



Inuit Early Childhood Education and Care:  
Present Successes – Promising Directions

*A Discussion Paper for the National Inuit  
Education Summit*

Prepared for ITK by Tagataga Inc.

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## Executive Summary

In 2007, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) undertook to complete a series of background reports on lifelong learning for Inuit, to serve as the basis for discussion at the Inuit Education Summit. The purpose of the background papers was to provide a discussion on the barriers facing Inuit in lifelong learning and policy directions for overcoming these barriers. This paper examines the issues surrounding Inuit Early Childhood Education (ECE), specifically

1. Identifying and documenting examples of successful Inuit early childhood initiatives, which have contributed to the ability of Inuit children overcoming barriers and succeeding in school.
2. Identifying gaps in Inuit ECE programming.
3. Recommending a list of policy considerations related to Inuit Early Childhood Education and Care (IECEC).

The paper cites a number of international trends in early childhood education and care, which could provide policy considerations for Inuit in ECEC programming.

A number of the national and international trends in ECEC programming can be seen in their early form of application across a range of success stories in the four Inuit regions. The paper looks in detail at: 1) language nests in Nunatsiavut, 2) trained staff, 3) provincial/regional funding arrangements in Nunavik, 4) Nunavik nutrition program, 5) school readiness programming in Clyde River, 6) culturally grounded services in Ulukhaktok, Northwest Territories and 7) the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre.

The paper also examines persistent gaps in programming including fragmented and inadequate funding mechanisms, which has hindered the development of childcare in some regions. Low salaries and poor educational standards for Early Childhood Educators has also impacted quality, particularly where there are no regulations to establish minimum training requirements for early childhood educators. The paper examines two other important gaps relating to parental involvement in program design and cultural/linguistic accessibility.

The document concludes with a set of policy considerations that fall into six main areas:

1. **Integrated funding**
2. **Recognizing the Early Childhood teacher**
3. **Integrating Elder input and participation in all aspects of Inuit ECEC**
4. **Accessing the voice and direction of Parents, Elders, and Educators in all aspects of ECE**
5. **Integrated services at ECE hubs**

## 6. Development of an Inuit ECE curriculum, supports and resources

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## Introduction

In 2007, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) undertook to complete a series of background reports on lifelong learning for Inuit that would serve as the basis for discussion at a forthcoming National Inuit Education Summit. The purpose of the background papers was to provide a discussion on the barriers facing Inuit in lifelong learning and policy directions for overcoming these barriers. This paper examines the issues surrounding Inuit Early Childhood Education. Specifically, this paper sets out:

1. To identify and document examples of successful Inuit early childhood initiatives which have contributed to the ability of Inuit children overcoming barriers and succeeding in school.
2. To identify gaps in Inuit ECE programming
3. To put forward a list of policy considerations related to Inuit Early Childhood Education.

## Vision for Inuit Early Childhood Development

**Our vision of Inuit early childhood development encompasses Inuit languages, Inuit culture and ways.**

**Inuit children are thriving.** The basic needs of Inuit children for food, shelter, health, love and care are met. Inuit families live in relaxed and safe environments. Inuit children are emotionally secure, physically strong, intellectually stimulated and spiritually fulfilled. The needs of all children are met in culturally, developmentally, and demographically appropriate ways. *All Inuit children have access to consistent and continuous programs and services.* The Inuk child has a positive self-image and has pride in Inuit languages, Inuit culture, and Inuit ways.

**Inuit families<sup>1</sup> are recognized and honour their important role<sup>2</sup> as the child's first teacher.** Inuit families provide culturally rich, secure, healthy environments in which to raise children.

**Inuit Elders provide the foundation and knowledge.** The advice of Inuit elders is sought and offered in guiding Inuit ECD activities to ensure Inuit culture and values are promoted and preserved.

**Inuit early childhood development strategy is unique.** Programs and services for Inuit children are developed based upon an understanding of Inuit culture, Inuit languages and Inuit ways. Programs and services must create and maintain a balance between the use of traditional and contemporary child development knowledge.

***The Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group adopted this vision, in June 2004.***<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The word "families" takes into account all those people who are parents/guardian/caregiver – this is meant to be all-inclusive.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that one of the strategies to have more time – is that society has to allow for an increase in parental leave so that families are able to stay with their children. As well it should be recognized the role of families in the development of a child is a very important factor in child rearing.

<sup>3</sup> The abridged version of the Inuit Early Childhood Development Strategy appears in Appendix 4

## Research Plan

The research methodology for this paper on Early Childhood Learning has involved the following four phases.

1. Circulate an information package to seek input from the Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group (IECDWG).<sup>4</sup>
2. A document search, which resulted in a 6-page listing of documents related to Inuit ECD, which appears in Appendix 3.
3. A set of interviews with Inuit early childhood organizers, supporters and researchers from across the four Inuit regions.
4. Involved reading current international 2007 papers on early learning education and care and re-reading many documents related more specifically to Inuit ECD.

## Current Trends in Early Learning and Child Care

Currently in the international community of early childhood education there are reforms occurring and research being advanced which relate directly to the concerns of Inuit Early Education leaders. These leading initiatives include:

### ***1. Move to integration of education and child care***

“(There is a) growing consensus in OECD<sup>5</sup> countries that ‘care’ and ‘education’ are inseparable concepts and that quality services for children necessarily provide both” (OECD, 2001:14; OECD, 2006)

The intent of integrated education and care is to effectively support strong early childhood development with a focus on children’s learning. In the Scandinavian countries there are fully integrated early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. (Moss & Bennett 2006, P.1) This kind of service will provide for both the educational and care needs of children and their families. In New Zealand, Norway, England, Sweden, and Brazil ECEC services are integrated within the Department of Education. John Bennett (2007) of the Organization of Economic and Community Development explains that, “weak systems are so because of the fragmentation of responsibility for children. “ It is understood that merging childcare and early education funding into a single integrated pot supports a valuable early learning system.

### ***2. Recognition of the value and role of the early years teacher***

A key component of quality childcare is stable, qualified staff. Advocates are promoting compensation and training for early childhood teachers at a rate equivalent to school

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<sup>4</sup> Members of the IECDWG are devoted to Inuit childcare and come from each of the Inuit regions

<sup>5</sup> OECD – Organization for Economic and Community Development

teachers. (Barnett 2003, P.23). The Organization for Economic and Community Development (OECD), recommends pay equity with teachers and national standards for university educated teachers (Bennett 2007). Workforce reform has taken place in New Zealand, Spain and Sweden (Moss & Bennett 2006). By 2012 - 100% of early year teachers in New Zealand will be university graduates. Teachers in childcare centres in France are well educated – they have the equivalent of a Bachelors degree as well as a 2 – year professional degree in early childhood education (Peer 2003). In the Inuit regions the development of professional standards with a connected comprehensive early childhood teacher-training plan is essential.

