We See It Every Day:

NUNAVUT POVERTY REPORT CARD 2026



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AMAUTIIT

CAMPAIGN 2000
END CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY

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A Message from the September 25 Press Conference

THE HIDDEN COSTS OF STRESS

“

Food insecurity and financial strain spill into the home, creating tension and sometimes violence. Parents carry a crushing mental load that affects their health, relationships, and children’s development.”

Chronic financial stress is linked to higher rates of **depression and anxiety** among caregivers.



SEEKING WARMTH AND SAFETY

“

We see young children, some unsupervised, at the food centre — coming in from the cold to eat or find shelter. Families often collect take-out food to bring home to their children.”



Community food centres and programs are a lifeline — yet **demand continues to grow.**

On September 25th, 2025 we gathered at the Qajuqturvik Community Food Centre in Iqaluit. We didn’t gather to celebrate or announce a new program — we gathered because the reality in our kitchens, homes, and communities has become impossible to ignore.

That day voices from the front lines told the truth plainly: Nunavut is in a food crisis (Staniforth). Qajuqturvik is serving more than 600 meals a day — sometimes feeding nearly one in ten people in Iqaluit. Even as staff and volunteers stretch every resource, the demand keeps rising. Families are hungry, children are going without, and the safety net is fraying.

As one speaker said, “We are trying our very best … but even if we’re providing over 600 meals in a day, we’re still not meeting the demand.” It is a heartbreaking truth — that in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, Inuit families cannot count on access to the most basic human need: food.

This press conference was not just about numbers. It was about people: parents deciding whether to pay rent or buy groceries. Elders sharing what it feels like to skip meals so their grandchildren can eat, and frontline workers who show up every day, knowing that what they can offer will never be enough.

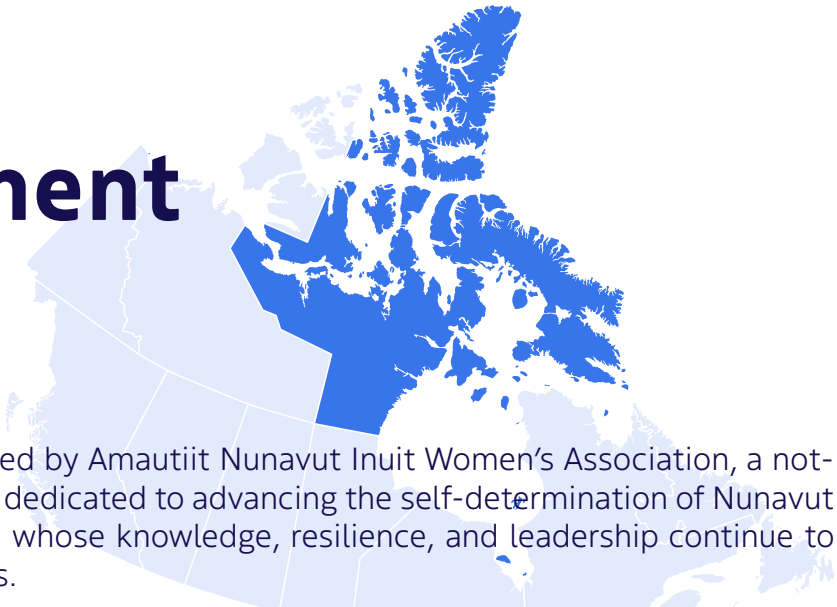
We also heard hard truths about policy choices that deepen the crisis. The cancellation of federal food voucher supports and the lack of a Nunavut Child Benefit that reflects our actual cost of living leave families more vulnerable. Meanwhile, organizations like Qajuqturvik are left trying to hold everything together, calling for more staff, more space, and more sustainable support.

This page of the Report Card begins with the voices from that day because poverty is not abstract here. It is lived, it is felt, and it is carried in our bodies and our homes. It must be met with the same urgency and care that our communities show one another.

The Poverty Report Card that follows offers the data, but we begin here with the story:

Nunavummiut are hungry, our communities are resilient but exhausted, and the call to act has never been louder.

Land Acknowledgment



This Report is presented by Amautiit Nunavut Inuit Women's Association, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing the self-determination of Nunavut Arnait — Inuit women whose knowledge, resilience, and leadership continue to guide our communities.

Nunavut means "Our Land". It is a vast and beautiful place that stretches across 21% of Canada's total area (Government of Canada) accessible only by plane or boat, and made up of 25 communities that each hold their own history and identity. From Iqaluit, a three-hour flight from Ottawa and home to nearly 8,000 people, to Grise Fiord, Canada's northernmost community with fewer than 150 residents, the realities of life in Nunavut are as diverse as the land itself. What unites us is the deep relationship between Inuit and the land — a relationship that statistics can never fully capture.

Inuit women are at the heart of this relationship. As key bearers of traditional ecological knowledge, Arnait have carried forward teachings about harvesting, animal behaviour, seasonal cycles, and sustainable practices that ensure balance with the environment. These teachings are not only about survival, but about respect, responsibility, and reciprocity.

Within families and communities, Inuit women are also teachers and cultural leaders. Through language, storytelling, sewing, hunting, and other cultural practices, they pass on knowledge that strengthens identity and connection to place. Their work nourishes children, sustains households, and contributes to local economies — while reminding us that the land provides both material and spiritual sustenance.

The role of women in Nunavut is therefore inseparable from the preservation of the land. Their leadership, cultural practices, and lived knowledge make possible a sustainable future where our communities can continue to thrive in harmony with our land.

This Report begins by acknowledging and honouring these truths.

Introduction

The release of last year's Poverty Report Card brought Nunavut's reality briefly into the national conversation. Canadians heard once again what Inuit have been saying for decades — that families in Nunavut do not have the financial support they need to survive, let alone thrive. Our stories were carried in the news for a moment, then faded from public memory.

