We are very grateful for funding which made the Inuit Education Forum possible - from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Marsha Hanen Global Ethics and Dialogue Program, the University of Winnipeg, Cape Breton University and the Nunatsiavut Government. We also extend our appreciation to ArcticNet and the TD Bank Group for their support of this Forum. In 2013, ITK was awarded an Arctic Inspiration Prize for initiatives that foster student success, and a portion of this prize was used to sponsor the Inuit Education Forum.
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Message from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami President

I would like to thank all Inuit teachers and education leaders for their dedication and perseverance to incorporate our culture, language, and worldview into the K-12 education systems across Inuit Nunangat. Inuit youth spend a significant amount of their developmental years in school, and deserve a world class Inuit-specific education. Our educators do their best to transfer Inuit knowledge systems to our students but we must do more to ensure our children are able to receive academic instruction in Inuktut and develop skills that are relevant to our society.

This report will serve as a valuable resource for those involved in policy decision making and for those involved in administering and delivering Inuit education across Inuit Nunangat. The collection of knowledge and recommendations provided by the Inuit teachers and administrators who participated in the 2017 Inuit Education Forum in Nain, Nunatsiavut are positive steps toward achieving Inuit self-determination in education.

I would like to thank the research team for their support in convening and capturing ideas from the education forum. Key areas of interest, such as Inuit perspectives on a number of fundamental areas, such as what enhanced Inuit control of education looks like through distributed leadership processes, the strides that can be taken to strengthen and create culturally and linguistically relevant education systems, the ways in which schools can be properly resourced, or how Inuit regions and national Inuit organizations can work together to ensure Inuit educators from across Inuit Nunangat have opportunities to meet in order to exchange knowledge and share their experiences as teachers and education leaders, are compiled in this report.

We must continue to work on education as a priority to achieve self-determination and to provide the best possible future for Inuit. In the spirit of Inuit educator Karrie Obed, who dedicated much of his life to teaching, we will continue on this important work for all who love and care for our communities and our people.

Natan Obed, President.
Executive Summary

In February 2017, an Inuit Education Forum was held in Nain, Nunatsiavut in which educators from across Inuit Nunangat gathered to share knowledge of successful strategies for student success. Inuit and long-term northern teachers have seen what is helping or blocking students. In this Forum, their understanding of what is working in their classrooms and at the school and regional levels was shared. This report serves as a renewed call to action as well as a reminder of the progress that has been made in Inuit education. As a result, themes cited in the academic literature or in the National Strategy on Inuit Education (First Canadians, Canadians First) as well as in the Forum are noted. Below are the key recommendations arising from the Inuit Education Forum.

A. Enhanced Inuit Control of Education

1) Decision-making in schools should be shared to a greater extent as in traditional Inuit culture.

2) To ensure a larger proportion of teachers are Inuit or long-term northerners, there is a need for an expansion of community-based teacher training programs and reforms in how teachers are hired.

3) Improvements are needed in the working climate/culture of schools.

4) An expansion of innovative efforts that support parents in their interactions with schools is needed.

B. Greater Strides Towards Linguistically and Culturally-Relevant Education

5) Culturally-relevant curricula should be further developed across Inuit Nunangat.

6) Land-based activities are seen as critical to ensuring culturally-relevant schooling in each region.

7) A greater proportion of class time should be devoted to Inuktut instruction.

C. Proper Resourcing of Schools

8) Schools in small communities need all the supports — for both students and teachers — that schools in large communities have in order for students to thrive.

9) Educators need more frequent opportunities to gather with other educators from across Inuit Nunangat to share their experiences.

The results shared in this paper echo decades of calls for Inuit control of a truly Inuit education system in which Inuit ways of knowing, being, and doing are reflected and celebrated, in which Inuit act as leaders, and in which Inuit students succeed. Many participants noted that a separate Inuit school board for each Inuit region could achieve many of the recommendations highlighted in this Forum. There is also impatience regarding the suggested reforms — many of these proposals were put forward decades ago. We hope northern policy makers will use these recommendations to prioritize future initiatives.
Introduction

Across Inuit Nunangat 1, teachers are working to support student success and improve graduation rates through innovative approaches, for example, by developing curricular materials, new assessment tools and interventions in their schools and classrooms. However, in light of the high cost of travel, opportunities for educators to gather and share their insight and expertise are limited. In February 2017, such a space was created - teachers, community members and educational leaders working and living in Inuit Nunangat came together for three days in Nain, Nunatsiavut to share their ideas for programming that would encourage greater success among Inuit students.

