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MARY SIMON & PAUL QUASSA

The residential school system
LIZ FOWLER & MINDY WILLETT

Nunavut Sivuniksavut: The little program that could
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Developing an education research agenda in Nunavut
HEATHER Mcgregor

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JODIE LANE

Engaging parents in education policy change
FIONA WALTON, et al.

Language, learning, & the promise of Nunavut
LAURIE PELLY

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Revitalizing EDUCATION in INUIT NUNANGAT
Change, growth, and development are characteristics of any living society and, beyond question, the Northwest Territories is now experiencing an extraordinary surge in these natural processes. We cannot refuse the challenges they pose, but we can say something about the direction in which they may take us. Central to any society’s efforts to influence the direction of change is its people’s ability to participate in the planning processes. And, beyond question, learning is the major factor in a people’s ability to participate in such planning. We argue, therefore, that learning is the key to our future.

Northern Public Affairs
Special Issue 2014

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FEATURES
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Education in Inuit Nunangat: A fine balance

Sheena Kennedy Dalseg

The school system has always been a critical and complex public issue in Northern Canada, owing to its colonial roots and its subsequent role as a key element of the Inuit movement toward self-determination. In the course of one lifetime, responsibility for Inuit education has changed hands from extended families, to the churches, to the federal government, to the territorial and provincial governments, and finally (back) to Inuit through land claims and self-government agreements, and the creation of a new territory. With each handover came significant changes in vision and implementation. Some of these changes have been positive, while others have had problematic, if not damaging, effects.

In recent years, education in Inuit Nunangat has received considerable attention due in large part to the work of the National Committee on Inuit Education. Its National Strategy for Inuit Education was launched in 2011, sparking national and regional discussion about the challenges and opportunities associated with transforming the education systems in the four Inuit regions. Education was, perhaps, the central issue in Nunavut’s October 2013 election, and the newly minted Premier Taptuna has identified it as a key priority for his government.

The Government of the Northwest Territories announced its Aboriginal Student Achievement Education Plan in 2011, and in 2012, the NWT Education Renewal and Innovation Initiative was launched, both of which seek to examine the education system and improve outcomes. In 2013, the Kativik School Board, which was created under the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement and opened in 1978, celebrated its 35th year, prompting reflection on the school system, and dialogue in the region about the future. At present, the Nunatsiavut Government is building on the successes it has had in the Post-Secondary Support Program, and is working closely with the Labrador School Board to examine how best to transfer the provision of K-12 education in the region.

While there is diversity within and among regions, it is clear that citizens and communities across Inuit Nunangat are concerned about their respective education systems and schools. And it is clear that education is understood to be a core element of a healthy, vibrant, and productive society. While each region has its own ideas and plans, all four share some common experiences and challenges, and all four want to see continued success and improvement for their young people.

Motivated by this momentum and public engagement on education and schooling, the Amaujaq National Centre for Inuit Education and Northern Public Affairs have partnered to publish a special issue on Inuit education that brings together a diversity of perspectives on education and education research in Inuit Nunangat covering a range of topics that explore some of the challenges facing policymakers, educators, communities, and students, and — importantly — showcase some of the exciting and innovative initiatives taking place in the four regions.

One of the underlying themes of this issue is the ever-present challenge of striking a balance within the education system — a balance that includes: economic, social, and cultural objectives; individual and collective (societal) goals and aspirations; long and short term labour market needs; and Inuit and non-Inuit knowledge and ways of learning. What the “right” balance is, and who determines it, will be different in every context, and it will undoubtedly shift and change over time in response to many factors both internal and external.

The challenge of striking the right balance between training the future labour force and educating healthy, capable, and productive citizens who can make genuine and informed choices about their individual and collective futures is one shared by all jurisdictions and societies across Canada. In the North, the pressures of meeting short-term labour market needs in the resource and mining sector makes the challenge of finding this balance even greater.

It is for all of these reasons that informed and sustained public engagement and communication about the education system is important and necessary. This requires not only parental engagement and improved relationships between communities and schools, but also a commitment on the part of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to engage and collaborate with one another. Government at all levels can support these critical components through leadership, facilitation, and adequate
longer-term funding.

In this issue, you will find pieces that speak to many different aspects and stages of the education system including: bilingual and bi-cultural education; the relationship between parents, communities, and schools; successful early childhood education initiatives, access to post-secondary education, and the potential impact of establishing a university in Inuit Nunangat. The contributors to this issue include established and emerging Inuit leaders, Inuit and non-Inuit educators, many with decades-long experience, and Inuit and non-Inuit researchers from all over Canada.

It has been a pleasure collaborating with the Amaujaq Centre on NPA’s 2014 Special Issue on Inuit Education. In particular, we would like to thank Mary Simon, Peter Geikie, Patricia D’Souza, and Heather Ochalski for their enthusiastic support and dedication to the issue. Thank you, also, to the Amaujaq Centre and the National Committee on Inuit Education for their support of Northern Public Affairs. We hope to collaborate again in the future.

Sheena Kennedy Dalseg is Founding Editor of Northern Public Affairs. She is a doctoral candidate in the School of Public Policy and Administration at Carleton University.
Five years have passed since I stood in the House of Commons with my fellow Aboriginal leaders to receive the formal statement of apology on residential schools. I looked directly into the Prime Minister’s eyes and said: “I stand here, today, ready to work with you — as Inuit have always done — to craft new solutions and new arrangements based on mutual respect and mutual responsibility.”

The next day in the Senate I purposefully laid down a marker:

The magnitude of yesterday’s historic apology and request for forgiveness will be measured in the future actions of government. So much of our past relations with governments have been diminished by unfulfilled promises… Canada must commit to the development and support of policies and long term programs that are needed to restore our families and rebuild our sense of community and our place in Canada.

In the company of fellow Inuit leaders and governments and Northern school boards, I launched a national Inuit education initiative aimed at moving beyond the damaging education policies of previous eras, toward closing gaps and improving outcomes. The result was the 2011 First Canadians, Canadians First: National Strategy on Inuit Education.

One of the recommended actions was to establish a Northern university based on Inuit culture and language. This was a recommendation built upon serious thinking that had already taken place at the Gordon Foundation to advance the discussion,¹ and a proposal for a university in Inuit Nunangat from the litturvik University Society.²

In 2009, then Governor General Michéelle Jean in Maclean’s magazine noted that “Canada is the only Northern state that doesn’t have a university in the North. Canada is four decades behind Norway, Finland, Sweden, and the United States.” In the September 2013 issue of Northern Public Affairs, the Norwegian Ambassador to Canada writes of her country’s pursuit of knowledge on the North through research, and strengthening universities. The Ambassador writes, “Norway has systematically built a network of universities and university colleges in Northern Norway which has filled a crucial role in developing the region.” Norway’s University
of Tromsø was established in 1968 — 45 years ago!

The economic arguments are clear. If we want Inuit to fully participate in the growing number of economic and public administration opportunities, we need more Inuit with university degrees. Throughout the Arctic our communities are dealing with economic, social and environmental pressures and at a pace that no other generation has experienced.

The social arguments are equally clear. If we want to understand our changing world or what’s working or not working in civil society, and why, then we need to do what Norway has done and make knowledge one of the pillars of our Northern policy. We need to make advanced education relevant to the lives of our students integrating both Inuit and Euro-Canadian knowledge in the delivery of courses and in the focus of research.

We have already witnessed success stories in collaborative models of advanced education:

- The teacher-training program developed between the Kativik School Board in Nunavik and McGill University.
- The Nunavut Master of Education program, delivered in partnership with the University of Prince Edward Island.
- The Bachelor of Social Work Program offered by the Nunatsiavut Government in cooperation with Memorial University.
- The Akitsiraq Law Program delivered in partnership by Nunavut Arctic College and the University of Victoria.

These courses, along with a number of others offered throughout Inuit Nunangat represent the first phase of university-based education in the Arctic. It is now time to move into the second phase of establishing a permanent university infrastructure in the Arctic.

This is a call to action that Inuit leaders throughout the North need to embrace. Self-determination is about putting in place the mechanisms that will enable full participation of Inuit, and some of the ways to achieve this are to increase the number of Inuit in university, and to increase Inuit participation in Northern research. For Inuit to be equal partners and leaders in policy-making and decision-making as the Circumpolar Declaration on Resource Development states, we need Inuit university-educated policy specialists, analysts, and managers.

We have seen a lot of investment in training programs provided by governments and by industry as a result of negotiations for Inuit Impact Benefit Agreements. However training programs, while useful in a specific context, are typically responsive to short-term labour-market needs, and do not foster the broader and deeper intellectual development needed to sustain our communities in the long-term.

Today, in 2014, we have an unprecedented opportunity for Inuit and governments to collaborate on an investment that will pay timeless dividends — a university in the Arctic. It is a bold idea for Canada to embrace while it chairs the Arctic Council and shows leadership on the Kiruna Declaration. It is a forward-thinking investment by Inuit leaders who are at the helm of revenue sharing from resource development and who are elected to promote the participation of Inuit in the growth and development of the Arctic.

Bold ideas often originate from visionaries who look beyond the present-day issues to what is needed over the horizon. Norway, Greenland, and Finland have all established Indigenous-based post-secondary institutions. Our discussion papers and studies in Canada have demonstrated that we agree on the need for a university in the Arctic.

One decision alone may not change outcomes overnight, but a decision to establish a university in the Arctic will serve as an unmistakable beacon of the possibilities that lie ahead for our young people, and will demonstrate the commitment of our leaders to the potential of our next generation.

Mary Simon is Chair of the National Committee for Inuit Education.

Endnotes
1 Blair Stevenson. 2010. Dialogue Toward a University in Canada’s Far North: An Environmental Scan. Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation.
GUEST EDITORIAL

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Mary Simon

ᐊᓂᒍᖅᑐᑦ ᐊᕐᕋᒍᑦ ᕖᑐᒻᒪᑦ ᕖᑖᔅᓱᒪ ᐊᕐᕋᕆᔨᑎᒍᑦ ᓯᕗᓕᖅᑏᑦ ᐄᓇᒍᓕᕆᐊᖃᑦᑕᖅᑐᕕᓐᓃᑦ ᐲᓇᑕᒥ ᐃᓕᓐᓂᐊᕆᐊᖃᑦᑕᖅᑐᕕᓐᓃᑦ ᐲᓇᑕᒥᐊᕝᕕᐅᓂᐊᕐᓂᖓᓄᑦ ᓵᙵᓗᒍ ᐌᔨᖏᖕᓄᒃ ᑕᐅᑐᑦᑎᐊᓪᓚᕆᒡᓗᒍ ᐲᓇᑕᒥ ᐆᖓᔪᖅᑳᒻᒪᕆᐅᔪᕐᒧᑦ:

“ᓇᖏᖅᓯᔪᖓ ᒪᓃ, ᐅᓪᓗᒥ, ᐱᓇᓱᐊᖃᑎᒋᔪᒪᓪᓗᑎᑦ − ᑕᐃᒪᙵᑦ ᐱᑐᐃᓐᓇᐅᖏᓇᐅᔭᖅᓯᒪᔪᑦ − ᐋᖅᑭᒃᓱᐃᖃᑎᖃᕈᒪᓪᓗᑎᒃ ᓄᑖᓂᒃ ᐋᖅᑭᒋᐊᕈᑎᒃᓴᓂᒃ ᐊᒻᒪ ᓄᑖᓂᒃ ᑱᕙᓪᓕᐊᔾᔪᑎᒃᓴᓂᒃ ᑲᑲᔾᔨᖃᑎᒌᖕᓂᒃᑯᑦ ᐃᒃᐱ.putsᑕᐅᑎᑦᑎᐊᕐᓂᒃᑯᑦ ᑱᓕᕆᐊᒃᓴᖃᖃᑎᒌᖕᓂᒃᑯᓪᓗ.”

ᖃᐅᑎᓪᓗᒍ ᓴᓇᑕ ᐊᕐᓂᖓᔪᓐᓂ ᐱᕙᓪᓕᐊᔾᔪᑕᐅᔪᓐᓇᖅᑐᓂᒃ ᐊᒻᒪ ᐱᓇᓱᐊᖃᑎᑦᑎᐊᕋᓱᐊᕐᓂᖅ ᐱᓂᐊᕐᓂᕆᔭᕋᓱᐊᖅᑐᖅ ᖃᒻᒪᒃᑯᑦ ᐱᓂᐊᕐᓂᕆᓂᐊᖅᑕᖏᑎᒍᑦ. ᐊᔨᕆᔭᕋᑦᑎᓐᓂ ᐱᓇᓱᐊᖃᑎᕋᓱᐊᕐᓂᑦ ᔖᔪᓯᑎᑕᐅᔪᓐᓃᖃᑦᑕᕐᓂᖏᓐᓄᑦ ᑲᓕᓂᕋᖅᖢᑎᒃ ᐱᓂᐊᕐᓂᕋᖅᑕᕋᓗᐊᒥᖕᓄᑦ…

ᑲᓇᑕ ᐱᓂᐊᕐᓂᖃᕆᐊᖃᒻᒪᕆᒃᐳᑦ ᐱᕙᓪᓕᐊᔾᔪᑕᐅᔪᓐᓇᖅᑐᓂᒃ ᐊᒻᒪ ᐱᓇᓱᐊᖃᑎᑦᑎᐊᕋᓱᐊᕐᓂᖅ ᐱᓂᐊᕐᓂᕆᔭᕋᓱᐊᖅᑐᖅ ᖃᒻᒪᒃᑯᑦ ᐱᓂᐊᕐᓂᕆᓂᐊᖅᑕᖏᑎᒍᑦ, ᐊᔨᕆᔭᕋᑦᑎᓐᓂ ᐱᓇᓱᐊᖃᑎᕋᓱᐊᕐᓂᑦ ᔖᔪᓯᑎᑕᐅᔪᓐᓃᖃᑦᑕᕐᓂᖏᓐᓄᑦ ᑲᓕᓂᕋᖅᖢᑎᒃ ᐱᓂᐊᕐᓂᕋᖅᑕᕋᓗᐊᒥᖕᓄᑦ.

2009-ᖑᑎᓪᓗᒍ, ᑎᒧᑦ ᓯᕗᓕᖅ ᑲᓇᑕᒥᒄ ᐄᓇᑦ ᐱᓂᐊᕐᓂᖃᕆᐊᖃᑦᑕᖅᐸᖅ ᖃᒻᒪᒃᑯᑦ ᑎᑎᕋᖅᓯᒪᔭᖏᓐᓂ, ᓄᐊᕗᐃ ᒥᑲᐃᐅ ᔮᓐ ᑲᓇᑕᒧᑦ ᑎᑎᕋᓚᐅᖅᑐᖅ ᖃᐅᔨᓴᕐᓂᖅᑎᑦᑎᒍᑦ ᐱᓕᕆᐊᕕᖓᑦ ᐸᓐᓇ ᐊᑐᓕᖁᔭᐅᓚᐅᖅᓯᒪᔪᖅ ᕖᑲᐊᔭᕈᑎᐅᓯᒪᔪᑦ ᐊᕐᕌᒍᖓᓂ 2011 ᖃᐅᔨᓴᕐᓂᖅ ᖃᐅᔨᓴᕐᓂᖅ ᑲᓇᑕᒥ ᐊᕙᑎᑦᑎᓐᓄᓪᓗ ᕖᒃᓱᕉᑎᖃᕐᒪᑕ ᐱᒋᐊᓕᖅᓯᒪᕙᒌᖅᑐᖅ ᐄᕙᓕᐊᕈᑎᒃᑯᑦ ᐱᒋᐊᓕᑦᑎᐊᖅᓯᒪᕙᒌᖅᑐᖅ ᐄᕙᓕᐊᕈᑎᒃᑯᑦ. ᓴᖅᑭᑎᑕᐅᓚᐅᖅᓯᒪᔪᑦ 1968 ᑲᑲᕈᒥᓐᓂ - ᐅᑭᐅᑦ 45 ᓯᓚᑦᑐᖅᓴᕐᕕᖕᓂ ᐱᓕᕆᕕᖓᑦ.

ᐱᔪᓐᓇᕈᑕᐅᔪᓐᓇᖅᑐᑦ ᐆᓇᓇᖏᑦᑎᐊᖅᑐᑦ. ᐃᓄᐃᑦ ᐱᑕᐅᖃᑕᐅᑦᑎᐊᕁᐅᒍᑦᑎᒍᑦ ᖃᑲᒥᓐᓂᐊᕈᑎᒃᑯᑦ ᐱᐅᔾᔨᑦᑎᔪᓐᓇᕐᓂᒃᑯᓪᓗ, ᐊᒥᓱᒃᑲᓐᓂᕐᓂᒃ ᐄᕙᓕᐊᕈᑎᒃᑯᑦ ᐱᑕᖃᒃᑲᓐᓂᕆᐊᖃᒻᒪᕆᒃᑐᖅ. ᓴᖅᑭᑎᑕᐅᔪᓐᓇᖅᑐᑦ 45 ᓯᓚᑦᑐᖅᓴᕐᕕᖕᓂ ᐱᓕᕆᕕᖓᑦ
Mary Simon is Chair of the National Committee for Inuit Education.
Terry Audla

Photo credit: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.
A collective call to action

Terry Audla

In 2011, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami’s National Committee on Inuit Education proudly released the National Strategy on Inuit Education, a groundbreaking policy document articulating our collective call to action to transform the Inuit education system and improve the education outcomes of our children. We called it the greatest social policy challenge of our time.

In February 2013, ITK took the next important step in this transformational process, opening the Amaujaq National Centre for Inuit Education within our office in Ottawa with the goal of implementing the strategy’s 10 recommendations one by one.

But this is not a challenge that ITK or the Amaujaq Centre can tackle alone. Real change will require the concerted efforts of all of us, and that includes a growing role for multinational corporations doing business in the Arctic and seeking an educated workforce.

Resource development in the Arctic has brought a new era of negotiated rights. Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreements (IIBAs) are now common in all regions, either because they are required by our land claims agreements or because they have become a standard operating practice in the resource development industry.

In recent years, IIBAs have evolved to include revenue-sharing provisions paid directly to Inuit organizations. In addition to revenue participation, IIBAs also contain provisions for Inuit employment in the resource sector training to build a local workforce.

But the reality is that despite significant efforts on the part of industry, governments, regional organizations, and communities, Inuit employment rates continue to be less than desired. Further, many of the jobs held by Inuit are at the lower end of the pay scales with fewer responsibilities.

Low levels of education are a key factor in this unwanted scenario. Many of the higher paying, skilled jobs require at least a high school diploma. Even some training programs have education entry criteria. Management and professional positions almost always require post-secondary degrees.

Simply put, there are not enough Inuit with the credentials to fill these positions. While training programs can alleviate some of these shortages, it is only through formal education that a real shift can take place.

Over and over we hear Inuit leaders, governments, and industry representatives expressing their support for change. Increasing Inuit employment in the mining sector, for example, is often highlighted as a goal in the regions. Getting Inuit youth educated has now become a collective priority across Inuit Nunangat.

One of the key areas for action identified in the strategy is the need to get parents engaged in their children’s education. A National Parent Engagement Initiative has been designed by the Centre and is being rolled out in each region of Inuit Nunangat.

As a parent I fully embrace this responsibility. However, not all parents are currently able to provide the needed supports. Re-engaging parents in the education of their children is critical to success in our schools.

Responding to that need is part of the ongoing role of ITK, as is uniting partners in pursuit of our shared goal to improve the wellbeing of Inuit and prepare our children to become full participants in the 21st century economy. With this issue of Northern Public Affairs, I feel that we have brought together a diversity of evidence and experience that both recognizes the work that remains to be done and celebrates all that we have accomplished.

Terry Audla is the President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the national organization representing 55,000 Inuit from Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Quebec), Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador) and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region of the Northwest Territories.
GUEST EDITORIAL

Terry Audla

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Terry Audla is the President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the national organization representing 55,000 Inuit from Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Quebec), Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador) and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region of the Northwest Territories.
On November 15, 2013, the newly elected Members of the Nunavut Legislative Assembly met in Iqaluit to choose the territory’s next premier. After the three nominees — Paul Okalik, Paul Quassa, and Peter Taptuna — made their opening statement, they answered questions from their peers. Joe Savikataaq, MLA for Arviat South asked about their plans for education in Nunavut.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to ask all candidates to respond to my question. During the recent election campaign, residents of Arviat raised a number of concerns with me regarding the education system in Nunavut.

Mr. Chairman, many of my constituents do not have confidence that our education system is at par with those in other Canadian jurisdictions, especially in the core academic areas of math, science and English. Other concerns raised by residents include the issue of social promotion and the lack of standardized testing.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that these shortcomings are short-changing our youth who want to pursue higher education at the university level, college level, and ultimately a job.

Mr. Chairman, although I recognize that there is a statutory requirement for the new Legislative Assembly to review the Education Act, I believe that it is critically important for the new Premier to give clear direction to the new Minister of Education. Each candidate, describe what he would include as a specific priority for the next Minister of Education in a mandate letter. Thank you. (p 35)

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Sa-
vikataaq. Can you respond to that question, please. Mr. Taptuna.

**Mr. Taptuna:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In my presentation, I did emphasize education. In Nunavut, our young people, the younger generation, are the future leaders of whether it’s for the government, our Inuit organizations, or our communities. Education is fundamental to Nunavummiut. It creates better health, better employment, healthier families, and healthier communities. One of the things which I would do as Premier is start the process of reviewing how we can improve education. Again, I have to say, it’s fundamental. Without that, without educated younger people, we’re in trouble. We’re in trouble in Nunavut. We do have to find a solution. It is difficult. We have to involve our partners, communities, and other jurisdictions to take a good, hard look at how we’re going to do this. Mr. Chairman, I know that in some other jurisdictions, they have dealt with this and have improved their education system for their young people. We have a low graduation rate. It is supposedly improving throughout the years, but at this time, with the population growth, we have to step up to the plate and find ways to get our people educated. Without that, our future leaders for Nunavut are in trouble. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Chairman (interpretation):** Thank you, Mr. Taptuna. Mr. Quassa, you have the floor.

**Mr. Quassa:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we’ve all heard about the concern of education. I am sure that this is going to be reviewed. The way we were taught and the way people are being taught today are totally different. I don’t want to go backwards but the system that they had is not being used in the present time. I, as MLA, know that this has to be reviewed and revisited. I am not sure how you translate “social promotion” but this has to be eliminated right away. That system is not improving any of the students’ education in regard to their grades. We have to have the same standards as the rest of Canadians. I think we have to see if we can have a unique system. For instance, when we went to school in morning and then in the afternoon we learned hands-on through vocational schools. Maybe we should look at that again in our communities. I think we have to look at the vocational side and see if we can get these programs going. We used to have these programs. I don’t want to look backwards, but it was a very good program and was very useful to us. We could still use those programs. I think we need to look at different ways of educating our children because Nunavut is unique. We don’t have to follow everybody else’s system. Sometimes we’re in the status quo, so we don’t go anywhere because we have a different way of thinking here in Nunavut. I hope that’s clear. Thank you.

**Chairman (interpretation):** Thank you, Mr. Quassa. Mr. Okalik, the floor is yours now.

**Mr. Okalik (interpretation):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I could not agree more with Mr. Savikataaq. I appreciate the question very much because what I’m hoping to accomplish during this term is to improve our overall education system and improve our numbers.

As I said during my opening comments, I don’t see a future for social promotion. Our numbers will decline in the beginning, but at the end of the day, everybody will benefit. So I’m committed to making sure that we repair what we are dealing with today. In terms of the mandate letter to the minister, I hope to see a good, strong Minister of Education. I will interview and talk to each of the ministers and look for the strongest because education is that much important to me and I want things done.

I look forward to working with the new Minister of Education and making things happen. That’s my commitment. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Quassa:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we’ve all heard about the concern of education. I am sure that this is going to be reviewed. The way we were taught and the way people are being taught today are totally different. I don’t want to go backwards but the system that they had is not being used in the present time. I, as MLA, know that this has to be reviewed and revisited. I am not sure how you translate “social promotion” but this has to be eliminated right away. That system is not improving any of the students’ education in regard to their grades. We have to have the same standards as the rest of Canadians.

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and Inuktitut teachers our language would not develop as much. We spend thousands on a CD program where we launch the Rosetta Stone, not only once, but twice, and we put a lot of funds into just a CD program, and I know that the Inuktitut teachers do have a salary, but I believe that it is not enough. Our government needs to show how important these Inuktitut teachers are because they’re more than just teachers, they’re experts in our language, and that connection between starting in kindergarten from the beginning of the school year to the end of school year is important to our language. And I think we need to show how important our language really is to our beneficiaries. Thank you, Madame Speaker.

In November 2013, Mary Simon, Chair of the National Committee on Inuit Education, was invited to give a special presentation on the Committee’s work to the Nunatsiavut Assembly. The following are some of the responses by members of the Assembly to Simon’s presentation.

Mr. Wayne Piercy (AngajukKâk, Hopedale):
Thank you. For the last two and a half years the Hopedale Inuit Community Government is in our office. We use that as our community hall because our hall burned down. We’re getting a new building built now, but every day we’re in contact with our recreation... departments, and we’re working with the school, and we’ve got about a 120 kids in our school.

