

# Marjorie Kaviq Kaluraq

Nunami Ilinniarniq: Inuit Community Control  
of Education through Land-based Education



## CONTENTS

4	Marjorie Kaviq Kaluraq Biography / Personal Note
5	Introduction
8	Background
10	INUIT COLONIZATION THROUGH EDUCATION
11	AULANIQ ASIJJIRLUGU – CHANGE THE CURRENT
14	THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LAND-BASED LEARNING FOR INUIT EDUCATION
19	Challenges & Recommendations
19	<b>CHALLENGE 1: FRAGMENTED FUNDING OPTIONS AS A BARRIER FOR COMMUNITY PROGRAMS</b>
20	<b>ATULIQUJAUJUQ – RECOMMENDATION 1: CONSOLIDATE FUNDING</b>
21	<b>CHALLENGE 2: LACK OF INUIT KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE IN EDUCATION STAFF</b>
22	<b>ATULIQUJAUJUQ – RECOMMENDATION 2: INUIT PILIMMAKSAININGAT ILINNAQTITSIJINIK</b>
24	<b>CHALLENGE 3: LACK OF COMMUNITY AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS</b>
25	<b>ATULIQUJAUJUQ – RECOMMENDATION 3: PIJITSIQATIGIINGNIQ POLICY</b>
27	<b>CHALLENGE 4: INCORPORATING THE ABOVE POLICY CHANGES INTO THE EXISTING EDUCATION SYSTEM</b>
28	<b>ATULIQUJAUJUQ – RECOMMENDATION 4: FLEXIBLE EDUCATION POLICY</b>
31	Conclusion
34	Reference list



The Gordon Foundation undertakes research, leadership development and public dialogue so that public policies in Canada reflect a commitment to collaborative stewardship of our freshwater resources and to a people-driven, equitable and evolving North. Our mission is to promote innovative public policies for the North and in fresh water management based on our values of independent thought, protecting the environment, and full participation of indigenous people in the decisions that affect their well-being. Over the past quarter century The Gordon Foundation has invested over \$37 million in a wide variety of northern community initiatives and freshwater protection initiatives.



The Jane Glassco Northern Fellowship is a policy and leadership development program that recognizes leadership potential among northern Canadians who want to address the emerging policy challenges facing the North. The 18-month program is built around four regional gatherings and offers skills training, mentorship and networking opportunities. Through self-directed learning, group work and the collective sharing of knowledge, Fellows will foster a deeper understanding of important contemporary northern issues, and develop the skills and confidence to better articulate and share their ideas and policy research publicly. The Fellowship is intended for northerners between 25 and 35 years of age, who want to build a strong North that benefits all northerners. Through the Fellowship, we hope to foster a bond among the Fellows that will endure throughout their professional lives and support a pan-northern network.



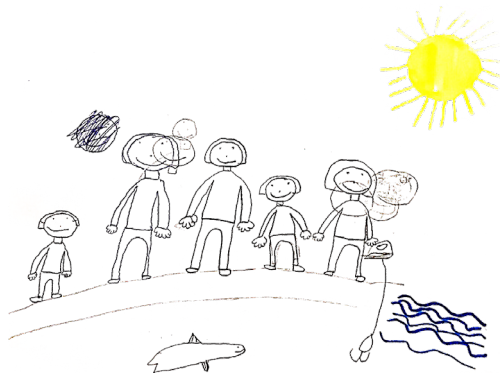
**Kaviq Kaluraq** lives in Baker Lake, Nunavut. She is an instructor in the Nunavut Arctic College's Nunavut Teacher Education Program. She is also the Acting Chairperson of the Nunavut Impact Review Board, currently serving her third term. Kaviq completed her Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Science at Trent University and is currently a graduate student in the Master of Educational Studies Program at Trent University. Kaviq travels to communities across Nunavut to teach, and to meet with community members to learn about how they live and what they strive for in terms of resource development in their communities. Through this fellowship Kaviq hopes to learn more about policies and practices surrounding Inuit environmental literacy and language. She has seen changes around the ways in which Inuit of different generations have relationships with land, and a growing gap of Inuit knowledge about the land among youth. She is interested in policies that allow for knowledge and skills mobilization for traditional Inuit knowledge about the environment using Inuktitut, as well as barriers to mobilization created by policies. Kaviq is interested in learning about the ways people across the North face and address the gaps of traditional knowledge and language about the natural environment; and ways that people are mobilizing traditional knowledge programs through the development of asset oriented and collaborative policies.

# Nunami Ilinniarniq: Inuit Community Control of Education through Land-based Education<sup>1</sup>

As my children get ready for bed I hear the usual request, “Mom, can you tell us a story, can you tell us a story from when you were little?” I often opt in to tell a story from my mother’s life on the land. I find the details from my mother’s life stories more evocative than my own. I find the story about my mother catching a tuktu while she was pregnant more intriguing (Nasby, 2002). Eventually, I realized how much life on the land and the memories created turn into vivid stories with important lessons. The lessons are taught to us by the land, we observe nature then give meaning to the patterns it presents to us; our elders, our families, our community members impart knowledge learned from nature through their stories, their songs, their art. Coincidentally, I realized how much cultural attrition<sup>2</sup> Inuit have experienced with land-based learning. In only four generations of Inuit, within one century, we have effectively become disconnected from the places in which we live, increasing our dependency on external support such as imported food sources, building materials and fuel. Rhoda Karetak (2017) discusses how under

the disguise of a helping hand, colonizers have created dependence among Inuit causing us to “become dependent and because of these helping hands, do not pursue independence” (p. 186). Education has been used to colonize Inuit into disconnected ways of living that displace cultural knowledge and practices that allowed Inuit to survive in the Arctic (Karetak, Tester & Tagalik, 2017; Walton & O’Leary, 2015). Systemic colonization has debilitated Inuit from achieving self-determination. However, decolonizing and Indigenizing education can change the current, Inuit can regain control of their education by reintroducing land-based learning in a more holistic and equitable way.

Josie Kusugak (2012) shares his story about the time he lived on the land with his family as a child then suddenly being forcefully taken away to attend residential school in Iglulugaarjuk at Turquitel Hall. Zeebedee, Eric and Peter often known as the Experimental Eskimos also share their stories about how they were sent away to be educated and assimilated (Greenwald, 2010).



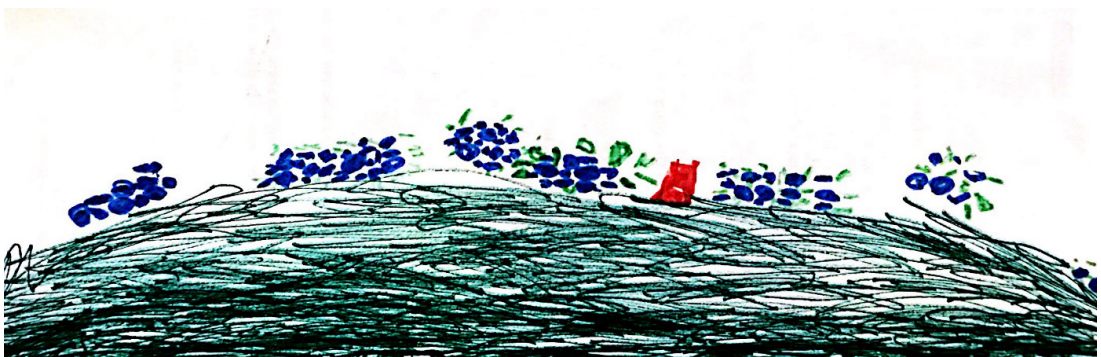
<sup>1</sup> Land-based education: I use the term 'education' rather than 'land-based learning' to emphasize the need to recognize and accredit learning that takes place on the land, either entirely or partly; to change the discourse from extra-curricular activities to the foundational space for learning to take place that is both meaningful and valid both as informal and formal education.

<sup>2</sup> According to Kang'ethe (2015) cultural attrition and erosion constitute phenomena in which a group of people are influenced either through coercive forces such as colonialism, slave trade, socialization, modernization, Eurocentrism, westernization and globalization, to abandon their cultures and adopt other new cultures.

Their stories resonate with so many people who for three generations were removed from their families to be educated and assimilated (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRCC], 2015). Although my generation did not attend residential school, my mother would listen to policy developments from Inuktitut media and say, “the government is raising our children.” I first heard this statement when the government was in discussions about how it would use Inuktitut in schools. Initially, I was puzzled by her statement, wondering: “how is the government raising us if we live with our family?”. Eventually, the analogy made sense to me as such: the government decides our routine, with expectations set for us to attend school with specified mandated timelines and schedules; the government decides what language we speak; the government decides what knowledge is accredited; the government decides what determinants to use to measure our success; the government figuratively fulfills the role of what parents did prior to government intervention by creating policies that delegate many decision making powers to government staff in regards to an Inuit child’s life. For example: when the Special Committee on Education recommended that

the Nunavut Department of Education [NDE] make legislative amendments that would allow District Education Authorities to seek resources and supports to provide additional language education in their local dialects to promote multi-lingual education; the NDE rejected the recommendation in favour of standardized Inuktitut similar to practices used with the English language, of the opinion that families are solely responsible for passing on their mother tongue (NDE, 2016). A bureaucratic decision to not use public funds to promote home languages in education is an example of how Inuit parents still have little influence over how their children are educated.

Inuit as Indigenous people<sup>3</sup> have a rich history with land that is sophisticated, innovative, ingenious, and sustainable. Although we do not live as our ancestors did a century ago, the foundations of life on the land still hold true to living a hopeful, enriching, independent and sustainable life. In this paper, I examine policy barriers that prevent Inuit in Nunavut from receiving equitable land-based education that is based on Inuit Qaujimagatugangit<sup>4</sup>, and I aim to bring to light the potential for change in policy recommendations informed



3 According to the Canadian Encyclopedia, “In Canada, the term Indigenous peoples (or Aboriginal peoples) refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. These are the original inhabitants of the land that is now Canada.”

4 Kalluak (2017) defines IQ as “what Inuit have known all along. In the simplest of terms we could say it is wisdom gained from extensive experience, passed from generation to generation” (p. 41).

by conversations with Inuit. The policy issues I explore through this research are the challenges to provide equitable land-based education for Inuit students as a perpetual force that prevents transformation in Inuit education rooted in Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit. The policy options presented aim to challenge existing policy directions so that the relationship between the education system and communities can work in a more collaborative and strategic way to deliver comprehensive educational programs through land-based education. The first option is to consolidate funding for educational programs into a one window approach, as well as to change the criteria from problem specific and targeted intake criteria to goal oriented criteria. Second, to place more emphasis of teacher professional development dollars on learning Inuit culture and Inuktitut as a means to obligate everyone within the education system to use Inuit culture and language within the education program. Third, to improve work between the education system and communities by developing agreements to work together to deliver land-based learning programs.

