



**ISARUIT INUIT ELDERS' GATHERING REPORT:
A COLLABORATION BETWEEN
ISARUIT INUIT WOMEN'S SEWING CENTRE
& THE CITY OF OTTAWA
December 1 & 2, 2020**

A Zoom Assisted Meeting *In Situ* at Odawa Native Friendship Centre, Ottawa

Introduction

My name is Jeannie Manning. I was born and raised in Cape Dorset, NU. My mother tongue is Inuttitut and my second language is English. I'm an experienced interpreter and translator. It is always a challenge when one has to interpret from one language to another, especially when it is from my mother tongue, Inuttitut, to English.



Jeannie Manning, Interpreter/Translator

I was honored when Isaruit asked me to interpret for the Inuit Elders Gathering with the City of Ottawa on December 1 and 2 of 2020. I complied because as an Inuit elder making my home in Ottawa, I am also aware of many of the issues that Inuit have here in Ottawa, and what is needed in terms of services and opportunities for Inuit. I interpreted and translated to the best of my ability. I have also written this

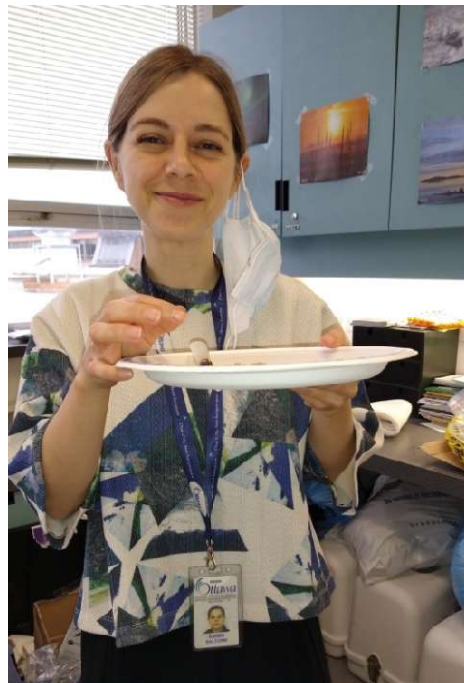
report of the proceedings, and submit it to you, hoping that you will be able to hear and understand what the Inuit Elders at the Isaruit Gathering were saying.

Please note that the comments written here in italics are translations from speeches given in Inuttitut. All comments written in normal type face are either direct comments, or summaries of direct comments, that the identified participants spoke in English. When there are comments with no speaker identified, these are comments that I have written simply reporting on the proceedings.

Background

(Written by Bev Illauq, Isaruit Centre Coordinator)

The Isaruit Inuit Elders' Gathering with City of Ottawa officials came about as a result of Karen Balcome, of the City of Ottawa's Community Arts + Social Engagement with the Recreation, Culture and Facility Services Department, reaching out to Isaruit as a part of the Odawa Native Friendship Centre's community hub at 815 St. Laurent Blvd. In the context of exploring collaborations in relation to the City of Ottawa's Older Adult Plan (OAP) , Karen asked the Isaruit Board members what they felt was a pressing concern for the elders of the Ottawa Inuit community in the context of being able to practise their sewing arts. All Board members agreed that the *disconnect between the City of Ottawa and the Inuit community of Ottawa* was one of the most glaring barriers to Inuit women in particular, and men as well, and especially Inuit elders, being able to live well and to engage in their cultural activities.



Karen Balcome enjoying muktaq at Isaruit's office. *Mammaktuq!*

The members of the Isaruit Board envisioned being able to bring several elders together to first of all (on day 1) talk together about their common experiences as long term residents of the City of Ottawa. They envisioned a second day of meetings to then meet with city officials (on day 2) to hear about services that other Ottawa residents benefit from, but that Inuit aren't yet able to access, and to then give input about Inuit- specific needs to City program leaders.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic conditions, Karen Balcome was able to work on this collaborative cultural gathering with Inuit elders, from January – December , 2020, meeting regularly with Bev Illauq, the Isaruit Centre Coordinator, and Susie Tiglik, the Programs Coordinator, with input from the Isaruit Board members, to develop and actualize plans for a two day Inuit Elders’ Gathering to be held at the beginning of December in a hybrid format, with the prescribed 10 people *in situ* at the Cedar Room of Odawa, and all other participants attending the meeting by Zoom. Karen called in the services of the Digital Arts Resource Centre, based in Ottawa, to provide the technical expertise and equipment needed to carry out this ambitious plan.

The results of all of this careful consultation and planning are presented in this report. Isaruit would like to thank the City of Ottawa, and Karen Balcome, Program Coordinator for the Arts and Culture program of the City of Ottawa in particular. With Karen’s unique and life-giving responsiveness, care and kindness, this Gathering was made possible. We are also thankful for the open-heartedness of the other City of Ottawa program people who attended our Gathering and spoke to us , especially Natali Zuniga, Cultural Development Initiatives, who extended financial support for the transcription of the Gathering proceedings and for the writing of this Report in English. Note that Jeannie Manning was hired as a simultaneous interpreter and managed to single-handedly interpret for both days. This is a huge gift from Jeannie Manning, and a testament to the strength of our Interpreter and Translator because usually it takes two translators to do even one day of Inuktitut – English Translation. As a result, Inuit elders have been able to begin to voice their concerns and air out the issues that we, the Inuit Community of Ottawa area face on a daily basis as residents of the City of Ottawa.