So each day there’s a list done up. For the last two years we’ve been keeping a record. So if a kid does come in late taking their time walking up the school and so on, right? There’s a note taken. Unless the parent calls to the school, we’re using that note as trying to keep the kids in school.

So if a child was late because they were just taking their time walking to school, or just goofing around or whatever, and they’d never had permission of parents, like if their parent called in and said I slept in so my child will be late coming in. My child has a doctor’s appointment or appointment at the clinic. So they were taken into consideration. So we were using that as a tool. We would say that because our community office is our community hall, right? So we’re using that as a tool so in 2012 we had 69 children late for school with no valid reason.

So what we started doing was telling the kids that if you were late for school for no valid reason you would not be allowed into recreation or CYN that following evening or any of the programs that we offer. So from 2012 to 2013 our numbers dropped to 39. So in the span of one year we helped that many kids stay in school. So our efforts even though we’re taking some slack from parents because we’re saying that we’re keeping the kids away from programs, but we’re saying we’re only keeping a child away for one day. So the routine that they had for skipping school, skipping school and it was a trend for a while, but since we intervened and we partnered with the school CYN and recreation, the statistics that we got, we dropped from 69 down to 39.

So efforts that we’re doing to keep our kids in school, we’re doing pretty good. So hopefully now with the multi-purpose building it’s going to make that much more difference. So, like with what you said, we’re what we need to do now is motivate the parents to drop it down again from 39 on further because for the 39 that’s still not coming to school that’s 39 invalidated reasons not to show up at the school. So and, like I say, thank you again for coming to Hopedale and what presentation you put out for us. So I hope that, and when you talk to the principal, he’ll let you know the same thing that the program that we got in place in helping. And we’ll continue to keep doing that even for the like a handful of people that’s saying it’s negative and we’re impacting the child’s life, but all we’re doing is keeping them away from one evening program, and then if they’re not late again the next day for anything else, they’re allowed back into the program.

But all we’re doing was just keeping them away from one evening program because our office closes at 4:30 and we’re open to roughly at 10:00 in the night, right? So just for the sake of one day we dropped from 69 to 39 and the partnership that we had will continue as long as the program seems to be working. So I hope a lot of people show up tonight so that what you have to say will reinforce what we’re trying to do and help out for those kids that we want to see get an education, move on and come back to our communities and do something to help with what we’re trying to do. Thank you.

Ms. Susan Nochasak (Ordinary Member, Hopedale): Thank you. Mary, I had more of a comment than a question. First, I just wanted to say how happy I feel that this idea you and your team have started with has now come to fruition and started into a strategy. For so long Inuit and education, just, it was such a struggle for the two to come together, and for some reason we, as Inuit, struggled with becoming educated, and I really hope that the strategy will change all of that and increase our numbers in regards of having Inuit educated. The strategy’s not just about education, but Inuit
becoming their own, Inuit becoming smarter, becoming independent and being able to become employed at the end of it. And, lastly, I just wanted to end by hoping that these new changes in our future that will not forget about those who have dropped out of school and who are too old to enter into the school, the schooling system now, that we don’t forget about them and that maybe we can try and come up with strategies and trying to get them in the education system as well.

Mr. Daniel Pottle (Ordinary Member, Constituency of Canada): I don’t have a question, but I always like to end on a positive note. I mean, so many times when we hear of issues affecting our communities, always from the negative. I think I heard you say, Mary, and some very positive things that the strategy is looking at and engaging those who succeed. I mean, and Gary will get you the statistics, I guess, and as skewed as they may be from some perspective, as Charlotte had mentioned, I mean, I think, you know, we start off very well with our students in school, but as they move through the school system, by the time they reach the last year of high school, I mean, the retention rate is something that needs to be looked at.

And one of the things that I would recommend is if it’s not being considered or thought about is to engage those successful students with those who are at risk. Children, obviously, identify more with their peers so, I mean, you know, if we can use that resource and that tool to look at retaining and enhancing the graduate rate for students in secondary school. One of the things, I think, that Labrador Inuit, in particular, should be very proud of as well is our success rate with the number of students that we’ve graduated at the post-secondary level.

Obviously something must have worked. I mean, we’ve been commended year after year after year by the federal government when they were providing and we were administering, you know, the program on their behalf, and now we’re administering from our own perspective. I mean, just this year as Minister Mitchell had pointed out this morning in his update to the Assembly, I mean, you know, we had approximately 200 students who were engaged in post-secondary student studies this year and over the length of the 25 or 30 years that we have been implementing the Post-Secondary Student Support Program. I mean, I think the recent statistics that came out and I stand to be corrected on this, I think we had 800 plus graduates from the Post-Secondary Student Support Program across all streams. You know, at the undergraduate, graduate, PhD level.

So I think some of those success stories should be highlighted as well and shared with our people to encourage children to continue to stay in school, and if little old Danny Pottle or anybody else could do it, I’m sure any other student who are struggling and considering it and supported can achieve the same and more. Nakummek. ◇
I would like to begin by thanking the organizers of the 2012 Inuit Studies Conference for inviting me to give one of the plenary keynote addresses. My presentation today is “Adaptation and Resilience — The Inuvialuit Story”.

In particular, I want to share with you some of my thoughts on how cultural resiliency has helped Inuvialuit to adapt in the past, why our culture is still important today, and what we, as Inuvialuit, must do to ensure that we “preserve our cultural identity and values within a changing Northern society.”

Those of you who are familiar with our land claim, the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, will recognize that this is one of the basic goals that lie at the foundation of the Agreement. I know, as well, by long association with Inuit in other areas, that this goal is shared across the circumpolar regions. The Inuit peoples of the western Canadian Arctic are called Inuvialuit — which means “Real People” in Inuvialuktun. Through the settlement of the land claims, the rights and responsibilities were established for our traditional homeland, which we call the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, and are recognized in constitutional law. The Inuvialuit Final Agreement was the first comprehensive land claim agreement signed north of the 60th parallel, and only the second in Canada at that time.

Inuvialuit history extends back into the far distant past, to a time immemorial, which we call Ingilraami in our language. Legends from that time connect the people to the land and environment. Inuvialuit legends tell us about our origins, and how our ancestors hunted and survived in the past. They also communicate Inuvialuit views of the world, and teach strong cultural values.

As we stated in one of our educational publications called Inuvialuit Pitqusiit: The Culture of the Inuvialuit:

We have a high regard for certain characteristics and for certain types of individuals. We value curiosity, resourcefulness, patience, kindness, and ability. We appreciate individuals who are successful at whatever they do, who are responsible, who keep their word, and who are modest. These are attitudes, which have not changed despite changes in all else around us.

The distinctive Inuvialuit culture took shape through... processes of adaptation and change over many generations. The population grew, and by the early 1800s Inuvialuit had become the largest Inuit group in what is now Canada.

The arrival of foreigners two centuries ago severely tested the resiliency of Inuvialuit culture. Sustained contact between Inuvialuit and outsiders — people we call Tan’ngit — began in the mid-1800s, first through the fur trade and soon after with the arrival of commercial whalers in the Beaufort Sea. The commercial whalers had a devastating impact on Inuvialuit, as they brought with them immoral behavior, alcohol, and a complete lack of respect for the people, especially the women. Missionaries, police, government and other agencies that were foreign to the area soon followed.

The newcomers brought new items that in some ways made life easier, but also brought new diseases that took a terrible toll on Inuvialuit. Whole communities were wiped out, social connections were severed and survivors struggled to maintain their traditional values... The inability of the angatkti — ‘shamans’ — to cure those who became sick caused many of the survivors to seek modern remedies. These new diseases came fast and furious, and overcame the ability of traditional healers to learn how to treat the people. As ties to traditional cultures weakened, Inuvialuit began to accept the ways of the Tan’ngit...

The damaging and destructive whaling era was short-lived. By the early 1900s trapping had become a foundation of the Northern economy. With money earned from trapping, Inuvialuit were able to purchase schooners. This made it easier to travel further to places on Banks Island and Victoria Island, where they mixed with the Inuit of those areas, called the Inuinnait. Most Inuvialuit today can trace their ancestry to one or more of three Inuit populations: the original inhabitants of our area who called themselves Siglit, Alaskan Inupiat and Inuinnait.

With the arrival of Tan’ngit we also began losing influence over our lands and our lives. Without
knowing it, in 1870 the Inuvialuit homeland became part of the new Dominion of Canada. Although a Council of the Northwest Territories was established in Ottawa, it paid little attention to the far northwestern part of the country. The government was content to let the police and missionaries deal with the Inuvialuit.

It was only when other nations sought to stake claims in the Arctic, and when oil was discovered at Norman Wells, that the government became aware of the potential riches in the Northern region. In 1921, the Department of the Interior sent a government representative, Oswalt Finnie, to meet with Inuvialuit leaders. These leaders included Nuligak and Mangilaluk. Oswalt Finnie attempted to encourage them to join a Treaty that had been imposed a few years earlier on Dene living to the south of us...

Inviting the Government to become more active in our area had many unintended consequences. One consequence is that many of our names were changed. The Government acted on some of Mangilaluk’s and Nuligak’s recommendations and started making family allowance and old age payments to Inuvialuit. However, they found it difficult to keep track of people by their traditional names, which they could not pronounce. Starting in the 1940s the government began to issue Eskimo Identification Numbers to Inuvialuit and Inuit. Each person received a disc with his or her number stamped on it. It wasn’t until the 1970s that people’s names replaced these identification numbers in government records. From that time forward people were required to have first names, usually Christian names, and surnames.

Another major consequence was the introduction of residential schools. The government only gave a Family Allowance to mothers if their children attended school. Some families moved into settlements so that they could be with their children attending day schools. However, many others lived too far away and had to send their children to residential schools.

The traditional way for Inuvialuit children to learn was through observation and participation in daily activities. When missionaries arrived they arbitrarily took children to be educated at the missionary schools. Many were not able to go home for 5 or 6 years.

In 1908 the Government of Canada declared the Mackenzie District to be a Missionary Field, and gave the churches responsibility for educating the children. The Anglican and Roman Catholic churches built and operated residential schools in what is now the Inuvialuit Settlement Region.
In 1946, the Government began to take over responsibility for the education system and established elementary ‘day schools’ in some communities. The churches continued to operate residential schools in Aklavik for students for communities that had no day school, and for those attending high school. The church-run residential schools operated until student residences were built in Inuvik in 1959 with Roman Catholic and Anglican residential facilities.

As it is relevant to the issue of residential schools, I want to mention at this point that in June 2008, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a full apology for the residential school system on behalf of all Canadians, acknowledging that the policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country. Although some former students have spoken positively about their experiences at residential schools, these stories are far overshadowed by the lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage, and language.

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement led to the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Last year, Inuvik hosted the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Northern National Event. Approximately 1,000 former residential school students, government and church leaders, and other participants were in attendance. Expressions of Reconciliation took place each morning with individuals, communities and church groups. More than 50 ceremonies took place, with truth sharing and cultural performances. The goal of the Commission is to acknowledge what happened and educate Canadians on the history of residential schools, as well as build towards healing and reconciliation.

By the 1960s, it became clear and evident that we could no longer leave our fate entirely in the hands of government. One of the things that triggered action was the interest that oil and gas companies were beginning to show in our lands, and the lack of involvement we had in government decisions about allocating lands for exploration and development. Inuvialuit of all ages and backgrounds — Elders, harvesters, civil servants, broadcasters, and politicians — came together for the Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement in 1970, which we call COPE. Originally we intended to provide a united voice for all Aboriginal people of the NWT, but by 1976 COPE was given a mandate to negotiate a land claim specifically for the Inuvialuit.

Working towards our land claim was truly a ‘grass roots’ process. COPE fieldworkers spoke with every Inuvialuit at the community level, and the negotiators brought the demands of the Inuvialuit to the Federal Government. After many years of hard work and many compromises, a significant milestone was reached when COPE and the Government of Canada signed an Agreement-in-Principle in 1978. Much work still lay ahead, and it wasn’t until six years later, on June 5, 1984, that the Inuvialuit Final Agreement was signed. June 5th is a day that we commemorate to this day as Inuvialuit Day, and it is the cause of great celebration in our communities.

With the IFA in place, COPE’s work was completed and the organization was dissolved, making way for the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation to implement the new agreement.

We could spend many hours telling you about our institution, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation — or IRC as we call it — and what we are doing today, but that will have to wait for another day.
ing inside the system, we would be able to remove some of the misunderstandings that were creating barriers. As a result, it was decided that one of us should try to get into territorial politics.

In 1979 I was elected as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Nunakput, which included the communities of Sachs Harbour, Tuktoyaktuk, Holman (now called Ulukhaktok) and Paulatuk. It was not a full time position, and it allowed me to continue to devote a good part of my time to the advancement of the Inuvialuit claim. My job was to try to build an understanding and trust of the claim within government.

The Inuvialuit Final Agreement was officially signed in 1984. Hopefully the intervention from within had helped. In 1991, I was chosen to be Premier of the Northwest Territories by my fellow MLAs, becoming the first woman elected to serve as a premier in Canada. I remained in that position until 1995.

In 1996, I was elected Chair and CEO of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, a position that I still hold today. IRC celebrated its 25-year anniversary in 2009. We have accomplished much over that time. The future continues to provide us with many opportunities to continue with our successes, but we are also aware of the many challenges we face.

One of the challenges we are seeing more and more now are the effects of climate change, and in particular the ongoing reduction in the amount and duration of sea ice.

The loss of sea ice means that we can expect more ship traffic through our waters. This may bring more economic opportunities, but also brings risks.

Climate change is also having an impact on resources that we traditionally use, such as beluga whales. The whales are being affected both directly by changes in the sea ice, and indirectly because their food sources are affected. Through our work with the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the use of traditional knowledge, we are trying to understand the nature of the changes.

Although we increasingly look to science, engineering and biology as we seek to adapt to many of these challenges, it is our culture and heritage that gives us our resiliency. IRC takes very seriously its responsibility to “preserve our cultural identity and values within a changing Northern society”, and I would like to give you examples of some of the things we have been doing to make sure that our cultural identity remains strong.

For as long as we can remember through our oral history, Inuvialuit have used songs and dances to recount history, stories, legends, and values, and to celebrate our achievements.

Not long ago, only a few of our Elders practiced the songs and dances of our ancestors. Thanks to the efforts of Elders, youth and many others, most of our communities today have large drum dance groups with many active members. I am especially proud that the Paulatuk Moonlight Drummers and Dancers are part of the Inuit Studies Conference. This drum dance group was started by youth in Paulatuk, and it is largely through their own efforts that they have come to international acclaim.

Our traditional sports are as much an expression of our culture as they are a demonstration of physical skills and abilities. Most of these sports were used in the past to develop and maintain skills needed for hunting and survival, but they also played a role in community bonding.

Inuvialuit speak three dialects known collectively as Inuvialuktun. Unfortunately, Inuvialuktun is classified as an endangered language because it is spoken by fewer than 50% of the population, many of whom are Elders. Together with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, the Inuvialuit Cultural Resource Centre has supported several oral history projects. Its mandate includes:

- Develop a language plan for the Inuvialuit Region.
- Develop an Inuvialuktun Language Curriculum and Program.
- Provide Inuvialuktun language teachers with resource materials.
- Preserve and maintain the Inuvialuktun language.

One of our priorities is to develop culturally appropriate learning materials, and ways of educating our students. One of the tools that we have recently developed for teachers to help them create a more balanced and relevant instruction is ‘Taimani,’ a visual guide of Inuvialuit culture and history. In the winter of 2012, Taimani was the first course taught at the high school level for students to learn about Inuvialuit history from ‘Time Immemorial’ to today. We are proud that Myrna Pokiak, an Inuvialuit anthropologist born in Tuktoyaktuk, was instrumental in guiding us through the process of getting relevant materials produced.

In order for us to truly grasp our cultural heritage, and to make it meaningful, each of us needs to establish our own personal connections. As Inuvialuit history is an oral history, it was felt that historical writings reflected primarily the views of those coming in and reflecting on and documenting what
they saw from the outside. However, as time went by, we found many of the journals and historical documents helpful. Although they were not totally compatible with the reality of our experiences, they were nonetheless very useful.

Anthropologists, archaeologists, and institutions from outside who have shared, and still share, our curiosity about our past and who are willing to work with us are an important part of helping us tie together many of the gaps in our history. Given our suspicion that past expeditions had been stealing our artifacts, this changed when institutions offered us quick and ready access to the collections. I also know that it is important that we encourage our youth to become anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, linguists, and traditional knowledge experts...

In the tradition of our Elders, I would like to conclude today with one of our Inuvialuit stories. In the early 1900s, an Inuvialuk, Angusinaq, told the anthropologist Knud Rasmussen about *Inguiryuat*, the Smoking Hills along the coast near Paulatuk. According to our legend, the smoke is from the cooking fires of people who went to live in the ground after other people took things from them without their permission. There is a lot more to this traditional story, however, as with all of our legends, there is a lesson to be applied today. In this case the lesson is: if we are to work together we have to do so on the basis of trust and sharing.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today and I hope I have given you a glimpse into our history and some insight into what has allowed our people not just to survive, but to thrive. There are lessons to be learned from our stories, and I hope we can help our young people become better and stronger in the future because of our experiences of the past. We hope to build understanding among *Tan’ngit* that we are first Canadians, and Canadians first, and are a vital part of the world’s society.
Mary Simon & the Hon. Paul Quassa

On February 10th, 2014, Mary Simon, Chair of the National Committee on Inuit Education and Paul Quassa, Minister of Education for the Government of Nunavut met in Iqaluit to share their thoughts on education. The following is an edited transcript of their conversation, translated into English. A video recording of their conversation in Inuktitut will be available online soon.

Mary Simon (MS): To begin our conversation, I want to congratulate you for having been elected to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, and for your appointment as Minister of Education. We know today how important it is to have a good education, how important it is to finish your education; it seems especially important in this day and age. I want to start off by asking you for your thoughts on education.

Minister Paul Quassa (PQ): Thank you very much Mary. We know that education is a very important issue here in Nunavut. Well, that is to say, everywhere that Inuit live. We speak two languages now, English and Inuktitut. I would like to see it continue that both these languages are kept strong. We should not have a situation where one language has dominance over the other. As an example, there are greater portions of our populace who are going to school here in Nunavut. They are our future and we will always have to keep jobs in mind. Not only here in Nunavut, but if we look at the whole world, our people should be able to work anywhere. That is what I envision. If we are going to be able to work anywhere, we have to look at all aspects of education. We have to consider our strengths and keeping them strong. I strive for that.

MS: What you are saying is very true. At ITK we have been addressing educational issues since 2008. ITK created the Amaujaq National Center for Inuit Education in 2013 as a place where we can coordinate issues relevant to our education systems across the Canadian Arctic in the four Inuit regions. Whereas before English was the only language that we were made to speak in school or on school grounds — even when we were going to school in our communities — in Nunavut and Nunavik we are now teaching in Inuktitut up to grade three, which is good and we need to continue developing this in our schools. Today in Nunavik, after learning in Inuktitut up to grade three students have to switch to English or French, so in fact we have three languages to deal with.

What kind of future are we going to have and what is it like now? Perhaps you could speak to that. I am going to use as an example the curriculum we have in Inuktitut. If we are going to teach in our language that is standardized and in grades higher than grade three, we are going to need enough teachers that are Inuit or Inuktitut-speaking in order to do that. We need to strive for all of that.

PQ: I agree with you wholeheartedly, of course. As I said earlier, our languages have to be strong. Now here in Nunavut, we really feel that. We really want to enhance Inuktitut in our education system, and feel that there should be more of it taught. And we know it is very important to have teachers that can speak Inuktitut, and to have certified teachers. That is very important to us. We can see that it has to be a priority. Like I said earlier, Inuktitut and English...
have to be given the same footing. It is apparent that curriculum is readily available in English subjects. We have seen in our territory that curriculum in Inuktut is only available if they are developed by the Inuit teachers themselves. This creates a roadblock. Teachers have to create their own teaching materials. We are seeing that this has to be fixed.

**MS:** It is very true, what you are saying. At ITK, we released a national strategy on Inuit education, which has ten recommendations in regards to addressing the priorities and gaps that exist in our education system. So what you are saying is very consistent with the work we have done at the national level. It is so important for us to work together and for ITK to support the jurisdictions that deliver education in the four Inuit regions. Even though Inuit ended up in different jurisdictions and we have different administrative structures, really without having any say in it historically, we still really need to work together on Inuit education. This will give us a bigger profile nationally, and give us strength in numbers to deal with the federal government. [Paul agrees]

Inuit acting together in regards to education, creating standards in our curriculum, will provide the kind of education we envisage for our children. We are not laying blame but it has been said by many, by mothers and fathers, by all parents, by all grandparents, that we have to support our children’s education. At this time, we are trying really hard as parents to figure out how we can further support our children’s education — to support their regular attendance and ultimately their completion of their education. We want our youth to have a good future as well as adults that want to go to school for the first time.

**PQ:** This is very true.

**MS:** Could you talk a bit more on this topic?

**PQ:** Parents and guardians are very important in our children’s education. We are always thinking now about how we can further encourage parents and others to increase their support of their children’s education. It has to be this way. Parents themselves are also teachers. They are teachers in their own homes. Children do not only learn in school; they also learn in their homes. How can we get the parents more involved? That is a struggle of course. Now we are trying to show examples in our homes as to how we can encourage parents in our communities to become more involved in schools. Parents definitely have to be more involved along with district education authority members and school staff. It takes many different people to get involved with children and youth getting an education but parents, especially, have to be involved along with educators and other role models.

**MS:** In various communities, community members have different jobs and different responsibilities. For example, there is the police force, healthcare, and social services, as well as other areas of course. People with different responsibilities should get together on a regular basis and talk about the issues that are affecting their community and try to find solutions, which in the end will help children to stay in school. I think it would be much better if we work together in our communities to help one another figure out ways to keep our children in school.

**PQ:** Of course. If young people who are getting an education can see that there are different career opportunities in different fields in the workforce in their communities, I think they could see their futures more clearly. This would encourage them to continue their education. Like I said earlier, parents, teachers, local education committees — all the different people involved in education — have to be resources, to be of help. Parents have to be more involved. We have to take a closer look at our laws with respect to education. We have to look at how we need to address the *Education Act*.

**MS:** Will you be reviewing it now?

**PQ:** We will have to review it very soon. Our government will be discussing our plans.

**MS:** How do you feel to date about the laws that you now have [in Nunavut] where the languages are given the same footing in education?

**PQ:** It is written clearly in our legislation [Nunavut’s *Inuit Language Protection Act* (2008)] that all our languages have to have the same strength. And that *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* has to be a foundation. We have seven guiding principles in Nunavut. The laws have to be followed properly. If *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* is going to be used as a foundation, as we said earlier, educational tools in Inuktut have to be more developed and standardized across the board. Even though we don’t live in the same communities, there is more availability in terms of curriculum now. We are able to trade and share curriculum and tools among ourselves. This new *Education Act*, which was
enacted in 2009, is being looked at more closely now. It is apparent that we have to look at many different aspects of it.

**MS:** We often mention the National Committee on Inuit Education. Kathy Okpik is an active member there. As we mentioned earlier, the Inuktut curriculum only reaches up to grade three today. Once students have reached grade three here in Nunavut, they then have to learn in English. It is the same in Nunavik, but in Nunavik we also have the option of switching to French after grade three. Sometimes we have youth that are trilingual. Once they have reached grade four, they have to turn to English when they still cannot speak it well. Many youth say they end up getting more confused about what they are learning when they have to switch to another language. This seems to make it more difficult for children to learn in school so we really have to deal with this as soon as possible.

A lot of youth say that they quit school at grade eight or nine because they have given up on their education. You mentioned earlier that Inuktut teachers have to create their own teaching materials. People who are trying to become teachers have to make their own curriculum. We have had to do that, too, in Nunavik. When it is like that in communities, there ends up being a vast amount of different standards of curriculum being taught. For example, in Nunavik, grade three students in Inukjuak and those in Aupaluk can be taught the same subject at the same level but with a different curriculum. There are no set standards across the board. The different education jurisdictions are working on addressing this but it continues to be a heavy burden to some.

**PQ:** We are very cognizant of that and I think we know what we have to do to address it. For example, from kindergarten to grade three or even further, having two languages can be a barrier itself. When I went to school, and maybe it was the same for you too, we were only taught math in English. How can we address teaching math in Inuktut? Sometimes when speaking Inuktut, there are no terms for math properties even though math seems to be a universal language. I think we will have to take a closer look at that. Like I was saying earlier, how can we review our legislation in order to better address these challenges?

**MS:** Could you elaborate a bit more on something that you have mentioned? Once we have properly prepared curriculum materials, it will be apparent that some of the material being learned will have to be only in English, while some of it will only be in Inuktut. If we embraced an education system that allowed students to take their subjects in Inuktut to the highest level possible and were able to graduate high school by taking some subjects in Inuktut and some subjects in English, that would be a better situation because we are using our mother tongue as a teaching language to the highest extent. This would help bridge language-retention in both languages. I think that is good food for thought.

