

# Pijunnanivunnut

## Fulfilling our potential

# Joseph Flowers

*Jane Glassco Arctic Fellow*



**PIJUNNANIVUNNUT:  
FULFILLING OUR POTENTIAL**

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The Jane Glassco Arctic Fellowship Program is aimed at young Northerners, especially Aboriginal Northerners, aged 25-35, who want to build a strong North guided by Northerners. It is for those who, at this stage in their lives, are looking for additional support, networks and guidance from mentors and peers across the North and throughout Canada as they deepen their understanding of important issues facing their region and develop policy ideas to help address them. The program was named in honour of Jane L. Glassco, Gordon Foundation trustee and daughter of founders Walter and Elizabeth Gordon. It was through Jane's direct leadership that the Foundation became deeply interested in Northern and Arctic issues, and in supporting young Northerners.

# Pijunnaniyunnut:

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### Joseph Flowers

*Jane Glassco Arctic Fellow*

*Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation*



Joseph is an Inuk-Anglo Canadian who calls three places home: Labrador, Nunavik, and Montreal. He was born and raised in the military town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador. In 1996, Joseph moved to Kuujuaq, Nunavik with his family where he finished his high school education. Upon graduation, he participated in the Canada World Youth program, during which time he worked on a dairy farm in Drayton Valley, Alberta, and in a primary school in Dolores, Soriano, Uruguay.

Joseph moved to Montreal to study at John Abbott College, and he has lived in the South ever since. After college, he undertook culinary studies at l'Institut de Tourisme et d'Hôtellerie du Québec. Following a six-year career as a professional cook in some of the city's top restaurants, he decided to continue higher education and earned a degree in linguistics and philosophy from McGill University.

Joseph is proud to say that he will be the first Inuk from Nunavik to graduate from law school in December 2011. Currently, he is working toward a dual law degree from McGill University's trans-systemic B.C.L./LL.B. program. Joseph has sat on the Board of Directors of the Indigenous Bar Association as a student representative since 2010 and his mandate ends in 2012.

#### *Fellowship Focus*

Given his experience in post-secondary education "down south," Joseph has examined post-secondary sponsorship and support policies for Nunavimmiut. He undertook a qualitative study, examining the experience of post-secondary students who move south to study. Joseph is very grateful for the Gordon foundation's support for his project. It has profoundly affected the way he understands civic responsibility and policy development in the North.

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Thank you to my family who always pushed me to do my best in my education and everything I do. And most of all, thank you to my wife, Jayne, who encourages, reassures, praises, criticizes, inspires, and loves me every day.



*"Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated, thus, everyone's task is unique as his specific opportunity to implement it."*

*Viktor E. Frankl  
Man's Search for Meaning*

# 1. Our Vision: Educated, Strong, Independent Inuit

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In December of 2011, I became the first Inuk from Nunavik to graduate from law school. I have completed several post-secondary programs including a social sciences program at the college level, a professional cooking program, a Bachelor of Arts degree, and a Bachelor of Law degree. I have achieved this with the help of the Kativik School Board (KSB), an Inuit-run school board which supports and guides students through post-secondary studies. I am proud of my achievements and I envision many more Inuit graduates from post-secondary programs.

This vision is not one only held by Nunavimmiut. Jean Malaurie, a French ethnographer and friend of the Honourable Senator Charlie Watt from Kuujuaq, has said that “the urgent task facing the North is to forge an intelligentsia who understand the high economic and geostrategic stakes of the Arctic.”<sup>1</sup> The most important part of accomplishing this goal is to ensure that we encourage our youth to gain higher education. As it stands, the only way this is possible is by sending our students to study in the South. We have to do everything we can to ensure we help students achieve academic success.

Though we have a generous and comprehensive support program available for post-secondary education, Nunavik still has students who begin their post-secondary studies saying, “I remember being on the plane, first day that I went moved to Montreal, I remember being on the plane with my classmates and looking at everyone and saying, ‘Where the hell am I going, what am I doing? I have no idea. Haven’t got a clue, I don’t know who anyone really is, I don’t know, the school is huge, how am I ever going to navigate it?’ It was all just kind of a big question mark, coming down into it.”<sup>2</sup> These words are strikingly similar to those of one Labrador residential school survivor, who said, “What a sickening feeling, I remember. Hearing the plane taking off... seeing home behind me. That was it, not a thing you could do. Get through it, just got to get through it.”<sup>3</sup> The objectives of the residential schools and KSB’s support program are very different, but the feelings of some students who travel south for their studies remain the same.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Malaurie, *Hummocks: Journeys and Inquiries Among the Canadian Inuit* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), xi.

<sup>2</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.

<sup>3</sup> Shirley Flowers in *The Courage to Remember*, DVD (Nain: Nunatsiavut Government/Anorae Productions, 2009).



## 2. Background: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada

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Aboriginal<sup>4</sup> attainment of post-secondary education lags behind that of non-Aboriginal Canadians. A recent study found that 23 per cent of non-Aboriginal Canadians hold a university degree, diploma, or degree, compared to only 8.6 per cent for Aboriginal Canadians – a gap of 14.4 per cent.<sup>5</sup> Thus, increasing Aboriginal post-secondary education is a high priority for governments, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal institutions, and for Aboriginal people individually and collectively.

