

# A Hunger to Teach: Recruiting Inuit Teachers for Nunavut La faim d'enseigner : Recruter des enseignants Inuit pour le Nunavut

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Article abstract

We describe findings from participatory research conducted by a southern-based researcher from Thunder Bay, Ontario, and Nunavut Arctic College's Teacher Education Program students. Together, they interviewed 128 high school students from 11 communities to determine what attracts Inuit youth to teaching and what might discourage them from becoming teachers. The research was based on the premise that Nunavut's schools cannot be Inuit schools without many more Inuit teachers. We found that many Inuit youth have considered becoming teachers, but they face barriers to doing so. They expressed concerns about housing, finances, leaving their home communities, and their own academic preparedness. Many lacked information about teacher education programs. We recommend addressing these concerns, in part, by using Nunavut Teacher Education Program students to educate high school students about the program and to encourage them to become teachers.

# A Hunger to Teach: Recruiting Inuit Teachers for Nunavut

Paul Berger,<sup>i</sup> Karen Inootik,<sup>ii</sup> Rebecca Jones,<sup>iii</sup> and Jennifer Kadjuk<sup>iv</sup>

## ABSTRACT

We describe findings from participatory research conducted by a southern-based researcher from Thunder Bay, Ontario, and Nunavut Arctic College's Teacher Education Program students. Together, they interviewed 128 high school students from 11 communities to determine what attracts Inuit youth to teaching and what might discourage them from becoming teachers. The research was based on the premise that Nunavut's schools cannot be Inuit schools without many more Inuit teachers. We found that many Inuit youth have considered becoming teachers, but they face barriers to doing so. They expressed concerns about housing, finances, leaving their home communities, and their own academic preparedness. Many lacked information about teacher education programs. We recommend addressing these concerns, in part, by using Nunavut Teacher Education Program students to educate high school students about the program and to encourage them to become teachers.

## RÉSUMÉ

**La faim d'enseigner: Recruter des enseignants Inuit pour le Nunavut**

Nous décrivons les résultats d'une recherche participative menée par un chercheur de Thunder Bay en Ontario, et des étudiants du Programme de formation des enseignants du Nunavut (Nunavut Teacher Education Program, Nunavut Arctic College). Ensemble, ils ont interrogé 128 étudiants du secondaire provenant de 11 communautés différentes afin de déterminer ce qui incite ou décourage les jeunes inuit à devenir enseignants. Cette recherche se base sur la prémisse que les écoles du Nunavut ne pourront être qualifiées d'écoles « inuit » sans y augmenter le nombre d'enseignants inuit. Nous avons découvert que de nombreux jeunes avaient effectivement envisagé de devenir enseignants, mais qu'ils ont, ce faisant, fait face à certains obstacles. Leurs préoccupations concernaient le logement, le financement, le fait de quitter leur communauté d'origine ainsi que leur propre préparation scolaire. Plusieurs d'entre eux ne connaissaient pas les programmes de formation en enseignement. Afin d'adresser ces problématiques, nous recommandons

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d'engager les étudiants du Programme de formation des enseignants du Nunavut pour informer les étudiants du secondaire au sujet du programme, et les encourageant à devenir enseignants.

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Addressing the urgent need for large numbers of Inuit throughout the school system remains the single most important factor in the success of bilingual education in Nunavut.  
— Participant in *Pinasuaqtavut 2004–2009*

**I**n 2010-2011, we undertook a study of what draws Inuit youth in Nunavut to the idea of becoming a teacher and what barriers they face that might prevent them from pursuing teaching. We were also interested in whether talking to an Inuit teacher education student could increase their interest in becoming a teacher. We interviewed 128 Inuit youth from 11 communities and from all regions of Nunavut. We present findings that can help focus efforts to recruit more Inuit teachers for schools in Nunavut and which will contribute to the literature on recruiting Indigenous professionals.

Although this themed issue looks at curriculum content in Nunavut that helps to move Inuit schooling forward, a culturally responsive curriculum, while desperately needed and certainly helpful (Berger, Epp, and Moeller 2006), on its own will not be enough. To address the failure of Nunavut's schools to provide culturally appropriate education, to address widespread poor student learning outcomes, and to enable schooling to be delivered in Inuktitut, the language of the majority, Nunavut also needs many more Inuit teachers.