### ***3. Early Childhood Education requires systems that support broad learning, participation and democracy (OECD Starting Strong 2)***

Peter Moss (2007) describes the early childhood centre as, “a place of encounter, interaction, connections among citizens in a community, with many possibilities- social, cultural... and others new and surprising.” He questions the use of the word quality in defining education and care, and the role of regulations as limiters of cultural diversity. He encourages us to consider the responsibility to prepare children to participate in democracies. The vision of ECEC is broad and comprehensive. This work challenges Inuit ECD leaders to consider:

1. How to support broad based learning;
2. How to introduce programs that support participation.
3. How to prepare children and families to participate in the community/ democracy.

### ***4. Early Childhood Programs that value differences***

In New Zealand a bicultural curriculum called, Te Whariki, was introduced in 1996. It is a culturally inclusive approach. It engages in narrative based teaching methods which, “embrace the idea that identity is created through the stories we narrate and that are narrated about our lives. These stories are seen to be developed at the intersection of relationships, community and culture.” (Farquhar & Fler, 2007 P. 29). Shared stories create an opportunity to bring parents, caregivers, children and teachers closer together, they create a road to cultural continuity and meaningful relationships at the centre. They can contribute to transformational change as the ECE worldview moves from the boundaries of the developmental framework towards broader understandings of the cultural nature of development. (Farquhar & Fler, 2007 pp. 42 -43).

## **Inuit Early Childhood Education in Canada**

All licensed childcare services in Canada are regulated through provincial/territorial legislation. In Nunavik more than 80% of all childcare funds originate from the provincial government, and parental fees are set by provincial regulation at \$7.00 per day. In Nunavut, the Northwest Territories (NWT) and Nunatsiavut the provincial/territorial investment is much less.

A portion of the federal funding for licensed childcare in all of the regions comes from two main federal funding programs: the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI), which is provided by Human Resources and Social Development Canada and administered in each Inuit region by the Aboriginal Human Resource and Development Agreement holders (AHRDAs). The Public Health Agency of Canada funds the early intervention program called Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities. The following chart details the distribution of Inuit sites by program and region, which varies significantly across the 4 Inuit regions.

**Distribution of Inuit specific sites by program and territory**

<b>Territory/Region</b>	<b>AHSUNC</b>	<b>FNICCI</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Inuvialuit, NWT</b>	1	3	4
<b>Qikiqtaaluk, Kivalliq, Kitikmeot Nunavut</b>	7	28	35
<b>Nunavik,<sup>6</sup> Quebec</b>	17	17	17
<b>Nunatsiavut, Newfoundland and Labrador</b>	1	5	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>62</b>

Based on 2005 information

Between 2004 and 2005 a great deal of effort was expended in preparing for an amalgamation of the federal funding programs in an effort to improve services and streamline funding. Pursuant to the change in government, activity towards this goal has apparently stopped.

***Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Inuit Early Childhood Development Issues***

ITK ensures that Inuit Early Childhood Development (ECD) leaders, teachers, and stakeholders from across Canada convene, advise and plan policy directions and program considerations related to Inuit ECD. ITK is the secretariat for the Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group and is the designated liaison for Inuit regions on national Inuit ECD.

In 2001, ITK became actively involved in supporting Inuit ECD. In 2001 ITK in collaboration with the Inuit regional Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA) holders produced the Inuit Early Childhood Development Issues Discussion Paper (ITK 2001). This paper illustrated “the tornado” effect of factors impacting Inuit children and families. Factors listed as impacting on education included<sup>7</sup>:

<sup>6</sup> The Nunavik sites which receive funding from both AHSUNC and FNICCI appear in both columns but are part of the same program so count as 1 in the total of combined AHSUNC and FNICCI....

<sup>7</sup> ITK, Inuit Early Childhood Issues Discussion Paper, 2001, p. 23

- Impact of training gaps on provision of quality support to children;
- Child care workers are not well enough trained;
- Education system does not emphasize cultural training;
- Insufficient value placed on education and parents not taking advantage of services available (poor attendance at school and AHS)
- (Over-all poor) Quality of education;
- Special needs children not being adequately identified or supported;
- Impact of residential school system on parents;
- Issues around suitability of the curriculum to the learner.

It must be noted that since 2001 some progress has been made in Inuit ECD; although most of the factors still remain today due mostly to the lack of financial resources and funding for Inuit ECD.

**In 2007 ITK's ECD activities have included** publication of the Tasiuqtiit Newsletter; collecting Inuit specific resources for the Aboriginal Children's Circle of Learning website; and organizing Inuit participation in the Aboriginal Round Table on Special Needs.

### ***Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group – Inuit ECD Working Group***

Members of the Inuit ECD Working Group are involved in Inuit childcare and come from each of the Inuit regions: Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Nunavut (Qikiqtaaluk, Kivalliq, Kitikmeot) and Inuvialuit. ITK and the national Inuit women's organization Pauktuutit each have one member. ITK is the secretariat for the group and as such is mandated to communicate with all levels of government concerning the activities of the Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group. A copy of the Inuit Early Childhood Development Strategy can be located in Appendix 4 of this document.

### ***Pauktuutit***

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada has been involved in the development and support of Inuit early childhood programs since its inception. The Inuit Women's Strategy Proposal's (Pauktuutit 2006) third priority is ECD: to ensure that ECD programs reflect Inuit values and culture. *Piaranut* a handbook for running a childcare centre in Inuit communities is being finalized. It includes operational guidelines about topics such as:

- Governance – local design and delivery, community based, non-profit;
- Partnership service – children viewed as part of the family, linked locally, inclusive;
- Language and culture – rooted in curriculum based on Inuit language and culture;
- Personnel- employs Inuit.

## **ECD in the Inuit Regions**

This section describes the state of ECD services in each of the Inuit regions<sup>8</sup>.

### ***Nunatsiavut, Labrador***

The Nunatsiavut Department of Health and Social Development (NDHSD) receives money to support ECD from the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative, the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. With this funding NDHSD administers six day cares services - three of which are licensed, one Aboriginal Head Start, four part-time pre-school programs, and seven after school programs. Child Care services in Nunatsiavut are governed by the Child Care Services Act and associated Child Care Services Regulations. The Act specifies the requirements for licensing of child care centres. It also specifies conditions of operation including health and safety, physical space, staff qualifications, staff ratios, age groupings and group size, as well as other conditions necessary for licensing and maintenance of licensed facilities. The licensed child care is monitored and inspected by the Provincial Department of Child Youth and Family Services to ensure its is meeting minimum requirements. Nunatsiavut Department of Health and Social Development (DHSD) - Program Developer for Childcare is responsible for policy development and ensures the centres are adhering to the licensing regulations. In addition to this support the Program Developer monitors programs and budgets, recruit and manages staff, as well as determines and delivers professional development opportunities.

A meeting was held in April 2006 to develop a regional early learning and child care plan. Representatives from NDHSD, provincial Child, Youth and Family Services, the regional health authority, Provincial Department of Health and Community Services, Aboriginal Head Start and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami participated in the consultation process. A number of areas were identified as requiring enhanced programs and services.

