



April 3 2017

Dear Mr. Ensom
Coalition on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth

Re: CHEO National Initiative - *The Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth*

Thank you for the opportunity for the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre (OICC) to endorse *The Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth* and to participate in carrying information to more Canadians about the adverse lifespan consequences for children and the society harm associated with physical punishment. There is no doubt that the OICC is prepared to provide a voice within this initiative.

The mandate of the OICC is to serve Inuit children, youth and their families. The objectives of the Agency are to provide Inuit children and youth with a learning environment that will enhance their overall development; to foster positive parenting through support and education; and, to promote the retention of Inuit culture and language. Our vision is *strong culture, strong families, strong community* and our mission in partnership with parents and the community is to foster strong and proud Inuit children, youth and families.

The Inuit cultural conversation includes acknowledging abuse in northern communities and the fact that Nunavut is working towards addressing the impact of intergenerational trauma and post-colonial circumstances. Colonization of Inuit took place over a very short historical time period, the intensity of which, caused Inuit to lose their way. Their culture, language and ways of being were suppressed through multiple federal, provincial and territorial government and church run policies of assimilation. These policies led to:

- The erosion of parenting skills (i.e. losing children to residential schools and children losing parents);
- The diminution of strong families (i.e. family members were often separated from one another and sent to hostile environments);
- The reduction of the male role in Inuit society and dependence on the Government of Canada (i.e. sled dogs were slaughtered by the RCMP so hunting was no longer feasible); and,
- Lack of leadership and spiritual guidance (i.e. Elders were unable to guide Inuit people because of the fragmentation of communities and families).

A proud people lost their culture, language and Inuit ways of being because they were purposefully destroyed during a painful historical period. The legacy of residential schools and inter-

generational trauma impacts Inuit to this day as Inuit society was founded on a system kinship relations that were systematically disrupted. Traumatized families and disrupted family bonds, ways of knowing and sharing knowledge and practices were destroyed by separation of parents and children for long periods of time.

Inuit Elders are now reaching back to reclaim their cultural strengths based on Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (Inuit knowledge past and present). These strengths help Inuit adapt successfully to changes that confront individuals and communities over which they still exert little control. It is essential that all Canadians recognize that we need to take a supportive role with Inuit families both in the north and the south. Many have moved to the south to improve their quality of life, for education, training and employment as well as to access health care, mental health and addictions treatments. When non-Indigenous agencies appear to judge the actions of Inuit parents while not acknowledging the historical and cultural context of the reality of the lives of Inuit, the trauma they have experienced nor the impact of trauma, the corrective measure for Inuit parents and fallout for children and youth may be perceived as judgmental and harmful. The two are not independent but rather concurrent of one another, however, this does not dissuade the OICC from supporting healthy family and community relationships.

The OICC is well aware of the effects of physical punishment on children and the dedicated work that is key to supporting parents through a number of preventative and intervention programs (i.e. Inunnguiniq Parenting Program, Healing Groups, On-the-land Culture Camps).

The OICC would be pleased to provide Inuit specific contextual information for the national knowledge mobilization initiative about physical punishment of children.

Thank you for the opportunity endorse and contribute to *The Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth*.

Respectfully



Karen Baker Anderson
OICC Executive Director

and,



Alyssa Flaherty-Spence
Chair, OICC Board of Directors