This Inuit Education Forum, held from February 14-16th, 2017, included 28 Inuit educators from all four regions of Inuit Nunangat. Teachers were nominated by the national Inuit organization, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), or their regional land claims organization as they are recognized as leaders in education in their region.

An open call for participation also solicited local youth, educators, parents and Elders. The President of ITK as well as the President of the Nunatsiavut Government, the Deputy Minister of Education and the Education Manager for the Nunatsiavut Government also attended.

The aim of the Forum was to share promising practices in education across Inuit Nunangat, and then to examine the next steps for educational improvement. The main questions addressed at the Forum were:

1. What barriers impact educational goals in your community?

2. What policies or programs would remove those barriers and foster greater student success in your community?

Inuit and long-term northern teachers bring a close connection between school and community, and these teachers observe daily the implications of educational policy and practice on learning. The Inuit Education Forum provided space and time for teachers to share their experiences with what is working in the classroom and at the school-level, and to brainstorm about what reforms are needed in the future. Recommendations arising from the Forum centred around three main themes: Enhanced Inuit control of education, greater strides towards linguistically and culturally relevant education, and proper resourcing of schools. This report summarizes these insights.

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1 Inuit Nunangat is the homeland of Inuit of Canada. It is comprised of four Inuit regions: Nunatsiavut (northern coastal Labrador), Nunavik (northern Quebec), the territory of Nunavut and the Inuvialuit region (northern Northwest Territories). These regions collectively encompass the area traditionally occupied by Inuit in Canada.
Background on the Inuit Education Forum

For decades, Inuit have advocated at the international, national, and regional levels for Inuit control of an education system that would reflect and effectively serve Inuit children. Inuit from Russia, Alaska, Canada, and Greenland resolved at the first Inuit Circumpolar Conference (1977) to create Inuit Nunaanni Illiinniartulirijit (International Committee for Inuit Education, Culture and Language) to ensure Inuit had equitable opportunities as learners and teachers following Inuit ways of knowing, being, and doing.

The desire for the colonially-imposed institutions, including schools, to reflect and be controlled by Inuit, and for Inuit to have learning spaces which maintain and build on Inuit culture and language is ratified in each of the land claims signed by Inuit groups in Canada. The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (1975) established an Inuit school board in Nunavik, with the Kativik School Board fully assuming control of Inuit education by 1978. The Inuvialuit Final Agreement (1984) created the Inuvialuit Social Development Program to address concerns including education and transmission of traditional practices. The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and accompanying Nunavut Act (1993) affirmed the right of a de facto Inuit government to legislate in the areas of education and language, resulting in strong legislation for bilingual, culturally-infused education (2008). The Labrador Inuit (Nunatsiavut) Land Claims Agreement (2005) acknowledged the right of Nunatsiavut Inuit to take over governance of schools in the Settlement region, and steps are being taken in this direction.

Canadian federal, provincial and territorial governments have supported, at least in principle, the pedagogical and moral desirability of Inuit-controlled Inuit education. In 1960, federal government representatives proposed that Inuit students should be taught in Inuktut for the first two years of schooling and that Inuit should be trained as teachers. This led to the establishment in 1967 of teacher training programs for Inuit from Nunavik and the Northwest Territories. The Northern teacher education programs were first offered in the North in 1979. In 1964, Quebec and Canadian governments recognized Nunavik Inuit’s right to mother
tongue education in Inuktut. In 1971, the Northwest Territories government mandated Inuktut mother tongue schooling from Kindergarten to Grade 3. The mandate was followed by community consultations and development of culturally-relevant curricula (e.g., Piniaqtavut, 1989; Inuuqatigiit, 1994). Similar efforts are more recently underway in Nunatsiavut.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms that “Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.” The Canadian Government is a recent signatory to this agreement. It has also affirmed its commitment to Indigenous education through its acceptance of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Final Report and Calls to Action, which include culturally relevant, Indigenous- and community-controlled education for Indigenous communities. Nonetheless, statistics reflect that education systems in Inuit communities still need improvements.