Teachers who share the worldviews of their students and who structure learning in culturally optimal ways are more effective teachers (Castagno and Brayboy 2008). Most Nunavut students start school with Inuit teachers and receive instruction in an Inuit language but must make an abrupt transition to an all-English classroom in Grade 3, 4, or 5 (Jacobs 2016). With approximately 9,300 Inuit and 430 non-Inuit students, only 22 per cent of teachers in Nunavut are Inuit—126 out of 579 (Eetoolook *in* Letourneau 2016). Most of the Inuit teachers are women, and almost all teach in the elementary and junior grades (Jacobs 2016).

High non-Inuit teacher turnover ensures that many teachers know little about Inuit language and culture (Rasmussen 2011). To facilitate bilingual schooling and an increase in Inuit student academic achievement and well-being, Nunavut needs more Inuit teachers (T. Berger 2006; Inutiq *in* Letourneau 2015). Inuit teachers have been in the vanguard of relevant curriculum development (Aylward 2006), and they hold the key to transforming Nunavut schooling from

a colonial model to a system based on Inuit priorities (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami 2008; Kauki 2015).

The call for Inuit teachers has been made consistently throughout the history of schooling in the eastern Arctic by organizations and individuals such as the Arctic Institute of North America in 1973, the Northwest Territories Special Committee on Education in 1983, the Tunngavik Federation of Nunavut with its call for an Inuit school system in 1987, the Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Education with its *Inuit Employment Plan* in 1996, the Government of Nunavut (GN) with its sponsored study by Aylward in 2004, the Nunavut Department of Education with its *Education Act Consultations* in 2006, Thomas Berger with his *Conciliator's Report* in 2006, the GN and Nunavut Arctic College (NAC) with their *Qalattuq 10 Year Educator Training Strategy* in 2006, and the Government of Nunavut with its education and language laws in 2008. The call for Inuit teachers is implicit in the GN *Uquasivut Plan* for Nunavut's official languages in 2012 and in the Auditor General of Canada's report on implementation of the Education Act in 2013. It is explicit in the Special Committee to Review the Education Act's work in 2015. There has been, then, not a demand just from Inuit themselves for more Inuit teachers but also very clearly from the Government of Nunavut, especially embodied in the 2008 Nunavut Education Act and the 2008 Inuit Language Protection Act (McGregor 2012b).

In the spring of 2017, the Nunavut legislature began debate on Bill 37, the Department of Education's proposed new Nunavut Education Act. It would significantly delay the commitment of the GN to provide schooling in Inuktitut. Both the Minister of Education Paul Quassa (in Minogue 2017) and the Deputy Minister of Education Kathy Okpik (in Weber 2017) blamed the delay on a shortage of teachers who can teach in Inuktitut. The delay in implementing bilingual education is expected to be extremely hazardous for the survival and vitality of Inuktitut, which is in decline (Martin 2017). The bill is strenuously opposed by the organization that represents Inuit in Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., and by scholars who write about Inuit language and schooling. Both groups have asked instead for a commitment to educating more Inuit teachers (CBC News 2017a, 2017b).

Calls for more Inuit teachers in Nunavut resonate with the literature on effective teaching of Indigenous students. While non-Indigenous teachers can become good teachers (Goulet 2001), they start at a significant disadvantage with a lack of cultural knowledge (Arnaquq 2015) and "low sense of efficacy" (Kanu 2011: 24). This observation has been confirmed in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories (O'Donoghue 1998; Berger, and Epp 2007; Berger, Johnston, and Oskineegish 2016). They will also arrive in the North with Eurocentric assumptions that may be difficult or impossible to overcome (Berger 2009; Arnaquq 2015).

Inuit teachers are insiders in Inuit culture. They bring knowledge of students' lives and experiences to the classroom, the ability to communicate in

their students' mother tongue, an intuitive understanding of how Inuit children learn best, and close relations with the community (Berger 2001; see also McCarty 2003). They are likely to hold high expectations for Inuit students (Noordhoff and Kleinfeld 1993). Scholars writing from the framework of cultural difference theory have convincingly shown that Indigenous students benefit from teachers who use familiar communication patterns and who structure learning in familiar ways (Crago 1992; Philips 1993; Vogt, Jordan and Tharp 1993; Stairs 1994; Cummins 2001; Diez-Palomar, Simic, and Varley 2007).