The 2026 Nunavut Poverty Report Card is equally distressing. Children are hungry. Families face impossible choices. The territory is still hurting.

This year's Report Card is based on 2023 data from Statistics Canada. By then, COVID-19 public health measures had officially ended and emergency supports had disappeared. There were no more relief payments, but the cost of living remained higher than ever. Tourism and travel were returning to the territory, yet the benefits of this recovery were not felt equally by Inuit households. The pressures of inflation, high food and housing costs, and fragile incomes continued to fall hardest on families already living in poverty.

Alongside this data, we have included stories and feedback from community organizations and non-profits across Nunavut, whose insights help bring these statistics to life. We are especially grateful to Qupanuaq, Ubluriak Society, Kitikmeot Friendship Society, and Qajuqturvik Community Food Centre for sharing their knowledge, experiences, and reflections. Their frontline work offers a deeper understanding of how poverty affects families, and how communities continue to respond with strength, compassion, and innovation.

We acknowledge as always, that numbers alone cannot fully capture life in Nunavut. Statistics cannot show the beauty of our communities, nor do they reflect the resilience and care that Inuit show for one another. They also underrepresent us. Because of colonial history and ongoing mistrust, many Inuit families do not participate in Statistics Canada surveys. For this reason, we continue to urge governments to work with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis organizations to uphold Indigenous data sovereignty — so that our realities are measured on our own terms.

This Report Card is more than numbers on a page. **It is a reminder of the urgent need to listen to Inuit voices.** To hear the experiences of the organizations serving our communities, and to act — so that every child, every family, and every community in Nunavut can live with dignity and security.



Report Methodology and Measurement

This Report uses the Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax (CFLIM-AT) to track poverty in Nunavut. The CFLIM-AT is a relative measure of income poverty: a household is considered low income if its after-tax income is less than 50% of the median after-tax income of the total population (Statistics Canada). The measure accounts for family size and household composition by adjusting for economies of scale, and it also includes government transfers in its calculation.

The CFLIM-AT allows us to compare the living standards of low income families to those of the rest of society, showing not only who falls below the threshold but also how far behind they are in relation to the national median. This data is drawn from the T1 Family File (T1FF) tax file, which is a reliable annual source of income information. Unlike survey-based measures, the T1FF captures a broader range of populations often missed, including residents of the territories, First Nations living on reserve, people in congregate settings or institutions, people in remote and rural areas, and families led by parents under 18. The CFLIM-AT does not capture the realities of higher cost of living in the north.

It is important to note that Statistics Canada releases this data on a two-year delay. The analysis in this year's Report Card is based on the most recent available data from 2023, reflecting the period after COVID-19 supports had ended and as tourism and travel were beginning to return to Nunavut.

CHOOSING BETWEEN FOOD AND MEDICINE

"Parents are forced to choose between paying for medication and buying groceries. A child's health and hunger should never compete for the same dollar."

Food insecurity: 79% among Inuit children

Nunavut Child Benefit: $29/month per child — the lowest in Canada

- This Report uses a measure called the **Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax** (CFLIM-AT).
- It compares how much money families have **after paying taxes**.
- A family is considered "low income" if they **earn less than half** of what the average Canadian family earns.
- The measure also **adjusts for family size** — meaning it understands that a household of six needs more money than a household of one.
- It **includes government supports** (like benefits or transfers) as part of a family's income.
- It can be calculated by **multiplying $26,442 by the square root of the family size.**

TABLE 1

Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax (CFLIM-AT), Thresholds by family size, 2023

NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS	DOLLAR AMOUNT
1 person	$26,442.00
2 people	$37,395.00
3 people	$45,799.00
4 people	$52,884.00
5 people	$59,126.00
6 people	$64,769.00
7 people	$69,959.00
8 people	$74,789.00
9 people	$79,326.00
10 people	$83,617.00

Source: Statistics Canada. (2025). T1 Family File: Final estimates, 2023 (Catalogue No. 72-212-X). Government of Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/72-212-x/72-212-x2025001-eng.htm

Market Basket Measure

The Market Basket Measure (MBM) was adopted as Canada's Official Poverty Line in 2019. following the release of Opportunity for All – Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy. Under the MBM, an individual or family is considered to live in poverty if their disposable income is too low to purchase a predetermined "basket" of goods and services required for a modest, basic standard of living (Statistics Canada).

To reflect the unique realities of the North, Statistics Canada recently developed the Northern Market Basket Measure (MBM-N). In Nunavut, MBM-N thresholds are calculated for a reference family of five people (two adults and three children), whereas in the rest of Canada the reference family is four people (two adults and two children) (Devin et al.). Table 2 presents the 2023 MBM-N thresholds for Nunavut's three regions. Notably, these thresholds are approximately twice as high as the Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax (CFLIM-AT) for a family of five — underscoring the extraordinary cost of living in the territory.

Issues with the MBM-N

While the MBM-N is intended to better reflect life in the territories, important gaps remain. The standardized food basket may not fully capture the high and highly variable cost of food across Nunavut communities. In addition, although the Nunavut-specific methodology introduces a component for Inuit cultural and land-based activities, it may not fully reflect the real costs of harvesting country food — including fuel, equipment and supplies — which are essential to food security and cultural continuity.

Housing costs are also underestimated. The MBM-N assumes stable access to affordable shelter, but in Nunavut overcrowding is widespread and families face some of the highest housing costs in the country. Transportation is similarly misrepresented. Unlike southern Canada, Nunavut has no highways between communities and no public transit. Travel by plane, boat, ATV, or snowmobile is expensive, yet these realities are not adequately captured in the MBM-N.