Last, to create a flexible education policy for the school system to allow for a better mediated learning program for students so that the system has effective measures in place to accommodate the lifestyles of Inuit. The data for his research comes from two sources, a workshop report from the National Centre for Collaboration in Indigenous Education held in Nunavut in March 2019 on Inuit Ilinniarniliriningat, and a land-based stories workshop done with children in Baker Lake in June 2019.

The concept of education needs to be broadened to include out of school learning, on the land, in the community.

## Rather than fitting Inuit life into schools, we need to fit schools into Inuit life.

The recommendations from this research emerged out of the conversation with people in the field of education, community members, elders, and children. During the Inuit Ilinniarniliriningat workshop, participants discussed what programs they offer, what their goals are, what challenges they face, and opportunities to overcome those challenges. Participants in the workshop were from various community-based programs, youth researchers, and stakeholders from the Nunavut Department of Education, Nunavut Arctic College, and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated. The workshop with children focused on conversations about why the land is important to them and sharing those ideas by illustrating stories then storytelling.

Critical reflection about the systems we engage in are necessary because we are the creators and actors of policy. We need to challenge our mindsets and reframe our thinking in order to make these changes possible. If extrinsic factors shape our intrinsic attitudes that direct our behaviour, we need to create opportunities to interact extrinsically to critically think about our attitudes so that we can transform our behaviour. Therefore, these policy recommendations are intended to promote collective engagement and space to think critically so that the changes we make in education work towards equitable social changes for Inuit.

## BACKGROUND

Inuit traditionally taught their children on the land and at home until they were forced to attend residential schools (Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2013). Initially, residential schools were administered by churches focused on print literacy for indoctrination using the Bible and providing medical services; subsequently the Canadian government created Federal Day Schools to assimilate Indigenous children (Crowe, 1991; TRCC, 2015). Federal Day Schools were operated in settlements for primary grades while residential schools for secondary grades were delivered in regional boarding schools in regional centers such as Yellowknife, Iqaluit, and Churchill (TRCC, 2015). As the Canadian education system transitioned to adopt Multi-cultural educational philosophies and policies, responsibilities of Federal Day Schools were transferred to the Government of the Northwest Territories for some of what we know as Nunavut communities today (McGregor, 2010). New policies required schools to offer language of instruction support in the mother tongue of the students, in the Inuit context, Inuktitut (McGregor, 2010). Local and regional school boards were developed to help produce culturally relevant curriculum resources (McGregor, 2010). Inuit were working as classroom aids and working towards earning formal credentials to become qualified teachers (Walton & O’Leary, 2015). With the creation of Nunavut in 1999, Inuit were in a new position to reform education based on an Inuit worldview. Commitments from the Bathurst Mandate (1999) relevant to this research are:

- ▶ The raising and teaching of children and the care of those in need, ‘Ilagiinniq’ (kinship) and ‘Inuuqatigiinniq’ (community kinship), are a collective community process.

- ▶ Land and language skills and respectful pride in our cultures and languages are fundamental for adults and children.
- ▶ Our education system needs to be built within the context of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.
- ▶ Educational programs are offered on a strategic basis, based on community by community needs.
- ▶ Begin the re-writing of the K-12 school curriculum, to emphasize cultural relevance and academic excellence, to be completed over the next 10 years.

This led to the legislative changes of the Nunavut Education Act (2008) and the Inuit Language Protection Act (2008). Despite increased control of education by Inuit through the development of Nunavut, Inuit are still challenged to realize the goals set out in their mandate for Nunavut education. Within this mandate, key goals include:

- ▶ Inunnguiniq - to create capable human beings who can function independently
- ▶ To rewrite the K-12 education system
- ▶ Recreate curriculum within the context of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit
- ▶ Develop an Inuktitut – English bilingual education system where students are able to function in both languages
- ▶ Be able to receive an education that prepares students for post-secondary education and the Nunavut workforce

Following the legislation of the Nunavut Education Act (2008), the NDE (2007, 2008a, 2008b) published foundation documents to define the applications of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in a school context, specifically in the areas of assessment and

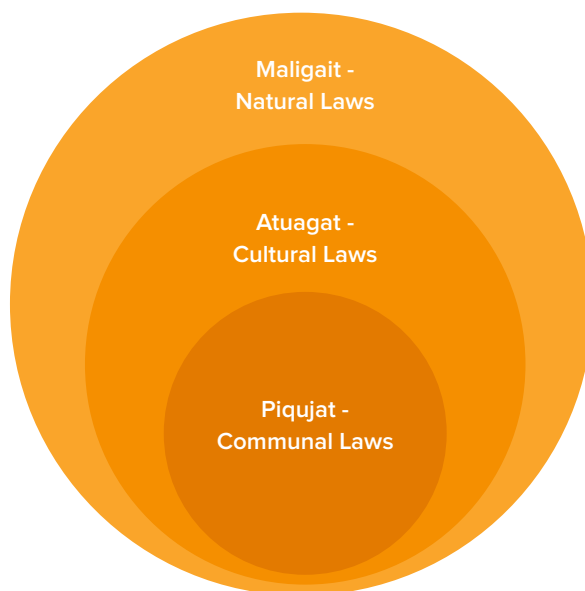


inclusive education. The fourth document that has yet to be published is the document on critical pedagogy. These documents, along with many subsequent publications aim to reform Nunavut education within schools to meet the goals mandated in the Bathurst Mandate (1999) and the Nunavut Education Act (2008). Today, the Government of Nunavut has tabled for the second time, proposed amendments to the Act<sup>5</sup> that would extend the initial timelines, as well as change many of the responsibilities initially envisioned.

The system of Inuit laws is important to education because they shape how we live. They can be understood as such: Maligait – natural laws derived from the natural environment, encompass interconnected relationships within the universe; Atuagat – cultural laws were used to govern the community, localized, and context specific; while Piqujat – communal laws set out how we live, shaping our behaviour, within the

educational framework defined as the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Principles (NDE, 2007). The system of Inuit laws in the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Foundation Document (NDE, 2007) demonstrate how the Inuit way of life revolve around the environment, hence the significance of land and place in Inuit education.

For the purpose of this research, land-based education is used to refer to the environment as a whole, encompassing land, sea, water, sky, as well as the physical and biological processes. Obed (2017) explains how land-based education for Inuit encompasses multiple components of the environment from the land – nuna, sea – tariuq, sky – qilak, including the relationships within these systems. Redver (2016) distinguishes the differences among land-based practice, activities, programs, and education to help define them for northern education. However, for the purpose of this research, using the term land-based is not limited to a specific mode of land-based learning.



**Figure 1:** Inuit Laws graphic from broad to specific context.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ourgoalsforeducation.ca/en>

## INUIT COLONIZATION THROUGH EDUCATION

In the initial version of the Nunavut Education Act, the process of giving control of local education to District Education Authorities continued from the Government of the Northwest Territories policies. Goals to transition to Inuktitut Language of Instruction in all grades were set (Nunavut Education Act, 2008). However, efforts to reform education in Nunavut are recurring experiences of colonization by asserting cognitive imperialism through internalized oppression and Eurocentrism. These actions have created barriers to transformative changes in Nunavut's education system, additionally increasing the gap in access and land-use by Inuit in culturally relevant ways that are recognized in education as valid and creditable.

Battiste (2005) defines cognitive imperialism as:

**A form of cognitive manipulation used to disclaim other knowledge bases and values. Validated through one's knowledge base and empowered through public education, it has been the means by which whole groups of people have been denied existence and have had their wealth confiscated. Cognitive imperialism denies people their language and cultural integrity by maintaining the legitimacy of only one language, one culture, and one frame of reference. As a result of cognitive imperialism, cultural minorities have been led to believe that their poverty and impotence is a result of their race. The modern solution to their despair has been to describe this causal connection in numerous reports. The gift of modern knowledge has been the ideology of oppression, which negates the process of knowledge as a process of inquiry to explore new solutions. This ideology seeks to change the consciousness of the oppressed, not change the situation that oppressed them.**

In the context of Inuit education, this is manifested by making Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit fit into the limitations of education within the context of schools, dissecting it to determine what parts of it can be included while excluding parts that challenge existing limitations and creating an Inuit education system that mirrors Eurocentric processes for the purpose of standardizing for efficiencies and corporate managing. For example, Inuit children are allowed to take time off from school to participate in harvesting activities, but their school calendars have not been redesigned to make it normal practice to do so. Additionally, knowledge and skills that are gained during those land-based activities are not explicitly counted for any value in their assessments and there is no expectation to do so. If what is learned on the land is counted for value in the educational program, the recognition is given value by a teacher's ability to incorporate it into the educational program.

Inuit children have been consistently measured against national Canadian expectations for education. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami [ITK] (2011) stated in its National Strategy on Inuit Education that "many of our children are not attending school, too few are graduating, and even some of our graduates are not equipped with an education that fully meets the Canadian standard" (p. 3). Additionally, "the stark reality of Inuit education today is that roughly 75% of children are not completing high school, and many who do find that their skills and knowledge don't compare to those of non-Aboriginal graduates" (ITK, 2011, p. 7). Developing curriculum that meets the goals to deliver bilingual education that is culturally relevant, based on an Inuit worldview continues to be a challenge (ITK, 2011). Berger (2009) notes that Nunavut teachers face

challenges using Inuit curriculum resources such as Inuuqatigiit: Curriculum from an Inuit Perspective, resulting in teachers defaulting to resources that reinforce Eurocentric curriculum. Inuit students continue to be problematized in schools; statements like “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?” (as cited in Taylor, de la Sablonniere, & Bourgeois, 2018) reinforce ideas that Inuit have to change and measure up to systems and processes from Western culture.