The Nunavut Arctic College's Nunavut Teacher Education Program (NTEP), established in 1979 in Iqaluit, has trained nearly all of the Inuit teachers in Nunavut. In 1993, the program began to be offered on a rotating basis in sixteen other communities. It was partnered with McGill from 1981 to 2007, and the University of Regina is its current partner. While students used to be certified to teach with a diploma or degree, the program now leads only to a bachelor of education degree. By 2016, 254 people had graduated (Jacobs 2016). The program is, however, undersubscribed (Aarluuk Consulting 2005). Between 2005 and 2015, on average eleven students graduated each year, with a large range—from four to twenty graduates. As of 2016, there were seventy-seven NTEP students in years one to four in nine communities, ranging from two in Cape Dorset to twenty-one in Iqaluit (Jacobs 2016). A number of factors may account for the lack of stronger interest in teaching.

The need to leave one's community to live in Iqaluit or further afield may discourage some students (Merkosak cited in Oosenbrug 2006), while concerns about studying at the university level may overwhelm others who might feel underqualified (Aarluuk Consulting 2005; Rodon, Lévesque, and Dalseg 2015). From other jurisdictions, we know that Indigenous teachers are often judged negatively by their non-Indigenous colleagues (Lipka, Mohatt, and the Ciulistet Group 1998), and they sometimes experience family tensions due to their professional role (Beynon 2008). Lateral violence, or being pulled down by others who are also part of an oppressed group, may deter some Indigenous people from wanting to become teachers (Kurszewski in Kassam 2015). In Nunavut, the lack of information provided to Nunavut high school students about postsecondary education possibilities, application procedures, and available funding may be a factor (Berger 2008; Rodon et al. 2014; Rodon et al. 2015).

We could find no work focused specifically on why NTEP is undersubscribed, and no research documenting Inuit youth voices on teaching as a career. This research addresses that gap and has implications for other undersubscribed programs such as the Nunavut Arctic College Nursing Program, and for Inuit teacher recruitment in other parts of Inuit Nunangat with acute shortages (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami 2008). It contributes to the sparse literature on the recruitment of Indigenous students for professional programs in other parts of the world, such as Greenland (Møller 2011).

## Research design: NTEP students conducting research

Paul was in Iqaluit in 2008 to meet Inuit leaders from Nunavut Arctic College to discuss conducting research with teacher education students. Responding to a Nunavut Tunngavik (2007) report describing the need for Inuit teachers to make bilingual education in Nunavut a reality, he sought funding from the Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and arrived in Iqaluit in 2010, where he met the co-authors: Inuit teacher education students in NTEP.

The research was participatory in the way Tester (2006) describes participatory housing research in Kingait, Nunavut, where community members were recruited and trained to develop an interview guide, conduct the interviews, and participate in the data analysis. As with Tester's (2006) research, co-researchers were paid for their participation, which took much time and needed to be woven into their already busy schedules as NTEP students.

This methodology responds to the need for collaborative research focused on anti-oppressive education for Indigenous peoples (Battiste 2004), and to the call for "Inuit specific research needed for results based policy" (Indian Affairs and Northern Development 2005: 11). It heeds the request for "research on relevant issues pertaining to education to improve and enhance training for Inuit teachers" (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Inuit Circumpolar Council 2007: 40).

The authors created a semi-structured interview guide to explore the research questions with Inuit high school students and recent graduates aged sixteen and up. Paul had submitted a preliminary list of seventeen sample questions to the Lakehead Research Ethics Board and noted that the interview guide would be finalized by working with the co-researchers. Working together, the guide was expanded to twenty-two questions with many question prompts added, such as those in question 17 that explore possible reasons why students might be worried about studying to become teachers:

17) Would you be worried about anything if you applied and got accepted to NTEP?

(would you be worried about ... )

- moving to another community?
- finding babysitters for your children?
- raising kids in a different community?
- finding housing?
- keeping up with the reading at college?
- doing the academic writing at college?
- that you might party too much?
- that NTEP would take 4 years?
- that money would be a problem?