What This Means for Poverty Measurement

The shortcomings of both the CFLI-AT and MBM-N mean that official poverty lines may understate the true depth and breadth of poverty in Nunavut. By failing to capture country food, harvesting expenses, and the real costs of housing and transportation, the poverty measures risk presenting an incomplete picture of what Inuit families need to live with dignity.

For Inuit, poverty is not only a matter of income, but of food security, access to the land, and the ability to sustain cultural practices. Until measures like the MBM-N are re-shaped to reflect these realities, the statistics will continue to fall short of the lived experience of poverty in Nunavut.

TABLE 2

Market Basket Measure (MBM) thresholds for Nunavut and select rural regions, 2023

REGION	2023 MBM THRESHOLD
Nunavut, Baffin (excluding Iqaluit)	$116,368.00
Nunavut, Kivalliq	$102,122.00
Nunavut, Kitikmeot	$108,582.00
Nunavut, Iqaluit	$121,791.00
Newfoundland and Labrador, rural	$50,597.00
Ontario, rural	$48,674.00
Saskatchewan, rural	$48,105.00
Northwest Territories, Beaufort Delta	$84,516.00

Source : Statistics Canada. (2024). Table 11-10-0066-01 Market Basket Measure (MBM) thresholds for the reference family by Market Basket Measure region, component and base year.

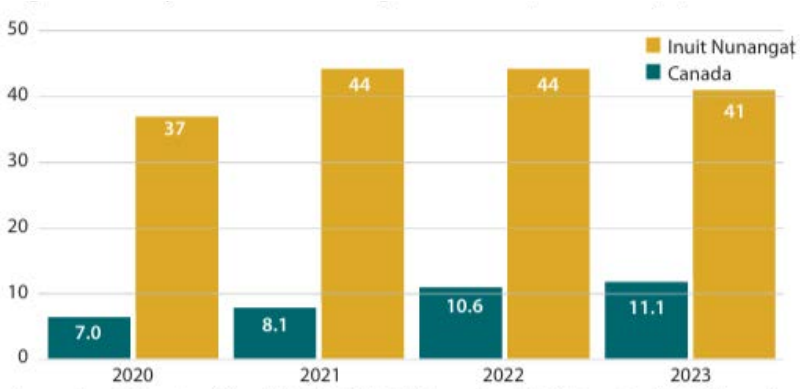
Market Basket Measure - IN

The Market Basket Measure for Inuit Nunangat (MBM-IN) developed by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) is the first poverty measure developed specifically to reflect the realities of life across Inuit Nunangat. Building on Canada's official poverty measure, the Market Basket Measure (MBM) and earlier northern adaptations such as the Northern MBM and Nunavut MBM, the MBM-IN recognizes that standard poverty metrics often fail to capture the unique costs and living conditions experienced by Inuit communities.

The MBM-IN estimates the income required to achieve a modest, basic standard of living by calculating the cost of a basket of goods and services that families need to meet their daily needs. Unlike southern poverty measures, the MBM-IN adapts the basket to reflect the realities of living in remote northern communities, where geography, climate, limited infrastructure, transportation barriers, and dependence on shipped goods drive costs substantially higher. It also acknowledges that many essential needs are met through land-based and traditional activities, including hunting, fishing, harvesting, and sewing, which contribute to food security, cultural continuity, and household well-being.

Using 2023 prices, the MBM-IN estimates that a reference family of four requires approximately $74,000 annually to meet a modest standard of living in Inuit Nunangat. Based on this threshold, an estimated 41% of families in Inuit Nunangat were living in poverty in 2023, demonstrating the significant affordability challenges facing Inuit households. Poverty is measured by comparing a family's disposable income, including government transfers, to the cost of the basket. Families whose incomes fall below the basket cost are considered to be living in poverty.

Figure 1: **Poverty Rates in Inuit Nunangat and Canada 2020- 2023 (%)**



Sources: Canada: Dimensions of Poverty Hub. (Market Basket Measure: Canada's official poverty rate). Inuit Nunangat: MBM-IN with calculations based on Statistics Canada's T1 Family File (T1FF). The MBM-IN was developed by adapting Canada's MBM and MBM-N using data inputs for each component revised to reflect Inuit Nunangat realities.

Note: The poverty rate in Inuit Nunangat and Canada cannot be directly compared because of methodological differences; for example, income data for Inuit Nunangat includes the non-Inuit population. Statistics Canada's and ITK's MBMs are complementary tools for understanding poverty in Canada.

Child and Family Poverty by the Numbers

In 2023, 6,280 children aged 0 to 17 in Nunavut were living in poverty — representing 38.8% of all children in the territory (Statistics Canada). 47.6% of children under the age of 6 lived in poverty in Nunavut in 2023 (Statistics Canada). While this marks a modest decline from previous years, the figure remains alarmingly high. More than one in three children in Nunavut continue to experience poverty, a rate that underscores the persistent and severe inequities facing Inuit families.

By comparison, Canada's national child poverty rate for children under 18 was 18.3% in 2023 (Statistics Canada) — less than half the rate in Nunavut. For children under 6, the national poverty child rate was 19.1% (Statistics Canada). This is alarming. Once again, Nunavut recorded the highest proportion of children living in poverty of any jurisdiction in the country. This disparity highlights the depth of structural barriers that continue to affect Inuit communities, including the high cost of food, limited housing availability, and fragile employment opportunities.

Even with incremental progress, the scale of child poverty in Nunavut remains a crisis demanding immediate and sustained action. Each percentage point represents children growing up without adequate food, secure housing, or consistent access to essential supports. Reducing child poverty in Nunavut requires more than national averages or temporary measures — it requires immediate, long-term, Inuit-led solutions that address the root causes of inequality.

