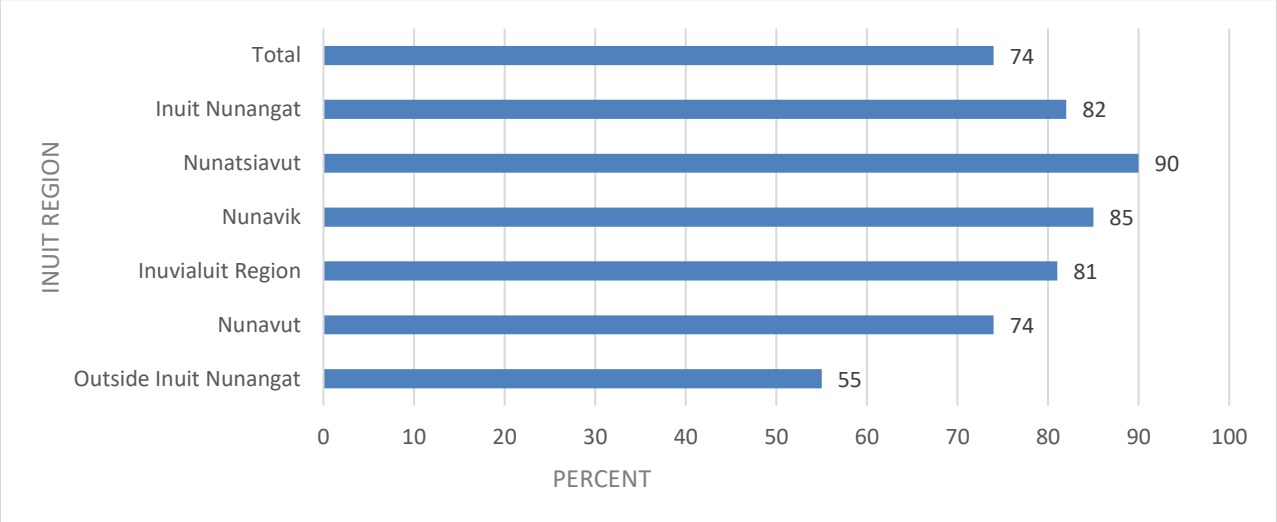
For Inuit who have completed high school, greatly strengthened pathways to post-secondary education and career advancement opportunities are needed. For the larger group of working-age Inuit who have not completed high school, pathways to good livelihoods can be created by holistic, longer-term adult learning programs combined with opportunities to learn on the job and access wrap-around supports. The Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy (NALS), which was released in 2006 and reaffirmed in Nunavut's 5-year poverty reduction action plan in 2017, calls for an intensive focus on literacy and other foundational skills development, stating that without such an investment, the Government of Nunavut would not be able to reduce the high levels of Inuit unemployment in the territory.[71] NALS also prioritizes the needs of "traditional activity learners," meaning those who are "seeking to retain elements of the traditional Inuit lifestyle, and/or participate in the traditional economy."[72]

Other major structural barriers to employment include limited access to child care, the many complications caused by inadequate housing, such as the inability to relocate for work, and mental health challenges. Notably, better access to childcare, along with more employment opportunities overall, is identified as the reason for Nunavik's much stronger employment rates and labour force participation compared to other regions of Inuit Nunangat, despite Nunavik having the lowest rates of education attainment.[73]

Participation in traditional harvesting work is very much alive in Inuit communities across Inuit Nunangat. The 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey indicated that 82% of Inuit had participated in country food harvesting in the 12 months prior to the survey. According to the Inuit Health Survey of 2008, more than two-thirds of households in Nunavut had an active hunter in the home.[74] However, Inuit face many challenges in maintaining the traditional work that is essential to the wellbeing of families and communities. "Country foods" is the first of six themes in the Nunavut Food Security Strategy, which identifies the following factors in a list of challenges to country food access: loss of traditional knowledge, high costs of harvesting equipment, and pervasive poverty that constrains the pursuit of traditional activities.[75] The Nunavut Food Security Strategy calls for increased support for harvesters so they can pursue traditional activities and improved community-based infrastructure to support this essential work. Additionally, Inuit are increasingly experiencing the impacts of climate change, which include changes in sea ice conditions, weather, and animal populations.