Since 2008, Canadian Inuit have strengthened a unified, national voice advocating for more effective implementation of Inuit controlled, Inuit education across Inuit Nunangat (the Inuit homeland in Canada) so that Inuit children have appropriate and effective education. ITK hosted the first National Summit on Inuit Education in 2008, which led to the Inuit Educational Accord signed by national, territorial, and provincial governments and representatives of Inuit land claims organizations from each region in 2009. Signatories to this Accord worked together on the National Strategy on Inuit Education. The Strategy puts forth specific measures to support Inuit students, strengthen Inuit parents and teachers as leaders in education, and deliver curriculum infused with Inuit culture, language, and values. ITK then hosted a Forum in 2013 to identify strengths and research priorities in Inuit education. As part of the follow-up from that Forum, ITK and ArcticNet partnered on a directed call for research proposals to address the priority needs.

The February 2017 Inuit Education Forum was a collaboration between ITK, the Nunatsiavut Government, and academic researchers. It was part of the project “Foundations for Student Persistence and Success in Inuit Nunangat”. The results shown in subsequent sections, drawn from participants’ comments and contextualized in prior research, show that teachers feel that Inuit leadership is undermined, that curricula insufficiently incorporate Inuit language and culture, and that school systems are under-resourced in ways that limit implementation of evidence-based practices for improvement. The teachers’ recommendations are summarized below with confidence that, in the words of Johannes Lampe, President of Nunatsiavut, “the outcomes will help to advance strategies for increased student success rates in Nunatsiavut and, indeed, throughout Inuit Nunangat.”
Recommendations for Policy Makers Arising from the Inuit Education Forum

A. Enhanced Inuit Control of Education

1. DECISION-MAKING IN SCHOOLS SHOULD BE SHARED TO A GREATER EXTENT AS IN TRADITIONAL INUIT CULTURE.

“We’re too agreeable. Our morals and values as Inuit are to be respectful. We’re too obedient. It’s time that we take control and say that we want this – without fear of being suppressed. It’s time that we speak up and say that we want control of our education system.”

– Forum Participant

“Real change in schools will only begin to take place when the relationships of power begin to change, that is, when the voices of parents and the community are heard and the direction of the school reflects the values of all.”

(Cummins (1986), page 34)

Creating welcoming spaces for Inuit teachers to act as leaders in their school is essential to achieving Inuit-controlled education. As was noted at the Forum – schools are potential sites of reconciliation, where school goals and culture could be jointly determined by the administration and teachers, especially Inuit teachers (McGregor (2013)). However, some teachers feel a lack of autonomy and control around school issues. Other teachers feel that there is a lack of teamwork in their school – that rules seem to be determined in a ‘top-down’ style.

If we use this in our schools, then the staff will feel empowered, and when the staff feel that way we have success in our students. It trickles down to the students and ripples out to the community and parents.”

Teachers note that a consequence of a lack of shared leadership is inappropriate school policies. For example, local school administration should have the ability to control holidays/school closures, but in parts of Inuit Nunangat they do not. It was suggested that school policies be more frequently discussed with parents and other members of the community.

A key area where reforms are needed is in terms of hiring policy – referred to as ‘growing our own’. It is essential that more Inuit hold leadership roles such as Principal and Vice Principal of schools. Inuit in leadership roles in schools allows for greater community connections/parental relationships, but accreditation (that a Principal must have a Masters degree) prevents some long-term teachers from becoming school leaders. A school-based pathway for administration should be introduced (see also Lewthwaite (2007)). Community choices of Elders for involvement in the school as leaders should also be respected. It was noted that at times individuals are put forward for this role and are rejected.

To rectify this, school leadership could be carried out by working teams, which would reflect traditional Inuit relationships rather than colonial ones. As Becky Tootoo, a teacher at Jonah Amitnaaq School in Baker Lake notes: “creation of school teams is a way of ensuring that everyone’s voice is being heard. The concept of shared leadership has sustained Inuit for thousands of years.

If we use this in our schools, then the staff will feel empowered, and when the staff feel that way we have success in our students. It trickles down to the students and ripples out to the community and parents.”
2. TO ENSURE A LARGER PROPORTION OF TEACHERS ARE INUIT OR LONG-TERM NORTHERNERS, THERE IS A NEED FOR AN EXPANSION OF COMMUNITY-BASED TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS AND REFORMS IN HOW TEACHERS ARE HIRED.