A proposal was approved by the provincial Department of Health and Community Services Early Learning and Child Care Capacity Initiative (ELCCI) This initiative incorporated the results of the consultation process and other community consultations. It will expand existing licensed services in Nain, Hopedale and Makkovik, re-instituting licensed day care in Rigole and opening licensed day care in North West River.

### ***Nunavik, Quebec***

The Nunavik region includes 14 Inuit communities situated along Ungava Bay, Hudson Strait and the eastern shores of Hudson Bay. KRG is 100% responsible for funding, licensing and supporting the 17 Child Care Centres operating in Nunavik. They offer a combined day care/head start program with both full time and part-time spaces.

KRG receives money to support ELCC from the Government of Quebec, the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada AHSUNC, parent fees at \$7.00 per day

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<sup>8</sup> This information originates from the *Transition Plan for the Inuit Early Learning and Child Care Program* (Rowan & Brown 2005 – and was updated in October 2007).

supplement the grants. All childcare centres in Nunavik are non-profit corporations run by majority Inuit parent boards. Inuit compose the majority of the staff at all centres. Inuktitut is the language of the centres. KRG has a twenty-three year agreement with the Government of Quebec. All of the powers and authority, which originate from the ministry but not those that are attributed directly to the Minister, have been transferred to KRG. New commitments for money, criminal procedures, laws and regulations fall within the mandate of the minister and have not been transferred. AS well KRG provides training funds for college level courses for educators as well as childcare centre director/manager training, board of director training, training for cooks and janitors as well as financial management training.

### **Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut**

The Qikiqtaaluk region includes 13 Inuit communities and the capital of Nunavut - Iqaluit. Kakivak Association receives funding through the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement specifically the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative for childcare. With this funding Kakivak supports Inuit childcare in the region through the childcare subsidy for eligible Baffin residents, operating expenses for eligible Baffin child care centres (block-funded), financial incentives for Inuit employment as well as funds for the Nunavut Inuit Child Care Association, emergency, childcare planning, supplementary training and capital. Kakivak Association monitors the centres using a checklist during annual visits. Kakivak sees its role as a childcare funder.

The Government of Nunavut (GN) Department of Education provides funding for occupied childcare spaces through a daycare subsidy. The GN is responsible for licensing and regulating childcare in the territory. The GN conducts annual community visits and also supplements childcare funding through the Healthy Children's Initiative – though this funding is not specifically allocated for licensed childcare. Aboriginal Head Start Funding is organized through the Northern Secretariat and received by the sponsoring organizations in Igloolik and Arctic Bay. The Canadian Action Program for Children (CAP-C) contributes to pre-school programs in Igloolik and Clyde River.

### **Kivalliq, Nunavut**

The Kivalliq region includes a total of seven communities with Rankin Inlet serving as the regional centre. The Kivalliq Partners in Development (KPID) receives funding through HRDC's - Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement specifically the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative. KPID supports the provision of Inuit childcare services in the region. KPID has a four-tier scale to rate and fund services. KPID monitors its funding agreements with the local childcare societies through community visits and quarterly financial reports. KPID is available to support the communities in response to community-generated requests.

The Department of Education of Nunavut Government provides funding through a similar arrangement as the Qikiqtaaluk region. Aboriginal Head Start funding is organized between the Northern Secretariat and the sponsoring organizations in Coral Harbour and Arviat. Cap-C also contributes to the Small Steps program in Arviat. This is an early identification and intervention program, which provides additional supports to

children and families in an inclusive environment within the existing continuum of services being provided in this community.

### **Kitikmeot, Nunavut**

The Kitikmeot region is made up of five communities with Cambridge Bay serving as the regional centre. The Kitikmeot Economic Development Commission (KEDC) receives funding through HRDC's - Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement specifically the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative. KEDC provides funding for the staff wage subsidy for all workers, except the janitor and cook and also provides a funding allotment for each centre based on the number of children and number of staff. KEDC monitors each centre through biannual visits. They use a checklist to see that funds are being spent on the wage subsidy. If money is available KEDC will pay travel to attend workshops.

The Government of Nunavut regulates childcare in the Kitikmeot as in the Kivalliq and Qikiqtaaluk. Aboriginal Head Start funding is organized between the Northern Secretariat and the sponsoring organization in Gjoa Haven, Kugluktuk and Taloyoak.

### **Inuvialuit, Northwest Territories**

The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation coordinates ECD in the 6 Inuvialuit communities. The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) administers funds from the federal and territorial government as well as other funding sources and disperses the money to the communities. This includes FNICCI and AHS. IRC assists program staff in meeting programming and licensing criteria. IRC staff helps the communities in writing reports in order to obtain and maintain funding, they conduct quarterly on-site visits, provide tutoring for the distance education courses, host yearly training workshops, provide accounting, bookkeeping and payroll services. IRC provides comprehensive support to the community childcare centres including: financial, pedagogical and organizational.

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) contributes to childcare in the region through a number of funding programs. The GNWT is responsible for licensing and regulating childcare in the territory it produces a quarterly newsletter and co-hosts an annual training workshop with Aurora College.

## **Inuit Early Childhood Program Success Stories**

One of the primary purposes of this research was to identify successful Inuit early childhood initiatives. As it turns out, a number of the Inuit childcare successes uncovered in this research share qualities that are reflected in the broader ECE trends cited earlier in this paper. These include:

- **Culturally Appropriate Programming:** Nunatsiavut Language Nest
- **Valuing ECE Staff:** Trained Staff (Nunatsiavut)
- **Flexible Programming:** Nunavik Nutrition project
- **Sustainable Funding:** Kativik Regional Government and the Province of Quebec

- **Integration of Services: Clyde River Family Centre:** Ilisaqsivik<sup>9</sup>
- **Culturally Appropriate Programming:** Cultural integration and parental involvement at the child development centre in Ulukhaktok
- **Leader in culturally grounded children's programming:** Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre

### ***Language Nest – Hopedale, Nunatsiavut***

The language nest in Hopedale was set up with the goal of creating a generation of Inuktitut language speakers and to overcome the problem of language loss. The program was started in April 2001 through a partnership between Torngâsok Cultural Center and the Labrador Inuit Health Commission, now the Department of Health and Social Development, Nunatsiavut Government. The main idea was that through intense exposure to Inuktitut, young children who are naturally inclined to language acquisition will become fluent Inuktitut speakers.

#### **Successes**

Some of the project milestones included:

- Unilingual speakers trained in early childhood education;
- Developed Curriculum;
- Arranged for cultural experiences and activities; and
- Expect new project in Nain in January.

A number of important achievements that have come through this program include:

- Children are speaking and understanding Inuktitut.
- The community is very proud of these Inuktitut speakers.
- People in the community speak to the young children in Inuktitut
- Community members have a renewed pride in the language.
- 1 -1 child/educator ratio
- Parents are acquiring new language skills.