Attendees at the Elders’ Gathering:

Isaruit Attendees:

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| Martha Flaherty Chair, Isaruit Board of Directors | Aigah Attagutsiaq, Member, Isaruit Board of Directors |
| Beverly Illauq Isaruit Centre Coordinator | Susie Tiglik Isaruit Programs Coordinator |
| Elisapee Burmingham, Isaruit Instructor & Elder Centre Town | Susie Kettler, Isaruit Instructor & Elder Kemptville |
| Mary Alainga Inuit Elder Bishop’s Mills | Jeannie Okalik Inuit Elder Vanier |
| Zippie Npchasak Inuit Elder Ottawa | Manitok Thompson, Inuit Elder, & CEO of Inuit Broadcasting Corporation Carleton Place |

City of Ottawa Attendees:

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| Karen Balcome Program Coordinator Community Arts + Social Engagement Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services Department | Natali Zuniga Indigenous and New Immigrant Community Cultural Developer Cultural Development and Initiatives Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services Department |
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| Anik Deprès Officer Cultural Funding Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services Department | Jonathan Browns Officer Public Art Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services Department |
| Monika Banel-Boily Case Worker Employment and Social Services East Community & Social Services Department | Cathy Shepertycki, Caroline Matt and Elena Abel also attended briefly as time permitted. |

Day 1 of Inuit Elders' Gathering

On the first day of the conference, elders physically present were Chairperson, Martha Flaherty, Jeannie Okalik, Susie Etok-Kettler, Elisapee Birmingham, and Aigah Attagutsiak, and Jeannie Manning, interpreter, facilitator Beverly Illauq, and Isaruit Sewing Center Programs Coordinator, Karen Balcome from the City of Ottawa, and Susie Tiglik, Isaruit Programs Coordinator. Also present was guest speaker, Manitok Thompsen, CEO for Inuit Broadcasting Corporation here in Ottawa.

After some technical issues with Zoom and with the electronic devices, the conference began with facilitator Beverly Illauq introducing elder chairperson Martha Flaherty and thanking everyone for their patience. Afterwards, Chairperson Martha Flaherty made her opening comments by welcoming everyone and said that the conference will officially begin after lighting of the *qulliq* (a lamp used by Inuit) by Susie Etok-Kettler and Aigah Attagutsiak.

Lighting of the Qulliq by Elder Susie Etok-Kettler and Elder Aigah Attagutsiak, Reverend/Pastor

Elders Susie Etok-Kettler, and Aigah Attagutsiak were tasked with the lighting of the *qulliq* which signifies the importance of any event, and it is used by Inuit organizations when they have ceremonies, conferences, meetings, and other gatherings. The *qulliq* is a tool that Inuit have used for thousands of years. The *qulliq* has played a key role in the survival of the people because the land and the environment that Inuit live on is one of the harshest in the world.



Qulliq made by Ottawa Inuit artist, Ben Illauq for the Gathering

Here's what Susie and Aigah had to share about the *qulliq*;

'The *qulliq* had many uses. They were used for cooking, heating, drying, lighting, and boiling water for tea. A large pot filled with food and water would be cooked with the *qulliq*'.

Beverly Illauq's summary of Susie's presentation about the *qulliq*:

'Susie was explaining the importance of the *qulliq* as she was lighting the *qulliq* and Aigah was helping her. They were talking about how a *qulliq* is used for warmth in traditional shelters like *igluvigait* (igloos), or *qarmait* (sod huts), and *tupiit* (tents), and it was not only used for warmth but also for cooking, for drying out clothing, but maybe the most important was that it was used as a source of light in the dark of winter and at night. So it was a very important, very portable, very renewable source of heat, light, and warmth'.

After the Lighting of the *Qulliq* ceremony and opening prayer by elder Aigah Attagutsiak, Chairperson Martha Flaherty made her opening comments and then introduced guest speaker, Manitok Thompson.

Elder Chairperson Martha Flaherty's opening comments:

In her opening comments, Chairperson Martha began by introducing Isaruit, a sewing group organization. Here is a summary of her opening comments:



Martha Flaherty, Chair of the Isaruit Board

"We are Isaruit board members, and we chose Isaruit as a name for our organization as Inuit women's sewing group. Inuit women need to sprout wings to begin soaring to become self-sufficient by:

- *Using wholistic healing as an approach to counter issues and hardships caused by past traumatic experiences.*
- *Representing our Inuit Culture using their unique art creations to represent Inuit culture such as carving, drawings, creations made from skin/pelt/hide, knitting, beading, singers and performance artists. As elders, we want to be involved for the sakes of our youths.*

Before the COVID pandemic, we were able to meet often to sew and do some crafts, and now is a good time to take advantage of our opportunity to keep our culture and traditions alive.