Forum participants noted that the proportion of Inuit teachers in schools across Inuit Nunangat should increase (also emphasized by Berger et al. (2017)) and that sustained investments are needed in local training of and professional development for Inuit teachers. For example, Rasmussen (2011) reports that in 2007 only one quarter of teachers were Inuit and 13% of principals were Inuit in Nunavut. The number of Inuit teachers in Nunavut is decreasing while the number of English-speaking teachers is increasing (Berger et al. 2017).

Community-based teacher training programs were noted as key for increasing the proportion of teachers who are Inuit. Such programs allow individuals to keep working at their current job and to train to be a teacher part-time, thus reducing the economic burden of teacher training. It is also difficult to uproot oneself and one’s family to attend training far away. In this regard, it was suggested that community-based program such as the Kivvik School Board’s Teacher Education Program, the Bachelor of Education program out of Memorial University, the local teacher training program by the Beaufort Delta School Board and the Nunavut Teacher Education Program be provided in as many communities as is possible. It was cautioned that if we don’t recognize these barriers, the number of local teachers will not increase.

Reforms are also needed in the system of hiring teachers. For example, when hiring a new teacher, less weight should be placed on seniority as a teacher and more weight should be placed on local/cultural/linguistic knowledge (Shepand and Anderson (2016); NCIE (2011)). Teachers fluent in Inuktitut must be hired, to ensure that Inuktitut-medium instruction can be extended to higher grades, including Inuktitut substitute teachers. There is thus a need to promote bilingual teaching careers to Inuit to a greater degree than is occurring now. In some schools, there are only 1-2 bilingual teachers who will retire soon. In fact, all teachers should be trained in Inuktitut – including non-Inuit teachers. Some proficiency in Inuktitut could be a requirement for employment in the school. Nunatsiaqut’s Inuit Teacher Education Program, which incorporates intensive Inuktitut language training, is an example of building Inuktitut language capacity in future teachers.

Elders should play a key role in the classroom on a daily basis. Together teachers and Elders can best integrate Inuit culture into classroom practice (as also noted by Lewthwaite and MacMillan (2010), Lipka, Mohatt, and Cuiislet Group (1998)). Each Elder is different – teachers and administrators can adapt to their strengths and think about how to integrate their teachings into the school’s processes. As was noted by Gunn, Arlooktoo and Kaomayok (1988), there is an “urgency to the interchange of knowledge as so much of the traditional knowledge is held by the Elders” (page 28).

“Having locally-based teachers helps students to interact with their teacher. Students seem to have more respect for those from the community – those that went away for university and came back – it shows their level of dedication to the students.”

– Melissa Webb, Human Resources Manager, Nunatsiaqut Government
3. IMPROVEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN THE WORKING CLIMATE/CULTURE IN SCHOOLS

Although the degree to which there is local authority of education varies across Inuit Nunangat, in all four regions there is a desire for it to be increased. This has been called for for decades – since the Sivumut conference of teachers in 1990 (Arnaquq (2015)). But as Tim McNeill, Deputy Minister of Education and Economic Development for the Nunatsiavut Government noted “there is fear of change – if we’re going to put a whole new system in place, what is it going to look like? Sometimes the easiest thing to do is to continue doing what we’re doing. But that means that things don’t change.”

Although efforts have been made to align school culture with Inuit culture and values in all schools across Inuit Nunangat, in some communities, the culture of schools is still quite different from community culture. For example, jamborees should be carried out in Inuktut rather than English. More activities such as drum dancing, drum making, hunting and throat singing should occur in schools (see also Annahatak (1994)). There should be more celebrations of Inuit language/culture in schools - through for example Inuit History month in all schools across the north. Motivational speakers from the north should be brought in as much as possible.

Some Inuit teachers noted that they feel silenced in their school – indicating that they are afraid to speak out for fear of repercussions. Research has documented ongoing implicit and explicit racism that hinders Inuit teachers (e.g. Fyn 2014). It was suggested that there should be a policy around communication/harassment/professionalism in schools to improve Inuit/Non-Inuit communication.

“A number of Forum participants noted that administrators/teachers are sometimes dismissive of local understandings. For example, new teachers sometimes do not understand that students need a personal connection to them in order to succeed. Non-Inuit teachers may overpower others in discussions or are unaware of cultural norms which leads to misunderstandings. As a result, it was suggested that there be cultural sensitivity training (as has been recommended by NCIE (2011), Spada and Lightbrown (2002), Stoffer (2017), Lewthwaite and McMillan (2010)) – not only for teachers but for administrators to ensure better communication and relationship-building between administrators, parents, teachers and students.