**PQ:** While living in any community, it is often heard that it gets confusing while being caught in the middle of learning in two languages. Yes, we have to fix
that. How can we put more effort into teaching in Inuktitut in our schools and how can we improve it? In Nunavut, we have two different methods of writing in Inuktitut: Syllabics and Roman Orthography. We have to examine the feasibility of these systems. Like you mentioned earlier, if I am in a school somewhere, there should be standards that are the same as other schools. They have to be on equal footing. Sometimes it becomes apparent when someone comes here from a different community there are slight differences in language.

**MS:** Our schools were brought into our communities from a system outside of our culture and language, and it did not relate to our culture or language. Now we have an opportunity to develop a school system that we can call our own, even though we entered into a system that was already established. By working together we can make the changes we want so it becomes something that Inuit take ownership over and call their own. Today, we have begun to administer and manage our school systems. We know that it has to continue improving. There are indications that our Inuktitut language is becoming weaker and weaker. In order to keep it strong we have to use it in our schools as a teaching language in grades higher than grade three, in our homes, and in our communities. The need for recognized standards has to be implemented up to the highest level of education. I see that for all the Inuit of Canada. Up to the highest level, even surpassing Canada’s standards if possible. We can try to do that but only when all the Inuit are using the same writing system, because as you said, there are great differences: in Nunavik we use Syllabics, in Nunavut and the Inuvialuit region, there are two writing methods (Syllabics and Roman Orthography), and in Nunatsiavut they also use the Roman Orthography.

The National Committee on Inuit Education has been given a mandate to create a taskforce to look at this and consult the Inuit on their thoughts regarding a standardized writing system across Inuit Nunangat. This would not have any effect whatsoever in the different dialects. This is already happening. This taskforce will report back to the National Committee on Inuit Education. I know now that I am an elder that we don’t want our language and written word taken from us, so we have to take great care in how we move forward.

Many people do not want it to be changed [to a standardized system]. We are not trying to change what is being used now. I don’t want people to feel that we are changing it, but perhaps [a standardized system] could be taught through the education system. We have to take great care in making these types of changes. It would strengthen the foundation of our school systems where we can start sharing our curriculum across the Inuit regions. We could publish books and so on.

**PQ:** Yes that is what we think. The people who are trying to get a higher education learn fast. Also, when we look at different lands like Akukittuit/Kallallit Nunaat (Greenland), if we look at them, we see that they have a standardized system — one writing system even when they don’t all speak the same dialect. I would like to explore where we can find a system that works well for us. There are examples
from Nunavik, Alaska, and Greenland, where can we glean from within their education systems something that we can benefit from. If we are going to consider how we can move forward, we have to look at different options.

**MS:** Other Aboriginal peoples besides Inuit have gone through the same thing. At one point the Maori of New Zealand almost lost their language but have recovered it by utilizing a standardized system. Their expertise has been brought forth from different sources. I think that we can do that too.

**PQ:** Yes, we can learn a lot from them. If we look at all of Canada when all of the Education Ministers meet we can learn from these resources, or from experiences overseas. We have to remember that our old way of life, and that of our children and grandchildren, is not at all the same anymore. Now there is new development in our lands like mines, for example. While these are now becoming more prevalent, we have to monitor education and be very aware that there will be employment opportunities in different fields of work.

Also, here in Nunavut, we have to showcase what we are proud of in respect to education. There are many people who have completed their education in the health and law fields, for example. We should showcase these successes to inspire our young people.

**MS:** This can definitely happen, if we can take care of the path education is taking. There is now a large number of youth in Inuit Nunangat. Youth under the age of 25 make up over 50% of the Inuit population today. Although we have addressed some of the educational needs in our regions, we have not addressed issues like mental health and social work to a satisfactory level. These also impact children’s’ ability to learn in school.

Students need to learn more about what their options are when they become young adults and are looking for jobs. In other words the resource development sector may have a lot to offer, but it has a life span. We need to talk about how their work experience and training in the mining sector can be turned into a very useful job in their community when the mining job is finished or they decide to leave early. For instance, if someone has trained to become a plumber, or electrician, or a chef, for example, they can find these jobs in their communities or create their own businesses. We have to better support the educators in our communities so they can have career fairs and so on with the students. I don’t think we tell them often enough about their future options. We have not said this enough to date.

**PQ:** Yes I agree. On that note, students who are just entering into the education system like early childhood education, daycares, these are things that we have to think about in education. For example, we hear that when children are around 4 or 5 years of age, they learn so much faster. If we start to educate them from that age to get a good education I think it would be very beneficial.

**MS:** That is a very important thing. Many children start going to daycares when their mothers are working. The daycares say that they don’t want to just be a babysitting service but they want to foster the education of little ones. That is why they want to have better-educated caregivers in daycares. We have to address that better. The running of the education system and the running of daycares is separate, and there are currently no linkages between daycare and kindergarten. I think it is important that both systems know the children who are entering their schools, to make sure teachers are aware of the children’s needs if they have any learning challenges. That, too, has to be addressed more. There also has to be more cooperation between daycares and teachers.

**PQ:** Yes. People just entering the schools have to be better introduced into the system. We are addressing that now. How can they be better introduced into the educational stream?

**MS:** Daycares are not funded enough. [Paul agrees] I use Nunavik as an example because that is what I know best. Daycare workers often lose hope because of the lack of resources. When children are small, they want to keep learning even if they are not with their mother. We have to take good care of them. They often say that there is a lack of educational material that is culturally relevant, because we feel there is the need to use Inuktitut.

From birth to reaching the age of entering daycare, the daycares are the ones who are dealing with them all the time, everyday, five days a week. What foundation do they have? Do they have a foundation in Inuktitut? Do they have a culturally relevant foundation? Do they have a foundation in Qajujaqatugaput? These are important questions to consider.

**PQ:** Here, we have mandated, for example, that if a new school is being built, it must have a daycare. Like we discussed earlier, our youth are having children of their own and we are directing this at those...
who want to continue their education. New schools are going to have to have a daycare. It is because we want the youth to continue their education. And when existing schools are going to be added to, there has to be a daycare. It is always keeping in mind the youth who have children. Even adult education centres should have daycares. The intention is to try to keep students more in contact with the school. But we always have to keep in mind what we discussed in the beginning: parents. Parents are also teachers. [Mary agrees] They have to be fully included too. We are not trying to divide.

MS: We are trying to unite them.

PQ: Yes, if we can unite them more.

MS: Teachers and mothers and fathers have to work together in the students’s education. I would like to return to that. I wanted to ask if you had any thoughts. Since we started last year in Nunavut, when Eva Aariak was still Premier, we were asked by a lot of people how we could support our children better when we don’t understand what they are supposed to be learning? If we don’t know whether or not they are learning, how can we support them?

And when our house is too small and we are too many and it is too loud in the household, how can we foster their education if they have homework. They have voiced this to us. Having tried to think on this I can only comment based on my experience. My children have gone on to higher education and even when they need help, I don’t always know how it is that I can help, especially mathematics. I have tried to support them within my house, making sure they are well fed, making sure they get adequate sleep, and trying to support their education by making sure they attend regularly. In any way, support of education can mean many things.

These educational materials that are written, that are produced are not the only way. The support that we give our children, like you said, starts with us. We are the parents; we are the teachers since our children were born. We can instill in our children good learning skills by supporting them in different ways. Also within the community, the mother and the father should not just wait for answers on how to help because they can think for themselves. [Paul agrees] It makes one want them to really understand. We are not trying to say that [the parents] won’t do it properly, that is not what it means. We are only talking about how we could further support our students by wanting them to advance their education.

PQ: Today, for example, if we go back a little bit, my parents were never educated in a school, whereas, I went to school. Perhaps for them, it meant even more. Today, for those of us in our generation that have gone to school, we know what they do there, what they have to do there. It would seem that we are better able to relate to our students. Is that understandable? [Mary agrees] My parents had never entered a real school such as what we have today. For them, it probably meant more for their children to go to school on a daily basis.

MS: Without being able to speak English as well?

PQ: Yes. That is the way it was. Today, we are better educated. And I think we understand better that even when you take your education to grade twelve, you can learn even more. I think we understand that better now. That is, more of us Inuit now. We have to strive harder as parents to encourage [our children] because we understand better now how it is to go to school. Also, for example, there are more opportunities for parental involvement now, such as local education committees, for example. Parents can also be resources in community education bodies; they can help make decisions, such as which teachers will be hired, and how long the school year will be. They are in a position to make decisions now. There are these things, which we in the communities can use. For example, we have ample tools now that we can use. We have ample tools now in our communities. If we could utilize them more...

MS: Parents and youth who have completed their education must also help encourage our children to stay in school. They understand the challenges facing our students and understand the importance of finishing school. They really need to take up the responsibility of keeping their children in school along with the schools and community members.

PQ: We have to remember that our ancestors had a strong livelihood. Through this, too, we can take that strength and support our children in education. What we learn now, the education system we have now, can be used as tools as they are powerful. We can have a future. It is only by making our languages - English, Inuktitut and French - strong will we have strength. Those of us dealing with education are going to have to keep striving this way to keep our two languages (English and Inuktitut) strong. We will have to investigate to see why they are not so strong now.

We have to keep language strong from the beginning. But we will always have to remember children will have to think like children. When we grew up
we were encouraged to think as children do. When elders were speaking, we were told not to be there since we were children and have to remain that way. We will always have to remember that in a school, because they are children. They cannot be expected to think in adult terms. That is what I think personally. But if we are going to use Inuit Qaujimajatuqangat as a foundation, this is what we have to talk about.

MS: This is all very true, what you have said. How about all these people who don’t go to school nowadays, there’s many of them? How can this be fixed?

PQ: We will have to think about the purpose of education. Our education has to be more geared to the workforce. If students can be given more options and guidance as to the direction of their educational path (for instance, deciding to take the academic stream), they would be better equipped.

We used to go to school in Churchill where we would learn reading and academic skills in the morning, and in the afternoons we would be taught manual skills for working — vocational skills. I think that can be applied now. If we look at the rest of the world, education is delivered that way in some places, like Germany for example. Like we discussed earlier, I think we have to look into the different ways of delivering an education for something that can readily apply to Nunavut. If we look into the different ways that education can be delivered, I think that we can have more retention. That is what I think.

I know that there are many who quit school. But there are other avenues that can be used. For example, through an adult education centre, what we call the Arctic College. We have to explore these avenues. And even though we are the government and we administer education, we also have to develop partnerships with the Inuit organizations, the mining industry, and other sectors. We have to help each other and work in partnership. Nunavut is not only a government, and we have a diverse population with different entities. We have a mandate as to how we can steer Nunavut in the right direction. Even though we are different, we have a common aim. I think we can explore different possibilities.

As a government, we receive funding that is earmarked for these things as well as funds through partnerships. It should be discussed more and used more. [Mary agrees] Of course industry wants employees. Come, then, if you want employees. Working together we can make this happen.

MS: That is very true even if it is not said. I support what you have said because it is so true. I don’t think that the governments can handle all that has to be done by them today. We have to work at this together. It is because I want to foster cooperation that I am here. This interview will probably be seen by many people as it will be available online at the Amaujaq National Centre for Inuit Education and on ITK’s website. It will also be translated into English in written form and made available in Northern Public Affairs. These are things that I really wanted to discuss. If there is anything else you wanted to say, feel free to do so Paul.

PQ: Thank you. As I mentioned earlier, we have now had an Education Act since 2009. We are fully aware that there have been people who have come here to do research and are fully cognizant as to what they are doing. When our students are the focus and are being mentioned, we have to monitor that and we have. And, I am going to keep striving to see how parents can be more fully involved. I think we have to do that everywhere in the world, [Mary agrees] because they are our future.

MS: The availability of real help from the federal government was made evident by the Prime Minister when he made the announcement to give substantial funding to First Nations education. Even though this announcement was not directed at us, we are Aboriginals, too. [Paul agrees]

We are not the same peoples as the First Nations who will be receiving the money but together the Prime Minister has to show confidence and support us financially as we move forward with our education. I try to think how we can cooperate on this. We can speak to this further any time that we are in Ottawa, I mean even if we don’t speak about it today, it’s ok. We have to speak of it anytime we get an opportunity.

PQ: Yes. I often think how something needs to be arranged, such as a task force. I am not sure what. [Mary agrees] I think there has to be something like that. If Inuktut is going to be strong, we have to explore it fully. Languages in school have to be strong. English, Inuktut, and French. Yes. Us Inuit, our language seems to be the same. [Mary agrees] Our language is important whether we are in Nunavut or Nunavik. Because it is our way, only through education can we show strength in language.

MS: Nakurniik.

PQ: Qujannamiik.
Northern Public Affairs spoke with Ronnie Campbell, Assistant Auditor General of Canada to discuss his report on education in Nunavut, which was tabled in Nunavut last November.

Northern Public Affairs (NPA): Your report on Education in Nunavut was tabled in the Legislature on November 19, 2013. What were your terms of reference for the audit, and how were they determined?

Ronnie Campbell: Our audit of Education in Nunavut examined whether the Government of Nunavut’s Department of Education has adequately managed the implementation of the Education Act. Although the Act only came into force in 2009, we decided to conduct an audit now to see whether the Department was on the right track in implementing it before too much time had passed.

The Office reports on matters of significance. Audit teams use professional judgment in selecting audits and what to include and exclude within each audit. We try to ensure that we select issues that are important to the territory and reflect the Government’s priorities.

NPA: The report makes several recommendations to the Department of Education. Which ones do you think are the most critical in regards to enhancing opportunities for student success?

RC: Our Office reports on matters that we believe to be significant. Therefore, all of the recommendations in the report are important and reflect areas where the Department can make improvements.

That being said, we feel it is critical for the Department to implement our recommendation to provide information to the Legislative Assembly on the progress of implementing the Education Act. This information is important for the Legislative Assembly to have when it reviews the Act. Without information on how implementation is going, including challenges the Department is facing, it will be more difficult for the review to identify the steps that need to be taken to improve education in Nunavut.

Our recommendations related to delivering bilingual education are also critical, given that this is a key component of the Education Act.

NPA: It seems that one of the underlying themes in the report is the very practical challenge of the need to further develop capacity within the Department of Education (both at headquarters and at the school-level) in order to meet the objectives of the Education Act. Nunavut does not currently have a public service commission whose role it would be to train and provide continuing education to Nunavut public servants at all levels. What are your thoughts on the value of such an agency for Nunavut?

RC: Our Office provides recommendations to government but we do not comment on how government should be structured. It is the Government of
Nunavut’s decision how to best organize itself to provide training to its officials and ensure that departments are operating with sufficient capacity. We have made recommendations in our audits related to how departments can make improvements to human resource capacity in Nunavut.

For example, our 2010 audit on Human Resource Capacity in Nunavut recommended that departments assess gaps in employees’ skill sets and implement strategies to address them. It also recommended that departments identify and address the reasons for low participation and completion rates in certain training programs. We have also made recommendations related to human resource capacity and training in other audits, including our 2011 audit on Children, Youth and Family Programs and our 2012 audit on Procurement of Goods and Services. Regardless of the structure that the Government puts in place, we agree that these are pressing issues that the Government of Nunavut needs to consider and address.

**NPA:** One of the findings of the report was that the Department was not using or analyzing key information. One of the goals of the National Strategy on Inuit Education is to bring together researchers, policymakers and practitioners to identify information gaps and improve communication and collaboration between these different groups. Based on your assessment and what you heard during your interviews what research or analysis is needed in order for the Department of Education to fill the information gaps that exist?

**RC:** The Department should analyze the information they already have available to them. For example, the Department has data on the differences between students’ classroom marks and those they obtain on the Alberta standardized exams in the same subjects. Our report included a recommendation that the Department analyze this information to understand why these gaps exist and identify improvements that can be made.

The Department could also look at whether its efforts to improve education are achieving the desired results. During our audit we saw examples of what officials in the Department and within schools are doing to make improvements. However, they did not know the impact of their activities. For example, the schools we visited had initiatives in place to improve student attendance but had not looked at the results of these initiatives to determine whether or not they were working.

Finally, officials could also look for more opportunities to share best practices with their colleagues across the Department so that more students can benefit from successful initiatives.

**NPA:** Recognizing the already strained capacity of the Department of Education, what resources are needed to improve the department’s access to and use of pertinent information.

**RC:** The Department should be putting its efforts into collecting the information it needs from schools and finding efficient and consistent ways to do this. They should then use the information to identify areas for improvement. Our audit found that officials spent time and effort creating reports that were providing little benefit to those who created them or those who received them.

**NPA:** In 2010, the Auditor General conducted an evaluation of education in the Northwest Territories. Are there any common themes/challenges between the two territories, and if so, what are they?

**RC:** While we audited education in the Northwest Territories (2010) and the Yukon (2009), the Government of Nunavut audit was different in that it focused on the implementation of Nunavut’s Education Act. That being said, all three reports indicate that attendance is a significant challenge. The three reports also note that graduation rates in their respective territory are lower than in many other jurisdictions in Canada.

**NPA:** Your report noted that there are several obstacles that are limiting the Department’s implementation of the Education Act. Beyond what the Department has control over directly, did you observe any issues impacting the quality of education in Nunavut?

**RC:** As we say in our report, low attendance is a serious problem in Nunavut. Repeated absences affect a student’s ability to learn the required material and advance to the next grade. However, school programs and policies may not be enough to improve attendance. The Education Act also recognizes parents’ responsibility in getting their children to school, well rested and ready to learn. In this way, parental involvement is paramount to the success of implementing the Act.

Ronnie Campbell was appointed as Assistant Auditor General in 2003. He is responsible for the group that conducts performance audits of the governments of Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, and Yukon.
A National Strategy on Inuit Education

The research and discussions of the National Committee on Inuit Education led to the identification of gaps in Inuit education that could be closed through 10 core investments:

Core Areas of Investment

- Mobilizing Parents
- Measuring and Assessing Success
- Developing Leaders in Education
- Increasing the Number of Bilingual Educators and Programs
- Investing in the Early Years
- Establishing a University in Inuit Nunangat
- Increasing Success in Post-Secondary Education
- Improving Access to Services for Students who Require Additional Support
- An Inuit-Centred Curriculum and Language Program Resources
- A Standardized Writing System
ARTICLES
INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

Change can happen:
A proactive approach to post-secondary preparation

Jodie Lane

My son is in grade three and recently brought home his math homework. When he told me that they are learning multiplication, I began running through my times tables in my head, to refresh; to prepare to help him learn. Then it happened. I was suddenly brought back in time to that moment of frustration I had with my own mother when she tried to help me with my math homework. I found myself in the same predicament as she, when she realized that the way she learned was no longer relevant, and in some cases, was now wrong!

Just as the way teaching methods change over time, so do the needs of students when it comes to planning for their future careers. The outcomes remain the same. Multiplication is still multiplication, and students still have questions about their options, but the ways in which the answers are deduced have changed.

Nunatsiavut is one of the four Inuit regions that make up Inuit Nunangat across Canada’s North. It is located in the Northeastern part of Labrador. Around 7,200 Inuit make up the Beneficiaries of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement, with approximately 3,100 Beneficiaries residing within the Nunatsiavut Land Claim Area. Within Nunatsiavut there are five Inuit communities — Nain, Hopedale, Makkovik, Postville, and Rigolet. Schools in each community range in size from a high of 226 students in Nain to a low of 32 in Postville. On average, there are approximately 24 students in Nunatsiavut who complete grade 12 each year.

Having worked with the Nunatsiavut Government Department of Education and Economic Development in the area of post-secondary funding for over 13 years, it has been very interesting observing changes in the post-secondary student, and how they function and navigate their way through the system.

When it comes to planning for their future, students were not always proactive or prepared. Many students depended on the help of support staff within the Nunatsiavut Government (and their respective schools) to carry out most aspects of post-secondary preparation. This help came in the form of such things as filling out applications for school and funding, or making travel reservations and finding appropriate housing. Although these supports were initially helpful and necessary, they were beyond the scope of the mandate of the funding agency — the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) — and they inadvertently contributed to students entering post-secondary studies often ill-prepared to meet not only academic challenges but also social, cultural, financial, and mental challenges as well.

In the early 2000s, PSSSP staff recognized a number of trends among Nunatsiavut post-secondary students, including poor attendance, high dropout rates, financial mismanagement, and social problems, and they connected them to the students’ performance in high school, lack of preparation for post-secondary studies, lack of financial planning and education, and overall dependency on others to navigate through a foreign system of applications, deadlines, and formal correspondence.

As the established default point of contact for post-secondary students in Nunatsiavut, PSSSP dealt with these challenges on a daily basis; reacting to the needs of students became a time consuming task. In order to curb these occurrences, the PSSSP made a conscious effort to take a more proactive approach to increasing the success rates of their students.

It was noted that if students were more prepared in all areas (academic, financial, social, emotional, etc.) before they left home to pursue post-secondary studies, many of the negative issues that often arise in these areas could be decreased. The question was: How could this be done?

Through the Education Counsellor position under the PSSSP, a plan was launched to provide career education to all grades (K-12), as well as career planning and post-secondary education preparation geared specifically to high school students. A number of initiatives ranging from the creation of a mascot (Cool Ed) and an identifiable logo, bingo-themed career games, activity books, promotional materials, as well as annual visits to each school with stay-in-school themed presentations to all grades, exposed students at different stages to the area of career planning and the idea and possibilities of post-secondary education. Students became aware and comfortable with the presence of the Education Counsellor in their schools. Information on many career options was disseminated through all grades and students began talking, more than ever, about what they wanted to be when they grew up.
In addition to the overall career presentations and activities in the K-12 system, a more focused approach to post-secondary planning was also initiated with all high school students. Presentations were refined to include information on funding for school, the application process, deadlines, scholarships, and entrance requirements. At the same time, students were given information on study skills, budgeting, living away from home, culture shock, time management, and what to expect while living away from the comforts of home.

So, where did all of these efforts get us?
Today, some 12 years after the problems were identified and efforts to address them were initiated, we are seeing noticeable changes in the successes of our post-secondary students. High school graduates today have been exposed to the career education and stay-in-school initiatives of the PSSSP for their entire secondary education, and are proving to be more independent when planning for their academic futures.

Post-secondary students have become less dependent on the services of the PSSSP and are showing improved grade point averages, attendance, and completion rates. Many college graduates are even returning to complete a second program, often a continuation of their original career plan (i.e. completing a diploma then moving on to university to earn a degree).

It is encouraging to know that our students are very capable of meeting the goals they set out for themselves. Too often the standards for Inuit are set at a lower level than the rest of the population because of the fear of setting students up for failure. We must stop assuming that our people cannot achieve. We must stop lowering standards, both academically and personally. We must expect greatness. After all, we are great people.

Jodie Lane was born and raised in Makkovik, Nunatsiavut. She is currently the Education Manager for the Nunatsiavut Government Department of Education and Economic Development.

Notes and Further Reading
1 Labrador School Board Graduation Rates Comparison, June 2008-June 2012.
2 Academic challenges are noted here, but not a result of intervention by PSSSP staff. The academic achievement levels of students in Inuit communities are a topic of great interest, but not the focus of this article.

Lane, Jodie (2013). If we tore down the barriers would we still be equal: Nunatsiavut Students and Post-Secondary education. Morning Watch: Education and Social Analysis, 40(3-4), 42-49. For more information on the Nunatsiavut Government Post-Secondary Student Support program, contact: Lucy Brennan, Program Administrator (lucy_brennan@nunatsiavut.com) or Jodie Lane, Education Manager (jodie_lane@nunatsiavut.com), or visit www.nunatsiavut.com.
INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

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Liz Fowler & Mindy Willett

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Rassi Nashalik, Igalaq host, lights the qulliq while the Yellowknives Dene Drummers sing a drum song.

Photo credit: Tessa Macintosh.
Special Issue 2014

Thank you.

Endnotes

1. MAI: Special Issue 2014

Mahsi, Merci, Thank you.

Endnotes
Lines of tables in cafeteria of Sir John Franklin Territorial High School/Akaicho Hall (Christmas tree in corner), Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, 1958.

Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner, Marie Wilson, accepts the new Residential School modules in both English and Inuktitut as a gesture of reconciliation from the two territorial Ministers of Education, the Honourable Jackson Lafferty, and the Honourable Eva Aariak.
For more than a year, students in the Northwest Territories (NWT) and Nunavut have been learning about the history and legacy of residential schools. This new mandatory module is being taught in all Grade 10 classes across the two territories. Many Northern leaders — in politics, education, culture, language, and other areas — provided guidance on what should be covered in this module and how it should be taught.

I would not worry too much as to how it should be delivered. We will make mistakes along the way. We will learn from those mistakes. But, we cannot remain silent about it any longer. We will take every precaution to be sensitive about how we deliver it, but the message has to go to the schools, it has to reach our young people.

— the late Maris Tungilik, Residential School survivor and long-term advocate for survivor rights originally from Repulse Bay, Nunavut.

One of the questions we posed to these leaders was: “What would you want your children or grandchildren to know, think, and feel about residential schools when they have completed this module?” The answers reflect the diversity and complexity of the experiences of those who attended residential schools.