Much of the research concerning Aboriginal post-secondary attainment, and the policies and programs that help Aboriginals in their studies focuses on First Nations' experience.<sup>6</sup> A House of Commons Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development focused on Aboriginal post-secondary education in their report *No Higher Priority: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada*.<sup>7</sup> The title indicates the urgency of improving Aboriginal post-secondary educational attainment. The standing committee's concern that "inadequate funding under the PSSSP presents a critical and ongoing obstacle that hinders significant numbers of First Nations learners from taking advantage of post-secondary opportunities"<sup>8</sup> is echoed by a 2010 Assembly of First Nations report.<sup>9</sup> The effects of improving educational attainment for Aboriginal Canadians are significant. In key measures of socio-economic stability, self-sufficiency, and security, the Center for the Study of Living Standards has noted that:

*"Even if there is no fundamental improvement in labour market outcomes for the Aboriginal population, the demography means that they will account for a disproportionately large share of Canada's future employment and labour force growth. Yet, it also suggests that if actions are taken to raise their participation and employment rates, the benefits to the Canadian economy could be considerable, with the contribution of Aboriginal Canadians to labour force and employment growth almost doubling."*<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "Aboriginal" refers to Canada's Indigenous peoples: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Sharpe, Jean-Francois Arsenault, Simon Lapointe and Fraser Cowan, Centre for the Study of Living Standards, "The Effect of Increasing Aboriginal Educational Attainment on the Labour Force, Output and the Fiscal Balance" (2009), 13 <http://www.csls.ca/reports/csls2009-3.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example a thorough examination of the post-secondary studies sponsorship programs delivered through Indian and Northern Affairs of Canada in: Alex Usher, The Educational Policy Institute, "The Post-Secondary Student Support Program: An Examination of Alternative Delivery Mechanisms" (2009), <http://www.educationalpolicy.org/publications/pubpdf/INAC.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Canada, House of Assembly, Stranding Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development "No Higher Priority: Post-Secondary Education in Canada" (February 2007), 13 <http://www.turtleisland.org/education/abed07.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid at 13.

<sup>9</sup> Assembly of First Nations "Taking Action for First Nations Post-Secondary Education: Access, Opportunity, and Outcomes Discussion Paper" (2010), <http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/pse-dp.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Supra note 5, 33.

However, it is important to note that post-secondary education not only increases one's chances of gaining economic self-sufficiency, it also significantly promotes a sense of accomplishment, intellectual capacity, confidence, and leadership.

Due to legal, administrative, geographic, cultural, economic, social, and linguistic differences, the experience of Inuit is very different from that of First Nations and Métis. Research on Inuit post-secondary education is sparse. The national Inuit organization Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) acknowledged this lacuna in the research when it said in its 2011 report that:

*"Less clear is what paths Inuit are taking to post-secondary education, how Inuit are doing in these programs, what programs are most successful, and where gaps exist. Very little published research exists on the Inuit post-secondary experience as a whole relative to the Canadian experience. There is also little published evidence on the reasons Inuit students drop out from post-secondary studies. All these factors need to be examined."*<sup>11</sup>

In a footnote, ITK notes that one of the few statistics available for Inuit post-secondary education is that "only 3 per cent of Inuit men and 5 per cent of Inuit women hold a University degree."<sup>12</sup> With these research gaps in mind, ITK recommends that researchers "identify and remove barriers to post-secondary education and adult training."<sup>13</sup>

Interestingly, the Assembly of First Nations has proposed that students who wish to attend post-secondary studies receive "support that includes, but is not limited to, social counselling, housing, daycare, stipends, academic supports, tutoring, etc."<sup>14</sup> Could the lack of these services be significant barriers to post-secondary educational attainment? To answer this question, it is worth investigating a situation where students have access to everything that the AFN wants for its students.

In its mission statement, KSB says it aims to provide basic education which will enable students, among other things, to "evaluate their own endeavours, and continually strive for improvement" and to "demonstrate initiative, leadership, flexibility, and perseverance" and also to "pursue life-long learning."<sup>15</sup> Demonstrating these ideals, many students wish to seek post-secondary education with KSB's guidance and support.

KSB recognizes the context from which students approach post-secondary studies in the preamble of its Sponsorship Policy: "Inuit beneficiaries represent a large number of KSB students whose historical and present level of formal education require special assistance in order to be able to attain a level of formal

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<sup>11</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *First Canadians, Canadians First: National Strategy on Inuit Education* (2011), 84, [http://www.itk.ca/sites/default/files/National-Strategy-on-Inuit-Education-2011\\_0.pdf](http://www.itk.ca/sites/default/files/National-Strategy-on-Inuit-Education-2011_0.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 86.

<sup>14</sup> Supra note 9, 14

<sup>15</sup> Kativik School Board, *Mission Statement*, 19

[http://www.kativik.qc.ca/sites/kativik.qc.ca/files/documents/11/mission\\_statement\\_e.pdf](http://www.kativik.qc.ca/sites/kativik.qc.ca/files/documents/11/mission_statement_e.pdf).

education comparable to that of the mainstream of Canadian society.”<sup>16</sup> While recognizing the special context in which students approach post-secondary studies, KSB aims to support students “so that they become economically self-sufficient, realize their individual potentials and contribute to the advancement of their families and the betterment of community life in Nunavik.”<sup>17</sup>

Considering the preamble, KSB states its objectives for the post-secondary sponsorship policy: “...to encourage and support Inuit beneficiaries... to attain their post-secondary educational and professional objectives...”<sup>18</sup> Thus, these broad objectives are targeted by responding to the need for academic, career, logistical, financial, and personal guidance and support.