“The way that Inuit practice leadership is different from the way that Southern society practices leadership. Inuit have practiced this style of leadership for so long and it worked. It provided harmony. It also provided peace.”

– Becky Tootoo (Forum Participant)

“Schools can be prime sites for reconciliation when non-Indigenous educators also engage in conscientization, becoming aware of embedded racism, challenging their own assumptions and practices, and growing in appreciation of the strength and richness of Indigenous cultures in ways that allow them to invite and respond to authentic community leadership.”

(Anoee et al. (2017))

“We’ve been fighting for the right to allow our systems to evolve into teaching the type of things that we want for our children – and getting to the same result that all Canadians get to by the time they finish grade 12.”

– Forum Participant
4. AN EXPANSION OF INNOVATIVE EFFORTS THAT SUPPORT PARENTS IN THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH SCHOOLS IS NEEDED.

Across Inuit Nunangat, innovative ways of engaging parents in schools are being used, such as home visits, community gardens or more regular food support for families (Tulloch et al. (2016), Amaujaq Centre (2014)). Adult education or ‘lifelong learning’ (ilippalianginnarniq) programs are being offered and are viewed as essential to engaging parents in the school system. Nunatsiavut’s Labrador Inuktut Training Program is an example of programming that supports adults to build/sustain Inuktut fluency, equipping them to support their children’s Inuktut learning. The Nunavut Literacy Council’s Miqqut and Niqitsialiurniq programs are also examples of programs that build life skills or entrepreneurial skills, alongside cultural and literacy learning, and that have had indirect outcomes of supporting parents’ engagement with their children’s schooling. Parental toolkits to facilitate parental engagement in their child’s learning have been developed in Nunavik. Participants at the Forum noted that these initiatives should be expanded and/or adopted at schools that have not yet adopted them.

In some schools, blame is placed on parents for their child’s poor attendance at school or for their child dropping out of school. It was noted at the Forum that schools need to adapt to parental and community desires for education (NCIE (2011)). Parents need to feel that they truly have a say in schools if increased involvement is to occur (Arnaquq (2015)). This is because a lack of common goals between schools and parents provides a disincentive for parents to become involved with the school (Anoee et al. (2017)).

“Family and community [are at] the heart of language development (McCarty & Nicholas, 2014), and parents and communities [are] de facto policy makers (Garcia, 2009).”

(Anoee et al. (2017))

“A relationship based on respect is conducive to trust and parents need assurance that schools are serving the best interests of their children and those of the community. Respectful relationships are difficult to foster if parents are marginalized from school decision-making and governance”

(NTI (2011), page 28)

More support is needed for parents whose children have dropped out already. Once dropout happens, it can be difficult for parents to re-engage with the school. Administrators and teachers should follow up with the parent to see if there is more that can be done to support the family.

Although schools across Inuit Nunangat communicate with parents in many ways, it was suggested that efforts to raise parental awareness of what to expect in schooling be increased. For example, parents need to understand the normal progression of the development of languages (Spada and Lightbrown (2002)) – that one language will be delayed but increase exponentially over time - to reduce fears that Inuktut instruction will reduce English proficiency.
Traditional knowledge isn’t infused into core academic courses. For example it could be infused into social studies or Canadian law. When I was in high school I learned about Canadian law but we didn’t learn about Inuit law. I feel like I lost a part of myself and my identity in that regard.

– Melissa Webb (Forum Participant)

Kids are writing an exam and have to read a story about a kid on a bus and riding a skateboard – who’s going to relate to that? None of the kids [here] have rode a bus or used a skateboard. It’s got to be relevant. They’re not going to be able to write about it if they don’t know about it.

– Ellen Adams (Forum Participant)

5. CULTURALLY-RELEVANT CURRICULA SHOULD BE FURTHER DEVELOPED ACROSS INUIT NUNANGAT.

At the Forum, there were many comments regarding bicultural schooling – in terms of curriculum, school climate and student assessment - that produces “less ambivalence and greater academic success” among Inuit students (Gallagher-McKay (2007)). It was noted that culture should be integrated into all courses – not just a single course on Inuit culture (as emphasized by many previous works including the Government of the Northwest Territories (1996) and National Committee on Inuit Education (NCIE) (2011)).