Many of us chose to live in the south for different reasons. Some people move south to seek further education in universities, colleges; some for lack of essential services in the north, and some of the most common reasons are due to lack of housing and escaping from domestic violence. There are many reasons why Inuit opt to stay in the south once they leave home.

Inuit and First Nations ought to be recognized as nations with their own cultures. We have many good values and traditions in our cultures, but we haven't been able to practice our own culture due to barriers.

Today is a good opportunity for us to acknowledge and to be proud of Inuit and First Nations' cultures. This also talks about keeping the Inuit language and culture alive.

Urban Inuit would also like to know where to go for help because they get treated differently from southerners by service providers so they get discouraged although there are establishments to help southerners and their elders.

Inuit would benefit by attaining a co-op housing style building that would house Inuit elders like First Nations have for their elders. Those are some of the issues we will be addressing during our conference.

More Inuit will be coming to Ottawa in the future and the Inuit population has increased and will continue to increase. Thank you."

Guest speaker Manitok Thompson

Guest speaker Elder Manitok Thompson began her comments by stating that Chairperson Martha had phoned and invited her to be a guest speaker at Elders' Conference and then introduced herself to the City staff. She said that she is formerly an MLA and cabinet minister in Nunavut Territory, and is now working as CEO for Inuit Broadcasting Corporation in Ottawa.



Elder Manitok Thompson, Elder & CEO of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation

Manitok then spoke of her origins stating that she was an Inuk and that she cannot become non-Indigenous. She said that she didn't know any English when she started school. She stated that she was brought up traditionally and has a different culture. To get better acquainted and to share her cultural knowledge with her neighbors, she invited some white ladies to her house to teach them how to skin raccoons, how to prepare the skins, and what they can make out of salvaged leather jackets and couches, and other things.

In her presentation, Manitok made references to the following topics and also made recommendations:

Racism:

In reference to racism, Manitok stated that the public perception of Inuit in Ottawa is all negative because Inuit are seen as addicts, have their children taken away from them and put in foster homes, homeless, and prostitutes. She said that not all Inuit are like that and that a lot of Inuit are successful and doing very well in Ottawa. She said that help is given to whoever is going through a hard time.

Manitok went on further to say that there are a lot of capable Inuit who are responsible, who want to help each other, and that sin is not distinctive to Inuit society and that it's human behavior. She said that many people from other nations like the Chinese, Japanese, Latinos, Whites, Blacks, and others also have similar problems. She also stressed that Inuit are survivors and can pretty well survive anywhere in the world.

To add to the deprivation of services that Inuit in the south encounter, Manitok stated that Inuit who opt to live in the south aren't really recognized as beneficiaries of Nunavut Land Claims and that that is akin to racism. She said that Inuit living in the south are not getting benefits from the Land Claims royalties and Land Claims Economic Development and that they are disqualified from beneficiary programs because they live outside the territory. That contradicts the NLCA because it clearly states that a beneficiary can live anywhere and still be recognized as such.

Lack of Inuit representation at political level

Manitok spoke on behalf of urban Inuit saying that they are not represented by the Mayor and the city council, and that Inuit pretty well just vote during elections. She used Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated as an example stating Inuit living in the south are expected to cast votes for NTI president even though they don't benefit.

Manitok went on to say that although ITK is an organization to represent all Inuit across Canada, Inuit in Ottawa aren't even on their agenda and that Inuit are without representation in politics. She said federal and provincial members are negligent of Inuit because nothing on their agenda is Inuit specific and said, "We know who we are, and yet, elected politicians have never recognized us."

Inuit organizations in Ottawa

In reference to the Inuit representative organizations, Manitok said that she's happy that there's Tunngasuvvingat Inuit and Inuuqatigiit because they serve Inuit through food banks and help with housing, but that the housing provided allocated to Inuit is not the best in Ottawa and does not meet standard requirements. We got out of the territory too because of housing crisis.



Drop In at Isaruit Inuit Women's Sewing Centre in Ottawa

Law enforcement and other professional service providers

Manitok then spoke of the fear that law enforcement officers put in indigenous people. She stated that indigenous people have come to fear them because of their racism, prejudice, and discriminatory attitudes. She also stated that the way doctors and nurses treat indigenous people is not much better than those of law enforcers. Here are Manitok's recommendations to the Ottawa City Council:

- *Give an orientation to all the police on Inuit culture by having Inuit deliver a workshop on their culture and their identity so the police can be better informed about Inuit, and recommended that the same be done with Social Services because they seem to be in the habit of taking Inuit children away from their parents.

- *Consult and involve elders when it comes to dealing with families because elders have wisdom and know how to give guidance and sound advice to younger Inuit because youths always have respect for their elders.

- *Have medical professionals like doctors, nurses, psychologist, oncologists, and others serving in health departments attend these workshops.

Identity Assimilations

Manitok also brought up the problem that Inuit have with being assimilated to First Nations. She said the most obvious difference between the Inuit and First Nations is that First Nations have powwows but Inuit don't. She suggested that Inuit be given the privilege Inuit to display and demonstrate aspects of their culture through celebrations that Inuit have in certain times of the year.