Battiste (2000) conceptualizes internalized oppression as a process by which the oppressed use the same tactics as the oppressor against people in their own group, in this case Inuit imposing oppressive policies against Inuit. For example: Inuktitut is measured against English by standardizing Inuktitut language in school while enforcing an Inuktitut education dialect. This is Eurocentric in that it seeks to reform Inuit education using mainstreamed school design by promoting a standard language, excluding the validity of any other Inuktitut beyond approved terminology. Also, what is silent in the conversation around school attendance is asking ‘why are students not attending, what needs to change in schools to make them more welcoming and how can schools change to better reflect the lifestyles of students?’ Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson and Dunbar’s (2019) report on the current state of Nunavut education illustrate how education in Nunavut is still assimilative, even after policy changes have been made to transform it from an Inuit worldview, further perpetuating historical policies enforced during the residential school era. Even if these policy changes are done with good intentions,

they still need to be critically interrogated to refocus them on transformative changes because they perpetuate ideas that Inuit and Inuit knowledge are not good enough for today’s life.

## **AULANIQ ASIJJIRLUGU – CHANGE THE CURRENT**

Many changes, although well intended, have perpetuated cycles in education with very little to show how they are meeting the original intentions to raise Inummariit who are independent and capable of being successful in any future they choose. In order to change the current education system, we need to change the context because “educating a child always happens in a holistic social context, and understanding that context is vital for any educational changes” (Skutnaab-Kangas et al., 2019). In the Inuit context, educating children was done as a family and as a community following the philosophy of Inunnguiniq (Akittiq & Karetak, 2017) and Pamiqsainiq (Uluadloak, 2017). The places and spaces where this took place was on Inuit Nunangat – Inuit homeland. Land is the space in which this took place, and it is from the land that Maligait – Natural Laws come from (NDE, 2007).

Bell and Brant (2015) offer a perspective on how we can understand the importance of land in an Indigenous worldview. We can look at land as the receptacle where our knowledge and wisdom are obtained from and grounded in (Bell & Brant, 2015). It is also important to understand that this knowledge is not fossilized and timeless. Inuit understand that life is in continuous motion, evolving as the environment evolves, requiring planning and preparedness for the unknown.

Kublu et al. (1999) explain:

**Knowledge was produced in relation to practice. Children were taught to develop their skills; this included using whatever was appropriate, and the use of modern techniques or implements had no negative connotations whatsoever. Inuit were always prepared to adopt new methods and materials if that proved to be advantageous. A balance of experience and innovation is central to the production and transmission of knowledge. The elders would relate to the young hunters how they hunted caribou with bows and arrows, but that did not mean they disapproved of the use of guns. In qualifying the knowledge of the elders as “traditional,” we should never forget that it was always directed to the future, intended to give a perspective to younger generations so that they were better equipped to face the changes they were facing.**

On this basis, I provide recommendations to transform Inuit education to be expand beyond the school, into the community, including families, elders, and programs on the land in an equitable, diversified, and inclusive relationship that is more equitable than the current system. Barnabus Piryuaq (1978) once said:

---

In the past, our lifestyle was patterned after the seasons. We led a nomadic life. We lived off the land and were bound to it. Today much has changed.

(AS CITED IN PUTULIK, 2015, P.71)

Although we no longer live nomadic lifestyles, we still rely on the land for food, for employment opportunities, for wellness, and

to maintain our identity as Inuit. Therefore, these policy recommendations should be understood as living policies that change to evolve to reflect the context of how Inuit live and where Inuit live. Battiste (2013) discusses how “the 'mainstream' functions like a 'keeper' current in a rapidly flowing river or ocean” (p. 107). These recommendations aim to change the current in Nunavut education to change the direction of education from a centralized, standardized, mainstream process to a diverse, inclusive, and community-oriented process.



---

My classmates in Nicole Bell's Indigenous Education Class illustrated this metaphor that represents decolonizing education from Marie Battiste's book. It illustrates the sense that I felt going through this research process, traveling against currents. Traveling against the current can be imagined as facing criticism, doubt, and conflict; going against popular opinion; facing things from a different angle to challenge the forces in education. Each current represents a different factor that has to be considered or flowed through to decolonize. Multiple routes represent the different paths that can be taken to achieve this.

---

“

The land and its people were made for each other.. One must know the nature of the Arctic to enjoy its climate and not feel intimidated by it. To occupy a place required that we be active in fellowship and stewardship with place. The next generation must be taught the importance of the good stewardship left to us by the ancestors.”

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LAND-BASED LEARNING FOR INUIT EDUCATION

---

The land and its people were made for each other... One must know the nature of the Arctic to enjoy its climate and not feel intimidated by it. To occupy a place required that we be active in fellowship and stewardship with place. The next generation must be taught the importance of the good stewardship left to us by the ancestors.

(MARK KALLUAK, 2017)

Angutinnurniq (2017) reminds us that the purpose of Inunnguiniq is “to ensure that [people] will be successful throughout life and be able to live a good life by helping others.” (p. 69). This was achieved by learning about our relationships as humans, with our environment, and all those within it.

What we learned about these relationships grounded us, gave us a sense of place, belonging, and responsibility. These relationships and our interactions with them developed our respect for ourselves and those around us. Even as we have become global citizens, “Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit beliefs and laws will always have value and will always be important for Inuit to follow because they hold our truth.” (Angalik, 2017, p. 84).

When we think about school curriculum and the work that teachers carry out, we recognize that their work has been well thought out, is organized, and has purpose. Equally, Inuit have well thought out ways of planning, organized systems of developing a child as a person, and continuously and gradually developed their sense of purpose through active participation.

Angalik (2017) tells us that “children need to be pilimmaqsaktau – capable through acquired skills and knowledge,” and “children were conditioned about their attitudes and ways of thinking before they were taught lessons” (p. 85). In order for children to observe, and be engaged, their mindset needs to remain positive and forward thinking. Angalik (2017) explains that a child’s mindset was developed using some of these actions:

- ▶ children were taught their kinship as a step towards building respectful relationships,
- ▶ determination was developed by finishing tasks,
- ▶ the tasks given to children were achievable,
- ▶ children were given space to think freely about how to complete a task in order to develop skills for problem solving,
- ▶ observation was key to understanding different ways of doing,
- ▶ self-reflection was taught by learning your own mistakes,
- ▶ there was continual encouragement to improve,
- ▶ and learning was based on a child’s observed ability to prevent limiting their ability to learn.

Attungalaaq (2017) shares how important it was for Inuit to conscientiously plan in order to live well and successfully. This was done by interacting with the environment and being given wise instructions (Attungalaaq, 2017). Attungalaaq (2017) uses a story about caribou harvesting and meat preparation to relate them to instructions that fulfilled Inuit laws and teachings. A common theme in

their stories is that they were all taught out of experience (wisdom) and learned through experience (participating in a relationship of doing activities).

Tootoo (2015) says that the lesson from Angalik's story is

---

**“The most important possessions that we own are within us; they are not material things. It is the knowledge and wisdom we actively pass down to our children and to our children's children that are most important to their later success. In order to gain wisdom, we must listen carefully”**

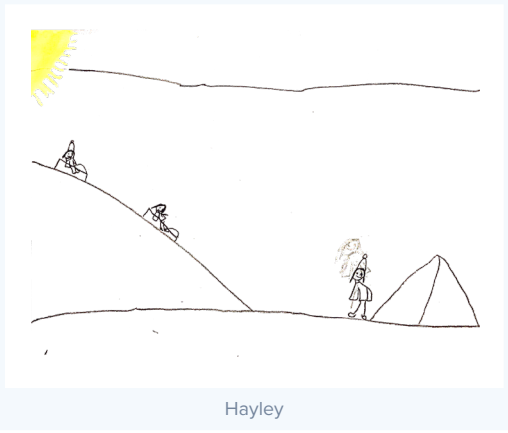
(P. 134).

In order to understand what land-based learning has to offer Inuit children, I gave them space to illustrate their stories, and use their illustrations to tell me what their illustrations are about in order to understand their significance. They used their stories to tell me what is important to them about being on the land.

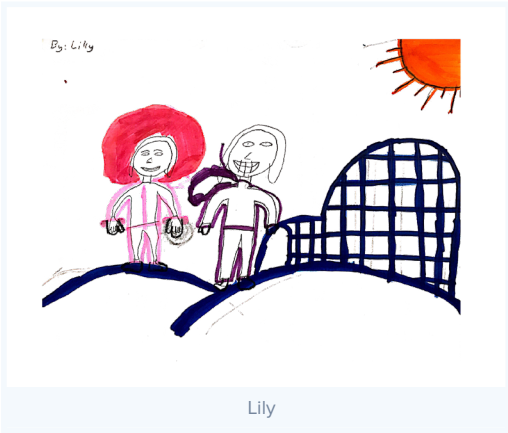
Here are lessons from the children's stories about the land that demonstrate the significance of land-based learning in their lives. Sally tells the story about her and her dad observing geese fly above, discussing the pattern of their flight, and the direction they are flying. Sally's initial experience develops her comprehension about geese and their behaviour. This can be extended to understanding patterns and behaviours of other living things, and also as metaphor about relationships, leadership, and change. The formation of their flight is called Aulajaaqtut, Aulajaaqtut is also the name for the high school curriculum about relationships, Inuit values, and wellness.

Haley, Lily, and Maggie all told stories about playing with their friends and families on the land. They talked about how they went sliding and played. They illustrated what their surroundings were like and described the weather. They also explained a sequence of events that took place, and described how they thought it was fun to be on the land. They got to experience being in a tent or Iglu. Haley, Lily, and Maggie's stories remind us the about the importance of play in building relationships. Through play, they gained a greater understanding of their environment and continued to foster their relationships with people. They used their observational skills to make meaning of what the weather was like on those days. They used their understanding of cycles to identify the seasons and used Inuktitut place names to situate their stories. These interactions they had with nature also relate to Angalik's (2017) teaching about conditioning the attitudes of children before teaching specific skills. For example, “it was important to be conditioned to withstand the cold environment before learning how to hunt” (Angalik, 2017, p. 85).