A curriculum that supports Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) would include classroom activities that reflect Inuit values, such as unity, consensus, mastery, teamwork, respect, kindness, etc. (Becky Tootoo, Forum participant). Inuit values should be incorporated into the curriculum outcomes for health, social studies, etc. “so that we do learn about the world but we learn about ourselves too” (Forum participant). Curricula should be adapted to match the Inuit developmental milestones from birth to adulthood. In this regard, the requirements for graduation should be modified to raise the profile of Inuit skills.

Currently examples and pictures in many textbooks and classroom materials are unfamiliar to students because they are often from the south – they should be of local people, places and stories. This should be changed so that all subjects use a local context – for example, mathematics lessons could use fishing applications (Garakani (2014); Pulpan (2006)). Inuit history – e.g. the Inuit land claims processes should also be taught in each school across the north. It was emphasized that these types of curricular amendments should happen soon – Forum participants felt that it is taking too long for culturally-relevant curriculum to be developed in some regions, or to be implemented where it exists.

There should also be improved sharing of curriculum materials across schools/Inuit regions (Aylward (2009)). Teachers are often ‘re-inventing the wheel’ to come up with culturally-relevant teaching materials. Materials that have already been developed could be shared to a greater extent among teachers across Inuit Nunangat. The use of ‘Moodle’ (as is used in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region) for sharing materials among teachers is helpful in this regard.

External firms are often paid for curriculum design, which is not respectful of the work teachers are doing to improve curricular materials – local teachers could instead be paid for such design. Renewed support for Learning Resource Centres is also needed (as suggested in NCIE (2011)) – some communities have these centers but they are underfunded. All communities need such a centre to support teachers in their curriculum development, as exists in southern school boards.
6. **LAND-BASED ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE MANDATORY IN SCHOOLS ACROSS INUIT NUNANGAT**

Inuit education should build skills and enable children to acquire knowledge that ensures they are fully human – this is referred to as pilimmaksaq (Becky Tootoo). This means teaching a set of values that emphasize endurance, coping, and survival through practices that are learned and acquired in real-life experiences. At the Forum, it was noted that land-based activities are crucial in this regard (see also NCIE (2011), page 12).

Teachers have observed that land-based programming helps to keep kids in school, because dropout seems to start once this type of programming ends. However, school policies often get in the way of land-based programming. For example, there are liability concerns around students riding in ski-doos, being around guns and travelling on ice. Such policies should be modified to ensure on-the-land programming occurs to a greater extent. In Nunatsiavut, land-based programming has been removed in some schools and it was noted that it should be brought back.

There are now promising practices for embedding curricular outcomes into land-based activities in schools across Inuit Nunangat which can be shared to inspire practice in other schools. Teachers can develop lesson plans that use land-based knowledge and activities to reach other curricular outcomes, as illustrated for example in Canada 3C lesson plans created by Inuit pre-service teachers and shared online.¹

> “If colonization involved a violent separation of us from our land, then any education aimed at re-introducing Inuit traditional lifestyles must correct that violence – our education must re-introduce us to the land ... because the land taught us about social relations.”

-- Diane Obed (Forum Participant), quoting Coulthard (2014)

7. A GREATER PROPORTION OF CLASS TIME SHOULD BE DEVOTED TO INUKTUT INSTRUCTION.

Inuktut instruction is associated with improved self-esteem and identity (as documented in twenty years of longitudinal studies published by Taylor and Wright (2003)) and provides a basis for academic success in a second language (Collier (1987), (1989)). As a result, at the Forum it was argued that Inuktut should be integrated into all courses and all aspects of education across Inuit Nunangat (see also Taylor and Wright (2003)).

More instructional hours should be devoted to teaching Inuktut across the North (as also advocated for by Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (2011) and Tulloch and Nunavut Literacy Council (2009)). Ideally Inuktut classes would be offered each day. In Nunatsiavut, the desire is for at least half an hour per day. Language programming in the Kativik School Board (KSB) is seen as a model for other regions. In the KSB, all classes are in Inuktut from Kindergarten to grade 3. From grade 4-6, Inuktut is taught every day for 45 minutes. From grade 6-secondary 2, Inuktut is taught 4 times per week.