#### **Gaps**

The program in Hopedale is not licensed and cannot, therefore accommodate more than 3 children at a time. This makes for a small group, even smaller when children are sick or away. (Andersen & Johns 2005). The educators are all fluent Inuktitut speakers but not ECE trained. It takes a lot of work to support the staff. There are ongoing concerns about the availability and sustainability of the funding as well as a lack of parental involvement in the program. At this time Hopedale hosts the only language nest in Nunatsiavut communities although it is hoped that a new language nest will be opening in Nain in the new year.

#### ***Trained Staff- Nunatsiavut***

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<sup>9</sup> Other Nunavut success stories include the Small Steps program and the Iglulik Home Visit Program

*“When the staff do not have ECE training they lack the tools of communicating with the children and they do not interact in the same way.”* **Jenny Lyall Nunatsiavut Government ECE Program Coordinator**<sup>10</sup>

Staff members in Nunatsiavut’s licensed childcare programs are subject to provincially regulated early childhood education qualifications. Newfoundland and Labrador child care regulations stipulate that a day care operator must have a two-year diploma in ECE<sup>11</sup>, and that the lead staff must have ECE Level 1 – a one year diploma.<sup>12</sup> Therefore all child care personnel teachers and operators working in the licensed child care centres in Nunatsiavut are trained. The Nunatsiavut model establishes a set of standards for early childhood teachers, which can serve as a model for all Inuit regions.

### **Successes**

Trained staff has learned about child development, hygiene and safety. They also know:

- The 10 core learning areas in the day care.
- About effectively communicating with parents.
- The value of play based learning.
- The value of routine and organized learning activities.
- The importance of interacting with children.<sup>13</sup>

### **Gaps**

The stipulation for trained Educators has some drawbacks: It kept the Hopedale Language Nest unlicensed due to lack of qualified Inuktitut speakers.

It is a barrier to hiring culturally and linguistically qualified Elders. There are a couple of communities where the day cares are not licensed. One reason for this is the lack of trained staff. Early Childhood training programs should be delivered in Inuktitut. At this time Nunavik is the only region in which Inuktitut language ECE training is reliably available.

### **Nutrition Project- Nunavik**

The Nunavik nutrition project was launched in order to reduce the incidence of anemia in preschool aged children in Nunavik. Studies estimated that between 17% and 26% of pre-school aged children in Nunavik suffered from iron deficient anemia. (KRG 2006)

If left untreated, this anemia can lead to unrecoverable developmental, intellectual and perceptual delays in children. A partnership was formed between Kativik Regional Government, Public Health Research Unit of the Laval University Hospital Center and Aboriginal Head Start in order to develop a prevention program.

### **Milestones**

- A literature review was undertaken in 2004 on anemia and young children.

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<sup>10</sup> Jenny Lyall was interviewed for this paper and contributed to the content of this section.

<sup>11</sup> Newfoundland Child Care Regulations, p. 70

<sup>12</sup> Newfoundland Child Care regulations, p.75

<sup>13</sup> Research suggests that teacher sensitivity to children increases with formal education. Regulated minimum educational standards set-out to provide for this. Chandler (2003).

- Analysis of the nutritional content of country foods, and development of appropriate menus.
- Support has been provided to childcare centres in instituting the nutrition policy and in the kitchen.
- Each centre was visited and centre directors educators, parents, cooks and Elders were consulted on the research program and policy.

### **Successes**

The project promotes the use of traditional country foods, which are rich in iron.<sup>14</sup> All Nunavik childcare centres have adopted nutrition policies. The policy bans junk food and juice from the day cares, reduces use of bottle-feeding in children over 12 months, and promotes healthy eating including country food ( seal, caribou, fish etc.).

The project has involved multi-organizational collaboration including Kativik Regional Government, Kativik School Board, Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services, University of Laval, Health Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Health Institute of Quebec Research Unit and Air Inuit.

A complete set of recipes has been developed with seasonal menus for centres and servings of country food 3 – 5 x per week. The cooks have been trained in selection, handling and preparation of country food as well as in overall food preparation and procedures.

An impact evaluation is being undertaken in order to provide scientific evidence of the results.<sup>15</sup> In the fall of 2006 the results showed “few anemic children.” (Gagne and Vezina, 2007).

### **Gaps**

Infrastructure is needed to assure a steady supply of country food.

### ***Kativik Regional Government and the Province of Quebec – Nunavik***

*“In Nunavik the regional government has a productive working relationship with provincial government.” Margaret Gauvin, Employment and Training Department Head, KRG.*<sup>16</sup>

In Nunavik a twenty-three year block funding agreement has been signed with the Government of Quebec that includes childcare. Funds under this agreement are indexed

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<sup>14</sup> Raw seal meat for example has 22mg of iron per 100 grams, from Iron Content of country and market meat chart with ref, to Blanchet (2000).

<sup>15</sup> Doris Gagne of Laval University Hospital Center was interviewed for this paper and provided the reference materials in September 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Gauvin was interviewed for this paper and contributed to the content of this section.

annually to the cost of living increase as well as to population growth. All of the powers, which originate from the ministry but aren't tied specifically to the Minister, have been transferred to KRG. KRG licenses, monitors, funds and supports the childcare centres in Nunavik. There are 17 centres, 815 licensed spaces, and 215 full time staff (ITK 2005 P.10). KRG also develops resources such as the board-training manual (Consilium & Rowan, 2005).

### **Successes**

The transfer of power and authority recognizes the particularity of Inuit language and culture and compensates remoteness. Transfer funding from Quebec is indexed at 1.69% for Nunavik. The government acknowledges the value of human resources and competency building through loan of service agreements and provision of expert advice at the request of KRG. The Quebec Government has demonstrated flexibility through derogations and exceptions to program guidelines and frameworks. Quebec funds 80% of the cost of operating child care centres in Nunavik. The Quebec government also provides operating funds to KRG to carry out its mandate concerning childcare.

Kativik Regional Government is responsible for all aspects of the delivery of childcare in the region. The KRG Child Care team includes 9 members (majority Inuit) dedicated to supporting, monitoring, funding and inspecting the operation of the child care centres.

Other Inuit regions do not have P/T support for Early Childhood Education and Care as demonstrated by the province of Quebec in Nunavik.

### ***Clyde River Family Centre – Ilisarsivik - Nunavut***

*“ The children learned how to interact with each other by doing activities together and that prepared them to start school when they reached the school age.”*

**Nina Palituk, Children's Program Coordinator, Ilisarsivik Family Resource Centre, 2007 Report.**

The Clyde River Family Centre offers a pre-school program designed to prepare children for Kindergarten. The program runs daily Monday to Friday from 1:30 – 3:00. Parental participation in the program is mandatory. While the children are engaged in educational activities and eating healthy snacks the parents are sewing.