To ensure that more Inuit graduate from post-secondary programs, KSB must continue supporting and guiding students. KSB has developed an expertise in Inuit post-secondary education by delivering the post-secondary program for over 25 years. Given this vast experience, KSB is sensitive to the particular needs of Nunavik Inuit students. Building on this foundation, KSB should implement several changes to its policy in order to ensure greater positive impact on students. This will ultimately ensure that more Inuit from Nunavik earn post-secondary diplomas, degrees, and certificates.

An informed and thorough exploration of the KSB program is fundamental to any policy change. With this in mind, I conducted a qualitative research project in order to understand which aspects of the program are working particularly well, and which aspects could be improved.

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<sup>16</sup> Kativik School Board, Post-Secondary Education Sponsorship Program Policy, preamble

<http://www.kativik.qc.ca/sites/kativik.qc.ca/files/documents/3/Post-secondary-sponsorship-program-2010-EN.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, section1.0.

### 3. Research Question

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My research was guided by the following research question: What is the support that the Kativik School Board offers to post-secondary Inuit students and how is that support perceived and experienced by those students?

#### **3.1 Result: It's time to adjust KSB's post-secondary sponsorship program**

I found that several areas of KSB's program work well, and thus should continue. I also found several aspects of the program which require adjustment in order to improve delivery of services. I recommended that KSB re-examine its post-secondary sponsorship policy and program in order to address the areas of concern raised in the present research. KSB should create a working group made up of senior KSB administrators, representatives from the post-secondary program, current and former students, and parents and Elders. This working group should develop strategies to ensure the continued proven success of KSB's program. Importantly, the working group should develop policies to improve services in those areas of concern I raise in the current research. Below, I provide ideas on how those areas of concern should be addressed.

## 4. Developing Policy: Values, Support and Capacity

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In order to develop sound policy proposals, three questions should be considered:

1. Does the proposed policy fit with the values and aspirations of the group affected by the policy?
2. Does support exist for the proposed policy changes?
3. Does the affected institution have the capacity to implement the proposed policies? Once these three questions are answered affirmatively, an implementation and evaluation plan should be developed in order to turn the policy into action.

### 4.1 Values and aspirations

As outlined in section one, above, the values and aspirations of Nunavik Inuit is to ensure we have an educated, strong, and independent population who can participate in governance of the region. The policy proposals in this paper fit neatly with Nunavik's vision and aspirations. The next two questions relating to support and capacity are now dealt with in turn.

### 4.2 Expected support

When I began this project, I gained KSB's approval to undertake the current research. Thus, I expect KSB will be open to hearing the results of my work, and will seriously consider the suggested changes. In personal communication with individuals on the executive committee of KSB, I have been assured that the research will be taken seriously. I have also spoken to staff at KSB, in post-secondary student services, and in other departments, and they too have been supportive of my research.

In my 10-plus years of post-secondary studies, many students have expressed their desire for certain changes in KSB's post-secondary program. It is expected that as this report becomes public, past and present post-secondary students will discuss and likely support the proposals in this document. Furthermore, many parents of students have also expressed some of the same concerns that are in this paper. I expect their support also.

The Québec government, which provides 75per cent of KSB's budget, with its current *Plan Nord* is expected to support any suggestions to improve delivery of post-secondary services to Nunavik Inuit. In its overview of the 2011-2016 Education Action Plan, Québec states that it hopes to "offer learning paths adapted to students in Nunavik" and to "heighten awareness among young people, with the assistance of communities and businesses, to the importance of school success."<sup>19</sup> Given its stated objectives, Québec should welcome research grounded in the student experience, conducted by a community-based researcher, and should take the recommendations seriously.

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<sup>19</sup> Québec Government, "Plan Nord: Community development – education" (2011)  
<http://plannord.gouv.qc.ca/english/development/education.asp>.

Though this paper contains sometimes harsh criticisms of KSB's post-secondary program, these criticisms are offered as constructive criticism. They should not prevent KSB executives from implementing the proposed policy changes. The evidence is clear – the current system requires adjustment and to ignore this will only serve to hold back many Nunavik Inuit from fulfilling their potential.

#### **4.3 KSB's capacity to implement the current policy proposals**

It is within KSB's capacity to re-examine and implement policy changes to the post-secondary program. The creation of a working group will place additional demands on KSB's – and the student body's – human resources, as well as KSB's financial resources. The creation of a working group will require the willing collaboration and support of individuals as well as the KSB institution itself.

To assure program and policy change, students will have to be actively engaged in developing policy ideas in collaboration with KSB administration. Thus, it is advisable to create a student union, and to have the president of the student union sit in on the working group in order to bring student voices to the table. The Saputiit Youth Association should play an active role in creating the student union. KSB or Saputiit should pay the student union president a modest honorarium to sit on the working group. Thus, the additional demands in capacity and resources here are two-fold: (1) human capacity in the form of student and KSB employee engagement with the policy development process; (2) financial resources to motivate students to seek the position of student president as well as pay for the costs associated with the meetings of the working group.

While students have shown grassroots support for policy change, action must come from high-level administrators. Combining strong leadership and vision from the top levels of KSB with the grassroots concerns of students will go a long way in assuring that KSB has the capacity to implement the policy changes that will increase student success. Thus, the capacity demand here is for active engagement of the executives and/or the director general in the working group.