Overwhelmingly, the leaders we spoke to responded that they wanted their own children to understand the past as a means to provide hope for tomorrow. They wanted others to know what their lives were like before residential school, so that what had been taken away could be fully known and understood. They wanted their children to be proud of their family members who had been at residential school and who were resilient in the face of the assimilative policies and practices of the schools. They wanted the positive side of residential schools shared, including stories of kind teachers who did their best. Some stated that without this acknowledgment healing could not take place. They wanted their grandchildren to remember those who did not come home, and to know the many facets of life in a residential school. They wanted everyone to understand that this is a complex story where happiness was found in unexpected places, and where tragedy occurred in places where those most vulnerable should have been safe. They wanted their children to know the many truths.

However, these leaders also stressed that they did not want their children to feel that the heavy burden of the past was also theirs to carry into their own futures. Instead, they recommended that the children learn what we should do now, and to think about the ways in which Canada can work towards becoming a healthy nation — a place where we can all be proud of who we are and where we come from.

We are not defined by residential school history. When you take into account our long, long history, it is a bump on the road. It is not who we are as a people. Our children must know the dark part of Canada’s history but we don’t want to take the rocks we’ve been carrying in our backpacks and simply put them into theirs and make it their burden to carry. We need to help them understand our knowledge — our gonawo — so they can be strong and know who they are.

— John B Zoe Tlicho, language and culture advocate. John was also a leader in negotiating the Tlicho Land Claim and Self-government Agreement.

The teacher’s guide, *The Residential School System in Canada: Understanding the Past — Seeking Reconciliation — Building Hope for Tomorrow*, written simultaneously in English and Inuktitut, each informing the other, was designed with this guidance in mind. It follows an arc. It begins by exploring how young children demonstrated independence and strength before the introduction of, or attendance at, residential schools. The activities in the middle sections of the module move into the time of darkness, when many colonial policies and practices at residential schools attempted to destroy people’s sense of who they were. In the final activities, the arc moves towards a place where,
together, we are trying to heal our relationships with each other towards reconciliation and the ultimate goal of returning to that original place of independence and strength.

Reconciliation means different things to different people and in different situations. In some cultures and languages, there is no equivalent concept. It can mean truth-telling, listening, forgiveness, acceptance, and understanding. It can exist between individuals, within a family, a community, and at a national level. It usually means restoring good will, respect, and cooperation in relations that have been disrupted. Some would say Canada is not ready for reconciliation and what is needed instead, is the work of conciliation — which means to bring agreement or respectful relations between two parties. Some speculate that reconciliation was politically or economically motivated, resulting from the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Some question if what motivated it matters. Others point out that there is a long history and many examples of harmonious, mutually-beneficial relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

During their studies, the high school students discuss reconciliation to understand the importance of identifying ways to reconcile at different levels, if possible; they are encouraged to think critically about these processes, and to consider their own role in them. While we are not yet there as a nation, the goals of this module — that by understanding the past and seeking reconciliation in the present, there can be greater hope for tomorrow — are setting the course for today and for generations to come.

“We are not defined by residential school history. When you take into account our long, long history, it is a bump on the road. It is not who we are as a people…”

As Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner, Marie Wilson has stated, “The history and legacy of residential schools is not an Aboriginal Issue — it is a Canadian issue.” While this special issue of Northern Public Affairs is focused on Inuit education, the residential schools module is for all of us. The North is a special place, and the difficult conversations that need to take place in order for us to build a better tomorrow are happening here in our classrooms.

Qujannamiik, Quana, Quyanaimni, Mahsi, Merci, Thank you.

Liz Fowler was born in Igloolik, Nunavut. She worked in education for 31 years. After retiring in 2005 she started her own education consulting business in Yellowknife, NT.

Mindy Willett began her teaching career in Kugluktuk, Nunavut. She is currently the NWT Social Studies and Northern Studies Coordinator.

Mindy and Liz were the lead writers for the residential school module.

Endnotes

1 Portions of this article are adapted from the teacher’s guide, Residential School System in Canada: Understanding the Past — Seeking Reconciliation — Building Hope for Tomorrow, 2013. Department of Education, Culture and Employment (GNWT), Department of Education, Culture and Employment (GN), Legacy of Hope Foundation.
I
n August 2010, my husband, Inuk filmmaker Joe-
bie Weetaluktuk, and I travelled to Christchurch
on the South Island of Aotearoa. Our purpose was
to learn as much as we could about a wide range
of educational options and opportunities for Māori
learners in order to find inspiration for our own
work in Inuit Nunangat. I have been involved in
the design, development, and delivery of child care
programs in Inuit communities since I became a
founding member of the Iqaluit Child Care Soci-
ety in 1988. In Aotearoa in 2010, I had a practi-
cum position as a visiting academic at the School of
Māori, Social and Cultural Studies in Education at
the University of Canterbury, and Jobie had a grant
from the Canada Council to undertake research for
a potential future film.

The purpose of this paper is to share ideas gar-
nered through experiences in Aotearoa that could
be valuable to Inuit and to reflect on those ideas
from the perspective of public policy. There is so
much I would like to bring forward and share in this
paper. I would like to write about how Aotearoa has
one treaty — the Treaty of Waitangi, signed by Māori
and the Crown on February 6, 1840 — and how
every schoolteacher in the country, as part of their
education, spends three days studying Māori rights
related to the treaty. I would like to write about how,
to ensure the Māori voice is heard on the national
stage, Māori have a guaranteed number of seats in
the parliament. I would like to write about Māori
professors in the universities and Māoricentric sup-
ports for Māori tertiary-level learners. I would like to
write about how te reo Māori is one of three official
languages in Aotearoa, and how Māori and non-
Māori teachers can have a paid year to study te reo
Māori at the university. There are so many oppor-
tunities for Māori in Aotearoa, and knowing about
these could spark ideas about future opportunities
for Inuit in Inuit Nunangat.

In this paper, however, I focus on early childhood
education (ECE). Specifically, I consider three aspects
of ECE in Aotearoa: Kohanga Reo (language nests),
the early childhood curriculum Te Whāriki, and
Playcentres. I start by providing a rationale for my in-
vestigation of these ideas. Then I examine in some
detail the Inuit ECE system, and I follow that with
highlights of the three focus points from Aotearoa.
In the latter part of the paper I consider take-away
points from the Aotearoan examples for Inuit families
and policy makers, and conclude by considering poli-
cy-level implications for Inuit ECE in Canada.

I believe Kohanga Reo, Te Whāriki, and Play-
centres are worthy of consideration by Inuit fami-
lies in Canada, Canadian policy makers, and read-
ers of this magazine. I look at Kohanga Reo in the
greatest detail because it is a Māori-driven language
and culture program for young children and fami-
lies. Much of Inuit child care in Canada is informed
by Euro Western systems imported from the south
in the form of teacher training programs, curricu-
ulum documents, food guides, materials, and regu-
lations. Non-Inuit have provided much of the ex-
pertise. In contrast, Kohanga Reo was imagined by
Māori mothers in the early 1980s and made possible
through their fundraising and planning activities.
The Kohanga Reo language nest programs are root-
ed in Māori linguistic and cultural knowledge(s). The
Kohanga Reo model has been successful in equip-
ing Māori children to become te reo Māori speak-
ers and holders of valuable cultural knowledge(s).
Māori expertise and resources have been essential
to successfully designing, delivering, administering,
and funding this Māori-focused language and cul-
ture program. I present Kohanga Reo here as an op-
portunity to reflect on ways in which recognition of
Inuit expertise could be increased in early childhood
programs and practices and to consider how Inuit
can become better positioned to drive ECE in Inuit
Nunangat.

Te Whāriki is a bicultural ECE curriculum pro-
duced and published by the New Zealand govern-
ment. Te Whāriki recognizes the value of Māori
knowledge by integrating Māori ideas in a nation-
al curriculum that is used in all child care centres,
kindergartens, Kohanga Reos, and Playcentres
throughout Aotearoa. The curriculum is support-
ed by a set of exemplars. One of these, Te Whatu Pōkeka, is Māori-specific and sets out approaches to
the national curriculum that are informed by Māori
ideas about young children, their families, their
worlds, and learning. There is only one early child-
hood curriculum in Aotearoa, and Te Whāriki is it.
In contrast, child care in Canada falls under provincial and territorial responsibility. In the province of Quebec, for example, one document to which all early childhood educators are supposed to refer does not mention Inuit. Even within Inuit Nunangat, child care is fragmented. Inuit land claim areas are situated in four separate jurisdictions, governed by four separate systems; therefore, we have specific curriculum documents and regulations for each, generalized for the whole provincial/territorial population. The Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group, a body composed of First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI) agreement holders, would like to see materials developed that support the delivery of culturally appropriate programs in Inuit communities. I intend to use the discussion of Te Whāriki as an opportunity to consider the creation of a pan-Inuit curriculum document.

I have chosen to examine the settler-designed Playcentres in Aotearoa because they are family-based programs. I have seen and understand that tremendous value and opportunities for meaningful engagement with Inuit worldview are made possible through family-based programs such as the ones running at Ilisaqivik in Clyde River, Nunavut, at the family house in Inukjuak, Nunavik, and in association with the child care centre in Ulukhaktok, Northwest Territories. I also know that parenting courses are being offered in Nunavik, through Kativik School Board, and in Nunavut, through the Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre. Furthermore, meaningfully connecting with parents is a prime concern of the child care section of the Nunatsiavut government. I see that the Playcentre system could offer structural insights into organizing a comprehensive strategy for the development and support of family centres in Inuit Nunangat, including training for parents. For these reasons, I present the Playcentre model for consideration.

Inuit Early Childhood Education in Inuit Nunangat

In the early 1980s, as a result of efforts by Inuit parents, child care centres began to be set up in empty classrooms and abandoned buildings in Inuit communities in the Canadian Arctic. In the mid-1990s, with the introduction of the Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities Program and the First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative, many communities developed services in renovated buildings and, especially in Nunavik, new centres began to be built. In anticipation of a federal child care strategy the federal government entered into multilateral funding agreements on child care with provincial and territorial governments in 2005. In 2004, the Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group officially began, and their first task was to draft a pan-Inuit early childhood development strat-
During this time and since, Inuit have called repeatedly for culturally appropriate programs and sufficient funding to develop child care infrastructure. However, regulatory hurdles and inadequate, inequitable funding regimes have hindered the Inuit vision of ECE for Inuit children.

Since licensed ECE programs are structured by provincially and territorially determined regulations, depending on the jurisdiction these rules can interfere with a centre’s capacity to deliver Inuit language- and culture-based programs. It is therefore imperative that regulations in Inuit Nunangat be amended to support Inuit cultural and linguistic objectives in the child care centre. The best example of this concerns the ability of centres in most Inuit land claims areas to legally serve country food at the licensed child care centre.

In Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, and the Northwest Territories, centres are supposed to serve meat that has been approved by a meat inspector. This inspection requirement makes it very difficult for centres to legally serve caribou meat and other country foods. Furthermore, the obligation for meat inspection disrupts the child care centres’ ability to support the local economy by purchasing food directly from community-based hunters, including fathers and mothers of children at the centre. The issue of country food procurement has been raised at national-level discussions for almost 20 years and remains unresolved to this day.

Funding for licensed Inuit early childhood programs comes through federal, provincial, and territorial funding programs and agreements. Due to provincial and territorial jurisdiction and because of the absence of a national Canadian child care strategy, there are dramatic differences in core funding, infrastructure, and educator benefits and salaries among Inuit land claims areas. In 2005, for example, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami reported a salary range for educators that started at $11.00 per hour with no benefits in the Kivalliq and reached $28.38 per hour with a pension plan, sick days, and access to a group insurance plan in Nunavik. Child and family access to licensed programs also varies. In Nunavik, about 50% of children aged 5 and under have access to a child care space. In Nunatsiavut in 2007, the figure was 10%.

Furthermore, the ways that program dollars are administered vary among the jurisdictions. In Nunavik, for example, the Kivalliq Regional Government (KRG) has a 23-year agreement with the province of Quebec, which provides about 80% of its child care dollars and delegates to KRG responsibility for licensing, funding, monitoring, and supporting licensed child care services in the region. Additionally, funds that originate from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) for Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities, as well as Employment and Social Development Canada’s First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI), are also managed by KRG. This integrated model is promoted as a factor for success in policy documents prepared for the National Committee on Inuit Education.

In contrast to Nunavik’s integrated funding model, child care funding in Nunavut is fragmented. The Nunavut Department of Education manages the territorial child care dollars, the regional Inuit organizations manage and distribute the FNICCI funds, and PHAC enters into agreements with various community organizations, including community-based education authorities, to distribute dollars from sources that include Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities, the Canadian Action Plan for Children (CAP-C), and the Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP). More than ten years ago, the Nunavut-based regional Inuit organizations proposed a “one-window approach” to child care funding, support, and monitoring; however, this approach has not been realized to date.

The Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group is a national body made up of representatives from the six regional Inuit organizations. It receives funding from Employment and Social Development Canada and is housed at Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Canada’s national Inuit organization. In 2010 the working group, in collaboration with funders from Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities and Employment and Social Development Canada, organized Nutaqhuntuq Siviniksavut: National Inuit Early Childhood Gathering. At the end of the second day of the three-day session, which was held in Goose Bay, Labrador, participants came together and crafted a letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper in which the following five key messages concerning issues in Inuit ECE were conveyed:

1. Comprehensive investments in buildings, people, and resources culminating in equal access to ECD programs for all Inuit children and families in the North and in urban areas are needed now.
2. New investment in infrastructure is essential.
3. Policies, programs, and plans to preserve and protect Inuit languages are critical to the survival of the language.
4. Inuit early childhood educators deserve pay and qualification parity with teachers.
5. Quality programs include the voices of Elders, parents, and children.
Over the course of the past 30 years, licensed child care programs have been developed by local child care committees and community groups with the support of Inuit organizations, school and health boards, municipal, regional, provincial, territorial, and federal governments, and, most recently, the government of Nunatsiavut, on minimal budgets. Throughout these years, Inuit have consistently articulated a desire to deliver programs for Inuit children in Inuit languages that are grounded in Inuit culture and connected with Inuit Elders and families.

At times, as evidenced in the continuing struggle to legally serve country food in child care centres, the provincial and territorial regulatory structures have served as obstacles to the delivery of culturally meaningful programs. Regulations in Inuit Nunangat must be amended, without further delay, to ensure Inuit cultural and linguistic continuity.

Programs sufficiently resourced with locally based materials and Inuttitut language resources, including books for children and educators, have been elusive. Furthermore, training for Inuit early childhood educators has been largely based on imported educational programs from the south — meaning that much of what Inuit early childhood educators have learned about young children has been based on Euro Western conceptualizations of the child informed by developmental psychology, not on Inuit childrearing practices and worldview.

Finally, the child care centres offer programs for children, not families, despite both high unemployment levels in Inuit communities that would enable parent participation, and articulation in policy documents of the need for programs for all.15

Highlights from Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa

Two Aotearoan programs (Kohanga Reo and Playcentre) and a national curriculum document (Te Whāriki) could be useful to Inuit families and policy makers considering ways to strengthen Inuit ECE, both in Inuit Nunangat and in urban settings with large Inuit populations, such as in Ottawa and Montreal.

Kohanga Reo

Kohanga Reo (meaning “language nests”) is a Māori-driven language and cultural immersion program for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families. The program was started by a group of Māori mothers who sought to purposefully reinstate te reo Māori in the lives of Māori families. Mason Drurie writes about how Kohanga Reo promotes Māori language, offers quality, family-focused care founded in Māori cultural values, and creates a comprehensive and complete Māori environment through use of immersion methods.16 The first Kohanga Reo was opened in Wellington in 1981. By 2000, more than 13,000 children were immersed in Māori language programs offered in 704 centres.17 In the early years, the program was entirely designed and financed by Māori. As Tilly Reedy explains:

Kohanga Reo encapsulates what Māori perceive as the best theoretical foundations of learning for the child: a holistic approach, interwoven with cultural ethos, and the [sic] calling upon…the most important resource for cultural and language transmission, the surviving kaumātua (Elders) whose knowledge is deemed essential to the environment of Kohanga Reo.18

Today the program receives funding from the New Zealand Ministry of Education and employs the Te Whāriki curriculum, which guides not only Kohanga Reo, but also all early childhood programs in Aotearoa. A main idea of Kohanga Reo is to create daily opportunities for Māori children and families to speak te reo Māori in meaningful contexts and to see the language as vital, vibrant, and essential to life in Aotearoa. The Kohanga Reo programs are rooted in family connections, and parental involvement is recognized and valued. Language lessons for parents are essential to a language revitalization strategy focused on sustainability, and the participation of Māori Elders is recognized as essential to meaningful centre-based practice with young Māori learners.

A key point to be drawn from the Kohanga Reo example is that the program began as a Māori initiative, designed, developed, delivered, and funded by Māori. This was not a program imported from elsewhere, but one designed and driven by Māori to address a very specific concern about language loss and retention of Māori ways of knowing and being.

Te Whāriki Early Childhood Curriculum19

Te Whāriki, the national early childhood curriculum used by all early childhood programs in Aotearoa, positions Māori knowledge, values, and language as part of the fabric of the nation. The curriculum is supported by a set of 20 exemplars, or curriculum guides, that present text and photos about particular aspects of early childhood practice. The exemplar on assessment begins with a Māori poem on the left-hand side of the page, with the English translation beside it.20 The Māori-specific exemplar is called Te Whatu Pōkeka.21 This volume sets out approaches to curriculum informed by Māori ideas about ECE. In creating the document, the authors intentionally
planned to make theories and values connected with Māori ECE visible by providing a space to articulate connected ideas. Not only does Te Whāriki present te reo Māori in the text of the document, it cites and references Māori scholars and early childhood educators, poets, and authors throughout.

Playcentres

Playcentres provide a physical meeting place — with kitchen and play area for children — where families can gather in their own community.22 The program is supported by a paid teacher who facilitates families’ access to information about child rearing and makes available, in collaboration with parent volunteers, a variety of activities for children. To volunteer, parents must achieve the Level 1 Certificate, “Playcentre Philosophy,” which includes a first aid component. Local parents engaged in Playcentre activities can complete a total of six courses, which include Principles of Child Development, Approaches to Adult Education, and Centre Management, to attain the Playcentre diploma in early childhood and adult education. The discussions and workshops are led by Playcentre parents who have attained the diploma.

Today there are 489 Playcentres divided into 33 regional organizations, all connected to the New Zealand Playcentre Federation, a volunteer-run organization that operates using a consensus model of decision making. Each local centre operates with its own parent board; the parents are responsible for their local centre. This model allows the centres to be organized in ways that incorporate community priorities and ways of knowing and being. Furthermore, it provides a way for families to be involved in all aspects of a child’s early childhood education.

Insights from Aotearoa as Inspiration for Canadian Policy Planners

What should Inuit families, policy makers, program administrators, funders, and readers of this magazine take away from the Aotearoan system? What do the Aotearoans have to offer in terms of concrete ideas and inspiration?

Playcentres are presented for consideration because they are a child care option that keeps families together. The Playcentre model could be of interest to many Inuit communities because it creates opportunities for — and builds on the strengths of — the whole family. Children and caring adults attend the Playcentre together. Activities are available for children and learning opportunities are available for parents. Parents train each other. The centres are run by local boards connected to a wider supportive organization, the Playcentre Federation.

Policy makers may be advised to revisit existing programs, including the Canadian Action Plan for Children, the Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program, Aboriginal Head Start, and Brighter Futures, and...
examine the potential of expanding these programs to serve more communities more widely. As part of this consideration, the Playcentre model would be extremely useful in informing the development of family-focused programs that utilize peer training. Certainly, existing family-oriented programs, such as the ones in Clyde River, Ulukhaktok, and Inukjuak, provide excellent examples of model programs in Inuit Nunangat. In all cases, policy makers are advised to consult directly with Inuit families, parents, and Elders on their vision for children and the kinds of programs and services they would like to see.

The Kohanga Reo language nest program was born when Māori mothers felt an urgent need for themselves and their children to learn te reo Māori. Employing Elders as teachers, they created a program to address this most serious concern. Inuit parents in Canada have similar concerns. For example, it is important to parents in the Inuvialuit and Nunatsiavut regions that their children learn the Inuit language, yet they are not convinced this will happen. We must ask what must be done for Inuit parents to see their priorities realized.

Clearly, provincial and territorial regulations hinder the achievement of a culturally appropriate Inuit child care service. Although debate over these regulations has persisted for more than 20 years without resolution, it is time to develop a set of Inuit-specific and appropriate regulations for Inuit Nunangat. Once they are agreed upon, Inuit could then determine an appropriate route to ensure these regulations are adopted.

Carrying out Inuit ideas in programs and policies requires that funds earmarked for Inuit be Inuit-controlled. It requires that Inuit approaches to learning and child care be made visible, and that the structural tools and financial resources required for action be made available to Inuit. An Inuit language policy for all Inuit child care centres could be developed and adopted, and ample budgets to pay for the development, by Inuit, of Inuit language materials and books must be in place. Most importantly, it is absolutely necessary to shift from training programs for early childhood educators based in developmental psychology to training guided by Elders knowledge and informed by Inuit approaches to child rearing.

Finally, this article has highlighted Te Whāriki, Aotearoa’s bilingual, bicultural national ECE curriculum used by both Māori and Pakeha educators. Te Whāriki can serve to open a discussion about the development of a pan-Inuit curriculum framework document. One merit of developing such a document is that it creates an opportunity to think deeply about Inuit values in Inuit ECE, and to document them. Here one must ask: Is it appropriate for such a document to be developed in the south? More appropriate would be a policy discussion about the value of producing materials within Inuit Nunangat.

The Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group table provides one place for such policy discussions. The working group seeks to make culturally appropriate ECE programs available in every Inuit community, and calls for sustained funding to produce resources for use in Inuit ECE centres. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to identify and access the sustained funding needed to meet the working group’s objectives. The absence of serious and sufficient Inuit-controlled national-level funding for early childhood education is one reason why, to date, a comprehensive ECE curriculum framework for Inuit Nunangat has not been developed, even though the national-level capacity is established: Inuit Tapiiit Kanatami has housed the Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group since 2004, and Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada has been developing pan-Inuit early childhood materials since 1989.

The compilation of a pan-Inuit curriculum framework would provide a platform through which Inuit approaches to early childhood education and care could be thoughtfully considered and articulated. Discussions for the creation of such a framework might include these questions: How would Inuit like to see Inuit values, knowledge, and languages transmitted through curriculum documents in Inuit Nunangat? And, would Inuit like to see Inuit cultural knowledge(s), values, and ideas made accessible to early childhood educators throughout Canada, in curriculum frameworks like Te Whāriki in Aotearoa? In any case, one thing is clear: Funding is essential for the development of any materials, including an Inuit ECE curriculum.

This article has offered three examples from Aotearoa that Inuit can use as inspiration when considering Inuit leadership in Inuit ECE: family-focused centres, Inuit-specific curriculum documents, and the implementation of Elder-informed, culturally meaningful Inuit language programs. Sufficient financial resources and multi-level government commitments to an appropriate policy process are now needed to reshape Inuit ECE in Canada.

Mary Caroline Rowan is a Vanier Canada Graduate Scholar completing a Ph.D. in education at the University of New Brunswick. She teaches comparative education at Concordia University. Currently, as a holder of the Michael Smith Foreign Travel Supplement, she is a visiting scholar at the Sami allaskula in Kautokeino, Norway.
Eating country food at the Tasiurvik Child Care Centre, Inukjuak, QC, with Aani Augiak cutting Arctic Char.

Notes
1. Aotearoa is the Māori name for New Zealand.
2. Te reo is the Māori term for language.
4. The Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group is housed at the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, where there is a staff member assigned to the file.
5. Employment and Social Development Canada funds FNICCI.
8. In Nunavut, the situation is different, and it may not be well understood. If country food is donated to a licensed child care centre in Nunavut, then it does not need to be inspected, and can be served. However, if the country food is purchased, inspection is required. (Laakkukuluk Williamson-Bathory clarified this point in a personal communication January 19, 2014.)
13. Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami also have representatives sitting on the committee.
18. Ibid.
25. Pakeha is the te reo Māori term used to reference non-Māori.
26. Deep policy discussions on future directions for Inuit early childhood programs and policies should involve many more stakeholders and interested parties. This is because the scope of the Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group is limited by its connection with the First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative.
28. It should be noted, however, that both of these organizations are situated in Ottawa.
“This school feels like ours now; it belongs to the community”:
Engaging parents & Inuit educational leaders in policy change in Nunavut

Fiona Walton, Darlene O’Leary, Lena Metuq, Jukeepa Hainnu, Saa Pitsiulak, Elisapee Flaherty, Nikki Ejesiak, Jeeteelah Merkosak, & Kerri Wheatley

The National Strategy on Inuit Education 2011 identifies mobilizing parents and developing leaders in Inuit education as the first and second core investments “to improve outcomes in Inuit education” (National Committee on Inuit Education, p. 9). This article addresses both of these themes by describing findings from ArcticNet-funded research that engaged parents and Inuit educational leaders in Nunavut through partnerships with the Coalition of District Education Authorities in Nunavut (CDEAN) and the Nunavut Department of Education. The research project, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and the Transformation of High School Education in Nunavut, took place in 2009-2010, the first year of the ArcticNet project, and was led by Fiona Walton, University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), working with a team of Inuit researchers in Nunavut.