She suggested having a *qaggivik*, a winter fest, and have igloos so they can have a place to demonstrate skinning animals, skin preparations, and sewing items made from skins of seal, caribou, beaver, etc., etc. Manitok feels that politically correct is totally off the wall here in the Inuit culture and that it really needs to be corrected politically.

Here are further recommendations that Manitok gave:

*Have carving shops for Inuit men to fill up their time with productivity because they need something to do. They came from the north where they hunted, and were always busy doing something outside

Some become homeless. They've got nothing to do. They're not going to mow the lawn; they're not going to cut the trees. They're not going to become cooks at McDonald's.

*Have a TV broadcast for Inuit like the Punjabe have. If the Punjabe can have it, why don't Inuit have something like that?

*That Inuit be given the same consideration as the Chinese and have their own stores and restaurants, and have an Inuit food store that will sell whole seals not yet skinned, walrus meat, fish so Inuit can have the meats they're used to having in their diet.

One example that Manitok gave was Kumik Lodge that is funded through Indigenous Affairs that is supposed to hire Metis, First Nations, and Inuit. She said that they just hire one Inuk every three years and sometimes every two years. Manitok said that that presents a very good opportunity for Inuit to teach their culture but that Inuit are not sought out although the federal government funding agreements with all these organizations clearly states Inuit, First Nations, Metis. She stressed further that all funding that comes from the federal government covers all three nations but the federal government indigenous affairs Kumik Lodge hires one Inuk every two to three years creating an imbalance.

Lack of materials for Arts & Crafts

The last thing that Manitok touched on was about the unavailability of certain fabrics for sewing in Ottawa. She said that a lot of the material they get comes from Montreal; good material for making parkas, jackets, and other practical items. She added that the fabric stores here only offer materials to make fashion dresses, wedding dresses, blazers, and so on. She suggested meeting with Fabric Land headquarters about their fabric stock.

Manitok then concluded her comments by sharing a funny episode that she'd had with her young granddaughter and ended the session with some laughter.

After Manitok Thompson finished speaking, Chairperson Martha Flaherty opened the floor for the other Inuit Elders in the room to give their comments.

Comments from Elders

Aigah Attagutsiak – Anglican Minister &-Elder:



Rev Aigah Attagutsiak, an Inuit Elder Living in Ottawa

*Translation:

You all know that I am from Arctic Bay and I am glad to be here and meeting with you all. I am thankful that we are able to meet even when it's a very trying time for us all. I have now lived here for 22 years because I moved here on November 20th, 1998.

It's good to hear that efforts are now being made to make Inuit more visible through their art and culture. As children, we were taught that if we want something, we have to work for it. It's easy to forget the values we were given as children but they come back to us when we begin to stand on our own two feet. I know that creating something with our hands is therapeutic because it helps us to get a better perspective of where we want to go and what we want to do in our lives and it helps to remind us that we are an able people. Inuit, need each other for support and to keep our strength, and when we stand together as a people, we are bound to be noticed. Thank you.

Following Aigah Attagutsiak's comments, elder Mary Alainga posed this suggestion:

Suggestion from Elder Mary Alainga

Referring to Manitok Thompson's previous comments about the judicial system, Elder Mary Alainga suggested that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Inuit Traditional Knowledge) be used as a reference guide if workshops are going to be given to law enforcers, judicial systems, and other service providers about Inuit, their culture, their values, and the transitions they experienced like colonization and residential schools. She also stated that the document was very well written and could be used as a tool if there is going to be a workshop.

After Mary Alainga's comments, Martha stated that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is being used as a reference guide.

Elisapee Birmingham, Elder:

A residence for elders was brought up so I want just want to say that First Nations have a residence for their elders which is a good idea. When we bring up the things that are lacking for Inuit specifically, no one seems to hear us and nothing changes.

Chairperson Martha reiterated that the need for seniors' residence was often brought up at Elders' Tea and that it would be good to have something similar to Elders' Home that is owned/managed by G'ignul Housing. She also informed the elder members that representatives from the City will be coming the next day to talk about existing programs and that it would be a good time to voice requests and recommendations that were brought up in day one of the conference and then continued with comments from the elders.

Jeannie Okalik – Elder:

If Inuit can attain a residence to house elderly Inuit with roughly the same age range, I am sure they would be more comfortable and have less worry. I would like to see Inuit continue to strive for a residence to house Inuit elders. Thank you.

Susie Etok-Kettler – Elder in the Ottawa Area since 1973



I don't have much to add. A residence for Inuit elders is what we need and want for aging Inuit here. We also have to consider the children, the youths, and adults who will become elders in the future. Inuit would benefit if they were to secure a building that would house elders now and in the future.

Comments from TI Culture Coordinator, Zippie Nochasak

Culture Coordinator at Tunngasuvvingat Inuit introduced herself and spoke of the programs that TI runs at 1071 Richmond Road, their head office. She stated that she is responsible for activities like Elders' Tea every Friday and other programs run by TI. She said that anyone is welcome to join virtual Elders' Tea.