Finally, it is essential to have KSB post-secondary student services' active engagement in revising the policy and program. They are the frontline workers who are the intermediaries between KSB's higher-level administration, students, and post-secondary institutions which students attend. KSB post-secondary student services' capacity to deal with these issues must be harnessed to its full extent.

In summary, increasing post-secondary student success is a vision that all of Nunavik shares. There is a healthy and active coalition of supporters who wish to see KSB's program re-examined. Furthermore, KSB and students have the capacity to undertake a comprehensive review of the program. Thus, it is expected that KSB will seriously consider the proposals in this report, and work to implement any policy changes that flow from the working group's recommendations.

## 5. Evidence That the Policy and Program Needs to be Changed

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The recommendations and data in this report are grounded in the experiential reality of current and former students. They have expressed both satisfaction and dissatisfaction with KSB's program. Based on the current research, it is clear that changes are necessary.

### 5.1 Methods

To learn more about students' experiences of KSB's guidance and support, I conducted a qualitative study. I interviewed 11 students, for a total of 10 hours, 36 minutes, and 27 seconds of recording time, and 217 pages of transcribed interviews. I used grounded theory<sup>20</sup> as research methodology. I undertook this research under the supervision of Dr. Mary Dean Lee, a specialist in qualitative research, and in consultation with Jayne Murdoch, a student with expertise in grounded theory. I analyzed the data I collected by diagramming analytic frameworks. I constantly refined my work, while consulting my interview participants (in grounded theory, this is known as "member checks"), to ensure that my framework was faithful to the experiences of the students I interviewed. After extensive member checks, I settled on a framework that could be applied to all experiences of students. See the appendix for the final framework.

### 5.2 Results

Students who arrived from the North indicated that their primary and secondary education inadequately prepared them for study in the South. This gave rise to a heightened need for KSB's support and guidance. Depending on the different contexts from which different students arrived, they either needed KSB's support and guidance, or they didn't. For example, a student who needs upgrading in mathematics may go to KSB to ask for math tutoring, while a student who is already strong in math does not need a tutor and thus doesn't need KSB's support in that regard.

KSB provides different kinds of support and guidance. I found seven types of support:

1. Financial support
2. Logistical support in the form of housing and transportation
3. Academic support in the form of upgrading and tutoring
4. Academic guidance in the form of academic counselling
5. Direction to support outside of KSB such as medical support
6. Personal support in the form of counselling
7. Career guidance in the form of career counselling

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<sup>20</sup> Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2008).



Each of these different kinds of support and guidance targets different needs that students have. The framework I built revolves around Maslow's hierarchy of needs.<sup>21</sup> Maslow posited that human needs are of several distinct categories. First, there are basic physiological needs to sustain the body.<sup>22</sup> These are the needs for food, water, and so on. Next is the need for safety and security. Maslow described safety needs as "security, stability, dependency, protection, freedom from fear, from anxiety and chaos, need for structure, order, law limits, and strength in the protector."<sup>23</sup> Following satisfaction of security needs, a person then has a need for love and belonging. Maslow explained that these needs are satisfied when a person finds "friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or children... people in general... (and) a place in his group or family..."<sup>24</sup>

Upon satisfaction of love and belonging needs, a person longs to satisfy his or her esteem needs. Maslow proposed that esteem needs were two-pronged:

1. The person's self-perception
2. The person's perception of himself or herself in the eyes of others

Thus, the first prong includes a desire for "strength, achievement, adequacy, mastery and competence, confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom."<sup>25</sup> The second prong includes a desire for "status, fame and glory, dominance, recognition, attention, importance, dignity, or appreciation."<sup>26</sup>

Finally, Maslow supposed that once all of the physiological, safety, love and belonging, and esteem needs were satisfied, then a person feels a need for self-actualization, which he defined as "doing what he individually is fitted for. A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself."<sup>27</sup> An illustration of how KSB's support responds to the needs in Maslow's hierarchy is as follows: logistical support in the form of housing targets a need for security and safety, by providing students with a secure home environment.

On one hand, if KSB responded adequately to the student's needs, then the student felt satisfied with KSB's support and guidance. This led students to feel that KSB was able to satisfy students' needs in Maslow's hierarchy.

On the other hand, if KSB responded inadequately to the students' needs, then the student felt dissatisfied with KSB's support and guidance. In this case, KSB acted as a barrier to the satisfaction of the needs in Maslow's hierarchy. Students then did one of two things:

1. They stopped seeking support and guidance and failed their courses or stopped their studies; or,

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<sup>21</sup> Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 35–47.

<sup>22</sup> Maslow, 35.

<sup>23</sup> Maslow, 39.

<sup>24</sup> Maslow, 43.

<sup>25</sup> Maslow, 45.

<sup>26</sup> Maslow, 45.

<sup>27</sup> Maslow, 46.

2. They sought the support and guidance independently of KSB, in which case they satisfied the needs in Maslow's hierarchy through a path of dissatisfaction. Students who were not aware that they could seek help outside of KSB usually stopped seeking the support and guidance, while students who were aware of sources of support and guidance were able to satisfy their Maslow needs without KSB.

This suggests that if KSB were to inform students that KSB exists to serve students as *one* source of support and guidance, but that other avenues are possible, then students would be more likely to continue their studies instead of giving up on them.

When students did not require KSB's support and guidance, they satisfied their needs on Maslow's hierarchy independently of KSB. In some cases, as students spent more time in the South, they gradually became independent of KSB, and learned where to find support and guidance from sources outside of the school board.