WHAT CHILD POVERTY LOOKS LIKE

"Child poverty in Nunavut looks like parents posting on Facebook, asking strangers for food.

It looks like children missing out on recreation, time on the land, and chances to connect with their culture — because their families simply cannot afford it."

38.8% of Nunavut children live in poverty (2023)

Cost of food: 2x higher than the national average

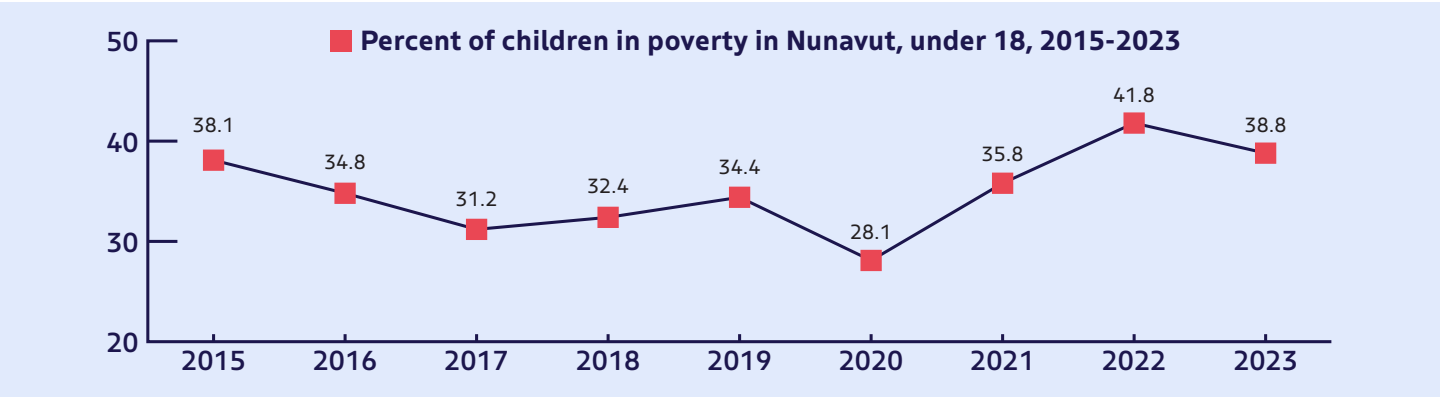


FIGURE 2. **Percent of children in poverty in Nunavut, under 18, 2015-2023**

Source: Statistics Canada. (2025). T1 Family File: Final estimates, 2023 (Catalogue No. 72-212-X). Government of Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/72-212-x/72-212-x2025001-eng.htm

THE COST OF POVERTY

“

Families in poverty pay more. They can’t buy in bulk or order discounted diapers online. Poverty takes time — hours spent waiting in lines or filling out forms that rarely lead to help.”

Shipping fees, fuel surcharges, and limited options raise prices by **40–60%**

HUNGER IN SANIKILUAQ

“

In Sanikiluaq, roughly eight out of ten children live with food insecurity. Families struggle to provide three meals a day. The high cost of living means food, fuel, and housing are often out of reach.”

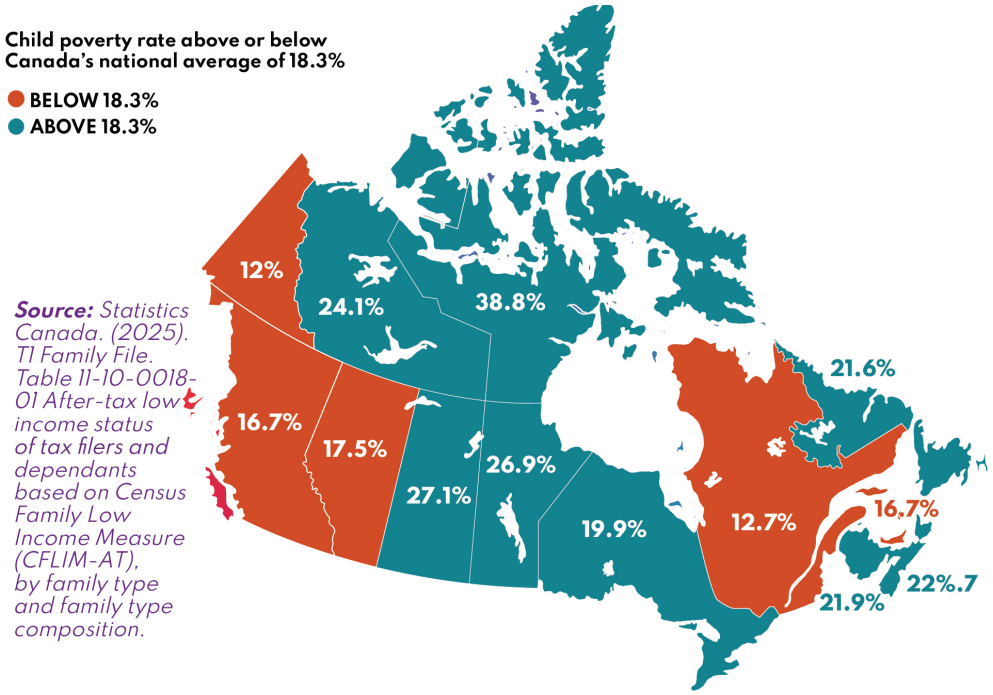
Remote communities face average food costs **3x higher** than southern cities

