



**Ulukhaktok, NT**

# **Community Conversation Summary**

**February 15, 2023**

**CAMPAIGN 2000**  
END CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY

## Introduction

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Below, we've summarized the main themes of the community conversation with people with lived experience of poverty in Ulukhaktok, NT. The conversations were hosted by the *Tahiuqtiit Women's Society* in partnership with *Campaign 2000: End Child and Family Poverty*.

The event had 45 attendees who participated in cultural activities such as sewing seal skin mittens, hearing elders' stories, and celebrating the birthdays of two elders. 20 people participated in the community conversation, which was conducted in small group and casual interview formats. The event was not audio-recorded at the request of participants; this summary reflects the notes and quotations relayed by the *Tahiuqtiit Women's Society*.

This summary is in three sections based on the topics of discussion. Main themes with related content and quotes are presented for each topic. The conversation content will be further analyzed over the next year, alongside content from other conversations across the country, to help create a community-driven indicator framework and recommendations for action.

We've tried to be true to the content and emotion of the conversation, which touched on the sensitive and difficult topics of experiencing poverty and discrimination, and that may come through in what's presented here.

Since this is a summary, we have reflected back what participants shared. With that in mind, there may be content presented here that does not align with Campaign 2000's values or platform.

Food insecurity was a major theme of the discussion; in particular, the high cost and low quality of store-bought food and the increasing cost of gasoline and supplies for hunting and harvesting are contributing to community members going without food and/or having to rely on family members to fill in the gaps. Inuit knowledge and approaches to food insecurity and other poverty-related challenges, such as poor housing conditions, low social assistance rates, and not enough jobs, were named as essential to any action moving forward.

## Experiences of poverty in Ulukhaktok

### *Food insecurity*

- People are going without food:
  - “We hear of people going hungry way too often and having no food in the fridge.”
  - Parents having to send kids to school when they know they’re hungry – really hard to do, and hard for kids to learn on an empty stomach
- As a fly-in community, there is a shipment from Yellowknife once a week with foods like milk, bread, fruits, vegetables – often already going bad
  - Results in limited access to healthy food
- Higher price of food because of shipping costs – higher than most places in the country, e.g., basic food for family of four for one week costs about \$600
- Elders having to help their kids and grandkids with food on a monthly basis after receiving their pension or old age security
- High cost of gas and hunting/harvesting supplies – impacts access to traditional/cultural food – see below.

### *High costs and limited availability of all supplies*

- Inflation costs, especially for gas – means that hunting and harvesting are becoming too expensive
- Increased costs of buying snowmobiles, boats, and equipment for hunting – these are higher than most places in Canada due to limited supplier options and high cost of shipping
- Limited products in stores, e.g., no hygiene products
- Companies profiting from high prices, like Northwest Company, are taking and taking without giving back to communities

### *Housing*

- Poor housing conditions

### *Health and mental health*

- Limited access to health care: “Due to the lack of healthcare and mental health care, a lot of our people go without seeing a doctor for many months.”
- High rates of suicide – living in poverty, with poor housing and poor health care, contributes to this.

### *Inadequate income*

- People are working hard, but a paycheque every two weeks is often only enough to pay rent and power – rely on family to fill in the gaps with food.

### **What is working in your community?**

#### *Inuit approaches and existing resources to address food insecurity*

- Sharing food:
  - “We help our families when they’re in need of food.”
  - Inuit share their harvest of musk ox, caribou, fish, seal, duck, geese, and beluga – try to make sure elders have food.
- Hunting and harvesting: Benefits of connection to land, pride in providing for families, cultural food, healthier than processed food, gives food for months.
- School programs that provide healthy snacks for kids in school

### **Priorities for action are...**

#### *Implement solutions to inequalities in culturally relevant and appropriate ways*

- Food insecurity
  - More funding for food banks in small communities – be able to purchase healthy food for families in need
  - School lunch programs, emergency food hampers
  - Supplement freight costs of food and harvesting equipment to fly-in communities
  - More funding for hunting and harvesting
  - Affordable food
- Adequate housing
- Proper health care
- Raise the minimum wage in the north
- Raise social assistance payments
- Create more jobs in small communities

#### *Centre Inuit knowledge and decision-making in any government responses*

- Inuit must be part of the change, must be at the table when government is deciding on policies and programs.
- Action is needed: “We know the problems, we hear about the solutions, but now we need action from the government.”