Positive attitudes about the land and our relationships are important to living a good life. In order to develop positive attitudes, we need to make space for positive experiences. All the participants in the workshop described their stories in a positive way. In particular, Jamiya, Sheridan, and Sydney shared stories about being at their family camps. These three stories include the presence of family, interacting with their surroundings, observing the weather, and enjoying their time. Their stories took place during the summer which happens to be the time of year when children are out of school. The activities they engaged in included physical activity by chasing animals, playing games, and hiking. These three participants described how



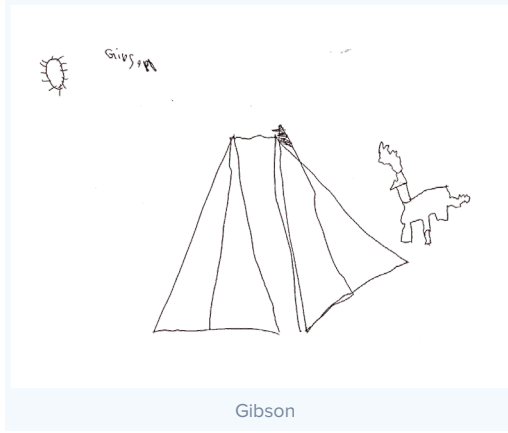
Hayley



Lily



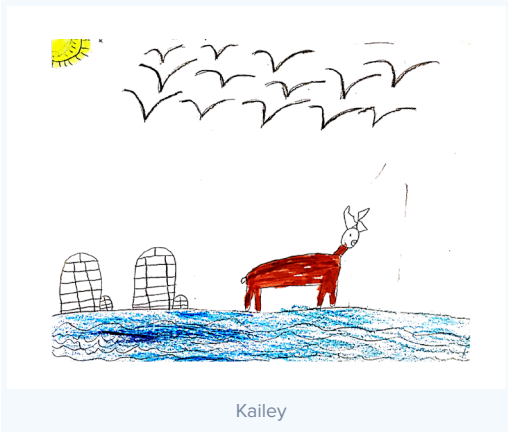
Maggie



Gibson



Kalea



Kailey



peaceful and calm they feel when they are at these places.

Bridget and Rosalinde described the excitement they felt going fishing with their families. They also provided detailed descriptions about the conditions of the ice and fish they caught while they were out on the land. Meanwhile, Kalea, Kailey, and Gibson recalled times when they went caribou hunting with their families and the joy it brought them to participate in the harvest. They recounted the process of catching a caribou and taking it home. The positive experience gave them happy memories about catching tuktu and understanding why it is important to practice.

Similarly, Cameron shared his excitement when he caught a fox outside his mother's tent. The four of them described the weather, the sequence of events when they harvested, and the emotions that they processed living these experiences. All of their experiences allowed them to actively learn on the land. Their mental, physical, social, and spiritual selves were actively engaged in the experience of harvesting for subsistence; they were holistic experiences that involved the land and their families.

Maria and Cassidy told stories about times when they were at summer camps with their mothers. Maria recalled the experience of harvesting berries while her mother was learning to make nipku (caribou dry meat). Her accounts of events were vivid: the elder tending to the fire, her mother preparing meat, then feasting on caribou heads to eat the eyes and brains. This experience allowed her to observe how different tasks are done within a camp and showed her the importance of using everything that is harvested. Cassidy's experience was at a

stage where she was able to begin practicing tasks within a camp. She helped her mother make nipku, cook meat over the fire, and prepare bone marrow to make papquti (caribou bone marrow dip aged in caribou stomach). She talked about how she enjoyed doing those things because it allowed her to spend time with her mother, and brought the family together in a happy place. Their experience on the land from observing to completing tasks work towards these practices become part of their *iliqqusiq*. Kalluak (2017) defines *iliqqusiq* as "the usual pattern of behaviour or being" (p. 41). Engaging in activities on the land allows them to make these healthy habits a part of their lifestyle. Akittiq (2017) reminds us that "if we want to teach our children how to prepare good food and how to share food with others, we need to model this all the time in the way we live our lives. If we are going to carry on Inuit culture, we need to include our children and demonstrate our relationship to the land in healthy, practical, engaging, and holistic ways so that they become a part of their *iliqqusiq*."

The youngest participant, Sebastian emanated a sense of joy and excitement when he told the story about the shoveling he did to clear a path into his *anaanatsiaq's*<sup>6</sup> cabin. He used a lot of energy and worked hard to create a path so that they could access the entrance. When he completed his task, he had a chance to eat lunch, sit, and enjoy the scenery. He was proud that he was able to do something helpful and he relished the time he got to spend outdoors with his family. His excitement and reaction were a clear indication that being on the land, with family, and contributing to the group give a sense of pride, demonstrate purpose, and promote healthy relationships between children, their families and the environment. Equally,

6 Anaanatsiaq is grandmother in Inuktitut.

“

... if we want to teach our children how to prepare good food and how to share food with others, we need to model this all the time in the way we live our lives. If we are going to carry on Inuit culture, we need to include our children and demonstrate our relationship to the land in healthy, practical, engaging, and holistic ways so that they become a part of their *iliqqusiq*”

they develop a foundation in children around *naalangniq*. Akittiq (2017) defines *naalangniq* as the foundation for any child to listen, obey, respect and be accountable.



Sebastian

All of the stories shared by the participants demonstrate IQ principles of *piliriqatigiingniq*, *qanuqtuurniq*, *pijitsirniq*, *pilimmaksarniq*, *inuuqatigiitsiarniq*, and *avatiptingnik kamatsiarniq* in concrete ways. They also reinforce the recommendations from Padney, Manish, and O’Gorman (2016) to prioritize family engagement in education, “increase the number of school trips” (p. 23), and the need for DEA’s to strengthen their work to foster the relationship between schools and families. The following recommendations work towards making these actions possible by changing the current directions to providing land-based education in collaboration with Nunavut schools.

### **CHALLENGE 1: FRAGMENTED FUNDING OPTIONS AS A BARRIER FOR COMMUNITY PROGRAMS**

Within the current funding networks offered by governments, land-based program funding is project-specific, problem specific, short-term, and dispersed by departmental mandates resulting in a fragmented network. Participants in the NCCIE

workshop discussed how funding opportunities usually ask for information about how they are going to treat a problem using their programming, requiring age and gender specific initiatives with short deadlines for proposals and program delivery.

Highlights from this discussion include:

- ▶ Current community programs need to continue their work and have their financial support improved
- ▶ Resources to access land need to be made available and accessible to people who do not have the means to retain them
- ▶ The funding opportunities do not usually encompass all their financial needs such as operational costs and upfront expenses, all equipment and materials; this results in people using their personal equipment, volunteering, limiting participation and creating a situation of have and have nots
- ▶ Land-based programs operate based on the conditions of the environment, and the cycles of seasons, funding options are not considerate of and do not reflect these timelines
- ▶ It is challenging to access funding for program delivery when the expectations of the funder are not in sync with the program delivery timelines
- ▶ A visible and accessible network of community resources can improve collaboration. This came out of the realization that many of the program delivery personal were meeting for the first time, realizing that many of them delivery similar programs
- ▶ Many of them do not receive adequate information about how to access funding or have a network to connect with other programs to in order to be able to collaborate on projects together

# Atuliquajaujuq – **Recommendation 1: Consolidate Funding**

*FUNDING OPTIONS FROM GOVERNMENT  
SHOULD BE CONSOLIDATED INTO ONE SOURCE  
WITH OVERALL GOALS AS CRITERIA RATHER  
THAN TARGETING PROBLEMS.*

More specifically to:

- ▶ Consolidate funds into a single source with processes that reflect the operational requirements of these programs and work in conjunction with schools
- ▶ Revise funding timelines and process to reflect program design
- ▶ Use sponsorship information to network programs to generate collaborative opportunities
- ▶ Use goal-oriented criteria rather than target groups and issues to allow programs to use community statistics, and environmental cycles to determine what programming would benefit their community more effectively and meaningfully

A recent example of this approach is Makigiaqta Inuit Training Corporations [MITC] consolidated funding cycle from 2018, where \$12.6 million was distributed to nine projects (LeTourneau, 2018; MITC, 2018). This allowed for programs to secure multiyear funding. Also, the criteria developed to qualify for funding used priority areas (goals) rather than specific guidelines that target identity, social class, or living conditions, diversifying clientele options. The only specific criteria are that participants must be Nunavut Inuit. Meeting the recommendation above

would fulfill a commitment made by partners of the Inuusivut Anninaqtuq Action Plan (2017) to

“Explore options for consolidating some existing GN community funding programs, simplifying application and reporting processes and improving support for multi-year planning and organizational stability”

(P. 34).

The benefits of a consolidated fund include the ability to create multiyear program plans, create stability in collaborating with schools when designing calendars and collaborative programming, with the ability to meet longer term goals. Longer program plans open up the opportunity to create curricular expectations and participant growth plans. A consolidated fund can improve the flow of resources to communities, as well as improve the relationship between government services, community programs, community members and students.

There are many community-based programs that offer land-based programs. Many of these programs for adults, with very few of them offering programming to children.

Some of these organizations in Nunavut are:

- ▶ Arviat Young Hunters Program
- ▶ Community Wellness Groups
- ▶ Hunters and Trappers Associations
- ▶ Ilisaqsivik
- ▶ Inuit Literacy Initiative – Baker Lake
- ▶ Kivalliq Inuit Association
- ▶ Kivalliq Science Educators Community
- ▶ Nunavut Literacy Council
- ▶ Pirurvik
- ▶ Qikiqtani Inuit Association

These organizations, non-profit or private, have delivered land-based programs in Nunavut communities. Not included in this list are government programs such as Piqqusilirivvik, and projects delivered in communities on a volunteer and ad hoc basis. These existing programs are potential sites to pilot school-community land-based programming that is community specific.

## **CHALLENGE 2: LACK OF INUIT KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE IN EDUCATION STAFF**

As of November 2018, 70% of teachers in Nunavut are non-Inuit<sup>7</sup>, many of whom relocated from the south and do not speak Inuktitut. The majority of the workforce that is expected to fulfill the goals set out for Inuit education neither come from Inuit culture, nor speak Inuktitut, and often have lived experiences which had nothing to do with Inuit and Inuit culture prior to coming to teach in a majority Inuit population. This disproportional representation creates an environment of teachers whom are not ethnically or culturally reflective of the Inuit students. This can create challenges in communicating instruction and ideas, impeding student ability to comprehend what their teachers are teaching (Lewthwaite & McMillan, 2010). However, when what is taught is culturally relevant, applicable to the context of students' lives, they are able to relate to what they are learning and perform better (Lewthwaite & McMillan, 2010). Lewthwaite and McMillan (2010) research shows that Inuit students are more engaged and perform better, meeting educational outcomes more effectively when what they are taught is relevant to where they live, includes people they know, uses their first language, and is related to their life outside of the school.

There has been significant emphasis to address the reflection of teachers in Nunavut schools by providing post-secondary training for Inuit to become teachers through the Nunavut Teacher Education Program (Berger, 2006; Nationtalk, 2019). The program has been operational for 40 years and Nunavut still experiences teacher shortages with a teaching staff that is only 30% Inuit. Many graduates of the program move onto other leadership roles and do not remain in the classroom. This is a cyclical problem where even as new Inuit are added to the teaching staff, many are also retiring or transitioning to leadership roles, leaving a steady gap in Inuit teachers.

