

in Rankin Inlet in March, 1999, delegates strongly reinforced the need to develop leadership skills among Inuit women. The Government of Nunavut must work with and provide resources to *Qullit* to encourage and actively support women to run for public office to create a Legislature that more truly reflects the population of Nunavut.

Pauktuutit is seen by Inuit women as an important vehicle for expressing their views and concerns with anonymity and safety. It is extremely difficult for women in small communities to be vocal in our opposition to the status quo, which appears to tolerate violence against women and children. Further, it takes great strength and courage to speak out about such personal and painful issues such as sexual assault, particularly when cases may involve high profile individuals in positions of power and authority, and many women look to Pauktuutit to advocate on their behalf. Therefore, on behalf of our membership, I am seeking the opportunity to make a collective victim impact statement to the Members of the Legislative Assembly when you reconvene on October 18, 2000, so that all MLAs and Cabinet Ministers may understand firsthand the impacts of the high levels of violence against Inuit women in Nunavut.

We cannot and do not assume that all of our elected representatives have an understanding of the dynamics and consequences of violence against women. I believe the Members of the Legislative Assembly would only benefit from learning first hand about what the individual and collective impacts of violence are, for we all suffer the consequences of this type of violence. The damage caused by sexual assault goes far beyond any physical injuries that the victim may suffer. It damages our very souls, and prevents us from being full and equal members of our communities and citizens of Nunavut. I will also be strongly encouraging all elected representatives and Inuit leaders in all regions to publicly commit themselves to working with us and state that violence against women and children is not a part of Inuit culture, and not part of our vision of Nunavut.

I look forward to your response at your earliest opportunity, and I look forward to meeting with you and your colleagues in the Nunavut Legislative Assembly.

Sincerely,

Veronica Dewar
President, Pauktuutit

C. J. SAGE

In the Shelter Where Battered Women Come

Ducking from their windy men, they
camouflage, and dodge the arms that spread
and hunt like lightning strikes, stalling flight.

His muffled lashes fold like wings
of dying moth pulled deep into her chest;
he is eight or ten, no more to give,

his mother hangs on tight
to words she makes him say.
'Tell me that you love me.'

His rain is talc to her yellowed blouse;
like baby powder, butterfly dust.
Cocoon layers dangle from their eyes.

Connections

Strong as any man, she'd seen
that new girl's clenched fist —
the thick veins headed for her face.
She in self-defense had returned
a punch in words; her words could break
an iron jaw, metal teeth, mirror,
mind. Now seven years later, resting
at her quiet partner's pool
reflecting missed connections
like that young girl who wouldn't break
free, she reruns the near misses
that used to dust her cheeks
— as if swarming doves
could mask her face's pain;
their flapping wings, erasers,
scratching the surface of things.
The counselor tried
to leave it all behind back then,
retiring to the safety of another's place.
But some men's arms are like feathers
of cloud-crests, or fairy tales
socked far far away.

C. J. Sage is a native of Northern California where she is the managing editor of Disquieting Muses. C.J. received a Phelan Literary Award for poetry earlier this year.