NO SHOES, NO SCHOOL

“

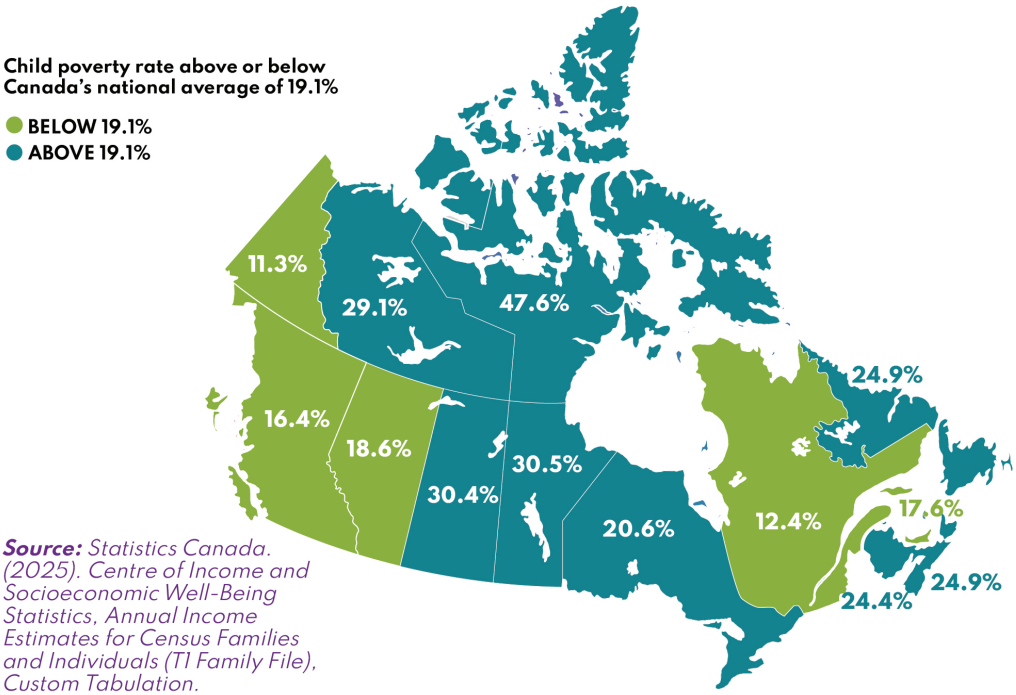
Many children miss school because they cannot afford indoor shoes, snacks, or warm clothing. Without basic necessities, education — a pathway out of poverty — becomes another barrier.”

Students in poverty are **2x more likely** to miss ten or more school days a month.



Source: *Statistics Canada. (2025). T1 Family File. Table 11-10-0018-01 After-tax low income status of tax filers and dependants based on Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT), by family type and family type composition.*

FIGURE 3. Child poverty rates by province and territory, under 18, 2023



Source: *Statistics Canada. (2025). Centre of Income and Socioeconomic Well-Being Statistics, Annual Income Estimates for Census Families and Individuals (T1 Family File), Custom Tabulation.*

FIGURE 4. Child Poverty rates by province and territory, under 6, 2023

Depth of Poverty for Nunavut in 2023

The "depth of poverty" measures how far a family's income falls below the poverty line — in other words, how large the gap is between what families earn and what they would need to reach a basic standard of living (Maytree). This gap in Nunavut is extreme.

In 2023, low income families with children in Nunavut would need approximately $15,000 to $19,000 more per year just to reach the low income line (Statistics Canada). In other words — even after all income is counted — these families are not just slightly below the poverty line. They are thousands of dollars below it.

This is a sign of structural poverty, not individual budgeting challenges.

People are not poor because they are making poor choices. They are poor because Nunavut has the deepest affordability barriers in the country — food, rent, heat, clothing, fuel — everything costs more. Even with wages, social assistance, child benefits, and family contributions layered together, families remain dramatically underfunded by systems that were never designed for the cost realities of the North.

The depth of poverty figures make clear:

- families are not "close to the line"
- families are not just slipping behind
- families are left behind by tens of thousands of dollars — every year

This scale of shortfall means that interventions that only add minor dollars (e.g. $50-$100/month) — while helpful — are functionally incapable of closing the gap.

The current system requires families who are in deep poverty in Nunavut to somehow invent $15,000–$19,000 annually, just to reach the starting line that families in the South are measured against.

This is why territorial-specific approaches — including higher benefit baselines, northern wage floors, and cost-of-living indexed supports — are essential. Without those, Nunavut families are mathematically prevented from escaping poverty, no matter how hard they work.