Based on my understanding of Inuit values and how Inuit work, when we are faced with a challenge, everyone is responsible for contributing to working it out; everyone has a role to play. Perhaps the current model of focusing entirely on Inuit professional development is not sufficient to change the current circumstance. The problem with focusing on only Inuit, making it an Inuit only problem is that we problematize being an Inuit, rather than effectively capitalizing on adaptations to all aspects of and all those involved in education.

Inuit culture comes from the relationship Inuit have developed with the land, Indigenous cultures are shaped by their relationship to land. It is through these experiences that others will begin to comprehend Inuit culture in a holistic way.

Participants from the NCCIE workshop expressed:

- ▶ How we need to offer more sophisticated learning activities without shying away from difficulty

<sup>7</sup> <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/nunavuts-education-department-suffers-from-a-people-problem/>

- ▶ That Inuit ways of living are holistic and encompass the things in school curricula but with a different worldview, different ways of doing; these need to be honoured and practiced
- ▶ The roles and responsibilities of people, including children need to be practiced in schools in order to reflect an Inuit way of living
- ▶ Educators have to remember that they play an important role in mobilizing these goals

## Atuliqujaujuq – Recommendation 2: **Inuit Pilimmaksainingat Ilinnaqtitsijinik**

*INVESTMENT DOLLARS ALLOCATED FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE STRATEGICALLY INVESTED IN LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL TEACHERS AND DELIVERED BY INUIT THROUGH A VARIETY OF OPTIONS.*

Teachers and education staff have significant funds accessible through their professional development funds. They are able to access these funds to further their education, such as earning a graduate degree in a field relevant to their work. Professional development days are regularly scheduled in the school calendar where teaching staff use working hours to receive training on department planned initiatives such as new curriculum resources on Balanced Literacy, First Aid, Suicide Prevention, etc. Teachers should be immersed meaningfully into Inuit culture so that they can better serve their students to contribute

more meaningfully to meet the goals made for Inuit education. In the first recommendation, some organizations were identified as having cultural training programs.

---

**There is an opportunity here to bridge those relationships so that Inuit programs are also used to bring people into Inuit culture. The benefits of doing so fulfills Inuit values of Inuuqatigiitsiarniq, Piliriqatigiingniq, Tunnganarniq, and Pilimmaksainiq.**

Many organizations, including the Government of Nunavut organize Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit days as a way to immerse people into Inuit culture. These experiences allow for team building, reflection, and growth. The limitation to this approach is that they are often limited to one day excursions, and activities are not recognized in any formal training plans. Formalizing the expectations for cultural immersion is an opportunity to create community-initiated training programs where community members design and plan relevant training, and are compensated equitably. This also applies to the involvement of elders.

If teachers are going to meet these aspirations, we have to create the opportunities for teachers to first comprehend Inuit culture, then begin to practice it so that they can apply it in their practice. The professional development is not intended to exclude Inuit teachers, rather to include all teachers both Inuit and non-Inuit with training specifically delivered by Inuit. Doing so may also be an opportunity for Inuit who may have internalized oppression to begin healing and reclaiming their Inuit identity from unresolved trauma.

From my experience participating in a Piqqusilirivvik course, I know that cultural reclamation activities provide a more effective space for reflection and dialogue about language, culture, and the traumas that ensued after contact. More specifically, the dialogue also happens in Inuktut, with elders, making it a more culturally relevant way to participate in heritage reclamation.

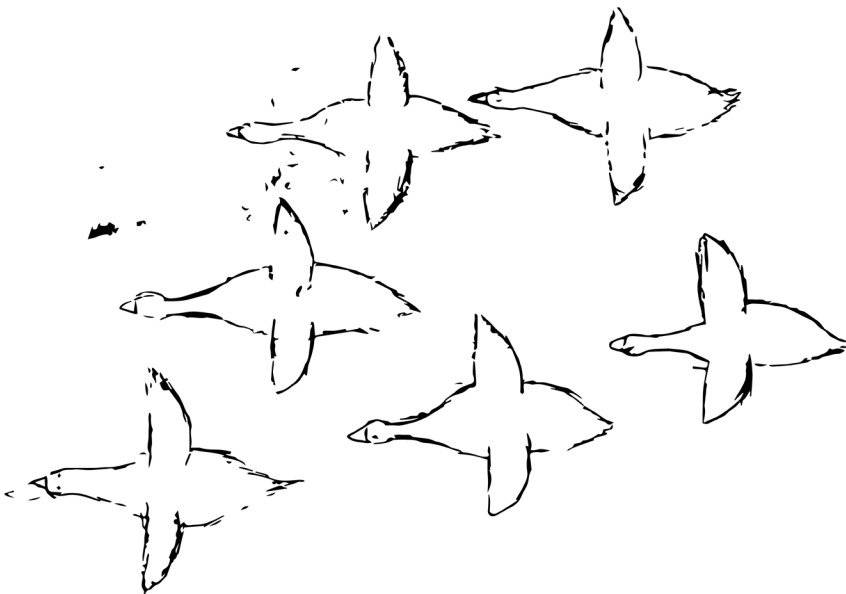
The refocused, goal specific professional development funds should be redirected to land-based, Inuit culture focused learning. Programs from Piqqusilirivvik, Pirurvik, Illitaqsiniq, and the Kivalliq Inuit Association already exist. Their participant intake is currently Inuit specific for the non-profit programs. However, if their intake is diversified to include non-Inuit, people working with Inuit would be in a better position to comprehend and practice Inuit culture. Subsequently, teachers would be able to embed Inuktut, Inuit culture and pedagogy into their practice. This

would also open up the dialogue for planning how schools and communities can collaborate to offer land-based learning during school hours, recognizing what they learn on the land, and providing credit for that learning.

---

**"Providing all teachers with continuous language and cultural professional development would obligate them to go through an enculturation process so that their practice better reflects the language and culture of Inuit students."**

In the NTEP, Inuit Culture Education courses combine hands-on culture-based learning with paper-based learning for academic credits. These already accredited courses can be used as frameworks to begin the process of developing land-based professional development. The



program is also an avenue that can be used to channel accredited programming because of its experience contracting cultural knowledge transfer services throughout multiple Nunavut communities. Additionally, Piqqusilirivvik is an Inuit Cultural School that has the ability to validate courses of this nature. A pilot project through Piqqusilirivvik, NTEP, and another community organization should be conducted to articulate how programming can be delivered to fulfill this recommendation.

### **CHALLENGE 3: LACK OF COMMUNITY AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

In the current education framework, District Education Authorities [DEA] represent communities. They mediate between the education system, schools, and the community; often dealing with school calendars, and hiring community members for relief roles, land-trips, and elder visitors. Additionally, DEAs are mandated to create an Inuuqatigiitsiarniq Policy for schools that sets out how people are expected to behave in schools to fulfill the principles of Inuuqatigiitsiarniq and Piliqatigiingniq (Nunavut Education Act, 2008, S.58, pp. 33-39).

In the proposed revisions to the Nunavut Education Act (2018, BILL 25) many of the roles that DEAs fill are expected to be taken away and transferred to the NDE; citing the limited funding and lack of administrative capacity to fulfill those duties. According to the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities (2018) their role would essentially change from being an oversight body to an advocacy body. DEAs provide a local voice and perspective on school operations. These changes would be working backwards from the GNWT development of DEAs to create locally relevant education because

decisions would be made for schools by people outside of the community. DEAs are intended to provide leadership and oversight for schools to provide locally relevant education (McGregor, 2010). The DEAs also report to regional school boards who were highly involved in curriculum development (McGregor, 2010). Communities seek to have these divisional school boards re-introduced (NTI, 2019). Communities also expressed their interest in having relevant bodies collaborate more effectively while providing better financial support for DEAs (NTI, 2019). Continuing with the proposed amendments creates a centralization of power, making it uncollaborative and uncooperative, contrary to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles.

During the NCCIE workshop, participants expressed that:

- ▶ Learning and living needs to be taken back to the land
- ▶ Inuit language and culture needs to be at the core of all business and learning to reflect the communities in which we live
- ▶ The responsibility of teaching and learning needs to be shared as a community
- ▶ Space and time need to be created for elders and youth to interact in a more organic way that reflects an Inuit way of living
- ▶ Community programs need to be recognized as creditable, non-credit assumes that the knowledge does not count and is not worth knowing. It is worth knowing and it does count. It has applications in both personal and professional fields.



The ability to function on the land both for personal use and professional employment are necessary in Nunavut.

---

Many employment opportunities require wisdom about the land in order to carry out operations in everything from research, harvesting, mining, architecture, shipping, and many more. This knowledge is earned by traveling on the land and interacting with the environment.

Knowledge and experience about the land is what has brought meaningful employment to Inuit like Sam (Tootoo, 2015). Additionally, the QIA (2018) demonstrates that as more people spend time working in the wage economy, away from the land, their ability to harvest country food is disrupted, then the amount of food available goes down, and a cycle that leaves families struggling to meet their needs is perpetuated. The ability for DEAs to bring a voice that promotes land-based learning and creates opportunities to do so with schools is significant. Continuing their oversight role can help promote the goals of local programs like the ones above.

## Atuliquajaujuq – Recommendation 3: Pijitsiqatigiingniq Policy

*PIJITSIQATIGIINGNIQ POLICIES AND MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING SHOULD BE DEVELOPED BETWEEN THE NDE BODIES, DEAS, AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS TO OUTLINE COMMON GOALS, AND STIPULATE HOW THEY WILL COLLABORATE TO DELIVER EDUCATION PROGRAMS AS A STEP TOWARDS RECOGNIZING COMMUNITY LEARNING OPTIONS INCLUDING LAND-BASED LEARNING.*

Pijitsirniq is interpreted as: serving and providing for family and community; -qatigiik interprets as: together; the policy would focus on Piliriqatigiingniq (working together for a common cause) and Aajiiqatigiingniq (decision making through consensus) to keep in line with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles. Doing so would place the obligation on these organizations to work together, and provide more accountability to communities. Creating a policy for working together can be an initial step towards developing a better understanding about local opportunities and generate time and space to discuss how these land-based learning opportunities can be recognized as creditable.