Chairperson Martha commented that it's become harder to attend Elders' Tea since the head office was moved to Richmond Road is now too far for some elders to attend due to transportation issues. She said that Inuit like to participate in, like arts, music, dance, theatre, physical fitness, economics, health, mental health, community gathering, meeting together, financial help, sewing arts, materials, selling, and many more. She also informed the elder members that there will be a question period and gave a list of questions that will require a response and gave an example of possible responses.

What is lacking that would help make life better for Inuit?

How can we, as elders, contribute to help establish resources and services that would help Inuit?

What do we need?

What are we searching for?

For example, things like drawing/graphic arts, singing, dancing, youths performing drama in the theatre, physical fitness, economic ventures, health, mental health, community outreach, social gatherings, financial aid, sewing, and other things we'd need like a boutique/store, a warehouse, and retail businesses.

Aigah Attagutsiak, Reverend/Pastor, Elder mentioned the issue of homelessness and how the homeless have to rely on shelters like Shepherds of Good Hope. She said that more support should be given to the shelters because they really help the homeless when it comes to getting counselling and support.

Lack of Medical and Mental Health Services

Mental health issues are continuing to rise globally and has become one of the biggest issues worldwide. Inuit are the most affected due to lack of mental health services. Many Inuit are suffering from depression and post traumatic syndrome disorder (PTSD). A solution is needed for this very important aspect of healing to ensure that support is available to those who are in need of it.

Jeannie Okalik – Elder:

Inuit workers are really needed. As one gets older, there's always a need to have someone to talk to especially when one is going through depression. The mind can overpower one's well being, and that's when it's crucial to have someone to talk to. It would be really good to have Inuit counsellors in mental health services because it's comforting to have someone that can help others in their mother tongue.

Mary Alainga - Elder:

Yes, thank you. While we're on the topic of support services, those of us on medical treatment for illnesses like cancer and other sicknesses, we too need support. Depression, hopelessness, and despair become really intense when there is no support for patients. I feel strongly that there should be a support group for people undergoing treatments for illnesses.

I've called medical services to see if there's any support services for Inuit like First Nations and other indigenous people and left messages for them to call me. They never return my calls.

Some of us cannot stomach food, and sometimes we eat more than we can take. It would be really good if there was a support service in place for people battling cancer and other illnesses. A lot of Inuit that are here for medical treatment go through the same thing and they are either at Larga Baffin or at home.

There is a real need for our own support services because it's painful to walk this journey alone. We need people who can bring comfort and words of wisdom to us.

Martha- Elder Chairperson:

Mary, thank you for your comments regarding mental health. Many have begun to voice their concerns about the need for mental health services and it's something that's often mentioned in other organizational meetings that I attend. It's often talked about but nothing is being done about it. Mental health is a big issue that is being addressed nationally in Canada.

Medical services should work with Inuit organizations and mental health service providers and identify what is needed to improve existing services.

Language Signage Issues

The issue surrounding signage issues was brought up. There are many who are not literate in English, nor can they read in French, Arabic, Chinese, and other languages because they are foreign to Inuit. The following comments were made by elders regarding signage issues.

Mary Alainga - Elder:

There are two employees at TI on Richmond Road who are looking at possible spaces in hospitals and how much it would cost to have that space within the hospitals here in Ottawa. The signages in hospitals are usually written in english and french; it would be good to have them in inuttitut too. However, since everything costs money, there may not be any funding for signages.

Mary suggested that TI look into the signage issue since they work closely with Larga Baffin.

Elisapee – Elder:

I, too, would like to see signages in inuttitut in publics places especially now that there's a pandemic. I'm sure there are warning signs in public places.



Elisapee Burmingham, Inuit Elder Sewing Instructor Living in Ottawa

After the signage issue was brought up, Chairperson Martha mentioned the lack of transportation support for elders.

Transportation issues

Chairperson Martha Flaherty:

I'm an elder now and I don't drive, so it's become harder for me to make it to my medical and other appointments.

Odawa Friendship Center provides transportation for their people and elders when they have to go somewhere. I would like to have transportation services to be taken into consideration. Thank you. Next. Jeannie Manning.

Jeannie Manning- Elder:

I would like everyone to pay attention to what I have to say because it's very important. A lot of Inuit are losing their children to CAS (Children's Aid Society) due to alcohol and drug abuse and violence. This is troublesome for Inuit because it's not Inuit culture to take children away from their homes.

In the Inuit culture, people help and support others that are hurting in their community. I know because I have interpreted during consultations about a lot of things that affect Inuit and dysfunctional families was one of the biggest concerns that was being addressed. Community support helps families get through very tough times. Many have gotten their children back with the support of their community.

If Inuit children are going to continue to be taken from their homes, building is needed that would house only Inuit children so they can have a place to stay while their parent(s) get help with their addictions.

Having an Inuit specific home for children would help keep the children from losing their culture, traditions, and language.