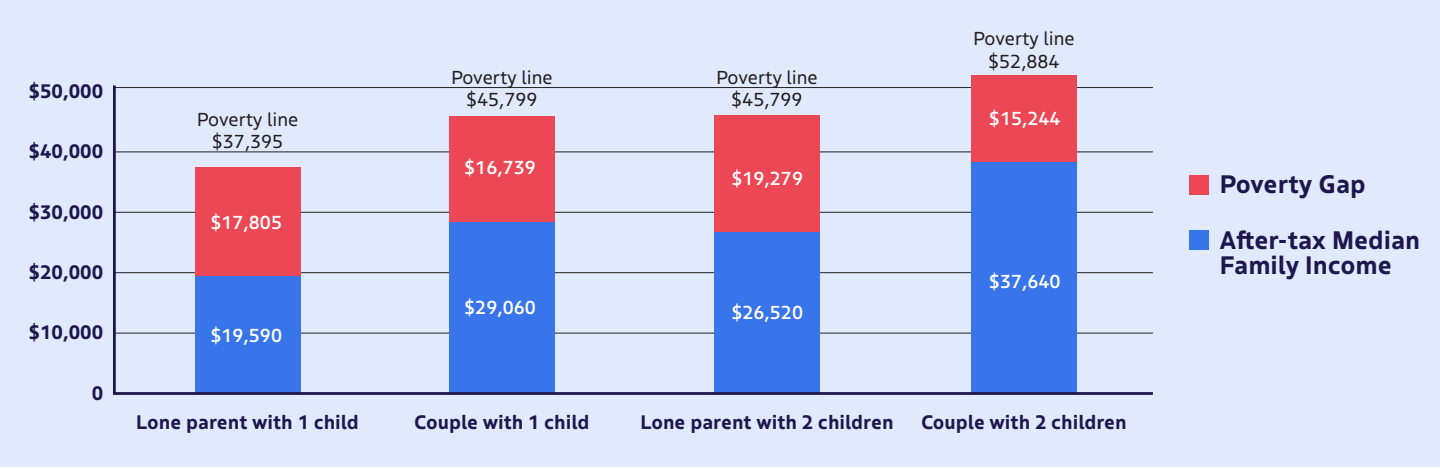


FIGURE 5. **Depth of poverty in Nunavut by family type, 2023**

Transfers Are Preventing Collapse — But the Nunavut Child Benefit Is Not Doing Its Job

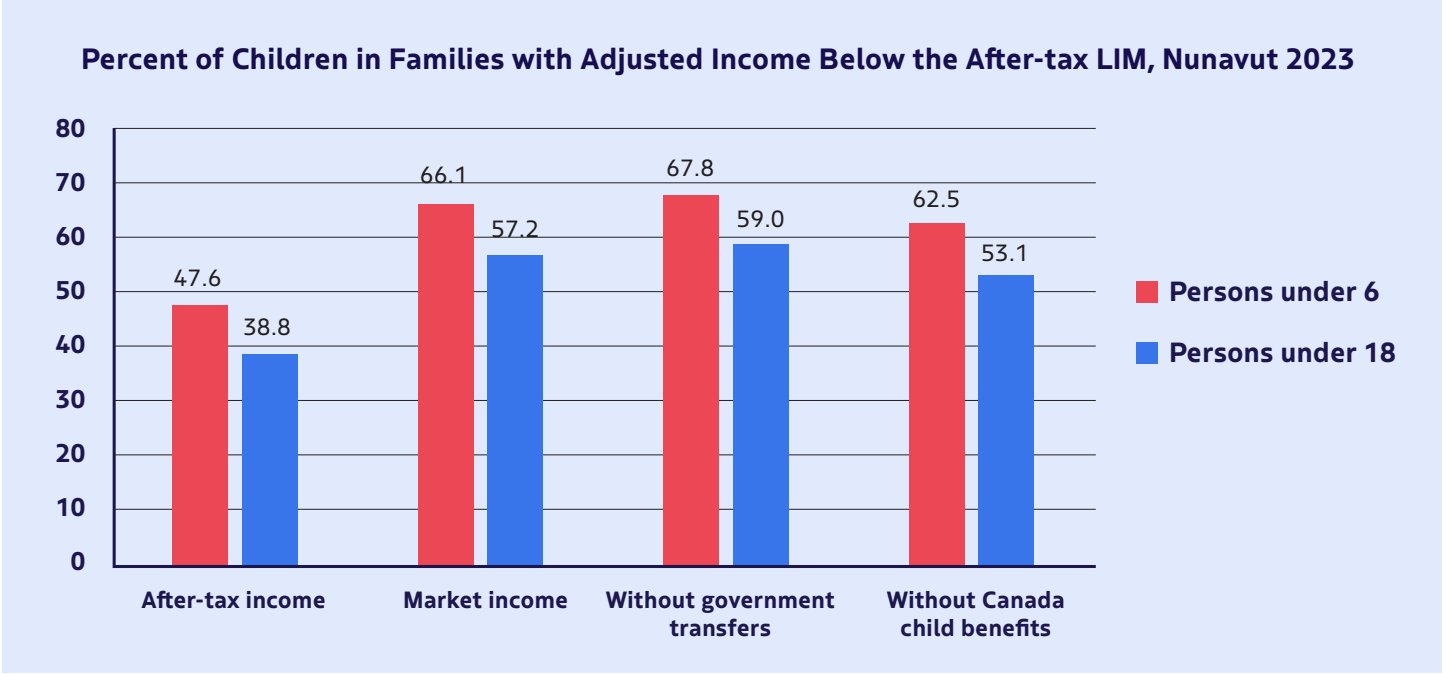


FIGURE 6. **Nunavut child poverty rates with and without government transfers, 2023**

In Nunavut in 2023, government transfers were the only thing preventing child poverty from reaching catastrophic levels.

The data shows that nearly half of children under age 6 (47.6%) and nearly 4 in 10 children under age 18 (38.8%) were below the CFLIM even after taxes and transfers were counted. Without transfers — particularly the Canada Child Benefit — child poverty in Nunavut would immediately jump above 60–67% (Statistics Canada).

This tells us two things at the same time:

1. Federal transfers are functioning as the main child poverty intervention in Nunavut.
2. Territorial child benefits are not — they are effectively irrelevant at current levels.

The Nunavut Child Benefit (NUCB) maxes out at $29 per month — $350 per year per child.

It fully phases out by around $33,700 in family income (Canada Revenue Agency).

It is the smallest child benefit in Canada (Koblensky Varela) — and nowhere near aligned with the reality of northern cost of living.

With food costs double the Canadian average this benefit amount is not just insufficient: it is structurally meaningless. Families cannot supplement an income gap of $15,000–$19,000 a year with $29/month.

What this means for policy:

▷ transfers matter and are proven to work —CERB dropped Nunavut child poverty to its lowest point in 20 years (Koblensky Varela).

▷ but the NUCB, as currently designed, is not protecting children from hunger or poverty.

In short: Nunavut's children are not being failed by families.

They are being failed by a benefit designed at levels that cannot possibly meet real northern needs.