Students consistently, though not unanimously expressed satisfaction that KSB met needs lower on Maslow's hierarchy, such as physiological and safety needs. Physiological needs were met by financial support, which permitted students to buy food. Safety needs were met by providing students with logistical support such as a room in the residence, or apartments, which permitted students to feel like they had a safe place to call home.

The greatest variation of satisfaction and dissatisfaction was present in how students experienced KSB's support and guidance targeting self-esteem and self-actualization needs. One student said it clearly: "I think physically, financially, they're doing a good job, I don't know about the emotional part."<sup>28</sup> The greatest need for re-examining KSB's program lies in those areas of support and guidance that aim to satisfy the higher emotional needs such as the need for self-esteem and self-actualization.

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<sup>28</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.

## 6. Discussion: Recommendations

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These results articulate parts of the KSB program that satisfy students' needs, while also identifying those obstacles students face with KSB, which lead students to feel dissatisfied with KSB's support and guidance. This section provides the basis for a thorough discussion of KSB's program and how KSB can maintain those aspects which work while acting on those areas where students are dissatisfied. Working together, KSB and the students it serves can improve KSB student services to increase success for post-secondary education among Nunavimmiut.

Nunavik should never accept a program that allows even one student to feel that, "I know for sure what I'm going to do is when I get kids, I'm not sending them to school up north... I'm not letting them go up north, have school there, and then let them have no choice here, and let them go through what I'm going through. I want to let them do whatever they want to do when they're done high school."<sup>29</sup> KSB and Nunavik should aspire to foster educational opportunities in Nunavik and in southern Canada that inspire confidence, excitement, opportunity, and pride, rather than allowing young people to envision a future where confidence, excitement, opportunity and pride are only available in southern settings.

The present work focuses only on post-secondary studies, and not on KSB's primary and secondary programs. Improving outcomes at all levels of KSB's work is important. In *No Higher Priority*<sup>30</sup> the Canadian government notes "that one component of Aboriginal education should not be given precedence over others" and that research on education "ought not to be an either/or proposition" in terms of either primary/secondary or post-secondary studies.

I now discuss the key findings, and provide recommended points of discussion for developing smart policy choices.

### 6.1 Proven success in KSB's program

#### *6.1.1 Recommendation 1: Financial support should remain at its current levels.*

Students expressed satisfaction with KSB's financial support. For example, one student, representative of most students, said, "financially, they're doing a good job."<sup>31</sup> One student acknowledged that some "people complain about it, but I actually think if we give students more than that, for the majority of students, it would be detrimental."<sup>32</sup> Given the generous and comprehensive financial support that KSB provides, and since no student expressed serious problems associated with the financial support, KSB should maintain current levels of financial support.

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<sup>29</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.

<sup>30</sup> Supra note 7, 2.

<sup>31</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.

<sup>32</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.

### *6.1.2 Recommendation 2: The College Preparatory Program (CPP) is effective and should continue*

Students indicated that the CPP program helped them adjust to the physical setting as well as the academic expectations of studying in CEGEP. One student said, “I’m glad that I was able to come down and learn the layout of the buildings and where the classes were... coming down early and learning to use the bus system and the metro was very helpful.”<sup>33</sup> However, this program was not consistently offered to all students. Thus, the CPP should be offered to all students during their first semester in the South.

## **6.2 Mixed success**

### *6.2.1 Recommendation 3: Personalize and individualize KSB’s support*

While some students felt that KSB provided individualized attention to their needs, this was not consistently the case. Some students felt that KSB failed to acknowledge individual needs. Students arrive from a variety of contexts. For example, some arrive with clear academic objectives, while others are not even sure what CEGEP is. Some students have strong academic backgrounds, while others indicate that they are not prepared for college level work. Some speak Inuktitut as their first language, while others speak English or French more than any other language.

Given the diversity of contexts from which students arrive, KSB must take into consideration the individualized needs of each student. Individualized attention is particularly urgent in terms of academic and career guidance. While some students expressed that KSB supported their individual aspirations, other students indicated that KSB failed to give individual attention to students. For example, one student expressed a desire to study a particular program offered in a college different than the one where KSB usually sends students. Instead of discussing this with the student, the student said that the counsellor “completely ignored the question.”<sup>34</sup> This lack of individualized attention gave rise to a feeling of being forced into a program that he or she did not want.

Another student attended summer courses, and expressed how it was difficult to convince KSB to sponsor him or her for this program. The student said that summer courses provide students with a different way of experiencing post-secondary studies in the South. Furthermore, certain courses offered in the summer are unavailable during the rest of the year. This student, after talking about the summer school restriction, said, “I work differently; you have to go with my way. We cannot go with [KSB’s] way, it’s way too impersonal, it’s way too mechanical.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.

<sup>34</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.

<sup>35</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.

#### *6.2.2 Recommendation 4: A current post-secondary student should accompany KSB representatives during secondary recruitment*

Students appreciated that academic counsellors traveled to Nunavik to recruit students during secondary school. They said that counsellors exposed them to various academic options and inspired them to pursue their studies in professional, CEGEP and university programs in the South. However, some students felt that counsellors failed to motivate them to go pursue further studies.

Potential post-secondary students could gain a great deal of inspiration and “real-life” insight into college and university life if they could ask questions to a current or former student. The secondary students and the current post-secondary student should have a closed-door session without KSB counsellors or teachers present, to provide a space for candid discussion.