### **Successes**

Parents are involved in the program. The activities are designed to promote the parent as the child's first teacher. The children begin the afternoon session with a combined parent/child activity.

The children took part in skill development activities: including name writing in syllabics and roman orthography; fine motor activities like beading; and pre-literacy activities. The children learned how to interact with each other and to share by doing activities together.

There is an Inuktitut literacy teacher on staff as well as an Elder Counselor who used Inuktitut during preschool sessions to promote Inuit traditions and culture. The elder played string games, ajagaq (with rabbits head and bone) as well as juggling games. (Clyde River report 2007)

The afternoon activities are supported outside of program hours by other related centre activities including a weekly radio show and parent support group. Healthy snacks are also available.

Children were prepared to start school when they reached the school age. Teachers at the school reported, “The children from Iliqisavik know what to do and how to behave when they start school and the children who have not attended don’t.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Gaps**

For many years there have been reports of financial difficulties at this centre due to proposal based funding problems. However this was not reported in the 2007 interview. The major gap noted was the need for a bigger space from which to operate the program.

### ***Cultural Inclusion and Parental Involvement - Ulukhaktok Inuvialuit***

When the community of Ulukhatok had to make a decision about investing surplus revenue – they chose to add on to the community childcare centre. The centre is still closed due to the renovations but they are hoping to open again soon. This centre has taken a holistic approach to early education and care through culturally and linguistically appropriate learning based on Inuit worldviews. Two of the centres strengths are: a strong cultural component founded in the work of the culture teacher who has been at the centre for 14 years; as well as strong parental involvement in the program.

### **Cultural integration**

“One time all the seals were out on the ice. We walked right over to the ice, to watch the seals. Another time when my son got a seal, we brought it right into the centre, cut the flesh, and placed the skin to dry outside on the wall.” **Margaret Kagyut, Program Coordinator, Ulukhaktok Child Development Centre and Preschool Program.**<sup>18</sup>

### **Successes**

Mary Akoakhion, is an Elder and an Inuinaqtun speaker who has been a language teacher at the Ulukhaktok Child Development Centre for 14 years. While at the centre she speaks to the pre-school children and the staff only in Inuinaqtun. Mary teaches the children in many areas including: crafts, Inuinaqtun language, stories about how Inuit

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Nina Palituk, Children’s Program Coordinator, Iliqisavik Family Resource Centre, September 2007, and contributed to the content of this section.

<sup>18</sup> Margaret Kagyut, Program Coordinator at the Ulukhaktok Child Development Centre and Preschool Program, was interviewed in September 2007 and contributed to the content of this section

lived long ago, traditional skills such as: cutting country food, fleshing skins, softening skins to make ready for clothing, about animal parts, caribou skin tent making, drum dancing and singing. The children follow Mary's directions and show that they understand. (Tasiuqtiit, Issue 1, p. 4)

### **Gap**

Mary celebrated her 65<sup>th</sup> birthday this year and has retired. A replacement will have to be found.

“ We have an open door policy for parents, Elders, community members to come and visit. Some parents come in at the lunch hour to help out.” **Margaret Kagyut, Program Coordinator, Ulukhaktok Child Development Centre and Preschool Program.**

### **Parental involvement**

#### **Successes**

Some parents come to help at lunchtime.

Parents donate food including: musk ox, fish and seal. The children like to eat country food.

There are nine parents are on the parents' committee. The program staff reports to the parents about the curriculum. They also encourage the parents to head-up fundraising activities.

Last fall the centre ran a weekly evening program for parents and children. During which the family members came together and sang songs and learned rhymes in Inuinaqtun and English. The Elders also told stories to the group in Inuinaqtun. The program was very successful because the parents were very pleased to know of what the children were learning.

On Fridays the children go over to the radio station and sing a few songs. The parents appreciate hearing their children on the radio.

### ***A Leader in Culturally Grounded Children's Programming - Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre***

The Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre is a destination location for Inuit early childhood community representatives from across the country to come to and visit in order to appreciate the multi-layers of cultural materials, activities, teaching, nutrition, approaches that make this centre a uniquely Inuit place in the heart of an urban setting.

#### **Successes**

Inuktitut is the official language of the program and is used throughout the day. One of the teacher's – Ina Zakal won the prime Minister's Award of Excellence in ECD in 2005. The program has games, puzzles, books, dress-ups, rugs, toys music – all based in Inuit knowledge and ways. Children are learning throat singing and are taught to be proud to be Inuk. Elders are important to the program and take part in activities as part of a strategy to promote and retain the Inuktitut language and Inuit culture.

The centre is the hub of a network of supports and services for Ottawa Inuit families and children. They offer: monthly field trips, host community feasts; practice community sharing, hold storytelling events, they provide an amazing service.

At present the construction of a new Inuit day care centre right next to the AHS site is taking place and a new toddler program has recently opened.

### **Gaps**

The staff of the centre often feels isolated due to their physical distance from other Inuit. When interviewed for the Inuit Early Learning and Child Care Discussion paper in 2005, the respondents noted that needs for the centre included: funding: to develop culturally appropriate material; to expand infant, toddler and youth program; create services for parents requiring full-time care for their children; to increase the number of certified Inuit Early Childhood Educators (ITK 2005 p. 23).

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## **Inuit ELEC Gaps**

Nunavik is the model for administration of licensed childcare in Inuit regions. KRG receives funds from the province and the federal government to run licensed childcare programs. The provincial investment is significant; in 2005 the province transferred \$11,500,000 to KRG to support the operation of 815 licensed childcare spaces. This is not the case in the other Inuit regions where the level of territorial/provincial funding is low and the funding is more fragmented. In this section gaps in Inuit Early Learning and Childcare will be examined.

### ***Integrated and Sustained Funding***

“ The Gjoa Haven daycare has been closed for a while due to funding issues and freezing of the building. The local community does not have enough money to pay for fuel and then the problem grows horribly.” Inuk Elder, (Interviewed in 2005)<sup>19</sup>

In all Inuit jurisdictions and especially in Nunavut, Inuvialuit and Nunatsiavut where there has not been a planned and comprehensive capital building program – a major investment of capital funding is required in order to bring existing buildings up to standard and to construct new buildings and develop new licensed childcare spaces.

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ITK, Transition Plan for Inuit Early Learning and Childcare Program, 2005 p. 16

**Table of Costs and Fees in Inuit Child Care Centres**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Daily Rate</b>	<b>Annual cost for operating 1 space</b>	<b>Cost of new building</b>	<b>new buildings in last 5 years</b>
<b>Nunatsiavut</b>	\$5.00	\$12,778.00	\$2M-4.5M	2
<b>Nunavik</b>	0 - \$7.00*	\$17,420.00	\$1.8M-30 places \$2.5M 80 spaces	10
<b>Qikiqtaaluk**</b>	\$30.00-\$39.00	\$13,000-\$15,000. <sup>20</sup>	\$.73M (19 places)	1
<b>Kivalliq</b>	\$20.00- \$38.00	\$8,000.	.55 M	3
<b>Kitikmeot</b>	\$29.00 <sup>21</sup>	\$7,540.	\$.25M	3
<b>Inuvialuit</b>	0 -\$30.00 <sup>22</sup>	\$14,000.	\$3M	0
<b>Ottawa</b>	0	\$13,500.	\$.5M.	1

ITK (2005). Inuit Early Learning and Child Care Discussion Paper p. 33.