Income Inequality in Nunavut — After-Tax Income by Decile (Families With Children)

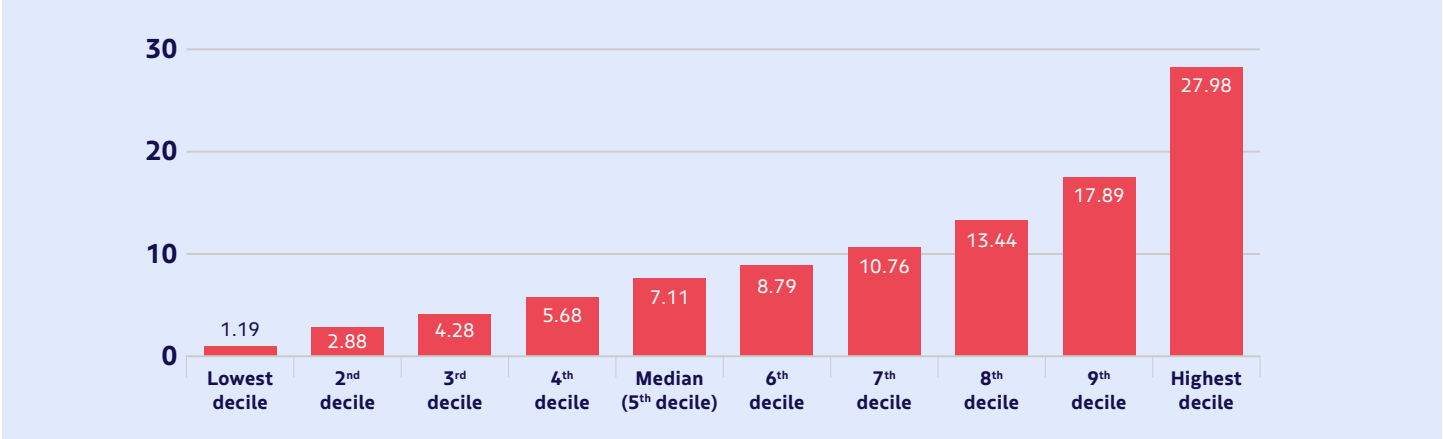


FIGURE 7. **Percent share of after-tax income by decile for census families with children, Nunavut 2023**

This chart shows how total after-tax income is split across families in Nunavut — from the poorest 10% (decile 1) to the richest 10% (decile 10) (Statistics Canada). Even after taxes and transfers, the distribution is extremely unequal.

- The poorest 10% of families with children share just over 1% of all after-tax income.
- The richest 10% hold nearly 28% of all after-tax income.

The top decile receives almost 28 times more of Nunavut's total income than the bottom decile.

In a territory where food, rent, heat, childcare, and travel are all more expensive than almost anywhere else in Canada, this has serious consequences:

- **families at the bottom have almost nothing left after essential bills.**
- **child poverty continues even with benefits in place.**
- **much of Nunavut's income is concentrated at the top.**
- **children in low income households are starting far behind.**

This pattern holds across *all* family types — couples with children, lone parent families, and female-led households. Each group shows the same sharp inequality curve: a tiny share of income at the bottom, and a very large share at the top.

This is why income supports matter so much in Nunavut — not because families do not work — but because the income structure itself is tilted heavily toward the top. Transfers don't erase inequality. They simply stop the lowest income families from falling even further behind.

Nunavut does not just have high poverty — it has an unequal income structure. Poverty here is not only deep — it exists within a system where the bottom has very little to begin with.

NO BED TO SLEEP IN

"Some children sleep on floors, couches, or piles of clothing because there is no bed. Families make do with what they have — but dignity should not be optional."

52% of Nunavut households are overcrowded

Every fourth child lives in an overcrowded home

Policy Roadmap: Ending Child Poverty in Nunavut

A Call to Action – 2026 and Beyond

More than one in three children in Nunavut live in poverty — the highest rate in Canada.

Families are struggling with hunger, overcrowded housing, and limited access to income supports.

These recommendations call for urgent, Inuit-led action to ensure every child grows up with dignity, safety, and opportunity.



1. Strengthen the Nunavut Child Benefit

Action: Raise the Nunavut Child Benefit (NUCB) from **$29 to $500 per month per child**, indexed annually to inflation and the Market Basket Measure (MBM-IN).

Outcome: Immediate reduction in child poverty rates and food insecurity across all regions.

Measure of Success: At least **5,000 children lifted above the poverty line by 2027.**

2. Implement a Guaranteed Basic Wage

Action: Establish a **territory-wide guaranteed basic wage** to ensure no Nunavut resident earns below a livable income floor.

Outcome: Increased income stability for working families; fewer children living below the poverty line.

Measure of Success: Pilot programs launched in **Sanikiluaq and Pond Inlet** by 2027, with Inuit-led evaluation of outcomes.

3. Feed Every Child

Action: Create an **Emergency Child Nutrition Fund** and expand school and after-school meal programs.

Outcome: Every child in Nunavut has access to at least **one nutritious meal each school day**.

Measure of Success: Food insecurity among children reduced by **25% by 2027.**

4. Fund Community and Family Stability

Action: Provide **multi-year, core funding** for Inuit- and community-led organizations delivering essential supports (food, housing, mental health, childcare).

Outcome: Consistent, culturally relevant programs replacing short-term, unstable funding cycles.

Measure of Success: All 25 Nunavut communities have at least one **core-funded family or food security program** by 2026.

5. Remove Barriers and Simplify Access

Action: Launch a **Nunavut Benefits Access Team** to help families file taxes, obtain IDs, and access Canada Child Benefit (CCB) and NUCB payments.