The two themes identified by the National Committee mentioned above strike to the core of educational change in Nunavut. In order for long-term change to take place, Inuit parents and educators need to take the lead in addressing the challenges raised in both the National Strategy, as well as the Nunavut Education Act (2008). Throughout the Education Act, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is mentioned numerous times stressing that it is Inuit ways of knowing, social values, and languages that must guide the educational system into the future. Inuit educational leadership and parental engagement are required to accomplish these policy goals and ensure that the educational system provides a strong foundation for what it means to be Inuit in Nunavut in the 21st Century.

However, the majority of school leaders and teachers in Nunavut are non-Inuit (Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated [NTI], 2012, p. 20). Therefore, the responsibility for providing the kind of support that enables Inuit parents and educators to fully engage in education so that they take on leadership of the system also requires the full participation and support of non-Inuit educational leaders. In an educational system still emerging from a colonial past and providing evidence that colonizing effects remain influential (Walton, Tompkins & McAuley, 2005; McGregor, 2010, pp. 20-25), the challenges raised by the National Strategy, as well as the Nunavut Education Act, require very careful consideration.

Research Approaches and Methodologies
The research described in this article focuses on the way that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit provided a foundation for two Nunavut high schools during the 2010-2011 academic year: Quluaq School in Clyde River, where Jukeepa Hainnu was the school principal, and Attagoyuk Ilisarvik in Pangnirtung, where Lena Metuq and Cathy Lee acted as co-principals to lead the school. The research partnership with the CDEAN and the Nunavut Department of Education enabled researchers to collaboratively develop the questions that guided the high school research project.

Jukeepa Hainnu and Lena Metuq, both long-term Inuit principals and graduates of the Nunavut Master of Education (MEd) program offered by UPEI, acted as community research leaders and were joined by their colleagues and fellow MEd graduates, Saa Pitsiulak and Elisapee Flaherty, ensuring that Inuit researchers were leading and guiding the study primarily in Inuktitut. Jeeteelah Merkosak, who was then the Chair of the CDEAN, travelled to Clyde River and Pangnirtung to assist with the research. Saa Pitsiulak narrated in Inuktitut (with English subtitles) the documentary video resulting from the research, Going Places: Preparing Inuit High School Students for a Changing, Wider World (2011), produced by Gemini Award-winning filmmaker Mark Sandiford.

Key Themes and Findings
The following themes highlight some of the key findings from the research. These themes are consistent with the first two core investments identified in the National Strategy on Inuit Education, and they draw on the experiences and voices of those directly affected by and involved in education in these schools.
Importance of parental and community engagement

The engagement of the community and parents by Inuit educational leaders was a vitally important key theme in this research. Jukeepa Hainnu commented:

I want [school] to be welcoming for people, everyone, no matter where one comes from. If people visit from outside, or especially for the Elders, I want them comfortable because formal schools are foreign to them. The school has to be welcoming because we are proud of Inuit and believe in them.

Daniel Jaypoonny, who teaches shop and culturally-related programs, reinforces the importance of positive communication with parents,

The parents are our audience and [we need to] request their help on how we should improve the education system in our schools, and I really feel there is going to be so much more improvement. We must make communication an [ongoing] priority.

Jacob Jaypoonny, the DEA Chair in Clyde River, provides a similar perspective, indicating that engagement of parents and community leads to encouraging students to keep working: “It’s encouragement that is so important now... Find other students who have finished high school who can be role models to them, come and talk to them of encouragement. Positive encouragement has to be the priority.”

In Pangnirtung, Lena Metuq echoed these insights:

We also need the support of the parents, and we need to support [the students’] parents, so that their children can finish their schooling and ask parents to encourage their children to be involved with social activities and be people persons. The only way to achieve [this] is that we work together as a team to teach them to be able to handle stressful situations that will come their way... Our young people have so much negative influence out there that can be self-destructive and barriers they have to face and issues of suicide around them, and we have to teach them positive coping mechanisms to be able to handle stressful situations... We have always encouraged students to stay in school and that if they stay in school, they will have a brighter future after they finish high school; but we should go even further and give them hope.

The practices and approaches described by participants in this research included opening the school to the community and offering a wide variety of opportunities for positive interactions and relationship building. Some of these activities include breakfast programs, lunches for Elders, on-the-land programs, including spring camps and hunting, and assemblies and sports events. They also include welcoming parents on a daily basis, so they feel comfortable and are willing to contribute and engage in dialogue with teachers.

Importance of Inuit leadership

Participants in this research believe that Inuit leadership in schools can make a significant difference. In his interview, Shawn Sivugat, then a high school student in Clyde River, whose story is told in the documentary, Going Places, spoke of the transformation he has seen take place: “Now that we have an Inuk Principal, it seemed to have improved things...We learn our Inuit traditional values and principles, we would otherwise have had not a chance to learn.” Jacob Jaypoonny agreed:

[W]e have seen a huge impact since we got an Inuk principal here... [L]ocal parents are more comfortable in coming here because they know her and will understand her. The ability to understand and speak to each other is the main factor for improvement in our community... [T]his school feels like ours now; it belongs to the community.

In Pangnirtung, DEA member Dr. Meeka Arnakak mentioned that when “someone wants to make a phone call to the school to ask questions, they can now talk directly to the principal and ask questions and be understood in your own language, and I think that is where there has been a lot of improvement.” Long-term Clyde River adult educator and DEA member, Loseosee Aipellee, believes that, “Ever since we hired an Inuk Principal, there have been a lot of changes for the better. Parents are majority Inuit and most students are Inuit. When they are having problems they can talk to someone. I feel that has helped a great deal.”

Having schools feel like they belong to the community is exactly what the Education Act in Nunavut and the National Strategy on Inuit Education are calling for, and this ethos and atmosphere is created by the approaches, strategies, and culturally-rooted behaviours that Inuit educational leaders can bring to schools. As bilingual members of the community who are respected trusted, and speak the same language as the parents, students, and staff, Inuit principals are uniquely positioned to implement the spirit and values of Inuit Qajuiniqtangit as a foundation for policies and practices. Jeeteetah Merkosak mentioned that, “Since we now get Inuit administrators, they know of the people because they are around them and surrounded by them all the time. These locals have really assisted others in using our first language and culture strongly.”

Inuit educational leaders interviewed in this re-
search can connect with the members of the DEA who represent the community. They care about the future of students in a way that is based on a deep connection to Inuit values related to kinship and the promotion of health and well being of Inuit. This is particularly important when providing a nurturing and psychologically supportive educational environment to Inuit students. As Elder Dr. Meeka Arnakak comments when raising concerns related to the high rate of suicide among young people in the community:

[L]osing relatives, grief and death, has a major affect on them [students], we all know that now… Although I do not have children in school anymore, I often wonder where we can make improvements, because I have grandchildren. I have to think of my grandchildren’s future.

Inuit and non-Inuit educational leaders need to understand the high levels of warmth, empathy, understanding, and support that are associated with providing a psychologically nurturing education to students who are carrying the impact of significant losses.

Need for decolonized education
The research also revealed the need for education to become a decolonizing experience for students, parents, teachers, and members of the community. Though he stresses that change is now taking place, Bobby Joanas (a language specialist in Clyde River) reflects on the benefits of Inuit leadership based on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and reveals the way that non-Inuit may have behaved in the past:

I think it is very beneficial to have an Inuk Principal. It's a big thing for us, especially since Inuit were intimidated by qallunaat, thinking they know everything and that they were the authority overall…

Even the way we look at hierarchy has changed, the qallunaat are not held in a higher level than they used to, just because of the color of their skin. As Inuit, we are not [a] lower sub-species, nor do we lack competence.

A decolonized educational system in Nunavut is reflected in the way that Inuit culture, languages, and ways of being become a central focus in schools. Loseosee Aipellee (DEA member), shares a belief that is supported by Nunavut Government legislation and policy:

We cannot lose our language; it's our language. It’s a given that our Inuit mother tongue is the foundation of the Inuit cultural traditional values and principles; it’s our age-old culture…

If we don't practice what has been passed on to us by our Elders from our ancestors, we would have lost that vital information.

However, participants in the research are concerned that in order to maintain the language and culture, highly skilled and qualified Inuit teachers are required and the resources and curriculum to support teaching are necessary. Dr. Arnakaq advises:

To me, our Inuktitut oral language is the most valuable and important foundation of our values and beliefs, which is our ancient mother tongue. Even when we try to ask questions and respond in Inuktitut in our conversations, [Inuktitut teachers] do not understand what we are trying to say… Perhaps we will have to strengthen the content and benchmarks needed to determine the depth of comprehension levels of both languages, so that they will have acceptable levels of literacy in both languages, instead of learning bits and pieces.

Decolonization requires that Inuit and non-Inuit understand how important it is to learn about Inuit politics, struggles, and land-claim history, as well as the rights of Indigenous peoples, and be able to take on roles in the Nunavut Government that result in changes that integrate Inuit beliefs, practices, languages, and ways of life into education. Roposie Alivaktuk, an Inuit staff member in Pangnirtung, noted that:

One of my children had attended Nunavut Sivuniksavut after graduation and is the only one in my children who has learnt our Inuit identity through school. Our children are not learning anything about Nunavut Tunngavik's mandates and organizations like Kakivak and Inuit public governments that are run by Inuit. [These things] are not being learned by Grade 12 graduation.

He goes on to reflect on the importance of actively promoting and speaking out about Inuit identity and knowledge:

I want to make sure I [do] not keep quiet and make sure we implement what knowledge we have and be vigorous about teaching our traditional knowledge about critical life skills that have been omitted.

Dr. Arnakak reinforced the importance of changing the way Inuit students are perceived and encouraged. She believes that negativity affects the way students approach school, decreasing motivation and the desire to succeed in school.

If you put yourself in [the students'] shoes, it must be very bleak, so the attitude becomes: “Nunavut
has the lowest levels of everything, we will never catch up and we will never amount to anything, so: why bother anyway”...That’s why I try to help them visualize and encourage them to stay in school and try their best. That’s what I can visualize for the future, jobs available for them and have the qualifications necessary to get them.

It is evident in the testimony from these highly respected Elders, teachers, and community members that the school system needs to become a place where everyone believes in the capacity of the students to succeed academically and reflects that in their attitudes, relationships, actions, and words.

Conclusion

In this short article, the authors have shared quotations from participants that support three of the dominant themes emerging from the analysis of interviews and focus groups. The words of participants carry important messages related to parent and community engagement, Inuit educational leadership, and decolonizing education in Nunavut as vital elements in the implementation of the Nunavut Education Act and the National Strategy on Inuit Education. Even when legislation and policy provide the basis for educational change, it is the principals, teachers, and other educators who must create an ethos in Nunavut schools to reflect the spirit of Inuit Qaqimajatuqangit in the way students are treated.

In research conducted over more than 30 years, Jim Cummins has found that “relationships established in schools can be disempowering” (1996, p. 2), and this is particularly true in contexts where a damaging colonial history has caused intergenerational and ongoing trauma and loss that is reflected in suicide and low graduation rates. Relationships need to be welcoming, encouraging, and supportive, but also relevant and academically challenging so that the students are highly motivated to learn. A nurturing yet academically challenging educational environment also needs be offered in ways that lead to academic success in a bilingual and bicultural Indigenous context (Cummins, 2000). In closing, we offer Lena Metuq’s words from interviews conducted in 2009 and 2010, which capture the essence of the research findings we shared here:

The Education Act has empowered us to make changes; instead of just wishing that we could include Inuit cultural values and traditions in the school programs and repeatedly trying to communicate our needs to seemingly deaf ears. The Act stipulates that the Inuktitut language and culture will be the official language of Nunavut and that it is recognized as the workplace language within the government departments. It has become very beneficial to implement what we are trying to achieve and it has strengthened our Inuit culture... The Inuit cultural traditions should be way up there on par with other programs, our children have to learn their Inuit identity, traditional values, and beliefs, whether they are going to be working indoors or anywhere else.

References

Our mission is to provide insightful and compelling commentary on the policy issues facing Northerners. We’ve featured contributions by the Hon. Leona Aglukkaq, Premier Darrell Pasloski, Premier Bob McLeod, Tony Penikett, Tom Axworthy, Peter Russell, Frances Abele, Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox, Niki Ashton, Terry Fenge, Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory, Zacharias Kunuk, David Brock, and many more. Our first two volumes reflect the passion our authors have for the North and its future. We hope that you’ll join them and consider subscribing to the magazine. Please visit us online at www.northernpublicaffairs.ca for ongoing commentary, archived articles, and more!

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FAMILY

Photo credit: Amaujaq National Centre for Inuit Education.
When it comes to formal education in the North, policy makers, education authorities, principals, and teachers exude a new-found energy rooted in hope and optimism: And, no wonder. Empowerment and decolonization have led to a genuine paradigm shift that is quickly changing the education landscape. More and more Inuit education is being wrestled from southern imposed institutions, structures and curricula to an education system that is controlled by and for Inuit and Northern communities.

As evidence-based, theoretically driven social scientists, who have taught and researched across the North, we too are caught up in the excitement. Our mission is aimed at addressing a thorny problem: school attendance and dropout rates have been, and are, unacceptably high. School attendance issues can be best illustrated by recent research by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami which reveals that elementary school students are missing, on average, 41 school days a year (CBC News, 2013). This number adds up year after year so that by the time these students reach high school they have missed a full two years of formal education. Issues surrounding school attendance become even bleaker as students progress through their education with high school dropout rates rising to 75% or higher (ITK, 2011). These rates stand in stark relief compared to the 15% dropout for non-Aboriginal youth (ITK, 2011).

To address school attendance issues in Inuit communities, an Inuit-controlled education system and curriculum is a critical first step, but it won’t be enough. The only hope for an Inuit-based curriculum to succeed is if students are in school “all day, every day, well rested, well fed and eager to learn.” Even the best Aboriginally-based curriculum will fail unless there are motivated students in the classroom.

The issue of school attendance has proven to be a persistent problem for Northern education. The stubbornness of the attendance issue points to a fundamental psychological divide between Inuit communities and the school, and all that the school stands for in the community. Addressing this persistent issue will require entirely rethinking our understanding of the roots of academic underachievement in Aboriginal communities.

We begin by asking “What is the vision that has guided, and continues to guide, Inuit education moving forward?” Our analysis is that the current vision for Northern education is based on an incomplete rationale that can only lead to disappointment and continued academic underachievement for Inuit students.

We offer here a theoretical alternative that points in a different direction, one that doesn’t compete with, but rather complements, the current vision (Taylor & de la Sablonnière, in press). We argue that because colonization had a devastating impact on all facets of Inuit life, colonization can best be understood as an attack on Inuit cultural identity. Colonization, most would agree, cast a wide net, impacting not merely one or two aspects of Inuit life, but the entire family, social, economic, educational and spiritual life of Inuit, the entirety of Inuit cultural identity. Thus, we frame the concrete challenge of school attendance in the broader context of ruptures to cultural identity. We believe this cultural identity focus can serve as a guide for policy makers, education authorities, schools, and classroom teachers to design practical interventions for addressing the school attendance issue.

The Current Incomplete Vision

What is the current, mostly southern, vision for Inuit education that we argue is incomplete? The guiding principal is quite simply that the long-standing academic underachievement of Inuit students is the result of a “cultural mismatch.” Colonialism, it is argued, has involved imposing southern, dominant Canadian culture in terms of formal education on Inuit communities that are culturally very different. The solution from this perspective is to decolonize the process and make Inuit education a culturally relevant enterprise with education evolving into one that is designed and delivered by Inuit, for Inuit, students. This means wholesale changes in structure and curricula designed to be culturally relevant for Inuit students.

While not disagreeing fundamentally with this view, we offer an alternative to the “cultural mismatch” assumption that guides all current initiatives in Northern education. Our starting theoretical
premise is that the heart of the challenge is not a “cultural mismatch” but rather the collective trauma arising from colonization’s attack on Inuit identity (Taylor, 2002). Colonialism did not merely traumatize specific aspects of Inuit culture; it negatively impacted the entire structure of Inuit culture and identity. No stone was left unturned such that Inuit worldviews, goals, beliefs, attitudes, norms, symbols and “ways of life” were forever compromised (see Figure 1). We argue further that explicit southern Canadian attempts to assimilate Inuit were disingenuous. While Inuit were forced to confront the colonizer’s institutions and ways of life, the deep structures of European culture were not willingly shared. That is, only the superficial trappings of European culture were forced on Inuit, but not the underlying values and goals, including the meritocratic building blocks of European culture. The end result is that for present day Inuit, forging a clear cultural identity is a major challenge.

King (2012), the noted Aboriginal author, with his usual irony, paints the same picture for First Nations people. He argues that there are only “dead Indians” no present day Indians. His point is that any time First Nations people are evoked in public discourse, all forms of media or symbolic display (e.g., Vancouver Olympics), it is always a depiction of an Aboriginal person or symbol from prior to European colonization. There is, King (2012) notes, no possibility to depict modern First Nations people because there are no present-day First Nations cultures to present. Our argument is that the lack of present-day clarity in Inuit culture or cultures is precisely because colonization completely destroyed these cultures.

The Consequences of a Less Than Clearly Defined Cultural Identity

When a group is struggling to recarve a new and clearly defined cultural identity, the psychological consequences for each and every member of the group are profound. For groups who have a clearly defined cultural identity, that identity serves as a guide and reference point in terms of values, goals, beliefs, and behaviours for every group member.
(Taylor, 2002). So, by way of example, if a group values education as a priority goal, then the group will promote education, reinforce education, offer mechanisms to achieve education, and like Canada, may even make school attendance a law. This does not mean that every group member will diligently pursue education: Some will choose not to, and others may not have the ability. But every group member will know that education is valued is rewarded and there will be well-defined concrete pathways for achieving education.

If a cultural group does not have the benefit of a clearly defined identity, there are no clearly defined valued goals, and pathways to guide group members. This is the worst possible psychological state for an individual. To emphasize this point, much is written about the cultural adjustment required of newly arrived immigrants to Canada (Amiot, de la Sablonnière, Terry, & Smith, 2007). Their task is a formidable one as they juggle their heritage culture and their new Canadian culture, with a view to internalizing a functioning identity for themselves. Not to underestimate their challenge, but at least they are juggling two relatively clearly defined identities, and wrestling with resolving points of discontinuity between the two.

By contrast, Inuit were robbed of their clearly defined cultural identity through colonization. And that leaves Inuit in a devastating psychological state: resolving competing guidelines is difficult enough, having no clear guidelines is an even bigger challenge.

Figure 1 — Factors leading to collective community challenges

![Diagram showing the factors leading to collective community challenges](image)

Cultural Identity and Longterm Goals
Cultures provide group members with a host of guideposts including values, beliefs, norms, attitudes, and behaviours (Taylor & de la Sablonnière, in press). But one guidepost is especially important: long-term goals. Cultures provide group members with the long-term goals that they should strive for, the goals that are so important that group members need to make great sacrifices to achieve them. Long-term goals such as formal education and training, and equity-based lasting human relationships are two culturally prescribed long-term goals that may be familiar to all Canadians.

The long-term goals prescribed by a culture are extremely demanding in terms of self-regulation, and that is why cultures go to such great lengths to foster them. To succeed at a long-term goal such as education, the student must forego immediate gratification in support of long-term success. The successful student will need to study for the exam, go to bed at a reasonable time in order to be focused the following day, and must follow a healthy diet. This means the successful student must forego the immediate gratification of alcohol, drugs, and risky sexual behaviour in order to get ahead in the long-term (Moffitt et al., 2011). The exercise of self-control or self-regulation is no easy task and thus a clearly defined cultural identity with clearly defined long-term goals is essential to guide the self-control of group members.

Inuit are now beginning to engage the task of defining the culturally valued long-term goals that are necessary to guide and regulate the behaviour of group members. In terms of formal education and training this means the long-term benefits of education are not, as yet, clearly and consensually enough defined (widely defined and accepted) as an essential, culturally defined long-term goal. If a culture does not put a collective and clearly defined premium on formal education and training, why would a person pass up the opportunity for immediate pleasure to attend, study, and work hard at school?

Cultural Identity and Community
Normative structure
The final link in our theoretical chain involves examining the impact that a less than clearly defined present-day identity, with its lack of prescribed long-term goals for education, has on the normative structure of Inuit communities, schools and classrooms (Taylor & de la Sablonnière, 2013). The end-result of these fallouts from colonialism are communities that face a challenge in terms of normative structure.

For any group, be it a community, a school board,
a particular school or a classroom, to succeed, every group member must contribute. Winning hockey teams, successful businesses, efficient public services, and education districts and successful classrooms all require their group members to make important contributions. In reality, no group is lucky enough to have 100% of its members contributing at the highest level. For this reason, we have introduced the often evoked 80-20 rule. If at least 80% of group members are contributing positively to the group’s goals, the group has a good chance to succeed. If the number of positively contributing group members drops below 80%, say to 70% or below, then the group’s viability is seriously compromised.

An 80-20 normative structure, then, is crucial for any group’s success. That explains why groups invest so many financial and human resources to rehabilitate the non-normative 20% in the group. The 20% of youth in a society who are labeled as delinquents are singled out and receive inordinate attention from authorities including the police, social workers and the judicial system. Schools focus their attention on the 20% of students who are “trouble makers” or “misfits.” Finally, companies target the 20% of under-performing employees for attention because without them making a positive contribution the company will go bankrupt.

To date, every educational policy, program, or intervention presupposes they are working with an 80-20 normative structure. The majority of education situations in the south have an 80-20 structure, and thus it makes sense to single out the non-functioning 20% and focus resources on their rehabilitation. That’s what interventions in the south do! They single out students with learning disabilities or behavioural problems and apply specially trained personnel with state of the art intervention strategies to address the individual student’s issue.

But Inuit communities do not have the benefit of an 80-20 normative structure. Indeed, some Inuit leaders have actually described their communities and schools as 20-80, the exact opposite in terms of normative structure. As one head of department for “special education” in the north put it to us: “What do you do when every child in the school is a ‘special needs’ child, and that’s only taking into account the children who are still attending school?”

The answer to this question is that you do not continue to generate policies, programs and interventions that presuppose an 80-20 normative structure, and impose them on communities and institutions that have the inverse: a 20-80 normative structure. Put in it’s simplest terms: What Northern communities and schools face is a collective challenge and therefore collective solutions are required. When operating with a southern 80-20 normative structure, it is logical that the focus is on the minority 20% who can individually be targeted for rehabilitation. Such a focus is misguided when 80% of a group requires attention. Now you have a collective problem requiring a collective solution.

Towards a Collective Solution
We can now shift our attention to addressing the educational challenge we posed initially: How do we have schools filled with students who are well rested, well fed and eager to learn so that they can benefit from educators and a curriculum that is culturally relevant? The barriers are formidable given that within the context of current Inuit identity, formal education is not a firmly established long-term goal, and no 80-20 normative structure to work with.

First, we need a collective solution, which means we need the help of literally everyone in the community. That is, a clearly defined cultural identity that clearly defines formal education and training as one of its long-term goals requires community consensus. Second, we need to approach every community member, forming a positive basis from which to build. Finally, we need to generate a one-on-one, face-to-face meeting with every community member that is positive, constructive, and engaging. The usual practices of holding a community meeting, or presentations on the FM, or poster and workshop campaigns will not work on their own. Only one-on-one, face-to-face, positive, non-threatening meetings with every member of the community will work. There are no short cuts!

We have implemented community projects to address the school attendance issue across the entire North, all involving a collective approach that implements the three features we have just highlighted. Our challenge is to reach everyone in a community involved in raising children, which is to say everyone in the community. We do this by administering a survey on education and we aim for a 100% completion rate. Such a completion rate may seem overly ambitious and unrealistic, but with dedicated community members and when the topic is of genuine community concern, 100% is not out of reach (see Taylor & Wright, 2002). Completion rates above 80% have already been achieved for a one-hour survey on education in several communities. As social scientists we help in terms of survey design, while developing the questions to ask in the survey, and achieving high rates of participation in completing the surveys is entirely in the hands of community members (Taylor & de la Sablonnière, in press).
Next, we need to focus on “positive education norms” and so included in the lengthy survey are items such as “education is important,” “the parent is the child’s first teacher” and “students perform better when they are well rested.” Despite an abysmal school attendance rate, everybody endorses these items. Now we have a positive norm that is endorsed by virtually everyone in the community.

We are now poised to have trained Inuit community members visit each and every home. The purpose of the visit is presented in the form: “We promised to give everyone feedback on the survey results. Instead of just holding a meeting, we decided to visit each of you in order to share some of the results.” Community members to date welcome these visits. At the time of the visit, each community member, in a one-to-one non-threatening conversation, is confronted with a disconnect: they, like everyone else in the community believe that education is important but the children are not in school. Thus, ultimately the discussion focuses on how the community member might help resolve the disconnect, improve attendance, finishing with an agreement that the community member will be visited again in three months to share more results and strategize further. Inuit community members in one Northern village have completed over 150 home visits and in every case there is an invitation for a second visit, underscoring the positive mood of the discussions.