\*Parents on income support or single mothers in school do not pay fees.

\*\* Nunavut and the NWT also have subsidy programs for parents on income support

The current situation is such that regional Inuit organizations in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut operate on a budget, provided through the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement that provides less than what is needed to adequately operate the existing services. This past spring in the Inuvialuit region the coordinator was querying which parts of her program would need to be cut, in order to maintain services – in the end she herself resigned and has not been replaced. In Nunatsiavut every licensed space is carefully accounted for and the Government of Nunatsiavut operates as many spaces as it can support. In 2005, 7% of Inuit children in Nunatsiavut had access to licensed childcare. Since then a new financial relationship with the provincial government has begun and the funding situation is beginning to improve.

Funding is also essential to provide for staff training, professional development, curriculum development, support for parents, special needs, and Inuktitut language specific supports, materials and activities.

The problem outside of Nunavik with ECEC funding has been the piecemeal nature of project-based requests for funding and the fragmentation of funding sources. Provincial/territorial, federal, the Public Health Agency of Canada for Aboriginal Head Start, Human Resources for First Nations Inuit Child Care, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) dollars for FASD activities, language dollars for language activities etc. Each of these requires papers and proposals and reports and conversations and lots of

<sup>20</sup> This is based on a projection prepared for Akaluk Daycare in consideration of the provision of quality childcare.

<sup>21</sup> In Cambridge Bay

<sup>22</sup> In Inuvik the cost of infant care is \$600.00 per month. ( \$30.00 per day based on 20 day month.) In Holman the charge is \$150 per month. In the other communities there is no charge.

time usually for an inadequate sum to meet the need. Things are further complicated in the territories where health dollars for FASD, and the ECD transfer funds go through the territorial government and have been impossible for the regional Inuit organizations and community child care services to access. There is no consistent planning for staff training or retention, which further contributes to the instability of existing programming.

### ***Availability of Licensed Spaces***

The following chart demonstrates the huge differences in availability of licensed services across the Inuit regions.

**Table of licensed childcare spaces available to Inuit children**

<b>Region</b>	<b># of licensed places</b>	<b>2001 APS – Inuit in Canada 0 –5</b>	<b>% of Inuit children have access to licensed childcare</b>
Nunatsiavut	50*	520	10%
Nunavik	815	1550	53%
Nunavut	816 <sup>23</sup>	3760	22%
Inuvialuit	121 <sup>24</sup>	305	40%

ITK (2005). Inuit Early Learning and Child Care Discussion Paper p. 34

\*Nunatsiavut figure updated in October 2007

Currently there are long waiting lists, inadequate facilities, and Inuit children have inequitable access to services due to jurisdictional differences. In the 2005 Transition Plan (ITK 2005,17) a call was made for all Inuit children to have access to early childhood programs regardless of parents occupation or jurisdictional placement.

### ***Parental Involvement***

“ When we talk about ECD there has to be a flavour for parental involvement. We have to figure out how to get parents valuing and supporting this and getting them to come around.” **Jenny Lyall Nunatsiavut Government ECE Program Coordinator** <sup>25</sup>

Jenny Lyall made the following points during our talk about parental involvement:

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<sup>23</sup> In Nunavut the total number of licensed spaces is 960. As Inuit represent about 85% of the total population the number of licensed spaces has been reduced by 15% in order to reflect the approximate number of spaces available to the Inuit population.

<sup>24</sup> In the Inuvialuit region there are 184 licensed spaces. In Inuvik about 1/3 of the spots are held by Inuit reducing the total by 48, and in Aklavik about ½ of the places are used by Inuit. This reduces the total number of spaces accessed by Inuit in the Inuvialuit region by 63 to 121.

<sup>25</sup> Jenny Lyall was interviewed for this paper and contributed to the content of this section.

- We have to start to support communities in identifying their own needs and figuring out how to meet them.
- When parents are struggling their kids are struggling and we have to figure out how to help them.
- The impact of parental involvement is huge.
- The intent of AHS includes valuing the parent as well as the child.

Parental involvement is considered a key to school success. Parental involvement is considered a key to successful ECE programs. In Nunavut and Nunavik parent majority non-profit corporations or societies run the childcare centres. In Nunatsiavut and in the Inuvialuit Region the centres are administered though the regional organization and guided by parent committees. In many communities attaining the kind of desired level of parental involvement in the design and delivery of the services has been elusive. Examples such as in Ulukhaktok contribute to our understanding of how to achieve this goal.

Goal 6 of the Inuit ECD strategy is Inuit Families Support. Objectives within this are:

- To advocate for resources, tools and strategies that enhance families involvement in children's development; and
- To promote, support and sustain the involvement of families in a culturally appropriate and meaningful way.

***Qualified staff – trained and available and paid appropriately***

In some regions ECD salaries are very low, especially so in consideration of the high cost of living due to the remoteness factor. In some communities even sick days are considered to be an extra benefit. There are serious retention issues and high turnover due to the economic and emotional reality of this very demanding and underpaid job. When early child educators do become trained they are often hired away from the insecure early childhood positions to permanent jobs elsewhere in the fields of education and health. The following chart shows the hourly wage, training and benefits received by Early Childhood Educators working in Inuit regions.

**Table of Staff Information**

<b>Region</b>	<b>ECE's working in region</b>	<b>ECE's with 1 yr. Training</b>	<b>ECE hourly rate of pay</b>	<b>Pension Plan? Yes/No</b>	<b>Benefits Pkg? Yes/No</b>
<b>Nunatsiavut</b>	9	9	\$13.74 - \$19.23 <sup>26</sup>	Yes after 6mths	Yes
<b>Nunavik</b>	164	75	\$18.16 - \$28.38	Yes	ES- Group Insurance IS Available
<b>Qikiqtaaluk</b>	30	27 <sup>27</sup>	\$13.00	No	YES – Taxi Vouchers & Xmas Bonus
<b>Kivalliq</b>	25	na	\$11.00 - \$22.00	No	No
<b>Kitikmeot</b>	36	18-20	\$15.00-\$19.00	No	No
<b>Inuvialuit</b>	25	4	\$12.00-\$18.00	No	Yes
<b>Ottawa</b>	2	3	N/A	Yes - RSP	Yes

ITK (2005). Inuit Early Learning and Child Care Discussion Paper p. 31.