The Office of the Auditor General of Canada's [OAG] Report (2019) identified that "the Department of Education did not have a strategy that outlined actions it and other partners could take to help students graduate and transition from high school to post-secondary education and employment." Creating a policy around how to collaborate with stakeholders, followed by a memorandum of understanding in each community would be a step towards fulfilling

the gap in partnerships. It would also be a step towards fulfilling the Inuit philosophy of Inunnguiniq. Inunnguiniq in Inuit society is a shared responsibility where everyone has a role in a child's development and this needs to be included in education (Akitiq & Karetak, 2015). There is consensus around the fact that partnerships and collaboration are lacking in education, a formal agreement around Pijitsiqatigiingniq can bridge those relationships within communities in an explicit way. They can also be used as models for people to understand the concept of Pijitsirniq. Kalluak (2015) reminds us that:

---

**“we cannot always be there for our children, or for our grandchildren, or for our great grandchildren, so it is very important to teach them the concept of serving (pijitsirniq). This principle will assure them to find ways to get things done” (P. 68).**

Based on the recommendations of the OAG, the NDE agreed to increase hands on learning opportunities related to careers and employment by tasking their Transition Team at Curriculum Services to “engage partners to ensure that academic and experiential learning opportunities are tied to program planning, course selection, and career pathways.” This commitment does not include land-based learning. Land-based learning should be included in the commitment to increase hands-on and experiential learning opportunities. Recognized land-based learning opportunities in formal education is not a new practice. Many universities and colleges recognize this kind of learning within their programs. For example, Actua has done

this in STEM education (Johnson, 2019).

Actua developed an InSTEM program that combines land-based learning, with traditional knowledge, and science and technology for high school credit (Johnson, 2019). It provides a model for how such programming can work. However, relying on programs like Actua to deliver this programming is not the intention behind this policy recommendation. Programs like Actua are offered in Nunavut schools throughout the year where program staff, usually university students, are sent to the north to deliver programs. The issue with relying on programs from the south is that the funds these local programs need are redirected to organizations like Actua in the south. Delivering local programs with local people allows students to reflect on people they live with, it allows people to model Pijitsirniq as a community. Also, keeping funds for northern programs in the north generates a diversity of employment opportunities, it also promotes land-based lifestyles that are essential to Inuit identity and autonomy.

Many non-credited programs are offered to adult Inuit, often as a reaction to colonization and cultural attrition. However, those programs are non-existent for children. Land-based learning is done ad hoc to school calendars during the school year. The creation of land-based programs for children would redirect the focus on cultural resistance and maintenance, and gap prevention, rather than a reaction to cultural genocide. These programs need a way to be included meaningfully in school calendars so that they may be regarded as mainstream curricula and not extracurricular activities. This requires responsible authorities to work together to determine what that looks like in their communities.

#### **CHALLENGE 4: INCORPORATING THE ABOVE POLICY CHANGES INTO THE EXISTING EDUCATION SYSTEM**

In the current Nunavut school model, each community develops a ten-month long school community calendar. The educational outcomes come from national standards, often with northern adaptations. School breaks usually occur during civic holidays. Each school usually has a start and end time calculated using the recommended number of teaching hours for various subjects, plus consideration for extra-curricular activities. Most of the time spent in schools is dedicated to instructional time that teachers are expected to account for in their planning; clearly and comprehensively outlining what they will teach, when they will teach it, how they will teach it, and how they will evaluate student achievement. The system itself currently has very little room for accommodations beyond the existing program to add activities such as land-based learning.

Participants in the NCCIE (2019) workshop highlighted that:

- ▶ We need to respect Inuit diversity amongst ourselves
- ▶ Policies need to reflect an Inuit way of life, even in the workforce and public service
- ▶ Space and time need to be created for elders and youth to interact in a more organic way that reflects an Inuit way of living
- ▶ The recommendations above have to be reflected in schools

These recommendations recognize that Inuit live differently throughout Inuit Nunangat, usually in ways that are influenced by the conditions and patterns of the environment. If Inuit diversity and ways of living are to be recognized within a school's educational program, there needs to be space and time for diversity in curriculum and planning.

The challenge behind developing diverse land-based educational programs with schools lies within the direction the NDE has taken. The NDE has launched many initiatives in schools in terms of standardizing the education program for math, English and Inuktitut literacy. These initiatives are creating "mainstream" education for Nunavut as a way to create consistency and use standardized evaluation practices as a way to monitor student achievement and control the quality of the education program. These changes make little to no space for community specific educational planning and restrict parental decision making responsibility around their child's education.

# Atuliqujaujuq – Recommendation 4: Flexible Education Policy

---

“Balance can only be maintained if one’s life is flexible”

(ANGALIK, 2017)

*THE NDE NEEDS A FLEXIBLE EDUCATION POLICY TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO THE EDUCATION PROGRAM AND TO INCREASE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING OF THE EDUCATION PROGRAM.*

If the policy recommendations above are to be piloted and implemented effectively, access to the education program needs to be more flexible, accessible, and open to community goals and student lives. In order to create clear and transparent mechanisms for people such as families to get involved in planning student education plans, people need to understand how to access the NDE, how to get involved, and understand the options available to balance their lives while meeting their educational goals. A flexible education policy would clearly outline the paths that students can take to complete their education, define the role the education system plays in accreditation, and opens the door to community involvement in education program delivery. Doing so puts the authority of a child’s education back into the hands of families.

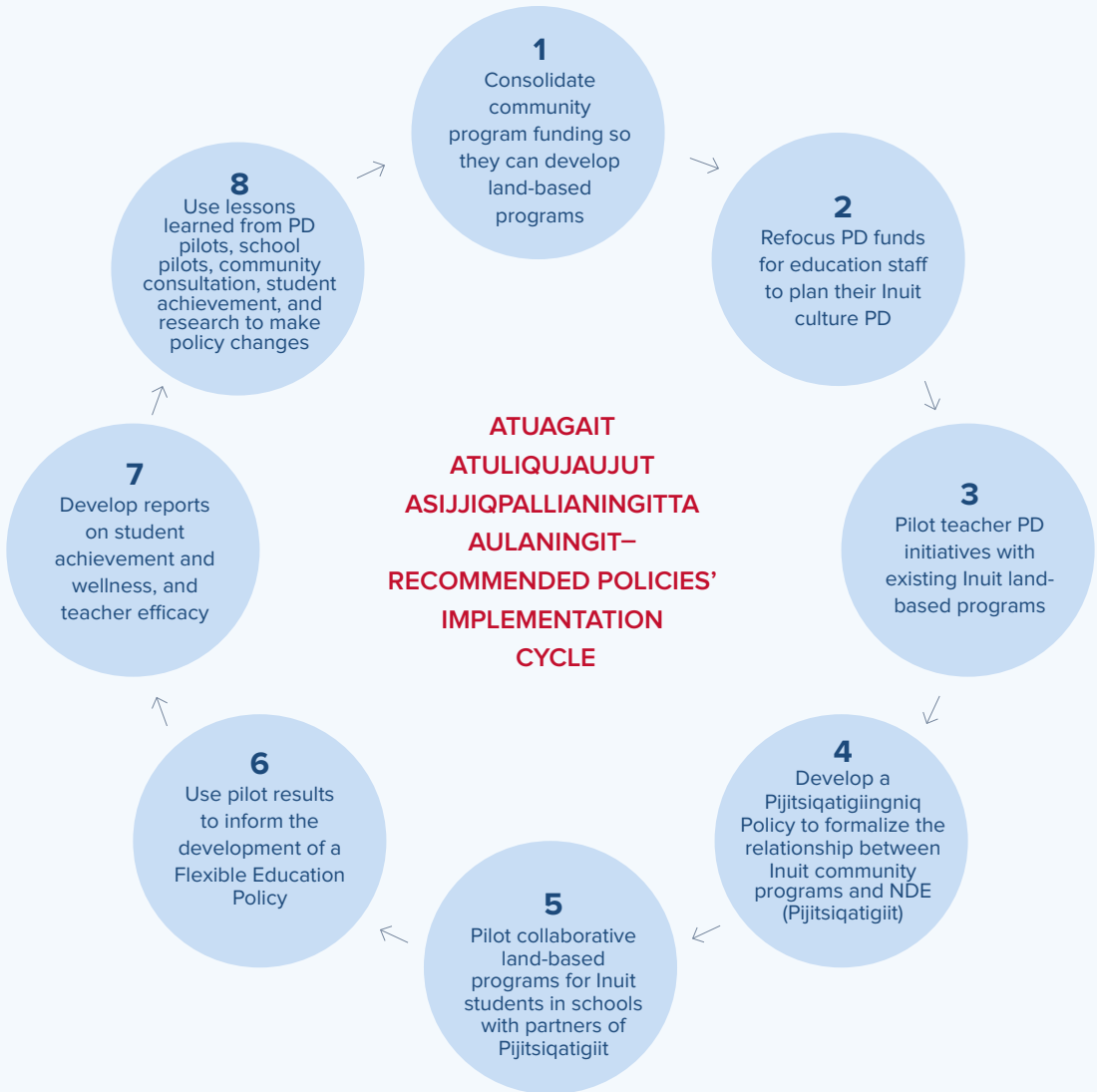
Families regaining control over the education of their children is paramount in all of the policy changes because “parents were set aside when

they were moved into communities and the role of parents was replaced by institutions like the school” (Karetak, 2017, p. 202). Equally, Pandey et. al (2016) argue that parental involvement and support is a primary determinant for Inuit student achievement and completion. A flexible education policy allows Inuit families to practice their culture such as living off the land, and plan their formal education goals in partnership with their local schools.

In other jurisdictions, flexible education options have been used to improve student achievement by allowing students to learn at their own pace (Whiteman, 2018); create flexibility options around time, access and entry requirements, instructional approach/design, and delivery options (Palmer, 2011); and to increase access to education and making it more inclusive (Ryerson University, n.d.); to place learners at the centre of the education program because they recognize the “benefits for students when they have a say in what they learn, how they learn, and what help they need (Education Review Office, 2018, p. 11). The Education Review Office (2018) in New Zealand found that “by sharing the power and responsibility for learning, teachers set their students on a path to fulfilling the vision we have for them” (p. 11); allowing teachers to make pedagogical changes using flexible learning spaces that meets students’ strengths and needs (Education Review Office, 2018). The Pathways to Education Program (Government of Canada, 2019) states that “a key component of the success... is the flexibility to adapt to local needs and conditions.”