Inuit need a building so they can have a place to put Inuit children that have been apprehended by Social Services where they can have visits with their parent(s) and have a room for family counselling. It should also be a place that offers programs where the elders can pass on their knowledge and wisdom to youths.

In order to help families who are in these situations, there needs to be a safe place where their children can stay and where they can receive family counselling. I wanted to bring this up because it's very important. Thank you.

Following elders' comments, facilitator for Isaruit Beverly Illauq introduced herself, and Karen Balcome who is involved in Culture & Art, and working with elders in different cultural groups in Ottawa. Beverly stated she and Martha had been working and preparing for this meeting for three years. She informed those present that they had begun talking to Karen Balcome around December of last year.

Martha Flaherty, Simona Arnatsiak, and Beverly Illauq prepared a schedule for the elders' conference to decide where and when it would be held, and make it easier for aging elders to attend in Ottawa. Beverly then gave a summary of all the issues that were brought up by the elders; issues that pertain to housing, language, medical and mental health services, racism, lack of representation, homelessness, lack of cultural recognition, and lack of transportation, and so on.

Following Beverly's summary, some elders made the following comments:

Jeannie O. – Elder:

Today is a good day for me because it's good see and talk with other people. It was also good to hear the speaker we had this morning because she brought up a lot of things that needed to be said, and also from everyone of you. This is good for me.

My hope is that the recommendations regarding housing will bring a positive outcome, and counselling services. I have friends but I don't like unloading my issues on them and beyond them, theirs is really no place to go to for counselling although there is a crises line. It would be helpful if there was a counselling service with trained counsellors. Sometimes, TI falls short in this area. Thank you.



Mary Alainga - Elder:

Thank you. I really liked what Manitok said earlier. We need to unite and take action. Inuit are stronger when they work together as one and produce positive outcomes. We also need people with particular skillsets in place that we can choose for help. It would be good if Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit were taken to consideration as a guidance source.

It would also be good if a health committee was formed and have a member from the Mental Health Services. From what I heard this morning, it became obvious that Inuit need to unify and work together because we are stronger when unified.

We are strong, but we encounter prejudice and discrimination from white people because they tend to stereotype Inuit as naïve and stupid. They think we don't know this. Inuit are very knowledgeable.

If we want our children, and grandchildren to have better futures, we need to come together as one and apply our strengths to be effective.

The Children's Aid Services that take children away from their homes also need to be educated in a place where they can be physically present and spoken to face to face. There is a need to sit down with them in a circle so they can hear how their actions affect the lives of the family they are supposedly helping. I think there can be a positive change this way.

Also, Inuit country food tastes good, especially for Inuit who suffer from health problems. It's important to our diet so we need to find a way to make it more available for Inuit. Thank you for inviting me to this meeting and giving me a chance to voice many of the things that Inuit need. Thank you, everyone.

Recommendation to have a regional rehabilitation center

After elder Mary spoke her comments, elder Aigah Attagutsiak spoke next and made a recommendation to have rehabilitation centers where people who are fighting addictions can get help and made the following comments. She stated that this should be seen as a number one priority, and that funding should be sought so this service can be delivered and provide support to those who need it. Aigah also stressed that Inuit can help people seeking rehabilitation if they had funding resources available to them.

Chairperson Martha supported Aigah's comments and recommendation and stated that funding is always an issue and that budget cuts always affect the level of services that can be delivered. She advised the elder members and others present that this is something that needs to be looked into because Inuit are also citizens of Ottawa right in the federal government's backyard.

Reference to Manitok's comments regarding West Embassy Homecare facility

At this point, elder Mary Alainga made a reference to Manitok's comments regarding the West Embassy Homecare residence for elders and the handicapped and wanted to know if they're accepting visitors. She was advised that there is no visiting allowed at this time due to the covid pandemic.

Aigah commented that it has become almost impossible to do her usual pastoral rounds of visits to the hospitals and the homecare facility. She said that not even spouses, family, relatives, and friends are allowed to visit because of the pandemic. She stressed that the pandemic has made it hard for everyone who has loved ones staying at Embassy West Homecare facility.

Day one of Elders' Conference ended with Beverly Illauq, Coordinator for Isaruit informing everyone present that more comments can be made the next day and that they will be able to questions to the City delegates.

Following Beverly's comments, Chairperson Martha asked Aigah, Elder Reverend/Pastor, to close the meeting with a prayer.

End of day 1 at 3:00 pm.

Day 2 of the Gathering

Day two of the Elders' Conference began with a presentation by Elder Aigah Attagutsiak about the *qulliq* (Inuit lamp). Aigah's presentation is recorded in the transcript of the meeting so anyone who wants to read it can ask for it from Isaruit. She then proceeded to open the meeting with a prayer upon request from elder Chairperson Martha Flaherty.

After the opening prayer, the next phase of the meeting was introductions of elder members and the city delegates. Chairperson Martha told the members to give their names, their ages, where they're originally from, and why they chose to live in Ottawa.