More generally, educators argued that Inuktut instruction should be valued as equal to other subjects such as Science, Math or English. For example, students should not be interrupted during Inuktut classes/Ilusivut classes (this interruption doesn’t happen in other classes). This increase in status for Inuktut instruction would require further development of curricular materials for learning (reading, writing and speaking) Inuktut. In other words, the same level of curricular materials as exist for other subjects is needed.

In the case of Nunatsiavut, more Inuktut immersion is needed. Educators at the Forum noted that Inuktut immersion is characterized by a ‘catch 22’ – parents don’t enrol their children because immersion isn’t advertised and teachers aren’t hired for it, and immersion isn’t advertised and hired for because there is an impression that parents don’t desire it.

Other innovative ideas offered at the Forum were that language could be celebrated through special activities such as by implementing ‘English dry’ meetings, days or assemblies, and that Inuktut should be a required course for graduation from high school. More funding is also needed to send teachers to the professional development course for Inuktut teachers at McGill.

“A lot of the opposition to bilingual education comes from the assertion that there aren’t enough Inuktitut/Innuinaqtun/Innuvialiaqtun speakers. Well then let’s train these little guys to be the next speakers!”

– Holly Nasogaluak Carpenter (Forum Participant)

“Teachers and parents need to become more aware of the fact that mother-tongue development, including literacy development, lays the foundation for subsequent learning including second language learning. If Inuktitut is not perceived as a language needed for employment and economic opportunities or a language that can be used for further education beyond Grade 2, then the risk of language loss is great in a community which, until now, has been able to preserve its language.”

(Spada and Lightbrown (2002), page 232)

“I think we should treat our language as just as important as Social Studies, Science and Math – because the students need their language first and then all of the other important learning will follow”

– Forum Participant
8. SCHOOLS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES NEED ALL THE SUPPORTS – FOR BOTH STUDENTS AND TEACHERS – THAT SCHOOLS IN LARGE COMMUNITIES HAVE IN ORDER FOR STUDENTS TO THRIVE.

a. Teacher supports

There was discussion of the fact that schools in small communities lack resources routinely found in southern schools. For one, more Teacher or Classroom Assistants should be hired. These used to be present in the classroom and their support allowed teachers to deal with diverse needs in the classroom (see also McGregor (2013)). Individuals in these positions could be apprentices, which could also serve as a pathway to teacher training locally.

Schools in small communities are also often understaffed. Teachers therefore must teach many subjects and do a great deal of marking simply because the number of students doesn’t justify increased funding for teachers. This causes some teachers to ‘burn out’ and provides for a lower quality educational experience for students.

The housing crisis in many communities is getting in the way of hiring and retaining good teachers. In 2011, 40% of Inuit lived in crowded homes compared to only 4% of Canada’s non-Indigenous population (Li and Smith (2016)). More funding is needed from the federal government for housing and in some communities the existing housing allocation mechanism within communities should change.

“You need an Inuit school board. I’ve been very touched/sad – I cried last night – thinking of how they [other Inuit teachers] need our help.”

– Stella Smiler (Forum Participant)
b. Key supports for student success are missing

In small communities in Inuit Nunangat, under-resourcing also affects the range of supports students receive. Services are absent because there are so few students in a given grade or in the school. However as one Forum Participant noted, “resources should be based on need, not on numbers”. For example, there should be a guidance counsellor in each school. More mental health supports in school are also needed (NCIE (2011), Hackett et al. (2016)). In some schools, students are not assessed for learning disabilities even when it is suspected that they have one.

There is a need for more one-on-one support for students that are struggling academically – these are called ‘shadows’ in Nunavik. Such individuals help students who are having difficulty – perhaps they have trouble sitting still, have problems at home, or they need extra help with content to get back on track with their studies. Special technicians are needed as well – for children with special needs.

In the case of Nunatisavut, online courses allow for greater access to upper year courses in academic subjects such as Chemistry or Algebra. However, these courses are inappropriate in that they involve a student sitting alone in front of a computer for many hours per day. More teachers could be hired to reduce the use of online courses.

Support Program (PSSSP) has seen a large proportion of students from Nunatsiavut go on to post-secondary school. There is a need for increased funding for programs such as the PSSSP across the north. Students also need greater awareness of opportunities following graduation from high school, through job shadowing, exchange trips and university/industry visits.