Outcome: Reduced exclusion from critical income supports due to administrative and structural barriers.

Measure of Success: 100% of eligible families accessing full child benefit entitlements by 2027.

6. Build a Holistic, Inuit-Led System

Action: Embed **mental health, addiction recovery, and land-based healing** in all poverty reduction initiatives.

Outcome: Integrated support that strengthens community well-being and long-term resilience.

Measure of Success: Inuit-led programming in place in **every region of Nunavut** by 2028.

Our Shared Vision

Every child in Nunavut deserves enough to eat, a safe place to sleep, and the chance to thrive in their culture and community.



Conclusion

The 2026 Nunavut Poverty Report Card makes one truth impossible to ignore: poverty in Nunavut is not a mystery, and it is not inevitable. It is the predictable result of underinvestment, inadequate policy, and the failure to measure our realities on Inuit terms.

The data tells a painful story — more than one in three children in Nunavut still live in poverty — but behind every number is strength, care, and determination. Families continue to support one another through hardship. Communities keep finding creative ways to feed children, share food, and uphold dignity even when systems fail them.

Ending child poverty in Nunavut will not happen through charity or one-time relief. It requires a sustained, Inuit-led commitment to fairness and equity — one that recognizes the right of every child to safety, nourishment, and belonging. Strengthening the Nunavut Child Benefit, introducing a basic wage, and investing in family and community stability are not radical ideas; they are essential steps toward justice.

Across this territory, Inuit women, families, and organizations are already leading the way. The solutions exist. What is needed now is the will to act — to ensure that Nunavut's children do not grow up hungry, excluded, or unseen.

Poverty in Nunavut is not the story of who we are. It is the story of what must change — and of the collective strength we will bring to changing it.

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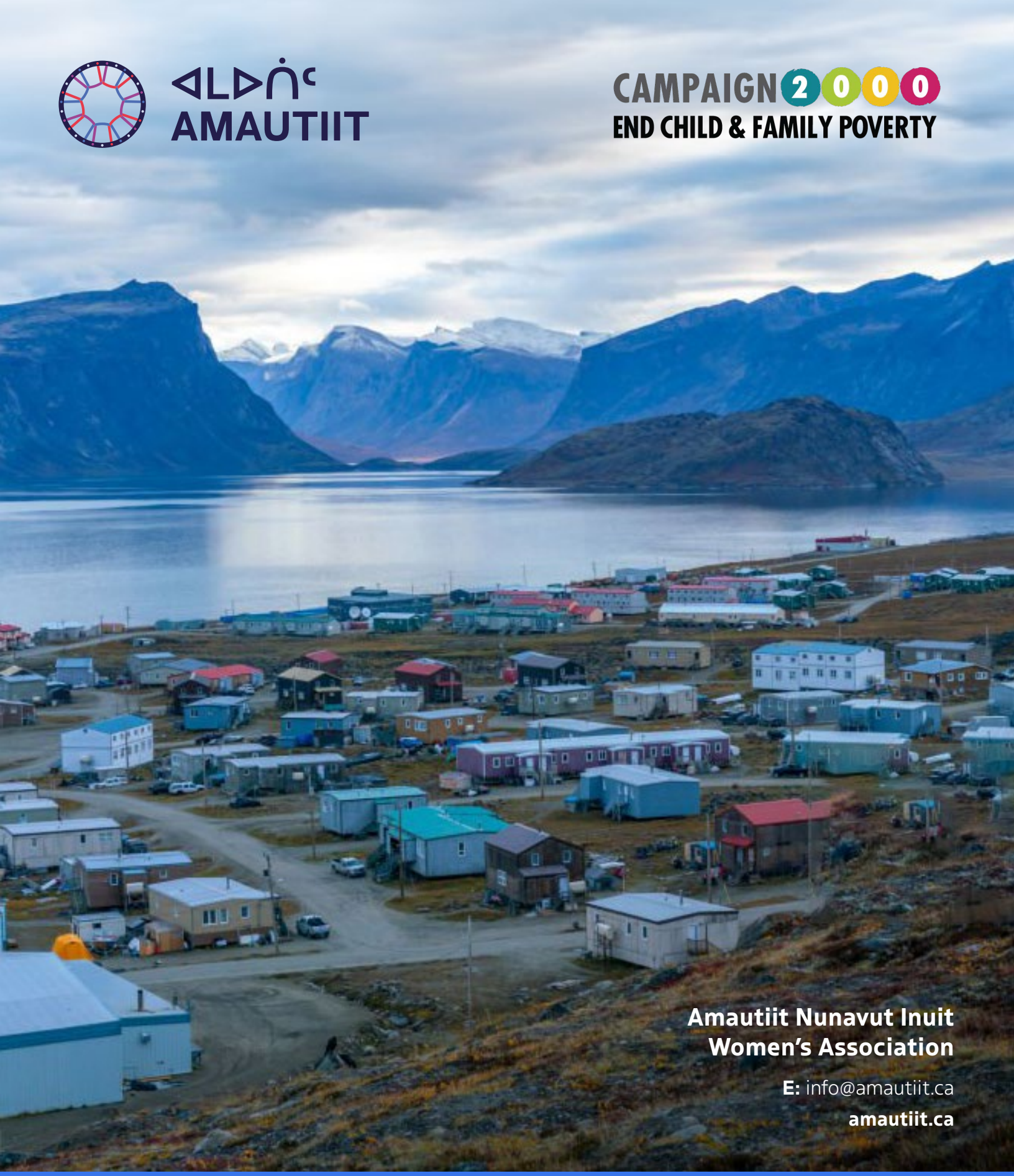
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Amautiit Nunavut Inuit Women's Association

E: info@amautiit.ca

amautiit.ca