Introductions

Elder Martha Flaherty, Elder

My name is Martha Flaherty, which is my given name, but according to the federal government, my identification number is E9-1900. I'm originally from northern Quebec. We were relocated when I had just turned 5 to Grise Fiord which was very far and dark.

We barely survived there. I came here in 1979 before a lot of you were born. I came here for education and I got stuck here.

Suzy Etok-Kettler, Elder:

My name is Susie, Susie Etok-Kettler originally from Kangiqsualujjuaq (George River). I got married in 1973 and I've been here ever since. I've made trips to go and visit my mother before she passed away but it's gotten too expensive to travel so I don't make regular trips there anymore. I was born in 1946.

Jeannie Okalik, Elder:

My name is Jeannie Okalik, and I'm originally from Pangnirtung. I'll have been here for 30 years come January. I first came down here on a holiday trip to visit my little sister and my brother Pauloosie, and I've been on a holiday ever since (laughter). I think I'll live here for the rest of my life because I like Ottawa. I also see a lot of other Inuit that live here and help each other.

Elisapee Birmingham, Elder:

My name is Elisapee. Back in the day, we never used last names so my dogtag was E7-561 and it's the one thing I've never forgotten because there's a lot of things I don't remember anymore. That was my number.

I used to want to come and live in the south when I was still with my first husband, but he never wanted to move south. After we'd divorced and both remarried, my second husband and I came to live down here. I like living here so we continue to live here. My full name Elisapee Aninnga-Birmingham. That's it.

Beverly Illauq - Facilitator, Isaruit:

Beverly Illauq is my name; I was born Beverly Howard. I was born in southern Ontario around Markham and my home community is... was the south but for 20 years, I lived in Clyde River, and I still consider it my home community because that's where my family is grounded right now.

Then I left there because, like Martha said, I had to leave domestic violence and I ended up in Regina for a while and I've been living here for ten years.

What I do is I'm the Center Coordinator of Isaruit at the moment but I do a lot of other things; mostly parenting and grand-mothering, and housecleaning. *Taima* (That's it).

Aigah Attagutsiak – Elder, Reverend/Pastor:

I am Aigah Attagutsiak and although I'm known by a good number of people, I will introduce myself as requested. My first name is Aigah, my middle name is Akumalik, and my last name is Attagutsiak. I was born July 25, 1959, and I am originally from Ippiarjuk (Arctic Bay) on Baffin Island. I have now lived in Ottawa for 22 years as of November 20th.

I do a lot of sewing, and I am a pastor. I am a grandmother so I help out with my grandchildren. What I enjoy doing most is making visits to hospitals to see inpatients, but due to the pandemic, I haven't visited as much as I'd like to because there are absolutely no visiting allowed. We are advised not to make any visits anywhere and it is better to comply with the restrictions in order to protect our loved ones and ourselves. Like many others, I'm complying with the restriction order. That's all. Thank you.

Mary Alainga, Elder:

Good morning to you, too. Thank you for inviting me. I was born in Frobisher Bay, now Iqaluit, and I grew up there. My parents names were Simonie and Inga Alainga. I moved down south to see what resources were available that could help. That's why I moved down south.

I worked for ITK (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami) for a while. I wasn't working when I got pregnant with my son. We'd lived here for some time and then returned to Iqaluit in 1995. In 2002, we came down here live and have lived here since. We've lived here for 18 years now. That's it. Thank you.

Zippie Nochasak – Culture Coordinator, TI:

I want to begin by thanking you for inviting me to be here today. I was born in 1961 in Nain, Labrador. I came down here to work on contract for one year and I now have seven grandchildren. I came down here to work on a one year contract in 2010 but I'm still here at Tunngasuvvingat Inuit. I make mittens by sewing, and parkas, and I also make beaded necklaces/chokers.



Nunavut Sivinaksavut Students sharing country food with Inuit Elders and Zippie Nochasak at Tungasuvvingat Inuit (Ottawa)

I do virtual instructions on beading and sewing. I love what I do because I'm helping others through teaching. I'll conclude by thanking you for inviting me to be here.

After the elder members completed introducing themselves, the City delegates took their turn in introducing themselves and stated their positions in the City and gave a detailed account of what they do in their positions.

Karen Balcome:

My name is Karen Balcome, and I work in the City of Ottawa with a team called *Community Arts & Social Engagement*. And so, what that means is that we do programming that puts the community, that puts the emphasis on the community and their role in the creative process.

So, often our work involves communities that are facing barriers to being creative. So we do work with children, with youth, with adults and older adults.

Natali Zuniga – City delegate:

Thank you so much. Thank you everybody. Just briefly, my name is Natali Zuniga. I come from coast of Peru. I was telling Martha that my roots are indigenous come from Andean Caixuan? roots Peru, I wasn't able to learn Caixuan? because of colonization like many of... many Inuit anyway; and I am here actually because of that as well so I am immigrant here because of colonization effect.

Cultural & Initiatives Unit works in encouraging facilitating, developing cultural awareness engagement and cultural action. Our principles are access and inclusion and they are fundamental in all the work we do. We seek broad and deep partnerships with external and internal estate stakeholders. That is the way that we work.