### **6.3 Areas for improvement**

#### *6.3.1 Recommendation 5: Students should be encouraged to seek external personal counselling*

Several students expressed disturbing accounts of active discouragement from KSB’s counsellors. KSB counsellors have responsibility for personal, educational, and career counselling. Usually, personal counselling is reserved for those who are members of the professional order of psychologists such as the Ordre des psychologues du Québec. In Québec, the practice of psychological counselling is governed by a professional code of conduct.<sup>36</sup> KSB does not require its personal counsellors to conduct their work by any code of conduct, nor does KSB require its personal counsellors to be members of a professional order of psychologists.

KSB’s failure to require personal counsellors to have membership in a professional order or to conduct their work by a code of conduct is a serious problem. Some students indicated deep dissatisfaction with the counselling they received from KSB. For example, one student said, “I would be told confidential information about students. [My counsellor] would say things to me about how so-and-so was doing in a course, or how they’re having problems. And I thought ‘That’s not my business, I’m not supposed to know that, and what are you doing with my information?’”<sup>37</sup> This experience was not unique, as another student reported a counsellor disclosing confidential information about other students.

Furthermore, given the tight social network that exists within KSB post-secondary student services, mixing personal, academic, and career counselling is dangerous. Indeed, one student said, “It seems like it could get messy because it’s a small community, and when you start to mix too many things together things get messy.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Professional Code, RSQ c. C-26, a. 87.

<sup>37</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.

<sup>38</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.

Given these serious concerns, KSB should encourage students to seek personal counselling within the academic institution they are attending. Most – if not all – schools have mental health services available to all students. Students should be encouraged to seek this counselling, and KSB should no longer offer personal counselling to students.

### *6.3.2 Recommendation 6: KSB should ensure counsellors actively encourage student success*

While not universal, several students said that their counsellors actively discouraged their academic and career pursuits. Several students used the term “shot down” to describe the feeling they got from KSB when they discussed potential academic and career pursuits with their counsellors. Another student told me that he or she asked a KSB counsellor about several different programs. The counsellor discouraged the student, suggesting he or she would either not get a job or would fail the program. The counsellor’s actions discouraged the student: “I trusted [my counsellor]. I thought [the counsellor is] working there, and knows everything.”<sup>39</sup> These experiences stand in stark contrast to KSB’s stated objective in the preamble of its post-secondary policy: “The program is designed to encourage Inuit...”<sup>40</sup>

KSB should never tolerate discouragement from the very individuals whose job it is to encourage student success. KSB should develop a policy that aims at ensuring counsellors actively encourage student success.<sup>41</sup> This may require continued professional development for student counsellors. It may require the intervention of the Director of Student Services. Under his responsibility to oversee the whole post-secondary program, he should be required to monitor counsellors’ interactions with students, and to ensure that counsellors encourage students rather than discourage them.

One student indicated that he or she had experience with more than one counsellor, and said that “there’s been good and bad experiences, and the thing that’s made the difference is if your counsellor gets to know you. They just listen and get to know you and connect with you.”<sup>42</sup> Since KSB’s counsellors play such an important role in the transition from Nunavik to Montreal, they should build trusting, caring, encouraging relationships. This should be one of the highest priorities for KSB post-secondary student services.

### *6.3.3 Recommendation 7: KSB should initiate investigations in cases of credible student complaints about student services employees*

Students currently have no recourse for complaint if they feel they’ve been unfairly or inappropriately treated by KSB employees. The only recourse students have in cases of unfair treatments lies with approval

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<sup>39</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.

<sup>40</sup> Supra note 16, preamble.

<sup>41</sup> In Alaska’s Guidelines for a Culturally-Responsive School Board, a high-priority action is to “Always assume a positive and proactive role as advocate for the educational interests of the broader community/region being served, (not just as special interests) and consider the long-term implications of individual issues and concerns that arise.” Alaska Assembly of Native Educators, Guidelines for a Culturally-Responsive School Board, (Anchorage, Alaska Native Knowledge Network, 2002), 4. (This should really be worked into the body, not used as a footnote.)

<sup>42</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.

or disapproval of sponsorship: the KSB post-secondary sponsorship policy includes an appeal procedure in case a student feels his or her application for sponsorship was not fairly approved.

The student union president should hear student concerns and complaints and bring them to the attention of the KSB executives and Director General. The KSB executive or Director General should then conduct an investigation into the complaint. Strict standards of professional conduct should be upheld for KSB counsellors. This may require ongoing professional development.

#### *6.3.4 Recommendation 8: KSB should repeal section 8.6 of the sponsorship policy*

Section 8.6 of the policy contains the rules of conduct for KSB-sponsored students. The tone of this section demonstrates that KSB presumes that students are negligent alcoholics, drug dealers, violent offenders, and thieves. Canada's Criminal Code covers most of the rules of conduct. Section 8.6 serves to undermine any sense of confidence that KSB may have in student success. It should be abolished.

This does not preclude the school board from imposing a no-alcohol policy in the residence, however.