Conclusions

Three important points need to be made about our collective strategy for constructive community change. First, and foremost, the definition of constructive change, the priorities, and issues to be addressed in clarifying a present-day cultural identity lie with Inuit communities themselves. Second, we have briefly described a collective approach to engaging community members in the support of school attendance that made use of survey techniques. But other collective techniques can be used for different groups. For example, we are currently using “daily diaries” and “written narratives” instead of surveys for high school students in Inuit schools. Every student in the class contributes a daily diary or narrative and we produce a class profile. Every student contributes to the collective class profile, but no individual student’s profile is ever revealed. The students together examine the class profile and come to their own conclusions and decisions for change. No authority tells the students what to conclude. They decide on what positive norms to enhance and which destructive norms they might tackle. All our interventions are collective in the sense that the ultimate goal is to have group members themselves define their own group identity.

Finally, whatever form an intervention takes, we seek to have them be evidence based. That is, at each stage of the school attendance intervention we document the outcomes: respondents answer questions on the survey with standardized rating scales, home visits conclude with concrete, agreed upon goal setting in terms of promoting attendance, and ultimately actual attendance and school performance are documented. The hope, of course, is that school attendance and school attitudes will improve so that the newly developed, culturally relevant curricula will be received by a motivated audience of students.

Donald J. Taylor is Professor of Psychology at McGill University. Roxane de la Sablonnière is a faculty member at the Université de Montréal. Laura French Bourgeois is a doctoral candidate at the Université de Montréal.

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References

We must teach our children their mother tongue. 
We must teach them what they are and where they come from. 
— John Amagoalik

Our ideas of human rights, of strength in diversity, of a Northern destiny merge in the promise of Nunavut. It is a promise we must keep. 
— Thomas Berger

In 1993, following almost 20 years of negotiation, the Nunavut Agreement — a modern treaty — was ratified by Parliament. Nearly 300 pages in length, the Nunavut Agreement is complex and detailed, as well as comprehensive. Each promise in it confers a right protected by Canada’s Constitution Act, 1982, enforceable through the courts. The Nunavut Agreement is accompanied by a detailed Implementation Contract, with implementation activities and funding levels to be negotiated every ten years. Implementing the Nunavut Agreement is a substantial effort, requiring the co-operation and commitment of the federal and Nunavut governments, Inuit organizations, resource co-management institutions, and others. While much has been accomplished through the Nunavut Agreement, many implementation challenges remain. In December 2006, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. launched a lawsuit seeking $1 billion in damages for the failure of the Government of Canada to implement various articles of the Nunavut Agreement. That case is wending its way through the courts.

This short paper addresses one significant component of the implementation challenge — Article 23 — which deals with Inuit Employment within Government, and the closely related issue of Inuit education.

Article 23’s stated objective is to increase Inuit participation in government employment in Nunavut to a level reflecting the ratio of Inuit to the total population of Nunavut — about 85% — in all occupational groupings and levels. Article 23 was, and is, an integral element of the Inuit goal of self-determination through public government, reflecting the long-held view that government workforces must reflect the Inuit culture and use the Inuit language. It is the logical companion to Article 4, which resulted in the 1999 division of the Northwest Territories to create the new territory of Nunavut, with its legislative assembly elected by vote of a population that is 85% Inuit. Implementation of Article 23 would also boost private sector Inuit employment and Inuit economic self-sufficiency, as employees inevitably move between the public and private sectors.

Twenty years after the Agreement was ratified, Article 23’s constitutionally-protected objective of a representative Inuit public service is still far from realization. As of 2010, Inuit employment in the Nunavut government was around 52%. At management and professional levels, it was around 26%, as it is in the Nunavut federal public service as a whole.

In 2001, NTI and the Governments of Canada and Nunavut began implementation negotiations for the second ten-year period of the Nunavut Agreement, 2003-2013. Article 23 was a major component of these negotiations, and it became a major obstacle. During the first ten year period, the federal government had never undertaken the detailed Inuit labour force analysis, which the Nunavut Agreement obliged it to deliver by January 1994 as the foundation for pre-employment training and Inuit employment plans. Without a maintained and regularly updated labour force analysis, government lacked and continues to lack critical information on the existing skill levels and qualifications of the Inuit work force. Unable to match such data against the numbers, skills and qualifications needed in the public service, government has been ineffective in developing training and employment plans to fill the gaps in Inuit employment over the short, medium and long terms. Despite these early and acknowledged failings, the chief federal negotiator had no mandate to fund these Article 23 requirements for 2003-2013. As a result of this and other funding disputes, the implementation negotiations ended without agreement in 2003.

In 2005, the parties appointed Thomas R. Berger, former Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, as the conciliator to help resolve the funding disputes between Nunavut Tunngavik and the Government of Canada. Berger’s March 2006 Conciliator’s Final Report, The Nunavut Project, was intended to — but didn’t — resolve the deadlock. A renewed implementation contract was never concluded.

Laurie Pelly

Language, learning, & the promise of Nunavut

Laurie Pelly
Northern Development at the time, never met with Berger to discuss the Conciliator’s Report. The federal government never adopted the recommendations made in the Report, or, indeed, ever formally acknowledged or responded to them.

Berger had addressed funding for the Nunavut resource management institutions in his August 2005 Interim Report. But he reserved the entirety of his 66-page Final Report for, as he put it: “a subject of even greater import, a subject with profound implications: Article 23 of the Nunavut Agreement. Article 23 lies at the heart of the promise of Nunavut.” He posited that, consistent with the honour of the Crown, “a new approach requires a greater regard for objectives and less for the fine print of obligations.” In his words: “Article 23 is entrenched in the Constitution. It is there and remains unfulfilled. It is always speaking; it will continue to speak until it is fulfilled.”

Implementation of the objectives of modern treaties, rather than a focus on narrow obligations, has also been endorsed in the 2003 and 2007 reports of the Auditor General of Canada, and in a 2008 report of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples. In an analysis that brought home the marriage of modern treaty objectives and obligations, Berger concluded that two critical failings led to the deficiency in achieving a representative public service in Nunavut: (1) inadequate Inuit training, and (2) ineffective bilingual language education.

Inadequate Training
As a result of a number of detailed projections, the Government of Canada was well-aware, prior to entering into the Nunavut Agreement in July 1993, that the cost of implementing Article 23 between 1992 and 2008 could be expected to be in the neighbourhood of $212 million (in 1992 dollars). In 1996, the federal Cabinet made available $39.8 million over four years for education and training initiatives under the cooperatively developed Nunavut Unified Human Resources Development Strategy. NUHRDS had some success, largely in training management staff through intermediate management courses, which unsurprisingly became the primary focus of funding in the run-up to 1999. Significant shortcomings, however, undermined achievement of larger capacity-building objectives. These shortcomings included inadequate tracking of NUHRDS program graduates, a failure to match program graduates with available jobs, insufficient upgrading and bridging programs in smaller communities, and importantly, the program’s short-time frame.

NTI was adamant that a more aggressive, direct and longer term approach was needed to optimize Inuit employment in a skilled workforce. It pushed for a detailed labour force analysis, and an integrated and coordinated training plan that would link individuals’ training with specific positions and qualifications. Following division and the end of NUHRDS in January 2000, however, there were no more targeted Article 23 training initiatives. Since 1999, the GN has received only $10,000 per year to implement its Article 23 obligations.

Ten years ago, NTI asked PricewaterhouseCooper to look at the costs of not implementing Article 23. PwC determined that not having a trained Inuit workforce in Nunavut is actually costing $137 million per year in lost Inuit wages, the costs of importing southern workers into Nunavut, and social assistance payments to Inuit. This doesn’t include the financial and human costs of disempowerment, in terms of health, alcohol and drug addiction, and suicide. In 2006, Berger prescribed triage: “for immediate action,” a federal commitment of $20 million a year for five years, to specific Inuit training initiatives, including community career counseling, internships, scholarships, and programs for summer students and mature students. The federal government, however, chose not to fund those initiatives.

When it comes to teacher training, Inuit under-representation in the public service has led to an unfortunate circular problem. As of 2007, only 117 of 467 Nunavut teachers were reportedly Inuit — about 25%, and only 13% of school principals were Inuit. With such low ratios of Inuit teachers, effective Inuit language bilingual education is not possible. And, as Berger discovered, without effective bilingual education, Nunavut’s schools are, by and large, failing to produce Inuit graduates qualified to work in the public service.

Ineffective Bilingual Education
To achieve long-term success in Inuit employment, Nunavut needs sufficient numbers of Inuit high school graduates. Over 70% of Inuit students, however, are leaving high school without graduating. To explain this shocking statistic, Berger conducted extensive research and consultation with experts on indigenous languages in Canada and abroad. He concluded that language of instruction is the principal culprit. Put simply, the main language of instruction in Nunavut schools is English, whereas the first language spoken by most Inuit is Inuktitut. In his words:
Today in Nunavut, Inuktitut is the language of instruction from kindergarten through Grades 3/4. In Grades 4/5 Inuktitut is abandoned as a language of instruction, and Inuit children are introduced to English as the sole language of instruction. Many of them can converse in English. But they can’t write in English, nor are their English skills sufficiently advanced to facilitate instruction in English. In Grade 4, they are starting over, and they find themselves behind. Their comprehension is imperfect; it slips and as it does they fall further behind. By the time they reach Grade 8, Grade 9 and Grade 10, they are failing (not all of them, to be sure, but most of them). This is damaging to their confidence, to their faith in themselves. For them, there has been not only an institutional rejection of their language and culture,
but also a demonstration of their personal incapacity. The Inuit children have to catch up, but they are trying to hit a moving target since, as they advance into the higher grades, the curriculum becomes more dependent on reading and books, more dependent on a capacity in English they simply do not have...

In Nunavut this reinforces the colonial message of inferiority. The Inuit student mentally withdraws, then leaves altogether.16

In a similar vein, the Auditor General recently noted that Nunavut attendance reports revealed that students attended classes less than 50% of the time, with attendance dropping as low as 27%. At such rates, students with average attendance will have missed the equivalent of more than three full academic years by the end of high school.17

As Berger stated, “Nunavut does not, under Territorial Formula Financing, have the resources” for the substantial and immediate, and sustained, investment in Inuit teacher training and Inuit language curriculum and teaching resources.21

Berger proposed long-term targeted funding for bilingual education — similar to the funding that goes to the provinces and territories for English and French under Canada’s Official Languages Act. Observing Canada’s colonial legacy, he said:

Unlike French and English, which are regarded as defining characteristics of Canada, and have been supported by the federal government with comprehensive programs and generous funding, the country’s Aboriginal languages, including Inuktitut, are regarded as part of the nation’s “heritage.” The federal programs and services that support these languages are restricted to the community and the home. Nunavut government departments cannot access this funding for teacher training in Inuktitut or curriculum and resource development.23

Since 2001, in its Bathurst Mandate — a broad vision and public policy program to achieve Inuit objectives — the GN envisioned a fully functional bilingual society — “the best of both worlds,” in Professor Martin’s words. Martin developed bilingual education delivery models for Nunavut schools, which, if implemented, will provide the appropriate balances, methods and timing for instruction to be delivered in the child’s first and second languages throughout the K-12 program.

In September 2008, Nunavut legislators enacted the Inuit Language Protection Act, which requires the Government to design and enable the education program to produce graduates who are fully proficient in the Inuit language, and a new Education Act, which provides that every student shall be given a bilingual education in the Inuit language and either English or French. The bilingual provisions are to be phased in by regulations that anticipate a fully bilingual Inuit language and English/French school system from kindergarten through grade 12 by 2019-2020.

As desirable and necessary as it is, this timeline is unachievable and will likely be revisited in an upcoming Legislative Assembly review of the Education Act. At the midway point between the timeline’s creation and the 2020 deadline, no significant progress has been made, mainly due to the lack of adequate and sustained funding to train enough Inuktitut-speaking individuals as teachers, language specialists, Inuit language instructors, and developers of Inuit language curriculum and teaching resources.22

As Berger stated, “Nunavut does not, under Territorial Formula Financing, have the resources” for the substantial and immediate, and sustained, investment in Inuit teacher training and Inuit language curriculum.22

In a 2000 research paper for the Government of Nunavut, Professor Ian Martin of York University described the historical evolution of language of instruction in the Northwest Territories inherited by Nunavut. From about 1945 through 1970, the main period of residential schooling, there was a radical and abrupt change from family-based child rearing in Inuktitut, to a “sink or swim submersion” in English language of instruction, with a colonialist goal of destruction of Inuktitut and acculturation to southern norms.20

Since 1970, the education system in the Northwest Territories has evolved toward bilingual education, but the GNWT and now the GN have been delivering the “early exit” Inuktitut instruction described by Berger. The reason for this is the shortage of Inuit teachers, especially in the upper grades.
The Inuit language continues to be recognized by the Government of Canada only for its “heritage” value, and funded accordingly, rather than as the first language of the majority of Canada’s newest Territory.

Conclusion
The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was adopted in 1982 as part of the patriation of the Canadian Constitution. Section 23 of the Charter guaranteed minority language schooling for speakers of Canada’s two official languages throughout the country, including what is now Nunavut. Yet in Nunavut, the Inuit homeland, Inuit have no express rights under the Canadian Constitution to schooling in their language.

The Inuit of Nunavut believe that they have rights to Inuktitut education as existing Aboriginal rights in Canada. Aboriginal rights are recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. In the context of international law, Inuit also have rights in relation to education that belong, as human rights, to all the world’s Indigenous peoples. Article 14(1) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states: “Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.” Article 14(3) of the UN Declaration recognizes that States, including Canada, have a corresponding duty: “States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.”

Thomas Berger delivered his Final Report to Minister Prentice with a letter that opened with the following statement: “Nunavut today faces a moment of change, a moment of crisis. It is a crisis in Inuit education and employment.”

Nunavut should not have to face that crisis alone. Yet, instead of accepting responsibility for its inaction in relation to Article 23 after creating Nunavut, the Government of Canada, on behalf of the Crown, has refused to make the necessary investment of public monies. In the procedural sphere, it launched a motion to require NTI to add the Government of Nunavut as a defendant in NTI’s lawsuit for the Crown’s multiple breaches of the Nunavut Agreement. When this failed, it brought a third party claim against the GN itself, asserting, among other things, that the GN alone is responsible for any failures to fulfill Article 23. If the Nunavut Agreement is to be fully and effectively implemented to achieve its objectives, the Crown has to accept, not shrink from, its duties, obligations and responsibilities. When the Crown signed the Nunavut Agreement on behalf of all Canadians, and when Parliament created Nunavut, they made commitments to the recognition and active promotion of Inuit self-determination. It is incumbent upon the Government of Canada to respect and implement those commitments.

Laurie Pelly is Legal Counsel with Nunavut Tunngavik, based in Ottawa, Ontario.

Notes
2. Id. at p.2.
4. Id. at iii.
5. Id. at 19.
6. Id. at 20.
15. Rasmussen, D., Forty Years of Struggle and Still No Right to Inuit Education in Nunavut, Our Schools Our Selves (Fall 2009), 19.1. Berger had stated in his Report that 35% of teachers speak Inuktitut but that their numbers are falling. Opcit. Berger at vii.
17. Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut — 2013, Education in Nunavut (November 2013), at paras. 3 and 38. The AG identified other reasons complicating the delivery of education, including the housing shortage and food insecurity (para. 4).
19. Id.
23. Id. at 36.
For me, the spirit of Nunavut — and its future — is exemplified by the students and graduates of the Nunavut Sivuniksavut program.
— Thomas R. Berger, Conciliator’s Report, 2006

In 1985, the leaders of the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN) were fully engaged in the negotiation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. They recognized that there needed to be a way for their fellow Inuit — and especially youth — to learn about land claims because a lot of people would be needed to implement any eventual agreement.

It was within this context that the TFN Training Program was born. (The name would subsequently be changed to Nunavut Sivuniksavut, or NS, by the students themselves).

Initially, the program was designed to train fieldworkers who could inform people back home about what was happening at the negotiation table in Ottawa. Over time, the program evolved into a more general educational experience that equips Inuit youth with the knowledge and skills needed to pursue opportunities created by the NLCA and the subsequent creation of Nunavut in 1999. NS was incorporated in 1999, and its courses are recognized by Algonquin College in Ottawa.

The first program had 10 students. Twenty-nine years later, it has 50 students enrolled in its 1st and 2nd year programs. During that time, it has evolved into one of Nunavut’s flagship educational programs, earning solid support from Inuit leaders, educators, and parents throughout Nunavut.

The program is unique in Canada, both for its content and its mode of delivery. Its combination of Inuit-specific course content and academic and cultural skill development provides students with a strong grounding in their history, their land claims agreement, and their language and culture.

In the end, the NS program helps Inuit youth to understand the “institutional landscape” of the world they’re stepping into as young adults — their own world — and how it came to be. The life experience gained from living in Ottawa also enhances their mobility skills, thereby enabling them to pursue
further educational and career opportunities anywhere in Canada.

The program’s most significant outcome is its impact on the attitudes of students — attitudes about themselves as individuals and collectively as Inuit. By learning about their history and politics, and by reinforcing the value of their culture, students leave the program full of pride in their identity and passion for their culture and territory. Their determination to contribute to the betterment of their communities and their territory is deeply rooted.

This article provides an overview of the program and the factors that have contributed to its success, followed by a personal perspective on the program from Becky Mearns — an NS student who has gone on to become an instructor in the program.

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“Leadership Training” in Many Forms

When we think of “leadership training” we usually think of people training to become politicians. But leadership comes in many forms — in fact, it comes in as many forms as there are graduates of the NS program.

Stacey Aglok McDonald (NS 2003): Originally from Kugluktuk, Stacey is now an independent filmmaker. Her latest production, Throat Song, won the award for best live action short drama at the 2013 Canadian Screen Awards. In November 2013, it was short-listed as one of ten to be nominated for an Academy Award.

Anguti Johnston (NS 2006): Since graduating from NS, Anguti has devoted his life to the needs and interests of Inuit youth, first as a youth coordinator with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, and more recently as president of the National Inuit Youth Council. He is also the star of Qanurli, a hugely-popular youth-oriented television series from the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation that uses laughter to promote the Inuit language.

Sarah Jancke (NS 2007): Since graduating from NS, Sarah has been actively involved in her community (elected onto the hamlet council), in her region (Youth Coordinator for the Kitikmeot Inuit Association), nationally (Vice-President of the National Inuit Youth Council), and internationally (representing Inuit youth at various conferences on global issues such as climate change).

Pujjuut Kusugak (NS 2000): Pujjuut pursued his passion for Inuit language and culture by becoming a teacher in his home community. He subsequently worked for the Kivalliq Inuit Association and was elected Mayor of Rankin Inlet. He is now a private consultant, providing cultural training to companies working in the North.

These are but a few of the examples of the types of “leadership” shown by graduates of the NS program during its 29-year history — leadership that combines a passion for Inuit culture and identity, a determination to contribute to Nunavut, and personal achievement in a wide range of occupational pursuits.

At NS, students spend eight months in Ottawa developing the life skills they need to live on their own in a southern, urban environment. They spend their class time studying their collective history as Inuit, i.e. the different phases of European intrusion into the Arctic and the impact each had on Inuit society. They learn about the powerlessness that many Inuit felt after being moved into communities in the 1950’s and 1960’s, and how a generation of Inuit leaders worked to regain control over their lives and their land.

Cultural learning has also emerged as a central part of the student experience. While it might seem counter-intuitive for Inuit youth to be coming south to learn about their language and culture, that is exactly what happens for NS students. Exciting new approaches have been developed to help all students increase their fluency in Inuktitut no matter what level they arrive with. Professional instructors are also enlisted to help students learn traditional and contemporary Inuit songs, dances, drumming, and throat singing. NS students take what they learn and then share their culture with residents of the National Capital Region. At the end of the year they also embark on a trip abroad to engage in cross-cultural exchanges with Indigenous peoples elsewhere. And they do so with unrestrained pride in who they are.

No matter what their chosen field, NS graduates become leaders by the examples they set for others, especially for those youth coming up behind them. They are breaking new ground just by pursuing a post-secondary education, by (re)asserting the importance of Inuit language and culture, and by their various contributions to the life and culture of their territory.

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Secrets of Success

NS provides an exceptionally rich learning environment for those Inuit youth who attend it. The curriculum is all about Inuit — their history, their struggles, their accomplishments, and their place in the broader world. Students find it enthralling to learn about their past, and empowering to
learn what their leaders accomplished within a single generation by negotiating the largest land claims settlement in Canada and literally changing the map of Canada with the creation of Nunavut. The depth of knowledge they acquire about themselves as Inuit has a transformative effect on their pride in who they are. NS students never look back, and never question their own identity again.

The program’s location also contributes to its effectiveness. Students have consistently affirmed the value of it being in the south because it gives them the chance to experience another part of Canada and to learn how to survive there. The sense of empowerment that comes from knowing they can survive on their own outside of the North leaves students with a vastly enhanced sense of their own future possibilities for work, school, or travel. Ottawa itself has proven to be an ideal location in the south. Students have easy access to various national and international Inuit organizations, as well as to government institutions like Parliament Hill, libraries, galleries and museums. Many Nunavut leaders and officials make time for students when they visit the city on business.

NS also enjoys an unusually high retention rate, e.g., approximately 80% of students complete their year. While this can be attributed to several factors, the key one has to do with relationships. The NS school functions differently than almost all other colleges: The students go through the entire year in a single group; everything takes place in one small facility; and staff are available at all times. This maximizes the opportunities for relationships among students, and between students and staff.

When students go through a low time (as they all do, either because of homesickness or other personal issues), there is always someone within reach for support. And because staff members are constantly interacting with students on a variety of levels, they come to know the students as individuals, each with his or her own story and his or her own particular needs. To know a student means knowing how to care for them, how to motivate them, and how to celebrate them.

NS’s Strategic Vision

NS is now on the cusp of a new era. There are two notable aspects to its future vision:

The first involves a plan to incorporate youth from other Inuit regions, such as the Western Arctic, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut, and potentially even Greenland and Alaska. The goal is to create a program where youth from these regions can study together for a year, learning about each other’s history, land claims, language and culture. The realization of this dream would mean that the name of the program, Nunavut Sivuniksavut, will eventually become Inuit Sivuniksavut.

The second change involves the gradual takeover of the program by NS alumni. Indeed, this process is well underway. At the time of writing, all members of the NS Board of Directors are former students; similarly, four of the seven full-time staff are now NLCA beneficiaries, and three of these are NS alumni (see Becky Mearns’ reflection, following). The future of the program looks to be secure in the hands of those who know it best.

NS will be celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2015 — a remarkable achievement for a program that began with ten students and two instructors back in 1985. To mark the occasion, NS will be hosting a conference that will bring together educators, government and Inuit officials, funders and other interested parties to examine issues of common interest — and of course, to share the story of thirty remarkable years of innovative educational practice.

There will be much to share.

From Student to Instructor: The Journey of Becky Mearns

In 2007 I left my four-year career with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and took the plunge into university. It had been seven years since I graduated from high school in Pangnirtung and the thought of going back to school excited me and scared me all at the same time. I had initially planned on taking leave from the RCMP to attend university and return upon the completion of my degree. Unfortunately, I was not supported in this and made the decision to resign from the RCMP to pursue my education. Perhaps this is what started me on the path to where I am today; the decision to give up a stable career that had me working in the territory that I love. However, it was time for me to move forward from where I was and embark on a new beginning. It sounds rather cliché, but as I reflect on this decision, that is what it was - it was the start of something new and so different from what I had been doing up to that point in time.

I had attended NS after graduating from high school, when I was young and not sure what I wanted to do with my life — much like any other teenager. I did not feel ready for university, so NS it was. It was an amazing experience that helped me learn about who I was. I not only learned about the Nun-
avut Agreement but about who I was and where I came from. I have to admit, back then I did not know much about Inuit culture. Maybe I knew more than I thought I did, but NS really opened my eyes. I spent much of my childhood in Scotland. Up until the age of 11 I attended school in a small village outside of Aberdeen. I did not have strong ties with the Inuk side of my family in Pangnirtung. I knew that we were Inuk, that we were different, but I did not know what that meant.

 came back from NS thinking about how contact with non-Inuit had affected the lives of Inuit. I thought about the treaties and negotiations between Aboriginal peoples in Canada and the federal government and how these relationships affected the way that things were in our communities. This was the seed that was planted that would one day grow and make me pursue further education. As an RCMP officer, I saw first hand what was going on in our communities in Nunavut - both good and bad. I wanted to do more and felt that attending university would help me to contribute.

 I studied sociology, Aboriginal studies, and law on a full time basis and held down part time jobs throughout my undergraduate degree. I initially worked with the Legal Services Unit of the RCMP and later at Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami in Inuit Qaujisarvingat. Both of these jobs related to various interests of mine and they tied nicely into my degree.

 The first year of university was tough because it changed the way I looked at and thought about things. I worked to navigate the different classes and the huge campus all the while meeting the expectations of each professor. I did not do too well in my first year, but I kept on going and it slowly got better. My grades improved and I found classes that really interested me. I found I did better when I was researching subjects of meaning to me. Many of the papers I wrote related to what was going on in Nunavut.