Schools could encourage leadership capacity for youth by asking them what they want for the future – for example, a forum for youth on the issue of educational reform could be held. To ensure children are supported in school, a peer tutoring/mentoring/buddies program could be set up. Children could be assigned a ‘buddy’ from a higher grade level who could ensure that the student has an older student to guide them and to look up to.

Forum participants noted that some teachers have low expectations of Inuit students’ abilities and that this should be guarded against. We need to hold students to a high standard (Gallagher-MacKay (2007)). It was noted that this may involve a move away from social passing/inclusive education.

Inuit do not have access to the same funding for post-secondary education and face higher barriers to attending post-secondary education without an Arctic university (Lane (2013); Rodon, Levesque and Dalgé (2015)).

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“Many have low expectations [of Inuit students]. My experience as a student was underestimation. We need to realize that this is happening even in our schools today. And students internalize that – we internalize that we aren’t expected to do, or to create or to know. Underperformance results from these low expectations”
– Diane Obed (Forum Participant)
9. EDUCATORS NEED MORE FREQUENT OPPORTUNITIES TO GATHER WITH OTHER EDUCATORS FROM ACROSS INUIT NUNANGAT TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES.

There is much diversity in education programming and policy across Inuit Nunangat, and more opportunities are needed for Inuit educators to share their strategies for success. In this regard, Forum participants suggested:

• A program for partnering schools/teachers to mentor one another and to share experiences so as to harness the insight that is available across Inuit Nunangat.

• An annual national Inuit gathering/teacher conference for individuals from all four Inuit regions so teachers can more regularly learn from one another.

• A permanent ‘think tank’ dedicated to Inuit Education policy/programming – to be funded by the federal government – for a group of Inuit experts to provide policy advice.

• An online database of curricular and assessment resources so that cross-regional sharing can begin.

Key to this cross-regional sharing is the establishment of a common writing format, as is already being worked on by the Atausiq Inuktut Titirausiq Task Group.

“Anything that you’re doing alone is too heavy. But I think we’re working together.”

Inuit Elders David and Lizzie Mary Angnakak, addressing the Inuit Circumpolar Youth Symposium, 2005

“WHEREAS, the barriers of distance and national boundaries have prevented closer contact and communication among the Inuit of Alaska, Greenland and Canada; and WHEREAS, the Inuit desire to ... shar[e] ...the adoption of educational philosophy to promote Inuit academic excellence; ...BE IT RESOLVED ...to establish Inuit student and teacher exchanges...[and] to establish exchanges of educational and cultural and media materials.”

(Inuit Circumpolar Conference 1977, Resolution 77-04)
Among the Inuit Circumpolar Conference’s first resolutions was the creation of opportunities for exchange of ideas and experiences among Inuit educators. The 2017 Inuit Education Forum built on prior efforts by Canada’s national Inuit organization, ITK, and brought together experienced Inuit educators and other leaders to forge a path that would lead to improved educational outcomes for Inuit students. As knowledgeable individuals engaged in collaborative, informed dialogue, new understandings emerged (what Canagarajah (2005) calls “grassroots knowledge-making”).

The findings of the 2017 Inuit Education Forum suggest that while strides have been made in each of the Inuit regions toward improving educational experiences of Inuit students, barriers remain. The two goals established in the 1960s – increasing Inuit control of Inuit education, and ensuring linguistically and culturally-relevant education – are still salient goals that have only partially been achieved.

Indicators for how well educational systems are achieving the goal of Inuit control include how power is shared within schools (both explicitly and implicitly), how spaces are created for Inuit teachers to lead in their schools, and the extent to which parents are engaged as leaders in their children’s education, as well as how many Inuit are serving as teachers or leaders on decision-making boards.

Indicators for how well educational systems are achieving the goal of cultural relevance include how cohesively language and culture are infused in the system, as subjects being taught, but also as vehicles for learning. Another indicator of how well the goal of culturally-relevant education is being achieved is how thoroughly Inuit values are shaping school climate and teachers’ aspirations for students.

Finally, resourcing of schools is an ongoing problem. Effective resourcing involves financial commitments. It also requires attention to the broader socio-economic and political climate within which Inuit students and teachers are engaging with schools. Effective resourcing requires mobilization of existing resources, including mechanisms for sharing of resources across Inuit regions.
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