Nunavut currently has guidelines and procedures to accredit locally developed courses that require Ministerial approval to be recognized (NDE, n.d). However, this approach is hegemonic and places administrative burden on the Minister if it were to be used more readily and frequently by communities.

## POTENTIAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE



Two summers ago my mom and I were making nipku at our tent. We also made uujug. It was a hot and sunny day so there were lots of bugs near the tuktu.



---

Kassidy

---

The NDE already has a Curriculum Services division that actively reviews educational resources and develops educational resources in collaboration with Nunavummiut. If the role of Curriculum Services is expanded to accredit local programs using a flexible education policy, Inuit may be more inclined to contribute to collaborating with NDE in creating accredited land-based programs.

The existing land-based programs in Nunavut, in collaboration with local families and schools can pilot flexible education options to help articulate:

what should go into such a policy, who should be involved in creating this policy, and determine how they will work together to deliver the program options. Fulfilling this recommendation would also meet the recommendation from the Nunavut Inuit Labour Force Analysis Report - executive summary [NILFA] (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018) to "offer flexible and supported high school completion programs" (p. 27). Although there are external institutions that currently use flexible education policies, it is important that Nunavummiut have one that allows Inuit to live an Inuit way of life and improves access to land.

## CONCLUSION

The policy recommendations above are directed primarily to the Government of Nunavut because “those who are in positions of power in our government are there because they are experts at the Qallunaat way. They need to decolonize themselves in order to really serve Nunavut in an IQ way that is effective for the people.” (Karetak, 2017, p. 201). Too often, student lives, family dynamics, and social conditions are problematized as barriers to student success.

There is a need to interrogate the system of education in order to change the current, decolonize, and Indigenize the system. Changing the discourse in Inuit education where Inuit culture is central to those changes is necessary to foster the identity of Inuit students, promote their culture, and recognize it in valid and meaningful ways so that Inuit students can ground themselves in their culture, their heritage, their language, and ways of living.

Dragon Smith (2020) discusses the need for ethical spaces and how ethical spaces can be created using land-based camps. For Inuit, being on the land can be the ethical space between Inuit communities and the education system, with Inuit children at the centre of that space so that new equitable learning opportunities are created. New opportunities can manifest as new curriculum, new outcomes, new understandings about teaching and learning, new ways of working together. Existing programs such as Nuna School<sup>8</sup> at Apex’s Nanook School and Arviat’s

Young Hunters Program<sup>9</sup> have demonstrated that land-based learning can be meaningfully incorporated into the school program. In order for successes like those observed from these programs to grow and expand into other grades, other schools, other communities, we need to make policy changes that allow them to be implemented meaningfully. In order for land-based programs to be implemented:

- ▶ community programs require sufficient and consistent funding,
- ▶ teachers need to have the ability to plan for land-based learning in the education program and be able to assess it to account for it in student achievement,
- ▶ community programs and the NDE need to work together to develop community specific curricula,
- ▶ and Inuit need to understand how they can use a community education network to meet their educational goals.

DEA’s are positioned to mediate between community programs and the NDE, they are also well positioned to be the window for Inuit to access flexible education options. Pottle (National Geographic, 2018) argues that “Inuit were born to be outside” and “our culture has to be practiced in order to be strong.” The policy recommendations aim to change current systematic processes in Nunavut education as a way to improve community involvement, student engagement, and recognize the significance of land to Inuit culture.

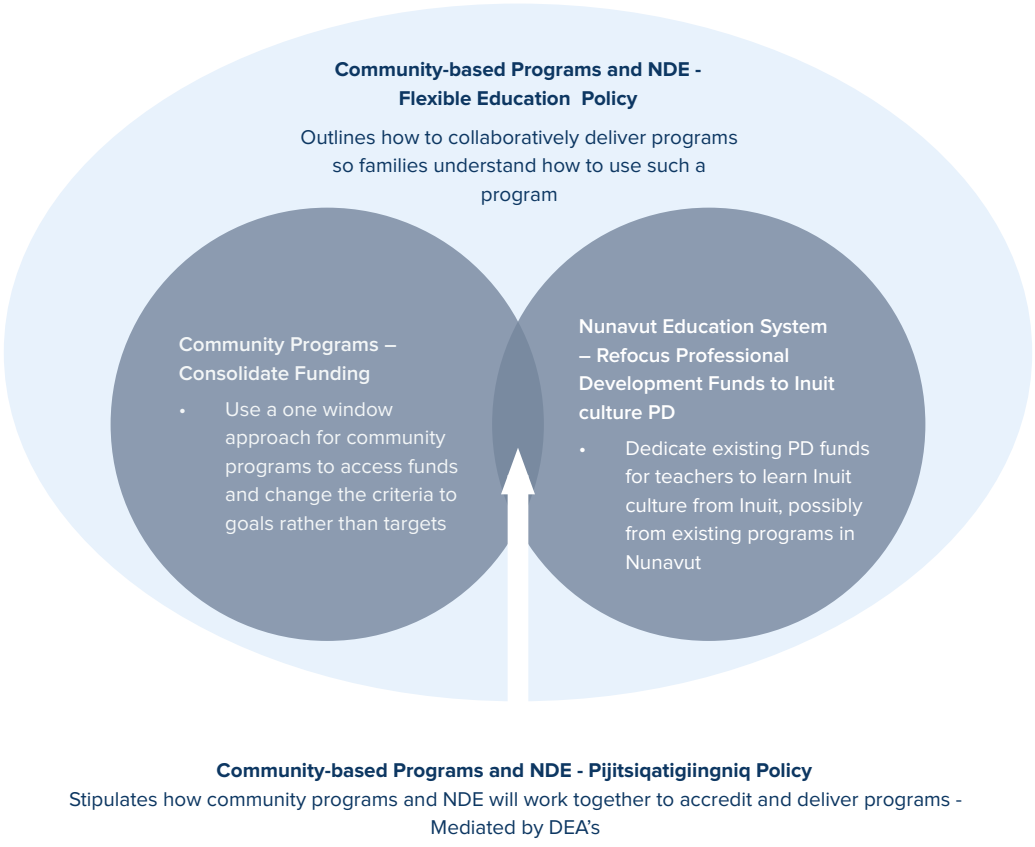
8 <https://www.facebook.com/nunaschool/>

9 <https://www.aqqiumavvik.com/young-hunters-program>

The recommendations aim to be strategic in redirecting existing resources and promoting more meaningful and effective relationships between Inuit students and their families, community land-based programs, and the Nunavut education system.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, implementing these recommendations would meet the recommendations of the NILFA (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018) to "provide Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit learning opportunities" and "integrate Inuit identity and local knowledge into essential skills training" (p. 26).

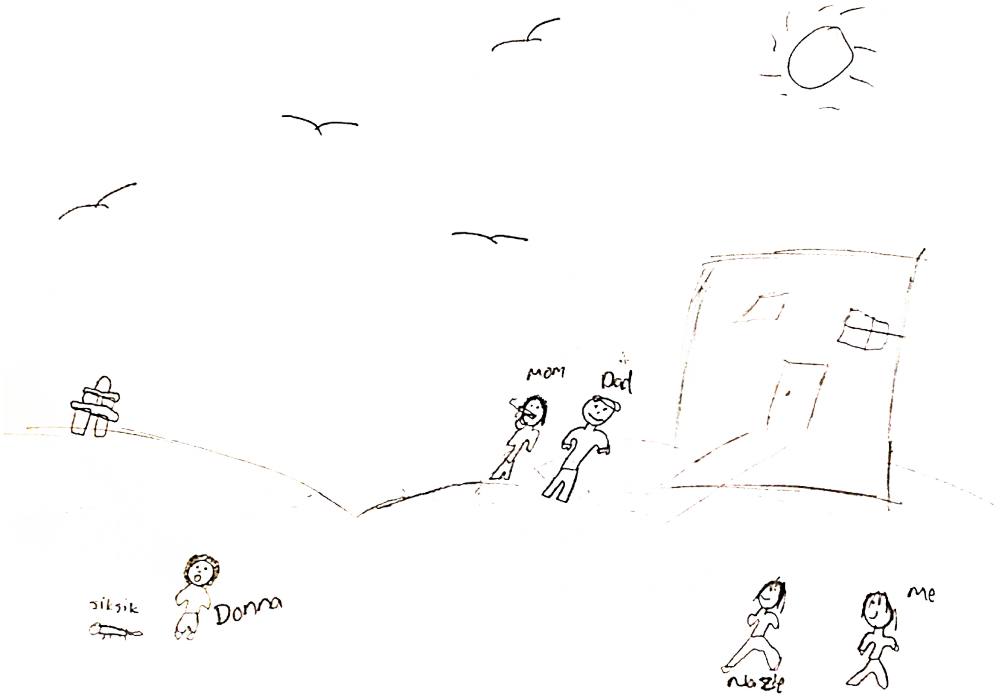
The illustration below shows where each of the policy changes fits within a community education framework. These policy changes are significant to the education of Inuit children because the land connects them to where they are, to who they are, and to where they come from; as their stories demonstrate, the land keeps them connected to their families. Let us work together to redefine the concept of earning an education to something that is achieved beyond the boundaries of a school, let us actively practice Inuit culture to prevent cultural genocide, and let us give our children the opportunity to become *inummarit*.

**NUNAVUT COMMUNITY EDUCATION FRAMEWORK**



10 In Inuuqatigiit, Inuit envisioned curriculum for Inuit students to be student-centered, for the whole child, culture-based, involve parents and elder, include Inuit history, ensure inservicing of partners in Inuuqatigiit, and be process oriented. The foundation of the document rests in the concept of the circle of belonging which are the relationships to the environment and relationships to people, the cycle of seasons (environmental processes), and the cycle of life (the past, present, and future).