 In 2011 I completed my undergraduate degree and moved on to a masters degree in geography. I made it through my first year of course work while working at ITK and doing teaching assistant work in the department. I was soon to begin writing my thesis when one day I came upon an ad for a job at Nunavut Sivunikavut. They were looking for instructors. I thought about the idea of teaching other young Inuit about what I had learned some years ago. It was a chance for me to try and inspire other Inuit to pursue their education. I could share my experience — be it my work or student experience. Throughout my studies I had continued to research many of the same subjects to which I had been introduced at NS, and my interest grew.

 I made the decision to apply for the job. What was the worst that could happen? If I did not get the job I could continue on with school, finish up my masters degree, and move on from there. I was called for an interview and not long after I received the call that I got the job. I was ecstatic. Despite having been a student at NS over ten years ago, up to this point I hadn’t realized that this would be my dream job. Working at NS allows me to interact with and teach Inuit youth from Nunavut. I can share my experiences and explore with them their future opportunities.

 Today I’m about a year and a half into my job and I could not be happier with where I am. I think back to the decision I made and the steps that I took to go to university. I teach both Inuit history and Inuktutit, which I believe are very important subjects. As a young Inuk I am so proud to say that I am teaching these subjects to other youth. I get to share with our students the collective history of Inuit; to explore a history of which most people are unaware. The Inuktut language class allows me to instill pride in our mother tongue.

 I have no regrets about making that decision, even though giving up everything familiar to me felt like a big risk at the time. I think this is the decision that every student has to make, especially students living in the small communities in Nunavut. Working at NS I get to provide students with the support that I received from NS after high school and again when I returned to Ottawa for university.

 I am privileged to be working at NS as we look to the future of the program. Strategic visioning started well before I began teaching there, but when I was introduced to this plan it made me even happier to be part of this program.

 I envision a great future for the NS program and I have great hopes that we can expand beyond the borders of Nunavut to work together with other Inuit across the Circumpolar North. NS has had such great success stories coming out of the Nunavut territory and I think it would be amazing to see other Inuit youth participate in the program and succeed.

 It is so important that we support our youth in pursuing their future. Teaching at NS allows me to encourage our students to pursue further education and share with them the story of how I have come through the education system.

 Murray Angus is an instructor at NS and was one of the founders of the program in 1985. He has a masters degree in social work from Carleton University, specializing in land claims policy. Becky Mearns is an instructor at NS. She hold a bachelor degree in Sociology and is working towards a Master of Arts in Geography, both from Carleton University.
Although high school education attainment in Inuit Nunangat has shown significant improvement over the past decade, graduation rates remain well below the Canadian average. For example, in Nunavut, while the high school graduation rate rose by 11 points between 1999 and 2009, it still remains at only 39%, well below the Canadian average of 78.3%.

Inuit students who wish to pursue post-secondary education do not have access to a university in the Canadian Arctic. However, a college system in each of the territories offers a wide variety of academic and vocational programs, some of which are offered collaboratively with Southern institutions. Currently, Nunavik does not have a college system and students must leave the region for post-secondary education; meanwhile in Nunatsiavut, students have access to university courses through the Labrador Institute of Memorial University. In the absence of a university in the Canadian Arctic, students in Inuit Nunangat may take courses by distance delivery but most go South to pursue their degree, a situation that brings with it both opportunities and challenges for individuals and their families.

Despite these initiatives, access to relevant and sustainable post-secondary education in Inuit Nunangat has remained extremely limited for most Inuit, and long term accessibility to a high quality diversified post-secondary education has been problematic. Although Inuit have made noticeable gains at the high school, college, and trade program levels since 1981, the percentage of Inuit who have completed a university degree has remained quite low (from 1.6% in 1981 to 2.7% in 2006). More significantly, the gap between Inuit and non-Inuit has increased as the percentage of non-Inuit who have completed a university degree during the same period increased from 6.4% in 1981 to 16.5% in 2006.

Recognizing the need for more evidence-based research on university and post-secondary programs delivered in Inuit Nunangat, including research that aims to understand the factors that contribute to the success of Inuit at the post-secondary level, the authors launched the project Improving Access to University Education in the Canadian Arctic. We aimed to compile an inventory and evaluation of past and present university initiatives in Inuit Nunangat, considering factors and issues related to curriculum, delivery methods, and success. This research has led to a better understanding of the needs and experiences of Inuit completing post-secondary programs and to the development of different scenarios to improve access to university education for Inuit and Northerners in Inuit Nunangat.

Three groups of researchers, including Inuit and non-Inuit student researchers, based at Laval University, Carleton University, and the University of Prince Edward Island, considered different aspects of the overall research question. This short article provides a summary of the major findings from this research. The research results will be available shortly in ArcticNet's IRIS 2 report and in academic journals.

We begin with a brief overview of the institutional and social history of adult and post-secondary education in Inuit Nunangat before turning to Inuit post-secondary students’ experiences collected through a survey and focus groups. We end with an analysis of UPEI’s Master of Education (MEd) program.

The Institutional and Social History of Adult and Post-Secondary Education in Inuit Nunangat
(Frances Abele and Sheena Kennedy Dalseg)

The history of adult and post-secondary education in Inuit Nunangat is intertwined with federal and provincial development dreams and actions. It has been shaped and reshaped by Inuit parents’ and students’ choices, along with the initiatives of a few non-governmental organizations devoted to democratic development. The complex and dynamic relationship among these forces has created the education and training situation that exists today, defining opportunities and limiting them as well.

Our aspect of Improving Access to Post-Secondary Education for Inuit inventories and analyzes the programs and initiatives offered to provide post-secondary and adult education to Inuit in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, beginning in the 1960s. Through archival and interview research
undertaken between 2011 and 2013, we have identified key historical moments and actors in the development of Northern adult and post-secondary education policy and programming, and we have been able to draw out many of the important and enduring debates surrounding education in the NWT and Nunavut, including those about the creation of a Northern university. Here we provide a very brief overview of our findings, and make some suggestions for further research and consideration by decision-makers.

Hundreds of adult education and post-secondary courses and programs have been offered across the North since the 1960s. These programs can be divided into three main categories: academic, vocational/technical, and cultural-linguistic. The vast majority of programs and courses were designed and provided by government either through the network of Arctic College community learning centres, or directly by government departments for labour force training purposes. Other providers include non-profit organizations, like Frontier College, Nunavut Sivuniksavut or the Piqusilirivvik Cultural School, and industry associations, such as those providing training for oil and gas industry employment. In the absence of a university in the North, there exists a strong tradition in the Arctic College to establish institutional partnerships with Southern universities to offer degree programs. The longest-standing program of this nature is the Northern Teacher Education Program (NTEP), which began in the late 1970s.

Historically, post-secondary and adult education programs offered in the North have tended to mirror the political and economic events and priorities of their time, often responding directly to short-term labour force needs in the resource development and government sectors. While in the early days education programs offered to adults could be linked more closely with community development, increasingly, adult and post-secondary education has become focused on skills development and improving the employability of Inuit in the wage economy labour force (in both the private and public sectors). Simultaneously, as Northern governments grew, they assumed more and different responsibilities for education, changing the relationships between community members and schools. This dynamic played out differently in the four territories of Inuit Nunangat, a matter we intend to explore in a future publication.

Alongside the evolution of the college system in the North has been a long-standing debate surrounding different visions for a university in the territorial North and more recently specifically in Inuit Nunangat. The discussions and debates, dating back to the 1960s, point to the fundamental relationship between education, self-determination, and democratic development. A university in Nunavut, for example, would contribute to the development of a stronger civil society in the territory to encourage more public engagement; it would create a Northern-based space for Inuit knowledge leaders and scholars to work together; and most importantly, a university would help to expand the range of imaginable possibilities for post-secondary education beyond those that respond directly to the immediate needs of the labour force.

Listening to Inuit Students
(Thierry Rodon and Francis Lévesque)

This part of the project was focused on Inuit students’ needs and experiences with post-secondary programs or courses in order to better understand educational paths and university successes from their point of view. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered through 68 surveys, nine in-depths interviews, three focus groups (Iqaluit, Kuujjuaq and Inuvik), and two workshops with southern and Northern educators involved in Inuit education (Ottawa and Kuujjuaq). These tools allowed us to identify many issues faced by Inuit post-secondary students.

One of the main issues identified in the survey and focus groups is the difficulty of accessing post-secondary programs. Not only do many Inuit students feel high school education does not prepare them adequately for post-secondary education, but once they graduate they have difficulty accessing programs. The fact that there is no university in Inuit Nunangat means that prospective post-secondary students must choose among the limited number of programs offered at one of the Northern colleges (which may not be located in the students’ home communities), or move away to study in a Southern college or university where more options are available but where they face considerable challenges: loneliness, homesickness, lack of support, adapting to a totally new environment or levels of education often not equivalent to Southern students.

Furthermore, Southern universities seldom offer programs adapted to Inuit culture and needs. Courses do not necessarily have a Northern context and are not taught in Inuktitut — two elements identified as particularly important by participants. For many Inuit post-secondary students, vocational training is
The vast majority of respondents (85%) study to achieve personal goals, while only 35% indicated that they study for employment or promotion. This research shows that the educational path of many Inuit students differs from that of Southern students, for whom post-secondary education programs are designed. In fact, for Inuit students, post-secondary education is often an all-encompassing experience that profoundly alters their way of life by removing them from their home communities. For this reason, they often need more support than average Southern students. The research data indicate that Inuit students need and benefit from counselling and orientation, but they also need support from their instructors (61%) and classmates, and from their family and friends (48%). The cohort approach, where many Inuit students undertake the same program at the same time, is valued by Inuit students (52%) and Southern and Northern educators involved in Inuit education.

The availability of housing is also a determining factor when students make decisions about where to pursue post-secondary education in the North. During the focus groups, it was mentioned that the lack of housing in Iqaluit was a barrier for student living outside the territorial capital.

The survey and the focus groups also highlighted the fact that funding is an issue, since not all Inuit have access to the same funding programs, and funding arrangements can be inconsistent and tenuous. While some funding programs are more generous than others, none of the students said their funding covered all of their needs; it is clearly an area that needs more research. One participant noted the difficulty in finding important information related to funding applications and mentioned the need for an online portal where students could get relevant information.

Our research indicates that post-secondary ed-

From left: Nikki Eejesiak, Kerri Wheatley, Francis Lévesque, Fiona Walton, Sheena Kennedy Dalseg, Naullaq Arnaquq, Thierry Rodon, and Mantalii Okalik following their session on Inuit education at the ArcticNet Annual Scientific Meeting in Halifax, Nova Scotia, December 2013.
ucation should be better adapted to Inuit realities and that program design and delivery should reflect their needs. This means, for example, developing programs in partnership with students, focusing on Inuktitut, bringing students on the land, including Inuit Elders, etc.

Encouraging parents to support their children in their educational pursuits is also a key element, and the recent National Parent Mobilization Initiative launched by the Amaujaq Centre is very encouraging in that regard. The difficult historical relationship between Indigenous peoples and the formal education system in Northern Canada cannot be forgotten or erased. Contemporary efforts to make post-secondary education more accessible to Inuit students through the involvement of Inuit communities, leaders, students, and educators in designing and carrying out education programs are important steps upon which we can build.

Our research has also shown that often Inuit students do not have access to sufficient funding that fits their specific needs. There are a wide variety of programs administered by territorial governments and by Inuit organizations that each has its specific rules. That means that access to funding can vary both within and across Inuit Nunangat. The federal government has a clear fiduciary responsibility to invest more in education, and a Northern university would be a good starting point. The Northern governments should recognize this priority, and not only put emphasis on vocational training for the short term needs of the job market but also on long-term education so that Inuit students can have the same opportunities as the rest of Canadians.

Accessing Graduate Level Education in Nunavut (Fiona Walton and Darlene O’Leary)

This section of the ArcticNet research project focused on the perspectives of graduates of two iterations of the course-based, Northern-accessible Master of Education (MEd) program offered in Nunavut between 2006-2013. The first iteration of the MEd took place from 2006-2009, the second from 2010-2013. Access to post-secondary education in Nunavut and Nunavik needs to consider both undergraduate as well as graduate programs. Given that Inuit teachers in Nunavut have been completing Bachelor of Education (BEd) degrees since 1986 and that over 200 Inuit teachers have completed this degree, we considered it important to include research related to the experiences of some of the first Inuit to complete MEd degrees.

The MEd program was offered by the Faculty of Education, University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), in partnership with the Department of Education, Government of Nunavut (GN). By May 2014, 37 Inuit women will hold MEd degrees, including one graduate from Nunavik. One graduate is enrolled in the PhD program in Educational Studies at UPEI and one student chose to complete a Master of Education thesis.

Between 2010 and 2013, 13 individual interviews and a focus group discussion took place with MEd students or graduates as part of this ArcticNet-funded research grant. Our preliminary findings suggest that a number of factors enabled graduates to access and successfully complete the 10 courses required for the MEd degree, including a keen interest in community service and a desire to act as role models within Inuit society in Nunavut. Graduates acknowledged that every Inuit student who completes a graduate degree represents a step towards a better future for Inuit.

[I value] giving back to my community and learning from other educators. Meaning I took the [MEd] program not to be top of everybody, but being part of my community, being part of Inuit [society]. (Nancy Uluaaluak, MEd, Arviat)

[The MEd] is going to have [an impact] on the wider audience… you are thinking students and school, but also… their parents and the community. So you are expanding your vision and how you are creating futures… and building community. (Millie Kulikta-na, MEd, Kugluktuk)

Graduates were aware that traditional knowledge, language, history, and social values related to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit are eroding in Nunavut. They were motivated to access the MEd degree because they believed that their research and writing would contribute to the documentation and preservation of valuable knowledge.

I want to be involved in [the] research side of things, because I think our Inuk voice and an Inuk researcher is what’s needed…there are so many things that socially should be looked at…[W]e can help to voice in print…and it’s just endless, limitless. (Louise Flaherty, MEd, Iqaluit)

The MEd was delivered in a cohort model that offered face-to-face as well as distance learning options. It was offered in Nunavut, not in Southern Canada, and involved both Inuit and non-Inuit instructors as well as Elders. Participants attended...
courses together without leaving their employment and family commitments. Minimal disruption to work and family commitments made it possible to access the degree. Students remained motivated because the group learned together.

The cohort approach, I love it because we can do it together and have a sense of belonging. (Mary Joanne Kauki, MEd, Kujuuaq, Nunavik)

I feel that… our MEd… was a huge thing for us Inuit. And also working at the same time and… we were all women…. we have children and families, and I feel that we were able to balance what we had to do and by working together we pulled it through. (Mina Rumbolt, MEd, Sanikiluaq)

MEd graduates strongly believed that completing a graduate degree based on a decolonizing approach enabled them to value Inuit society and appreciate the importance of professional knowledge, voice, confidence, and identity.

I think that we need to start… to build that professional expertise as Inuit… on the local and regional level… I think an MEd course also develops… the ability to start becoming autonomous as a society. (Mary Joanne Kauki)

[The MEd] had helped a lot with… the confidence and… ability to… voice what I think… whereas before, as classroom teachers we kind of went along with what was expected, or what was… told. (Nunia Qanatsiaq-Anoee, MEd, Arviat)

The more Inuit [are] educated with higher degrees, the more people will want to see themselves as equal. If more students go through the Masters program, it will become the norm. (Peesee Pitsiulak-Stephens, MEd, Iqaluit)

Conclusion
After exploring past and present post-secondary programs, listening to Inuit students’ experiences and conducting a preliminary analysis of a very successful post-secondary program, our research results allow us to make the following conclusions and suggestions.

The history of Northern education is also the history of the development of Inuit society over the last several generations. Schools and schooling were fundamental aspects of federal “Northern development” measures, and they are now fundamental venues through which all residents of Inuit Nunangat are building their future. For this enterprise, it is essential to understand how the institutions and philosophies embedded in the school system affected Northern communities, including how those institutions reflect and continue to reflect social power relationships.

Inuit students’ experiences with post-secondary education to-date suggests that programs which fo-
Focus on Northern context, make room for Inuit co-instructors, include Elders, facilitate instruction in Inuktitut and English, and provide an education that reflects context and culture, raise motivation and engagement and are therefore more relevant and meaningful for Inuit students.

Providing academic and personal support, access to counseling and program orientations, connecting Inuit students together and developing cohort models in order to foster learner communities are all elements that can greatly improve students’ success.

Our research has shown that often Inuit students do not have access to sufficient funding that fits their specific needs, and that access to funding can vary both within and across Inuit Nunangat. These programs should be evaluated in order to make them more relevant to Inuit students’ needs.

Choice is important. Many Inuit students undertake post-secondary education not necessarily to prepare for future careers, but to achieve personal goals, and because they enjoy learning. For this reason, they want to have access to a wide variety of programs, not just vocational programs that focus on the short-term needs of government and industry.

In the short term, there is a need for the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to invest in university-level programs in order to close the gap between Inuit and the rest of Canadians. Southern universities can continue to support this effort by developing more university courses in Inuit Nunangat. In the long term, a Northern university designed to meet the needs of Inuit students should be a key element in improving access to post-secondary education for Inuit.

In the upcoming months, a number of longer publications are planned in which we will present the conclusions of our research in more detail. If you would like to receive copies of our work as it emerges, please contact any of the authors of this short paper.

Thierry Rodon is Adjunct Professor and Northern Sustainable Development Chair at Université Laval; Fiona Walton is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Prince Edward Island; Frances Abele is Professor in the School of Public Policy and Administration, Carleton University and Academic Director at the Carleton Centre for Community Innovation; Sheena Kennedy Dalsg is a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Public Policy and Administration at Carleton University and a Research Associate at the Carleton Centre for Community Innovation; Darlene O’Leary is a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the University of Prince Edward Island; Francis Lévesque is Coordinator of the Northern Sustainable Development Research Chair at Université Laval and holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the Université Laval.

Notes
4. During this period, we conducted fifteen semi-structured interviews with individuals from a variety of perspectives including current and former public servants and government officials, former adult educators, former students and Indigenous leaders. Archival research was conducted in Yellowknife at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Museum (May 2011 and December 2013); in Ottawa at Library and Archives Canada (October/November 2013) and the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada library (through 2011, and October/November 2013); and in Iqaluit (March 2013).
5. We also included programs that were offered specifically to Inuit outside of the NWT and Nunavut, such as Nunavut Sivuniksavut, which is based in Ottawa.
6. We are currently in the process of writing up our results for publication.
7. In Iqaluit, Nunavut, for example, adult educators worked very closely with community members to set up an outpost camp committee, local radio station, library system, youth club, alongside conventional literacy and numeracy programming.
8. Kelly Black, a doctoral student in Canadian Studies and Political Economy at Carleton University produced a working paper, entitled “Tracing the Idea of a Northern University.” This work was funded by ArcticNet, and is currently under revision for publication.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
15. To learn more about the National Parent Mobilization Initiative launched by the Amaujaq Centre, go to: http://vimeo.com/81716290.
16. Rodon et al. (2013) op. cit.
In 2011 Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) identified that a significant challenge to improving Inuit education is the “comparatively small amount of performance monitoring data and evidence-based research that exists to illustrate trends or document and disseminate promising practices” (First Canadians, Canadians first: National strategy on Inuit education 2011, p. 97). Arguably, as ITK points out, research plays an important part in developing, enhancing, and assessing educational resources and programs. Insights that can be reached through research are particularly important when schools are grappling with significant policy changes, as have been seen recently in Nunavut following the 2008 Nunavut Education Act. Research should help the public, policy-makers, administrators, and educators see how education looks and feels from different perspectives, what it does and should do well, and how it needs to change.

To accompany and inform ITK’s National Strategy on Inuit Education, several literature reviews were commissioned on topics including: Building Post-Secondary Success; Inuit-Centred Curriculum and Teaching Approaches; Bilingual Education; Capacity Building in Inuit Education; Mobilizing Parents; and Early Childhood Education. While providing useful overviews, these documents are now several years old (completed in March 2010), and many rely on scholarship dealing with primarily Aboriginal/Indigenous education in general rather than research specific to Inuit contexts. These reviews are evidence of the scarcity of research on Inuit education across the board.

ITK used the National Strategy on Inuit Education to identify priority areas for partnership, policy changes, advocacy, research, and program development in Inuit jurisdictions moving forward. Of the 10 recommendations put forward by the Committee, ITK has prioritized four for immediate work: Mobilizing Parents; Improving Access to Early Childhood Education; Examining Feasibility of Standardized Inuit Writing System; and Improving Research Capacity and Establishing Standards. ITK also called for the establishment of a university in Inuit Nunangat (homelands), and as I will suggest below, this goal is inextricably tied with substantially improving education research capacity, as well as enhancing access to post-secondary education.

The call for more education research was recently tempered with an equal, if not greater, concern for how education research has been, and should be, conducted with Inuit and Arctic communities. A meeting hosted by ITK in Iqaluit, Nunavut from February 19-21, 2013 brought together representatives from the four Inuit Nunangat, the majority of whom were Inuit. A group of university-affiliated researchers with experience in Inuit jurisdictions were invited to attend part of the meeting to share ideas. The report from this meeting is entitled Future directions in research in Inuit education: A report prepared from the proceedings of the 1st forum on research in Inuit education.

I was fortunate to attend the entire meeting as a researcher, Northerner, and former employee of the Nunavut Department of Education. Here, I have highlighted important discussion points that arose during the meeting. I wish to emphasize that the report authored by ITK more comprehensively represents the entire discussion, whereas I am reflecting on what I heard and focusing on points that I suggest deserve particular consideration by researchers.

Inuit and Northerners explained that they want their own research questions to be investigated, rather than questions that appear meaningful to outsiders or questions to which outsiders think they already have the answers. Meeting participants expressed hurt and concern about ill treatment of local people by researchers who “show up out of the blue”, both in the past and on an ongoing basis. They are looking to work with researchers — Inuit or non-Inuit — who demonstrate the values of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, patience, listening, and a willingness to learn and understand Inuit epistemology as well as Inuit language. Ideally, research in Inuit Nunangat should be carried out by researchers who have long-term relationships in communities, or who demonstrate a commitment to developing such deep connections. According to participants this could involve utilizing collaborative methods and building partnerships, supporting the empowerment of Inuit, and using more holistic approaches to knowledge, participation, education and research. At the
meetings in Iqaluit, it was said that data analyses that focus only on negative views, failures, deficits, and crises are not welcome. There is a lack of awareness amongst the educator community and the public in general of what research has already been undertaken and how to access research outcomes. The information gathered and the knowledge generated through research should be made more accessible to Inuit on an ongoing basis and in plain language.

Finally, I heard that it is particularly important that education research be undertaken in ways that reflect the Inuit majority population because of: the large number of Inuit educators who are available to participate in research (relative to other research sectors); the extent to which education affects everyone; and the work that has already been done through informal research in the field of education to document Inuit knowledge.

In my own view, education research in Nunavut has not yet placed enough emphasis on historically-situated, place-based, comparative, long-term or appreciative views of education and schooling. I would contend that existing research tends to reinforce simplistic binaries between Inuit and non-Inuit teachers (and others involved in the school system), and that this does not reflect the spectrum of experience, strengths, needs and challenges amongst individuals in both categories “Inuit” and “Qallunaat”/“non-Inuit.” Existing research tends to re-inscribe well-known observations and problems with the school system that emerge from itinerant teachers’ short-term perspectives.

The deficit and crisis framing of some scholarship has not been counter-balanced with consideration of the time- and resource-intensive start-from-scratch change process that has been underway for decades, and which has resulted in substantial policy and program change. The development and implementation of education policy, programs, learning materials, teacher resources, and staff training occurs in a dispersed, cross-cultural and multi-linguistic context. Such complex work requires specialized expertise and experience that few people hold, and such work cannot necessarily be achieved more quickly or effectively simply by calling for more funding or resources. Research into issues and complexities associated with advancing made-in-the-North policy and practice — such as sustainable human resource and leadership development initiatives — may have more impact than repeatedly calling for financial investment without appropriate staff to put that money to work.

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Participants at the February 2013 forum on Inuit education research articulated challenges regarding the conduct of research in their communities. In many cases these challenges demand that researchers better account for — and even surpass — ethical principles and methodological approaches as they have been outlined by Nunavut Research Institute, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies and ethics review boards of various universities across Canada.

From my perspective, the challenge of meeting high expectations for education research in Inuit jurisdictions necessitates at least two significant projects. The first is to explore more deeply what Inuit research methodologies could and should look like. An excellent example of this is Janet Tamalik McGrath’s work with Mariano Aupilaarjuk, entitled Lumaksagsiurtigijakka: Conversations with Aupilaarjuk towards a theory of Inuktutit knowledge renewal.

The second pursuit, which I will discuss further here, is to look closely and specifically at research precedents — at the history of education research in Inuit jurisdictions and its impacts on schooling and communities. A useful investigation into the history of research would ask, for example: What research is currently available concerning Inuit education in Nunavut? How has that research met the needs of Inuit and Northerners in terms of research processes as well as outcomes? And, what insights might inform a more strategic education research agenda for the future — one that is more responsive to the...
interests and goals of Inuit and Northerners, as well as viable for researchers?