In Nunatsiavut – trained Early Childhood Educators are required by regulation. In Quebec the regulation stipulates that two out of three Educators must be trained. The Governments of Nunavut and the Northwest Territories do not have a minimum training requirement. Trained educators are considered to be a component of quality childcare.

In addition to training – ongoing professional development is another key part of staff support and development. In Nunatsiavut there is a legislated requirement for 30 hours of professional development for every three years of certification.

The Inuvialuit Settlement region has taken steps to ensure ongoing support and development for its staff as demonstrated in the following staff-training chart extracted from their 2007 annual report:

**Chart of Staff training in the Inuvialuit region**

- All the Language Teachers attended the Regional Language workshop in Inuvik – 1 week
- 5 Staff attended the Braids of Hope workshop in Edmonton – 1 week
- 3 Staff attended the Families First in Inuvik – 1 week
- 3 Staff attended the Integrating Language Curriculum to Early childhood conference in Yellowknife
- 1 Staff from Ulukhaktok was invited by Aurora College to visit an Early Childhood Program in British Columbia.

<sup>26</sup> Based on \$25,000. - \$35,000. per year and 260 day year.

<sup>27</sup>Qikiqtaaluk figures provided by Kakivak Corporation October 2007, based on information concerning Kakivak funded centres.

- 12 Staff are enrolled in the online ECD course offered by Yukon College and a couple are near completion of receiving their certificate for Early Childhood.

Generally there are very few training opportunities made available to early childhood educators working in Inuit communities. Goal 3 of the Inuit ECD strategy is for financial, technical, professional support for training and capacity building. Objectives include: a clear plan to strengthen training and capacity building; holding annual Inuit ECD training workshops, and providing for ongoing training and capacity building to ECD teachers.

### ***Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Programming Grounded in the Inuit Way***

Early Childhood Educators working in Inuit communities and centres need quality resources and materials developed in collaboration with Inuit Educators, Elders and parents. Some work is taking place in this area. The Nunatsiavut Government is currently developing a comprehensive list of Inuit resources for ECD. Avataq Cultural Institute in Nunavik has developed a beautiful resource book for Early Childhood Educators called, “Unikaangualaurtaa, Let’s Tell A Story.” In the winter of 2007 the Government of Nunavut developed a collection of story boxes for centres in Nunavut. Pauktuutit has compiled a guidebook on quality care called Piaranut. ITK has published Tasiuqtiit and collaborated with Health Canada and the IECDWG to set up an Inuit resource section on the ACCEL website. There is much to be done in this domain. Goal 5 of the Inuit ECD strategy includes objectives for promoting and supporting the creation of Inuit specific teaching material, disseminating those materials and translating as necessary and appropriate.

### ***Special Needs***

In 2006 ITK developed a survey and conducted a literature review in preparation for special needs research. In February of 2007 representatives from each of the regions and urban attended a two-day special needs round table. One of the recommendations was for the development of culturally appropriate assessment tools including: screening and diagnostic tools.<sup>28</sup> There is an urgent need for a comprehensive plan to identify and appropriately support special needs children including appropriate facilities, resources and trained staff.

### ***Urban Inuit***

In March of 2006 representatives of urban Inuit came together in Ottawa to talk about Inuit childcare from the urban perspective. St. John’s Newfoundland; Montreal, Quebec; Ottawa, Edmonton, Alberta and Yellowknife, Northwest Territories were all represented at the meeting. The following list represents the priorities as set-out by the participants at the urban meeting:

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<sup>28</sup> Tagataga Inc., Early Education and Special Needs in First Nations and Inuit Communities, Feb. 27 &28, 2007, Marriott Courtyard, Ottawa, Ontario, Notes from Inuit Roundtable

1. Capital investments
2. Funds specifically for Inuit
3. Language and culture
4. Human resources and training
5. Special Needs services
6. Support programs (counselling, healing, father's programs)
7. Awareness of Inuit culture (non-Inuit social services)
8. Transportation
9. Better statistical information for urban Inuit
10. Networking with other cities with urban Inuit and Inuit from Inuit regions
11. National Urban Inuit Committee on ELCC.<sup>29</sup>

Ottawa Inuit have a successful Aboriginal Head Start at the Ottawa Children's Centre. Inuit in other urban areas look to the Ottawa site as a model of what could be. The urban reality includes a well-articulated desire for urban Inuit to retain their culture and use their language.

## Policy Considerations

Based on our observations of the emerging trends in ECE and the successes and gaps in Inuit early childhood programs it is possible to draw some policy conclusions about the direction that Inuit childcare needs to head.

1. **Integrated funding:** The Nunavik example demonstrates the value and success associated with one, regionally based, funding source for childcare program dollars. The province provides for 80% of the costs through a 23-year agreement. Funding in Nunavik is consolidated, predictable and sustainable, consolidated service delivery and improved program support appears to be a successful model of early childhood education and care program delivery. Integration of childcare dollars into a single, regional program source, inclusive of funding related to early childhood education and care, goes beyond the current status quo in any of the Inuit regions.
2. **Valuing the role of the early childhood teacher** – Staff members in Nunatsiavut's licensed childcare programs are subject to provincially regulated early childhood education qualifications and this example sets a high standard for the quality of early childcare programs. There is an established link between empathy and education. Childcare workers in the Inuit regions outside of Nunavik are making low wages and in most cases have few benefits. In many cases jobs are on a year-by-year contract basis and very unstable – due to proposal based funding. Opportunities for professional development are rare, and many workers have limited education, although increasingly staff in centres has ECE training. This training needs to be consistently delivered in Inuktitut. International examples of establishing college and university level training requirements should

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<sup>29</sup> Inuit ECD Priorities 2006 – ITK internal document

- be given serious consideration in Inuit regions, specifically addressing linguistic and cultural training appropriate for Inuit children, along with the adoption of a salary at a rate in line with that of an elementary school teacher. In the Inuit regions the development of professional standards with a connected comprehensive early childhood teacher-training plan is essential.
3. **Recognizing the Elder and/or unilingual Inuktitut teacher:** One of the challenging policy concerns in early childhood education is recognizing and supporting the role of unilingual language specialists who may not be ECE qualified. There is significant leadership required in successfully incorporating unilingual language specialists into ECE programs.
  4. **Accessing the voice and direction of parents, elders, and educators in all aspects of ECE:** It is widely agreed that well functioning parent boards are one way of assuring community voice in ECE programming. The link between parent participation and student success is established. Currently the voice of the Inuk parent is not being effectively heard. Strategies must be put in place to mobilize parent's voices in all aspects of ECE.
  5. **Integrated services:** There is growing recognition that integrated services and programs for children and families through pre-school 'hubs' of services, strengthen the ability of children to succeed in school. The Arviat Small Steps program offers a model that is based on a continuum of services from school-based parenting preparation, pre-natal health, birthing centre, supportive family services, universal pre-school, access to childcare and early intervention and parenting supports. The piloting of a hub model in each of the regions would go a long way to demonstrate the value and success of integrated pre-school services.
  6. **Development of an Inuit ECE curriculum and support:** The Te Whariki curriculum introduced in New Zealand in 1996 is a culturally inclusive approach. They use shared stories to bring children, parents and teachers closer together. There is much to be learned from this narrative approach to curriculum. As an initial step – it would be instructive for representatives from the Inuit regions to learn more about what is happening with the Te Whariki curriculum in New Zealand and to consider the employment of narrative based teaching approaches in developing an Inuit Early Childhood Education curriculum.