---

Jamiya

---



---

Rosalinde

---

## REFERENCE LIST

- Akittiq, A. (2017). The role of family. In Karetak, J., Tester, F. J., & Tagalik, S. (Eds.), *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: What Inuit have always known to be true* (pp. 61-68). Fernwood Publishing.
- Akittiq, A. & Karetak, R. (2017). Inunnguiniq (Making a human being). In Karetak, J., Tester, F. J., & Tagalik, S. (Eds.), *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: What Inuit have always known to be true* (pp. 112-146). Fernwood Publishing.
- Angalik, L. (2017). We Inuit call our children Qiturngat. In Karetak, J., Tester, F. J., & Tagalik, S. (Eds.), *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: What Inuit have always known to be true* (pp. 83-88). Fernwood Publishing.
- Angutinngurniq, J. (2017). Hunting, fishing, and laws of the land. In Karetak, J., Tester, F. J., & Tagalik, S. (Eds.), *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: What Inuit have always known to be true* (pp. 69-82). Fernwood Publishing.
- Attangalaaq, N. (2017). Conscientious planning. In Karetak, J., Tester, F. J., & Tagalik, S. (Eds.), *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: What Inuit have always known to be true* (pp. 102-106). Fernwood Publishing.
- Battiste, M. (2005). Indigenous knowledge: Foundations for First Nations. *WINHEC: International Journal of Indigenous Education Scholarship*, (1), 1-17.
- Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit*. UBC press.
- Bell, N., & Brant, T. (2015). *Culturally relevant Aboriginal education*. Toronto, ON: Pearson.
- Berger, P. (2009). Eurocentric roadblocks to school change in Nunavut. *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 33(1-2), 55-76.
- Berger, T. R. (2006). Conciliator's final report: "The Nunavut project." *March*, 1, 1.
- Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities (2018, September 4). Our goals for education (*handout with commentary and questions to Nunavut Department of Education announcement*). Unpublished.
- Crowe, K. J. (1991). *A history of the original peoples of northern Canada*. McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP.
- Dragon Smith, C. (2020). *Creating ethical spaces: Opportunities to connect with land for life and learning in the NWT*. Toronto, ON: The Gordon Foundation.

- Education Review Office. (2018). *Leading Innovative Learning in New Zealand Schools*. New Zealand Government. Retrieved from <https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/mental-health-wellbeing/Documents/Flex-Learning-Res-Full.pdf>
- Employment and Social Development Canada. (2018). *Nunavut Inuit Labour Force Analysis Report - executive summary*. CANADA: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/research/nunavut-inuit-labour-force-analysis-summary.html>
- Government of Canada. (2019, July 30). Evaluation of Pathways to Education, final report. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/evaluations/pathways-education-report.html>
- Government of Nunavut. (1999). *The Bathurst Mandate. That Which We've Set Out to Do. Pinasuaqtavut. Our Hopes and Plans for Nunavut*. Iqaluit, NU: Government of Nunavut.
- Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and Embrace Life Council. (2010). Nunavut Suicide Prevention Strategy. Retrieved from <http://www.tunngavik.com/files/2010/10/2010-10-26-nunavut-suicide-prevention-strategy-english1.pdf>
- Government of Northwest Territories. (1996). Inuuqatigiit: The curriculum from the Inuit perspective.
- Greenwald, B. (2010). Experimental Eskimos.
- Inuit Language Protection Act, SNU 2008, c 17. Retrieved January 1, 2020 from <http://canlii.ca/t/535vk>
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, (2011). *First Canadians, Canadians first: National strategy on Inuit education 2011. Prepared for the National Committee on Inuit Education*. Ottawa, ON: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.
- Johnson, R. (2019, April 6). On-the-land STEM program for high school credit to expand to northern Indigenous communities Social Sharing. CBC News Indigenous. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/actua-instem-program-north-1.5085196>
- Kalluak, M. (2017). About Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit. In Karetak, J., Tester, F. J., & Tagalik, S. (Eds.), *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: What Inuit have always known to be true* (pp. 41-60). Fernwood Publishing.
- Karetak, J., Tester, F. J., & Tagalik, S. (Eds.). (2017). *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: What Inuit have always known to be true*. Fernwood Publishing.

- Karetak, R.A. (2017). Healing unresolved issues. In Karetak, J., Tester, F. J., & Tagalik, S. (Eds.), *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: What Inuit have always known to be true* (pp. 182-207). Fernwood Publishing.
- Kublu, A., Laugrand, F., & Oosten, J. (1999). In Nakasuk, S., Paniaq, H., Ootoova, E., & Angmaalik, P. (1999). *Interviewing Inuit Elders Volume 1: Introduction*, (pp. 1-12). Iqaluit, NU: Nunavut Arctic College.
- Kusugak, J.A. (2012). On the side of the angels. In Rogers, S., DeGagné, M., Dewar, J., & Lowry, G. (Eds.), *"Speaking My Truth": Reflections on Reconciliation & Residential School*, (pp. 109-128). Aboriginal Healing Foundation.
- Legacy of Hope Foundtion (2013). *We were so far away*. Retrieved from: <https://weweresofaraway.ca/>
- LeTourneau, M. (2018, June 18). Makigiaqta funds nine Inuit training projects. *Nunavut News*. Retrieved from <https://nunavutnews.com/nunavut-news/makigiaqta-funds-nine-inuit-training-projects/>
- Lewthwaite, B., & McMillan, B. (2010). "She Can Bother Me, and That's Because She Cares": What Inuit Students Say About Teaching and Their Learning. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 33(1), 140-175.
- Makigiaqta Inuit Training Corporation. (2018, June 12). Makigiaqta Media Release. Retrieved from <https://www.makigiaqta.com/news/makigiaqta-media-release/>
- McGregor, H. E. (2010). *Inuit education and schools in the eastern Arctic*. UBC Press.
- Nasby, J. (2002). *Irene Avaalaaqiaq: Myth and Reality*. McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP.
- National Geographic (Producer). (2018, July 22). Keeping the Inuit Way of Life Alive in a Changing World | Short Film Showcase [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYMEoFOZavs>
- Nationtalk, (2019, September 10). Re-focused Nunavut Teacher Education Program to strengthen Inuit language and culture in schools. *NationTalk: powered by you*. Retrieved from: <http://nationtalk.ca/story/re-focused-nunavut-teacher-education-program-to-strengthen-inuit-language-and-culture-in-schools>
- Nunavut Department of Education. (n.d). Curriculum and Learning Resources. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.nu.ca/education/information/curriculum-learning-resources-0>
- Nunavut Department of Education, (2007). *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: Education framework for Nunavut curriculum*. Iqaluit, NU: Nunavut Department of Education, Curriculum and School Services Division.

- Nunavut Department of Education, (2008a). *Ilitaunnikkuliriniq: foundation for dynamic assessment as learning in Nunavut schools*. Iqaluit, NU: Nunavut Department of Education, Curriculum and School Services Division.
- Nunavut Department of Education, (2008b). *Inuglugjaittuq: foundation for inclusive education in Nunavut schools*. Iqaluit, NU: Nunavut Department of Education, Curriculum and School Services Division.
- Nunavut Department of Education. (2014). *DEA/CSFN Orientation and Training Manual*. Iqaluit, NU: Department of Education, Government of Nunavut. Retrieved from [https://www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/dea\\_manual\\_eng\\_final.pdf](https://www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/dea_manual_eng_final.pdf)
- Nunavut Department of Education, (2016). *Annual Report 2015-2016: Department of Education*. Iqaluit, NU: Government of Nunavut, Department of Education. Retrieved from: [https://www.assembly.nu.ca/sites/default/files/TD-17-5\(1\)-EN-2015-2016-Annual-Reports-of-the-Department-of-Education.pdf](https://www.assembly.nu.ca/sites/default/files/TD-17-5(1)-EN-2015-2016-Annual-Reports-of-the-Department-of-Education.pdf)
- Nunavut Education Act, SNu 2008, c 15 | Education Act. Retrieved February 14, 2020 from <http://canlii.ca/t/5260>
- Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated. (2019, June 5). Bill 25 Education Act Amendments Disappoint Again. Retrieved from <https://www.tunngavik.com/news/bill-25-education-act-amendments-disappoint-again/>
- Office of the Auditor General of Canada. (2019). *Support for High School Students and Adult Learners: 2019 June Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut*. CANADA: Office of the Auditor General of Canada. Retrieved from [https://www1.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/nun\\_201906\\_e\\_43388.html?wbdisable=true](https://www1.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/nun_201906_e_43388.html?wbdisable=true)
- Palmer, S. (2011). The lived experience of flexible education: Theory, policy and practice. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 8(3), 1-16.
- Pandey, Manish & O'Gorman, Melanie. (2016). Cultivating the Arctic's Most Valuable Resource: An Analysis of the Barriers to High School Completion Among Youth in Nunavut. 10.13140/RG.2.1.3726.8083.
- Putulik, M. (2015). Chapter 5: Piniagsarniq. In Walton, F., & O'Leary, D. (Eds.), *Sivumut—Towards the Future Together: Inuit Women Educational Leaders in Nunavut and Nunavik*, (pp.71-88). Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Obed, D. (2017). Illiniavugut Nunami: learning from the land: envisioning an Inuit-centered educational future.

Redvers, J. M. (2016). Land-based Practice for Indigenous Health and Wellness in Yukon, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Calgary, Calgary, AB. doi:10.11575/PRISM/26717

Ryerson University. (n.d). Flexible Learning Resource. Retrieved from <https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/mental-health-wellbeing/Documents/Flex-Learning-Res-Full.pdf>

Skutnabb-Kangas, T., Phillipson, R., & Dunbar, R. (2019). Is Nunavut Education Criminally Inadequate?: An Analysis of Current Policies for Inuktitut and English in Education, International and National Law, Linguistic and Cultural Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity.

Tootoo, B. (2015). Chapter 8: Strengthening Young Inuit Male Identity. In Walton, F., & O'Leary, D. (Eds.). (2015). *Sivumut—Towards the Future Together: Inuit Women Educational Leaders in Nunavut and Nunavik*, (pp.121-140). Canadian Scholars' Press.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Canada's Residential Schools: The Inuit and Northern Experience*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Uluadluak, D. (2017). Pamiqsainirmik (training children). In Karetak, J., Tester, F. J., & Tagalik, S. (Eds.), *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: what Inuit have always known to be true* (pp. 147-173). Fernwood Publishing.

Walton, F., & O'Leary, D. (Eds.). (2015). *Sivumut—Towards the Future Together: Inuit Women Educational Leaders in Nunavut and Nunavik*. Canadian Scholars' Press.

**Nunami Ilinniarniq: Inuit Community  
Control of Education through Land-based  
Education**



The contents of this publication are entirely the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the view or opinions of The Gordon Foundation.

This publication is available under limited copyright protection. You may download, distribute, photocopy, cite or excerpt this document provided it is properly and fully credited and not used for commercial purposes.

## CONTACT

The Gordon Foundation  
11 Church Street, Suite 400  
Toronto, ON M5E 1W1

416-601-4776  
info@gordonfn.org  
gordonfoundation.ca

 @TheGordonFdn  
 @GlasscoFellows