Extending beyond literature reviews, we need studies that evaluate and assess research processes based on interviews with research participants and partners to find out how they experienced the process and outcomes of the research, and whether they use the research outcomes now. This initiative would examine research completed by government departments, Inuit organizations, graduate students, and the Nunavut Literacy Council as well as university-based researchers, to develop a more informed agenda.

I stated above that research should help us see education more clearly. Research should also help the public, policy-makers, administrators, and educators see how research looks and feels from different angles, what it does well, and how it needs to change. Conducting this kind of research into research could generate a venue for discussion about balancing the interests of Inuit and Northerners with the constraints (ethics, funding, time allocated, language, etc.) of university-affiliated research. Brought in comparison with government-sponsored or community-led research, we might identify how these different groups can collaborate — or at least compliment one another — on the basis of their respective strengths. This might also support education research by connecting and comparing precedents, conflicts, and accomplishments in Inuit jurisdictions with Indigenous education research more broadly — a field where increased capacity might be sought for nurturing future researchers that understand Inuit prerogatives. With methodological and theoretical innovation, research may become more responsive to the ways that knowledge is defined, practiced and mobilized in Inuit tradition, language and culture. I hope this would be viewed as an exciting prospect for all involved.

The purpose of such work would not be to establish a consensus, but to open up conversations informed by specific and deep consideration of where we have been with education research as well as where we might go. This work could enhance the profile of research questions that Inuit and Northerners are interested in, informed by what has come before, rather than in the abstract. Accounting for the history of education research could provide insight into why, for example, some communities are more reluctant to invite or welcome researchers into their schools. It may remind researchers that sometimes the ideas they bring are not helpful, their proposals are not desired by the community at that time, or the projects they can imagine present too much of a drain on hardworking educators and school administrators already challenged by their workloads.

Most of all, a dedicated examination of education research could demonstrate that to improve the quality and relevance of research, Inuit and Northerners should be conducting their own research with appropriate supports from institutions and partners. In my view this further illustrates the urgency of establishing an Arctic university with research expertise that can provide training, support, networking and dialogue regarding education research. It could also work directly with K-12 schools, early childhood and adult education programs, informal education activities, and graduate level education to advance the interests of Northern peoples. As ITK has envisioned: “It would become an intellectual home for Inuit and Inuit scholarship, which by definition, would include the fostering of scholarly debate and academic achievement embedded in an Inuit worldview” (First Canadians, Canadians first, p. 88).

Heather E. McGregor is a PhD candidate in education at the University of British Columbia. She has published several works on the history of education and educational change in Nunavut.

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References

Heather E. McGregor, PhD
These abstracts were presented at the Research Symposium, called Leadership in Learning in June 2013 at Nakasuk School Library in Iqaluit, Nunavut. They have been reprinted here with permission of the authors.

My Grandmother: Amarualik

Vera Arnatsiaq
Igloolik, NU

This paper shares aspects of the life story of my grandmother Rachel Amarualik who lived in Igloolik, Canada from May 9, 1930 until August 24, 2001. She was known as Amarualik and that is the primary name that is used throughout the paper. Amarualik was born on the land called Naujaarjuat, near Repulse Bay and was raised in the traditional, nomadic Inuit way. Amarualik’s mother died when she was about four years old and she was raised by her father, Joannasie Uyarak, until he remarried. This paper shares stories told by Rachel Amarualik to her granddaughter, Vera Arnatsiaq. It cover various periods in her life as a young girl on the land, as a teenager who was taken to Arctic Bay to marry a person she had not chosen herself, to life as a young woman, adult and mother living in the community of Igloolik as it grew and developed. The paper contributes to the social history of Igloolik and benefits Rachel Amarualik’s family by providing them with a recorded history told in her own words.

Key words: Inuit, traditional, nomadic, social history, Igloolik, Amarualik

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Practices in Entrepreneurship

Rhoda Cunningham
Iqaluit, NU

The research study investigated local Inuit women in business in Iqaluit, Nunavut to explore their uses of traditional knowledge in their private business practice. Data about what Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles were applied in the private sector were collected through semi-structured interviews with four participants. They described some of the challenges and positive experiences they have faced as indigenous business owners. Their work practices include efforts to persevere, promote, and revitalize the Inuit language, traditional knowledge, and culture. These practices educate people about the use of Inuit Qaujima-
"jatuqangit in business. The findings show how Inuit women entrepreneurs of Iqaluit have exercised decolonization to overturn misconceptions of how Inuit ways are integrated into the private sector. During this journey, they have created a new business culture.

Key Words: Inuit, women, business practices, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, decolonization

Inuit Language Proficiency Courses at the Nunavut Arctic College
Louise Flaherty, Iqaluit, NU

This study investigates the opinions of Nunavut Arctic College students on the delivery of Inuit language courses. After the advent of the Inuit Language Protection Act and the Official Languages Act, we explore if the only post-secondary institution in Nunavut has enough Inuktitut courses for students to become confident Inuktitut speakers, readers and writers. The study summarizes questionnaire data from the 24 current students in the three programs where one Inuktitut course is taught. Through the questionnaires, students express their views of their Inuktitut learning opportunities and experience. Drawing on the voice of participants, this study aspires to bring forth the reality faced by students in programs where one Inuktitut course is taught and highlights the reality they face when they leave the program.

Key Words: Inuktitut, language courses, Nunavut Arctic College.

The Role of Songs in Enhancing Literacy
Bertha Iglookyouak, Baker Lake, NU

Students in Nunavut are required to be bilingual and must be fluent in both English and Inuktitut in order to graduate from high school. They must learn to read and write in both languages. The purpose of this research project is to explore the idea of how music can improve or enhance literacy skills in Inuktitut. Participants in this research consist of 19 grade three students in the Rachel Arnngnammaktiq, Elementary School in Baker Lake, Nunavut. I teach this class Inuktitut for a half-day on a daily basis. In this action research project, I gathered Inuktitut children’s songs and CD’s to enhance the Inuktitut program with music in the classroom for a period of four weeks in February 2013 and maintained a journal documenting the students’ responses. Oral aspects of Inuktitut were the most positively impacted, indicating that oracy, as a foundational building block of literacy, can be strengthened by adding music to the program. Strong oral fluency in Inuktitut can lead to improved reading and writing skills. The conclusion of this small study is that listening, speaking, reading and writing could be enhanced by adding music and singing during language arts instruction as a part of the curriculum. Singing songs, especially those with action can also be fun for elementary school aged children who learn best through play.

Key Words: Inuktitut, literacy, elementary level, music, song, dance, oracy

Reflections of an Emerging Inuit Educational Leader
Mary Joanne Kauki, Kuujjuaq, QC

This paper provides auto-ethnographic reflections of an Inuk woman detailing her experiences and observations in various leadership roles as an emerging educational leader. The reflections shared in the paper are grounded in mainstream literature and define and describe several forms of unethical leadership practices that do not reflect the collective identity and spirit associated with Inuit ways. The paper includes an analysis of colonial and neo-colonial practices that impact Inuit society and education. It describes a personal leadership struggle and expresses hope for decolonization that will lead to more ethical practices that reflect a commitment to the common good.

Keywords: reflection, leadership, unethical practices, colonization.

Pijunnautitaqpaaliqsimaliqtut: Building Confidence through Cultural and Literacy Skill Development
Adriana Kusugak, Rankin Inlet, NU

This paper explores the impact of non-formal, community-based cultural programs with embedded literacy on Inuit participants’ confidence. The Miqqut program is analyzed as a case study which took place in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut. All participants and Elder instructors are Inuit women. Success factors and outcomes are captured through analysis of participants’ and instructors’ testimonials. The paper focuses on the impact of confidence that was nurtured during and following the program. It examines how confidence built within the Miqqut program enabled the participants to make changes in their lives by enrolling in formal educational programs, entering the workforce and establishing positive, healthy relationships within their families and the community. The paper documents the importance and benefits of non-formal cultural programs with embedded literacy that helped participants gain the confidence and skills to engage in one community in Nunavut in ways they found meaningful.

Key Words: Inuit women, cultural program, literacy, confidence.
Seeking Identity
Saimanaaq Patricia Netser
Arviat, NU

Inuit need to know and understand colonization before they can begin decolonizing. They need to name and recognize the impact of colonization in order to start the process of decolonization. This paper addresses my own need to decolonize by describing some of the colonizing forces that have had a negative impact on my life. These forces include experiences in a hospital while undergoing treatment for tuberculosis as well as my forced attendance at a residential school and the impact of an arranged marriage. It considers my experiences as an Inuit educator in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the school system focused on an assimilationist agenda. Finally, the paper reflects on my own search for Inuit identity and healing. It describes my work with Elders and how this has enabled me to change, decolonize and understand what has taken place for Inuit over the last 60 years. Many indigenous people all over the world have begun to decolonize and some Inuit in Nunavut are now starting this process, which is prompting a rediscovery and reclaiming of our culture, traditions, and language.

Key words: colonization, decolonization, Inuit, Nunavut, reclaiming, assimilationist

Sophisticated Cultural Languages of the Inuit in Nunavut
Eva Noah
Baker Lake, NU

This reflection on the loss of sophisticated Inuit oral language is written from my personal experiences while becoming a bilingual Inuk and then making a career as a Nunavut educator. I worked as an Inuktitut teacher, teaching Inuktitut language arts from kindergarten to the college level (Nunavut Teacher Education Program). The orality of Inuit, especially in Inuktitut language arts, remained rich from generation to generation. Traditional stories have been passed by Inuit from grandparents to their grandchildren. The erosion of Inuktitut has been felt from early missionaries to today’s modern working world. Within our transitional society, we are experiencing and living with a transitional language. Changes in families, in schools, in technology, and in culture are leading to the loss of our sophisticated Inuit languages. Language in all areas and fields has a purpose and there were many specific purposes for Inuktitut that no longer exist. Our students in Nunavut need to graduate from high school with pride and a stronger Inuit identity. My goal as an educator and language instructor is to add the more traditional ways of using the oral literature of the Inuit languages into the school system so that we may more effectively teach Inuktitut in Nunavut.

Key Words: Inuktitut, Inuit, language, oral language, loss of language, identity.

Piniaqsarniq — Practice to Achieve
Maggie Putulik
Rankin Inlet, NU

This paper describes traditional Inuit cultural practices and pedagogy and analyzes historical events that impacted Inuit society on the western coast of the Kivalliq in the central Arctic of Canada. The paper shares childhood memories growing up in one Nunavut community, Chesterfield Inlet (Ighuligaarjuk), where the author grew up. The paper reflects on various Inuit cultural practices sustained for generations and discusses shifts in values and beliefs that occurred during the early twentieth century as interpreted by the author. This testimonial identifies agents of change who contributed to the colonization of the once nomadic people and concludes with Inuit cultural practices that still exist and are achieved through piniaqsarniq. Through the perseverance of core Inuit values and cultural practices, the paper reveals how they can be applied to educational resources that are supporting the cultural survival of Inuit.

Key words: Inuit, pedagogy, values, practices, piniaqsarniq.
Bilingual Competencies in a Grade Five Classroom
Susan Tigullaraq
Iqaluit, NU

A bilingual education system is a requirement under the current Education Act (Government of Nunavut, 2008) and is supported by many Nunavummiut. Finding effective ways to teach both Inuktitut and English languages needs to be explored and documented. This small research study was conducted with twelve grade five students in an elementary school in Iqaluit, Nunavut. The research combined three methods: observation of students while they were being taught in Inuktitut and English; the completion, by students, of a questionnaire with multiple-choice questions; and a talking circle (focus group) method of asking questions of the participating students. The research revealed that the English language dominates over Inuktitut in classes and homes. It also shows that students have difficulty understanding English at the time they change from primarily Inuktitut instruction to primarily English instruction. Most students prefer to be taught in both languages, because they do not have comprehensive knowledge of either. The current implementation of bilingual education may not be meeting the diverse language-related needs of students in the study.

Key Words: Inuktitut, English, bilingualism, Nunavut, Inuit, Grade Five.

Strengthening Young Inuit Male Identity
Becky Tootoo
Baker Lake, NU

This research paper focuses on young Inuit male identity and how it is formed, shaped and sustained among Nunavummiut. The research was conducted in Baker Lake, Nunavut in 2013 by holding kitchen table talks with three different groups. The first group included three male Elders and one man in his 50s. This group provided names of young men they deemed to be successful in the community. The second group included the parents of the three young men who agreed to participate in the research. The last group included the three young men who ranged in age from 17 to 26. The discussions with the three groups identified people, projects and supports that enabled the young men to become successful, healthy contributors in our society. The key factors identified as promoting success were relationships with family, friends and other members of the community and wider society. A second factor related to hands-on activities that can be culturally relevant but reinforce and strengthen identity. The final factor was education, either formal or informal. Only one of the young men identified by the Elders holds a high school diploma. Contrary to western conceptions that often identify successful young people because of their formal education, the amount of money they make or even material possessions, the Elders saw that encouraging the potential of the young men to contribute to their families and community as being the first and foremost sign of their success.

Key Words: Inuit, young men, parents, Elders, success, identity, relationships, hand-on activities, education.

The Different Names of Mosesie Qappik
Mary Etuangat
Pangnirtung, NU

In the mid-twentieth century, the forced relocation of Inuit from small hunting and fishing camps to larger, more central settlements shattered the longstanding ways of knowing and being that had defined relationships between people and their environment (Qikiqtani Truth Commission, 2010; Nunavut Tungavik Incorporated, 2012). Incorporating family trees, oral history and vivid autobiographical narrative, the author of this paper explores the impact of this relocation in the eastern Qikiqtani on her immediate and extended family. She concludes with the need for healing and the promise that it can happen.

Key Words: Qiqiktani, healing, cultural grief, relocation, Inuit

Keeping our Language and Heritage
Lizzie Iblauk
Arviat, NU

Inuktitut remains one of the strongest Aboriginal languages in Canada, a status reinforced by legislation and policy of the Government of Nunavut. Nevertheless, its long-term viability is not without challenges. To understand how they have remained strong in Arviat, a small Inuit community on the western coast of Hudson Bay, the author traces the histories of the people, institutions, and initiatives that have promoted and strengthened Inuit language and heritage from the 1920s to the present. As well being valuable as a community history in its own right, the research may serve as an inspiration for similar successes in other Nunavut communities.

Key Words: Arviat, Inuit language, Inuktitut, Inuit heritage, history.

If you are interested in reading the full length version of any of these papers please visit http://projects.upei.ca/nunavut/. Links to each paper will be posted. Papers are hosted on the Robertson Library Archiving site IslandScholar at the University of Prince Edward Island.
Spaces and Places
Janice Ikeda, Linda Liebenberg, & Michele Wood
Dalhousie University

The Spaces and Places Research Project, led by Dr. Linda Liebenberg and managed by Janice Ikeda at the Resilience Research Centre (RRC), Dalhousie University, in collaboration with the Nunatsiavut Government, explores how communities can build better civic and cultural engagement amongst youth. This visual methods study is taking place in two remote communities in Labrador, including one community within the Land Claim area of The Nunatsiavut Government. A total of 17 youth (12-17 years) participated, helping us gather and analyse data, and disseminate findings.

Youth were provided digital cameras to take photographs of the spaces and places around them; spaces that made them feel they belong to their community and spaces that made them feel they did not belong. Each youth was also filmed for a day. Youth were then interviewed about their photographs and a video compilation of their video footage. Finally, over one weekend, youth attended a data analysis workshop. Here youth helped us analyse and understand the project’s initial findings. Youth then created art-based dissemination projects.

Youth participants clearly stated that they want more opportunities to engage in cultural activities, in particular through their school. Although they do have some Inuktitut instruction and life skills (such as slipper or mitten making) they want more opportunities to learn their language, go out on the land, and learn activities such as hunting, fishing, beading, and slipper, boot, or mitten making. Youth commented that without the life skills course, they would have no opportunity to learn how to make seal skin mittens (Female, 16). When asked how they feel about these courses offered at school, one participant commented that, “it’s good, people get to see more out on the land there” (Male, 14), because this enables survival through activities such as hunting and wooding. This participant also explained that the life skills course makes him feel “welcome” at school because it’s “part of my culture” which makes him “want to go to school.”

Youth also spoke positively about learning about their cultural history and enjoyed watching videos and hearing stories about the past. A 17 year old participant commented that he would like more opportunities to learn from elders and “hear their stories of what they did, how they lived and how they hunted [because] it’s part of my tradition [and] it’s the way they hunted for a very long time”.

Previous research has shown that when youth are connected to their culture and language they are more likely to have positive outcomes. We have found these youth are no exception. Youth are eager to participate in their education and to achieve academic success. Educational engagement, however, appears dependent on opportunities to engage in cultural activities in conjunction with school curriculum that is inclusive of their Inuit culture. This research suggests that when these cultural elements are in place, youth are more likely to engage with school, increase their resilience processes, and have positive psychological and social outcomes in life.

For more information visit resilienceresearch.org or www.LindaLiebenberg.org.

Dr. Linda Liebenberg, Principal Investigator
Co-Director, Resilience Research Centre
Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Dalhousie University
email: linda.liebenberg@dal.ca

From Knowledge to Action: Understanding Wild Berries Health Benefits to Implement Community-Based Interventions Linking Public Health and Social Innovation In Nunavik
Lemire M 1, Harris C 2, Lucas M 1, Cuerrier A 3, Gauthier MJ 4, Bouchard A 4, Labranche E 4, Alary-Vézina P 5, Tardif M 6, Dewailly E 1

For centuries, the Inuit of Northern Canada relied only on the natural resources available to them. Traditional Inuit knowledge passed down through generations emphasized the importance of wild animals and plants in Inuit diet, medicine, and culture. Since the 1990s, the consumption of country food in Nunavik has decreased markedly and the rapid transition towards a western diet has led to excessive intake of sugar and salt. Food insecurity is still widespread in the North. Obesity and related cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk factors are emerging as major health concerns. Global environmental changes also affect Inuit diet and health, most notably through the accumulation of environmental contaminants in the food chain. Over recent years, science has not only corroborated traditional Inuit knowledge regarding the health benefits of many country foods but also learned from Inuit knowledge in studying...
the impacts of global changes on Northern ecosystems and health. Despite this progress, continued study and active promotion of country foods is urgently needed in order to maximize potential health benefits and minimize risks of contaminant exposure, and to develop and implement innovative community-based interventions celebrating the health benefits of country foods, traditional Inuit knowledge, healthy ecosystems, community empowerment and social economy.

With limited access to store-bought fruits and vegetables, Nunavik local berries may provide Inuit peoples with needed plant-derived nutrients and secondary metabolites. In addition to improving local food consumption, Nunavik berries offer unique potential for the prevention or management of metabolic disorders and associated cardiovascular complications. Low in sugar, salt and fat, wild berries may serve as an important local source of vitamins, minerals, and fibre, as well as other antioxidants such as polyphenols and carotenoids. Beyond antioxidant properties, several of these phytochemicals may improve insulin sensitivity or act as anti-inflammatory agents. In addition, certain phytochemicals may also chelate heavy metal ions, potentially reducing the risks of environmental contaminants.

In 2012, we developed a research project to study the chemical composition of local berries, seaweeds and other wild plant foods from different Nunavik villages, to evaluate the impact of wild berries on insulin resistance and obesity in mice, and to assess the impact of wild berry intake and plasma polyphenols on insulin-resistance and diabetes among Nunavik Inuit adults. While visiting communities to collect native plants, community members expressed a desire to consume more berries, but also highlighted numerous obstacles, from economic (e.g. time constraints) and social (e.g. gender and generational issues) to physical (e.g. no storage space in freezers) and environmental (e.g. seasonality). Seeking to translate the combined traditional and scientific support for berries into a community-based initiative, we engaged community stakeholders as well as regional governmental (NRBHSS and KSB) and non-profit partners (Biopterre) to develop The Purple Tongue Project in Tasiujaq and Kangiqsualujjuaq schools. We received Kativik Regional Government (KRG) support matching in-kind contributions from Biopterre to develop novel wild berry products (baby puree, roll ups, dried berries, granola bars, slush and frozen yogurt) that could be eventually produced by Individual Path Learning (IPL) students in schools. Our objectives with this intervention project are to improve wild berry consumption, distribution and availability throughout the year, propose local healthy alternatives to soft drinks and snacks, and stimulate youth empowerment and employment.

New formulations of the berry products were first evaluated by community representatives, whose feedback inspired recipe refinement and alternative formats. The berry products had to present low sugar content, produced at low cost, using locally available food items and simple cooking techniques, attractive for the youth, and in accordance with Inuit taste and culture. In Tasiujaq in September 2013, we introduced our selection of berry products to again receive feedback — this time from the IPL students from the two villages. Along with berry picking, we conducted several activities about traditional knowledge of plants, nutritional benefits of Nunavik berries, and berry patch mapping using GPS.

This first workshop with IPL students was a success. The students were present and attentive, tested the berry products, and participated in the outdoor activities. Everyone enjoyed the activity on traditional knowledge of the plants with Susie Morgan, an elder from Kangiqsualujjuaq. As Nathalie Ross, Tasiujaq school director, mentioned: “For the first time, my IPL students were the ones having the greatest and funkiest project in the school. We broke a taboo that IPL students are just drop-off and not good for anything.” From this experience, Mrs. Ross suggested that the intervention project could become an integral part of the pedagogical guide of IPL students on a 3 years basis. Collectively, we decided to focus on practical hands-on and tool kits activities (berry mapping and harvest assessment, making a herbarium, cooking berry recipes, hygiene and safety tips in a kitchen, tool construction, the basics of project management) to better involve young men in the project. Since our visit, IPL students collected more than 20 kg of berries in preparation for the next phase of the project — learning how to cook and prepare the products — in Kangiqsualujjuaq this past November.

Understanding the benefits of country foods consumed in Nunavik and partnering with Inuit institutions is central to the development and implementation of innovative community-based interventions aiming to address many issues at once: improve food security, promote Inuit culture, minimize risks from environmental contaminants and emergence of obesity, diabetes and CVD. Investing in community-initiatives to capacitate and empower the youth and generate social economy opportunities are undoubtedly one of the key leading to success.

This project is funded by ArcticNet, Kativik Regional Government, Biopterre and NRBHSS through the Nutrition North Canada Program. For further information on the research project, please visit: http://www.arcticnet.ulaval.ca/research/summary.php?project_id=48.

1 Centre de recherche du CHU du Québec, Université Laval, Quebec City, Quebec
2 Department of Biology, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario
3 Institut de recherche en biologie végétale (IRBV), Université de Montréal, Montreal, Quebec
4 Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS), Kuujjuaq, Quebec
5 Kativik School Board (KSB), Kuujjuaq, Quebec
6 Biopterre, Institut de technologie agroalimentaire, La Pocatière campus, La Pocatière, Quebec
Revitalization of Inuit Sign Language (ISL) for deaf Nunavummiut
James C. MacDougall, C.M., Ph.D., C. Psych.
Department of Psychology, McGill University and
Canadian Deafness Research and Training Institute

Although there has been a good deal of attention paid to the issue of hearing loss in Canada’s arctic region, the focus has mainly been with medical aspects of middle ear disease (Otitis Media) (Bowd, 2005). Sensory-neural hearing loss, resulting in severe to profound deafness, has largely been ignored as a topic for research, most likely due to the small numbers involved. In the south, the prevalence of deafness is known to be approximately 1/1000 (MacDougall, 1990). Estimates for the north suggest that due to outbreaks of various diseases such as meningitis, the prevalence may be at least three times higher (Destounis, MacDougall, Geisel, Pollitt, Waters and Gledhill (1990); MacDougall, 1990).

The management of deaf children in the arctic, including the NWT and Nunavut, has proved to be controversial. Historically, children with sensory-neural deafness were sent south to residential schools for the deaf. Depending on the specific school, they may have experienced many of the negative issues associated with the residential school situation for Inuit children in general.

A key recommendation from the 2006 community consultation involved the need for documenting the newly “discovered” sign language - Inuit Sign Language (ISL) - in the context of the oral history of deafness in the territory. Since that time, the Canadian Deafness Research and Training Institute (CDRTI) has documented the use of ISL through video and face to face meetings in various communities, including Iqaluit, Pangnirtung, Rankin Inlet, Taloyoak and Arviat. Print materials illustrating ISL signs were also developed and distributed throughout Nunavut and a captioned video which summarizes the project to date is available from the author. This documentation project is consistent with a world-wide resurgence of interest in the revitalization and recognition of aboriginal sign languages (Zeshan and de Vos, 2012).

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References
Canadian Education Association, Winter Issue.
Official Languages Act and the Inuit Language Protection Act (2008). Government of Nunavut. This act established Inuktitut, English and French as the territory’s official languages, and provides special support to the Inuit Language.
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Inuit legends inspiring children to create their own stories.
The above drawing is by Maya-Linea Reinhardt, aged 9, Joamie School of Iqaluit, 2014.
On the cover, the drawing is by Briona Morrisey, aged 9, Joamie School of Iqaluit, 2014.