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## Appendix 1 - List of Contacts

<b>Region</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
<b>Nunastivut</b>	Jenny Lyall	Regional Child Care Coordinator, Nunatsiavut Dept. of Health and Social Development
	Kim Vincent <sup>30</sup>	Program Operator, Language Nest, Hopedale
<b>Nunavik</b>	Margaret Gauvin	Manager, Employment and Training, KRG
	Annie Augiak	Program Officer, Nutrition Program, Kativik Regional Government
	Doris Gagne	Researcher, Nunavik Nutrition Program, Laval University
<b>Nunavut</b>	Carolyn Macdonald	Educational Advisor, Igloodik Head Start
	Nina Palituk	Children's Program Coordinator, Ilisagsivik, Clyde River
	Shirley Tagalik/Margaret Joyce	Department of Education, Government of Nunavut
<b>Inuvialuit</b>	Susan Peffer	ECD Program Coordinator, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
	Patricia Davison	Childcare Mentor, Inuvik
	Margaret Kagyut	Program Coordinator, Ulukhaktok Child Development Centre and Preschool Program

## Appendix 2 – Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group

Nunatsiavut	Jenny Lyall
Nunavik	Margaret Gauvin
Qiqiktaaluk, Nunavut	Eva Eetuk-Groves
Kivalliq, Nunavut	Mary Kasaluak
Kitikmeot, Nunavut	Bernadette Niviatsiak/ Rosabelle Aknavigak
Inuvialuit	Susan Peffer
Pauktuttit	Ulrike Komaqsutisag
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami	Tracy Brown

<sup>30</sup> Researcher was unable to connect with Kim Vincent

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Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve

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## **Appendix 4 – Inuit Early Childhood Development Strategy prepared by ITK**

### **Introduction/Background**

The Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) has led the development of the Inuit Early Childhood Development Strategy. ITK has worked on the strategy in association with representatives from the Inuit Land Claim Areas and regions. These are: Labrador, Nunavik, Nunavut (Qikiqtaaluk, Kivalliq, Kitikmeot) and Inuvialuit, as well as with Pauktuutit.

The foundation of the strategy has been in the process of being built since March 2001 when ITK invited Inuit ECD leaders to come together in order to consider and document issues related to Inuit Early Childhood Development.

Each year since then ITK has accessed limited funding from Health Canada to continue the work of the IECDWG towards the development of a strategy.

In 2003 the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs entered into a contribution agreement with Pauktuutit – The Inuit Women’s Association, for work on the Early Childhood Development Strategy. As a result of the INAC funding allocation Pauktuutit became actively involved in the Inuit Early Childhood Development Working group (IECDWG).

In the same year (2003) the Terms of Reference for the IECDWG were finalized and formal recognition as a sub-committee within the ITK Health Committee was attained.

The IECDWG vision of Inuit early childhood development encompasses Inuit languages, Inuit culture and Inuit ways. The purpose of Inuit ECD is to strive to achieve the ultimate goal of 100% healthy, happy and safe Inuit children and families.

### **Vision**

The participants at the Inuit ECD meeting held in March 2004 developed the following ECD Vision, which was subsequently revised at this meeting:

**Our vision of Inuit early childhood development encompasses Inuit languages, Inuit culture and ways.**

**Inuit children are thriving.** The basic needs of Inuit children for food, shelter, health, love and care are met. Inuit families live in relaxed and safe environments. Inuit children are emotionally secure, physically strong, intellectually stimulated and spiritually

fulfilled. The needs of all children are met in culturally, developmentally, and demographically appropriate ways. ***All Inuit children have access to consistent and continuous programs and services.*** The Inuk child has a positive self-image and has pride in Inuit languages, Inuit culture, and Inuit ways.

**Inuit families<sup>31</sup> are recognized and honour their important role<sup>32</sup> as the child's first teacher.** Inuit families provide culturally rich, secure, healthy environments in which to raise children.

**Inuit Elders provide the foundation and knowledge.** The advice of Inuit elders is sought and offered in guiding Inuit ECD activities to ensure Inuit culture and values are promoted and preserved.

**Inuit early childhood development strategy is unique.** Programs and services for Inuit children are developed based upon an understanding of Inuit culture, Inuit languages and Inuit ways. Programs and services must create and maintain a balance between the use of traditional and contemporary child development knowledge.

## Principles

The principles were developed for the Inuit ECD strategy at the March 2004 meeting and reviewed and finalized in Charlottetown. The following is a consolidation of this work:

1. The Inuit ECD strategy focuses on the health, safety and well being of the whole child.
2. The Inuit strategy is based on Inuit culture and Inuit values.
3. All Inuit children have access to continuous ECD programs and services.
4. The IECD strategy will have a strong focus on Inuit children with special needs and those at risk.
5. The IECD strategy respects regional structural diversity and priorities.
6. The IECD strategy will be carried out in cooperation amongst all Inuit stakeholders and government agencies in the best interest of Inuit children and their families. The commitment and priorities of the IECD Working Group will be extended to the Inuit organizations, communities and families.
7. There is respect for all people, values and culture.

## Goals and Objectives

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<sup>31</sup> The word "families" takes into account all those people who are parents/guardian/caregiver – this is meant to be all-inclusive.

<sup>32</sup> It should be noted that one of the strategies to have more time – is that society has to allow for an increase in parental leave so that families are able to stay with their children. As well it should be recognized the role of families in the development of a child is a very important factor in child rearing.

Preliminary work on the goals and objectives took place during the March session. At the June meeting the participants developed and refined the following goals to support the Vision and Principles as follows:

1. To ensure all Inuit communities have equal opportunity and access to ECD programs and services.
2. To ensure that resources and infrastructures are readily available so that Inuit children have the opportunity to develop to their full potential.
3. To obtain financial, technical, professional support for training, as well as regional and community capacity building.
4. To develop mechanism(s) that ensure financial resources for the IECD strategy are equitable and take isolation and remoteness factors into account.
5. To provide an environment for Inuit children to grow up happy, healthy and safely.
6. To provide culturally appropriate, consistent and continuous support to Inuit families.
7. To continue to build a strong relationship and to improve communications amongst all stakeholders of the Inuit ECD strategy.
8. To advocate for streamlined and simplified the funding processes.
9. To ensure that resources and documents are available in Inuit languages.
10. To provide a forum for Inuit ECD leaders to come together to share experiences, knowledge and successes as well as to deal with issues in order to provide input into the federal ECD strategy.