[68] Palesch, Neil. 2016, p.1.
[69] Statistics Canada. 2011. *National Household Survey: 2011.*
[70] Palesch, Neil. 2016.
[71] Government of Nunavut. 2006. *Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy*, p.7.
[72] Ibid, p. 16
[73] Thomas, Jasmin. 2016. *Nunavik's Labour Market and Education Attainment Paradox*. Centre for the Study of Standards of Living. CSLS Research Report 2016-13
[74] Egeland, G.M. et al. 2010. *The International Polar Year Nunavut Inuit Child Health Survey 2007-2008: Summary Report.* Montreal: McGill University Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment (CINE).
[75] Nunavut Food Security Coalition. 2012. *Nunavut Food Security Strategy 2012-2016.*

Chart 13
Percentage of Inuit who Hunted, Fished, Trapped or Gathered, Previous 12 months
(by Inuit Region, Inuit Population aged 15 and older, 2012)
Source: Statistics Canada, 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey



A complex web of national, provincial/territorial, and local funders and service providers contribute to labour market development across Inuit Nunangat, some of which are limited to the wage-based economy and some of which support Inuit livelihoods more broadly. There are structural differences in each region, but also many common elements. Provincial/territorial level government services include adult learning and high school upgrading programs, career planning support and job access programs, harvester support programs, and a range of economic development efforts to create jobs. Within each region, there are also many community-based organizations and informal groups that deliver adult learning programs grounded in Inuit culture and knowledge.

At the federal level, the program that most directly targets Inuit livelihoods is the *Aboriginal Skills and Employment Strategy* (ASETS). ASETS aims to increase Indigenous participation in the labour market. ASETS funds are distributed through land claims organizations in each region of Inuit Nunangat. Other relevant federal programs include the *Office of Literacy and Essential Skills* (OLES), which is intended to support Canadians who do not have the literacy and essential skills needed to fully participate in the labour force. While not Indigenous-specific, funding from OLES has been used in Inuit regions, such as for innovative Inuktut literacy and sewing programs delivered by Ilitaqsiniq, the Nunavut Literacy Council. The federal government also delivers some workforce and economic development initiatives through the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CANNOR). For example, the *Northern Adult Basic Education Program* (NABEP) was a five-year investment designed to improve access to adult basic education through the colleges in Nunavut, NWT, and Yukon. Federal funding also reaches Inuit Nunangat through *Labour Market Development Agreements* between the federal and provincial/territorial governments.

Given that the Inuit population is young and growing, service providers and employers need to plan now to meet the needs of a working-age age population that will soon be much larger. Until Inuit start to see significant improvements in early learning, K-12 outcomes, and the other social determinants of health, the number of Inuit in the working-age population who need access to training and employment support programs can be expected to increase substantially.

For Inuit who have completed high school, strengthened pathways to post-secondary education will enable them to take advantage of the many paraprofessional, professional, and leadership opportunities across Inuit Nunangat. For the large segment of the working-age population that has not completed high school and faces multiple other structural barriers to employment, increased availability of a range of holistic, long-term opportunities for learning

and engagement in work are needed. This will require rethinking the approach to Inuit labour force development, moving from looking for quick gains in employment outcomes to strengthening systems for learning across the lifespan.

To begin to resolve the crisis in Inuit livelihoods that we are experiencing today, a long-term, holistic approach to Inuit labour force development is needed. Targeted and locally-informed economic development is needed to create new employment opportunities for our growing workforce. Along with this, major improvements in the delivery of skills development and workforce engagement programs are needed to increase access to work in both the money-based economy and traditional occupations rooted in Inuit culture. To advance a more long term approach, ITK recommends action be taken in a number of areas.