#### *6.3.5 Recommendation 9: KSB should aim to make itself unnecessary in students' lives*

As students progress in their studies and become accustomed to living in the South, they become less and less dependent on KSB's support. This is to be expected and is desirable. However, KSB maintains a heavy-handed paternalistic approach to controlling the lives of students. This characterization is grounded in the observations of one student I interviewed: "(KSB) really acts as if they were our godparents, or parents, or adoptive parents, or adults taking care of us children."<sup>43</sup> Another student felt that KSB didn't have confidence in his or her ability to undertake the challenges and rigors of college life: "I kind of feel like they treat us like we're kind of stupid."<sup>44</sup>

Gradually, KSB should aim to make itself unnecessary in the lives of post-secondary students. This could take the form of eventually allowing post-secondary students to sign leases for their own apartments, and control payment of all expenses, rather than having KSB control most aspects of students' lives. In this same vein, KSB should reconsider its policy of maintaining access to students' academic records.

KSB aims to provide parents with confidence that KSB is adequately caring for students when they arrive down south. KSB satisfies parents by providing students with a transition year under a very sheltered support program including the CPP, followed by a gradual weaning of students off of KSB's support and guidance.

KSB's program exists to provide support and guidance to students so that they may achieve their academic objectives. Again, students arrive from a variety of contexts. Some students are older adults, while others

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<sup>43</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.

<sup>44</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.



have parents indifferent to the student's academic pursuits. The bottom line for KSB is not to ensure that parents are comfortable with how KSB supports students; rather, the bottom line, as outlined in the preamble to the KSB's sponsorship policy, is to ensure students succeed academically, in order to contribute to the advancement of their families and the betterment of community life in Nunavik. A part of this learning is to gain independence. KSB should aim to support students so that the student services department is no longer needed.

One student emphasized the importance of gaining independence while studying in the South: "If KSB student services told the students to manage their own money for the rent and everything, I think it would help them in the long run, for their life..."<sup>45</sup> This student observed that KSB's protective actions may set students up for a shock when they are no longer students, and have to fend for themselves: "if you want to create the strong independent people for the North, I think it starts from here... and the system is not going to be friendly forever. Why not teach them now? Even if it's hard for them, even if they're not used to it, they're going to get used to it, we always get used to everything we go through."<sup>46</sup>

#### *6.3.5 Recommendation 10: Inuit working at KSB*

One student indicated that access to Inuit employees at the school board would be helpful, because Inuit who have gone through the experiences of moving south have an intimate understanding of the student experience down south. During meetings with the KSB Executive in January of 2012, discussions arose around the comfort levels of Inuit students with non-Inuit employees at the school board. Students recognize that the non-Inuit employees of KSB can and do provide a great deal of support, but they would appreciate the increased comfort level that comes with speaking with someone who has lived similar experiences, in Inuktitut.

### **6.4 Not a recommendation, but worth discussion**

It may surprise the reader that I am neither recommending for or against the creation of a Nunavik-based post-secondary institution or a program similar to the Nunavut Sivuniksivut program.<sup>47</sup> There are two main reasons for this.

First, such a recommendation would lie outside the scope of my research question. I examined what support exists for students now, rather than what support they would like to see in the future. The desire for a post-secondary institution in Nunavik may have arisen, had I asked a different research question.

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<sup>45</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.

<sup>46</sup> Anonymous student interviewee.

<sup>47</sup> Under the "Education" section of the Plan Nunavik, the desire for a post-secondary institution is highlighted: "It is very difficult for the students to leave their region so they can acquire (post-secondary) services... It is vital that students access to these services in their own region. We require programs that emphasize the culture, history and land claims of Nunavik and that will prepare students for the decision-making processes that take place in their communities." Makivik Corporation and Kativik Regional Government, Plan Nunavik: Nunavik Past, Present, and Future (Westmount: Avataq Cultural Institute, 2011), 50. (This is another footnote that should probably be in the body).

Second, in order to create such an institution, Nunavik will require local academics. While Inuit Elders and local leaders hold vital knowledge and methodologies which play a central role in Inuit education, “academic” knowledge and methodologies will play an important role in the creation of a Nunavik-based post-secondary institution. It would be preferable to have local academics, rooted in Inuit culture and language while also operating in academia. In order for Inuit to become trained in academia, they must attend southern institutions. Thus, appropriate and adequate support and guidance for Inuit to study in the South is a vital pre-requisite to the creation of a northern post-secondary institution.

This was the observation of one student during my research: “...it would be better to have mostly Inuit employees in these positions. And currently we don’t have enough Inuit in university.” We need more Inuit to attend university to take over positions within Nunavik institutions, including any post-secondary institution we hope to create. This is currently only possible by studying outside of Nunavik, thus we should do all we can to ensure that KSB provides students with the conditions needed to achieve success in their studies in the South.

## 7. Conclusion

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KSB has successfully produced many post-secondary graduates in its long history of post-secondary support, and it will surely continue to do so. The data in the current report shows that there are certain areas of support which require adjustment. Adjusting these areas will ensure greater success for Nunavik students. Improved student success is a vision that all of Nunavik holds. There is significant individual, community, and institutional support for the ideas contained in this report. KSB has the capacity to implement these policies, and should use its human and financial resources, its power, and its authority to show leadership in improving its services.