Anik Deprès – City delegate (cont'd):

Thank you so much. Yes, my name is Anik Deprès; I'm a cultural funding officer with the city of Ottawa. I work in a unit called the Cultural Funding Support Unit. This unit manages 17 cultural funding

programs and awards; and I manage in particular, one program called the Heritage Funding Program and the activities that you mentioned yesterday, and some of the story-telling, the sewing, and some of the winter activities that you're proposing I think would fit the objectives of this program.

I will share my contact information, and I will also share the website where you can find the information. So, I'll be happy to respond to any questions you may have after the presentations. Thank you very much.

Jonathan Browns – City delegate:

Thank you very much. I'm an artist and curator and I work at the City of Ottawa, and I have for about nineteen years and I manage the City's art collection. Since everybody's talking about their age; I was born here in Ottawa in 1961. I thought I would share a presentation, so I will do that.

So I hope you can see this. So the City of Ottawa Public Art Program is a program mainly for visual artists and we collect, commission, and exhibit arts that are both local, national, and international.

Monika Banel-Baily, City delegate:

I work for Ontario Works with Social Services. The Goal at Employment & Social Services is to improve the quality of life of residents. We try to do that by providing a few different services including employment support, financial services, support with medical supplies, and social supports as well.

Call 3-1-1, find out what's available, and even if you're not eligible for this program, there's other programs that you can be referred to, so I highly, highly recommend that you do call them and check about that.

Amanda Kilabuk,

Amanda Kilabuk, the CEO of Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI), was briefly available and introduced herself. She explained what she does at TI and invited the City Delegates to attend a gathering set for early 2021. She said that TI is hearing from community members and wants to work together with Isaruit to figure out ways to support the Inuit elders and the community.

Summary of Objectives of this Elders' Gathering

Following Amanda Kilabuk's introduction, Isaruit Coordinator Beverly Illauq provided an oral summary of everything that was brought up by the elders at the conference and the reasons given why it's so important for Inuit to be recognized as a nation with their own culture, traditions, customs, and values.

Summary of What City Delegates heard from the Elders on Day 1

Karen Balcome, City delegate, also gave a short summary of what the delegates heard from the Inuit elders and that there was some very valuable information that was shared. Following the short summary, the round of delegates' introductions continues.

Dan – City delegate:

I work for DARC, the Digital Arts Resource Center located in the Arts Court beside the Rideau Centre, a non-profit co-op group that works out camera equipment and offers rental of different equipment for

film makers and artists working in digital media, digital arts. We also have exhibition spaces so if you are interested or if you know anybody who's interested in film making or just art practice in using digital media, or wants to learn, just check out our website digitalartsresourcecenter.ca.

We have grant programs and a bunch of different stuff to check out there if you or anyone you know is interested, so just to mention that. Thank you for having me and thank you to Karen as well. Does anyone have any questions? and if so, feel free to drop me a line, my e-mail is on the DARC website. If ever in the future you want to get in touch, I'm more than happy to chat.

Summary of Recommendations:

Before the conference concluded, elder Mary Alaing made these recommendations:

- *That the City working with the Inuit organization to hire an interpreter/rep. for Inuit at the City Hall on specific days and leave messages for Inuk for services required by Inuit calling who are not understood by non-Inuit;

- *That workshops be given to create Inuit awareness to officials in the City of Ottawa; and that officials such as policemen, correctional officers, and security show more respect to Inuit who gets squashed just because we're a minority;

- *That TI housing, and anyone working with housing to meet with the City to get an Inuit Center.

- *And City's presentation, I encourage whoever is able to write to them to partner, to stay informed, get everything and all kinds of information on paper.

- *And hire an interpreter for work when they're doing stuff at the City for Inuit to understand better. Yes, we can speak english, and we can understand some, but the comprehension of the "big words", political words, should be broken down some so that we understand at our level.

Before the conference closed, Karen Balcome made these comments:

Karen Balcome – City delegate:

You know, mostly, I just want to say thank you for everyone who's been involved, everyone in the room here; thank you for taking this big journey with technology together. You know, you've done incredible, even though I know it's been frustrating at times but you've done so well, and I'm so glad we were able to connect with those of you who are at home, I think that was so valuable.

And I also really want to thank Jeannie Manning who has been providing translation throughout this event with the support of Cultural Development & Initiatives, they were able to jump on board and support us in that way.

Beverly Illaug, Isaruit Centre Coordinator

One thing we have learned through the process of collaborating to present this Elders' Gathering is that if we are to work effectively with our Inuit Community in the City of Ottawa, we need to allow Inuit to think and speak in Inuktitut. Having Jeannie so willingly and so clearly translating both ways between Inuktitut and English has made all the difference for all of us today. I think that we have all truly heard each other. I think that going forward we have much work to do together to improve conditions for the Inuit community living in our City.

Elder Reverend/Pastor Aigah Attagutsiak closed the meeting with a prayer.

Taima.



Susie Etok Kettler, Sewing Instructor and Martha Flaherty, Chair of Isaruit Board, thanking Karen for her contribution to the event