1. Significantly increase federal support for Inuit labour market development services and initiatives, recognizing the real cost differences between Inuit regions and southern Canada and also that Inuit regions must prepare now to support the labour market development needs of a working-age population that will soon be much larger.

2. Ensure that Inuit labour market development funding is long-term (at least 10 years) so that regional Inuit partner organizations can strengthen training capacity, do long-term planning, and provide stable services in their regions.

3. Work with stakeholders to develop a shared long-term, holistic approach to labour force development in Inuit Nunangat that extends far beyond short-term training and employment programs to include longer-term programming, support for pre-employment and employment readiness, and support for engagement in a range of formal and informal work in Inuit communities.

4. Support skills development and work in traditional occupations, such as harvesting country foods, recognizing that this work is essential for poverty reduction in Inuit Nunangat and contributes to local economic development.

5. Work with Inuit organizations to analyze and respond to the labour force development needs of the growing Inuit population that resides outside of Inuit Nunangat.

6. Work with Inuit organizations to Invest in research, innovation, and knowledge sharing in Inuit labour force development.

7. Encourage and support employers in Inuit Nunangat to transform workplaces, including:

    a) Strengthened support and accommodations for mental illness;

    b) Trauma-informed hiring, career development, and learning practices in workplaces;

    c) Strengthened on-the-job learning, including workplace-based literacy and essential skills development.

8. Invest in innovation and planning to ensure that Inuit are supported to work on construction of all new housing across Inuit Nunangat, with wrap-around supports and supplementary skills development as needed.

9. Support research into Inuit Nunangat's informal economy, particularly considering hunting, fishing, and the arts, to strengthen understanding of Inuit Nunangat's economy overall.

10. Develop indicators to track Inuit progress toward better livelihoods overall, rather than focusing on employment rates and formal education outcomes to measure labour market development.

5. Conclusion

ITK remains committed to working in partnership with the Government of Canada to promote poverty reduction in Inuit communities. It is important that a CPRS is responsive to Inuit understandings of poverty and the unique circumstances that have led to common conditions of poverty across Inuit Nunangat. Inuit must be engaged in finding solutions to improve the standard of living for Inuit and ensure that this parallels that of other Canadians.

A CPRS should aim to help 'complete Canada' by achieving social equtity between Inuit and non-Indigenous Canadians. This can be done through processes of social equity based on fairness and justice. ITK takes a holistic view of poverty in Inuit regions and strongly believes that significant improvements can be made by comprehensively addressing the Inuit social determinants of health in a holistic and integrated manner.

A CPRS should be grounded within a framework that recognizes and promotes human rights and Indigenous rights. Self-determination should be a key principle underpinning a CPRS. Inuit and our governments and representative organizations must be actively engaged in determining ways in which to reduce poverty among Inuit, in our communities and throughout Inuit Nunangat.

Further, Inuit need greater direct involvement in and control over decision-making that affects us, and decisions need to reflect Inuit knowledge, values and priorities, ensuring that legislative, policy, and program measures that support poverty reduction also are appropriate and viable for Inuit. This includes measures to be taken in the priority areas of income security, housing security, food security, early learning and child care, health and wellness, and livelihoods.

Finally, ITK is committed to working towards reconciliation as called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. By developing and implementing a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy that is responsive to unique Inuit circumstances, priorities and worldviews, we have an opportunity to strategically advance our shared goals for reconciliation between Inuit and non-Inuit in Canada and healing from the past.

6. Appendix A: Acronyms Used

Acronym	Definition
CPRS	Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy
GNL	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
GNWT	Government of Northwest Territories
GN	Government of Nunavut
IQ	Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Inuit traditional knowledge)
IQK	Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Katimajiit
ISVs	Inuit Societal Values
ITK	Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
IRC	Inuivialuit Regional Corporation
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
TI	Tungasuvvingat Inuit
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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