The late Taamusi Qumaq, an Elder and a cultural and intellectual giant from Nunavik said in his autobiography that:

*"In 1939, I became independent. I had my own kayak which I used every summer. I had a dog team and a qamutik. I loved hunting in winter. I remember 1939 well. It seems to me that that year marked the beginning of my happiness. I was able to work and to hunt. I remember clearly that it was that year that I began thinking about my life and about my future."*<sup>48</sup>

In our Elders' time, a man's happiness and future depended on his ability to independently hunt and fish and provide for his family. Essentially, this has not changed. Udloriak Hanson reminds us that students who are attending school right now make up "the generation after the one that was born in igloos and tents; the generation that moved away from the nomadic and land-based economy."<sup>49</sup> Our generation still hunts and fishes. But now that we have left the nomadic and land-based economy, another way we build our kayaks and qamutiks is by earning university degrees and college diplomas. It is through education that we become independent. The Kativik School Board's post-secondary sponsorship policy states in its preamble that it is there to help Inuit become "economically self-sufficient, realize (our) individual potentials and contribute to the advancement of their families and the betterment of community life in Nunavik."<sup>50</sup> We have an opportunity now to ensure that our institutions provide us with the means to gain our independence and fulfill our potential.

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<sup>48</sup> Taamusi Qumaq, *Je veux que les Inuit soient libre de nouveau*, trans. Joseph Flowers (Québec : Les presses de l'Université du Québec, 2010), 62.

<sup>49</sup> Udloriak Hanson, "The Next Generation" in Frances Abele, Thomas J. Courchene, F Leslie Seidle and France St-Hilaire, eds. *Northern Exposure: Peoples, Powers, and Prospects in Canada's North* (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2009), 499.

<sup>50</sup> Supra note 16.

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
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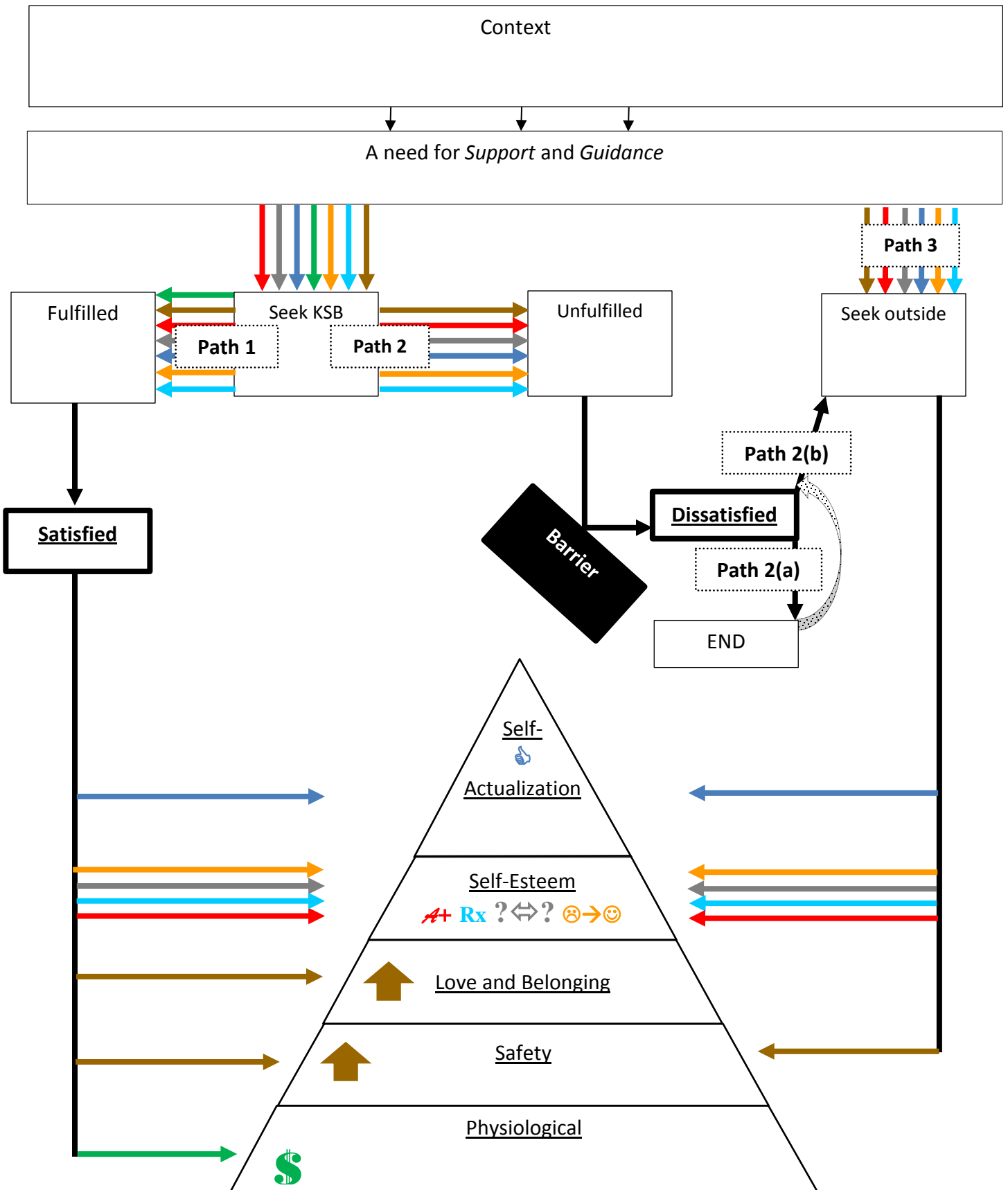
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## 9. Appendix: Analytic Framework

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	Financial support		(money)
	Logistical support		(a house)
	Academic support		(a good grade)
	Academic guidance		(direction)
	Guidance to outside support		(prescription from a doctor)
	Personal support		("turn your frown upside down!")
	Career guidance		(thumbs up for encouragement)







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