The co-researchers' own knowledge of applying for, and engaging in, teacher education in Nunavut was invaluable in this process.

We amalgamated some questions and Karen, Rebecca, and Jennifer suggested changes to the language, such as changing, “What would be bad about being a teacher?” to more open language: “What do you think a teacher’s job is like?” They also added prompts such as “What parts of being a teacher would be good?” and “What parts of being a teacher would be hard?” We also decided to ask high school students what grades they would most like to teach, what subject they would most like to teach if they taught high school, whether they had ever been inspired by a teacher, and what makes someone a good teacher. Answers to the latter two questions were very encouraging for co-researchers to hear.

Paul, Karen, Rebecca, and Jennifer ran through interview protocols together, including the recording technology and informed consent procedures approved by the Nunavut Research Institute and the Lakehead Research Ethics Board. When Paul asked how they were feeling before starting the interviews, one said, “lots of paper!” This reply was in reference to the many forms that needed signing to satisfy ethics and Lakehead Office of Finance requirements.

Paul later ran through protocols with Terry Aknavigak and Emma Pauloosie, two NTEP students in the Cambridge Bay program who also conducted interviews for this research. Although some were initially nervous, co-researchers felt comfortable following the interview guide and gained skill in asking follow-up questions as they transcribed the interviews.

The five NTEP students interviewed 128 Inuit youth in eleven of Nunavut’s twenty-six communities in 2010 and 2011. A SSHRC grant supported travel to communities where the co-researchers had friends or relatives and could stay without needing a hotel. Participants were contacted through the schools, community radio, and posters; all of these methods were coordinated by the co-researchers. Interviews, which typically lasted about ten minutes, were conducted in schools and homes. In most cases, participants were not well known to the interviewers. They received a ten-dollar honorarium. Interviewers audio-recorded most of the interviews, and then transcribed and, where relevant, translated them. Karen and Jennifer each conducted about five interviews primarily in Inuktitut. Karen transcribed most of Emma’s and Terry’s interviews. Transcripts were loaded into Atlas.ti. and coded by Paul.

Final analysis was completed by Paul, Rebecca, Jennifer, and Karen. The findings were co-presented at the International Congress on Arctic Social Sciences conference in Iceland in 2011, at the Inuit Studies Conference in Washington, DC, in 2012, and at the Nunavut Research Institute in Iqaluit in 2013.

We heard from youth in Iqaluit, Pangnirtung, Pond Inlet, Coral Harbour, Rankin Inlet, Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven, Clyde River, Nauyat, Taloyoak, and Kugaruuk. While we cannot claim that the ideas we heard represent all Inuit youth in Nunavut, we heard from Inuit youth in each region. We have confidence that we captured many important views on the perceived barriers to becoming a teacher and the perceived attractions.

## **Inuit youth want to teach**

More than half of all participants—58 per cent—said that they had, at some time, thought of becoming a teacher, and 39 per cent indicated that they had considered applying to NTEP. Most participants thought schooling would be different with more Inuit teachers, and most said one or more teachers had inspired them.

There was much celebration of teaching by the participants. For example, one said, “It’s very noticeable that they have a big impact on bettering the students’ lives.” Another said, “I’ve had so many teachers that have helped me and they’ve put their foot forward ... They’ve bent over backwards to make sure that I understand.” Asked if they think teachers can change the world, one said, “Yep, for sure they can change the world. They open doors for kids so they can get good jobs, stuff like that.”

We asked whether people would like working with children and why. We heard many positive answers, such as, “I would learn lots from them” and “They make me happy to be around.” We asked what parts of being a teacher would be good and heard things such as, “Getting to know the students and teaching them and helping them, being a leader” and “Teaching all those children good things that they should know, and you know you did something very good in your life because you taught kids.” Participants almost unanimously said that they would enjoy sharing knowledge with others, passing on Inuit language and culture, and being a role model for others. The following exchange is exemplary:

Interviewer: As a teacher, would you enjoy being a role model for others?

Participant: Very much! That’s probably one of the main reasons why I wanna be a teacher too.

Similarly, out of sixty-eight Inuit postsecondary students, Rodon et al. found that over 40 per cent chose serving “as an example to others” (2015: 6) as a reason they were attending.

Asked what a teacher’s job might be like, one participant said,

It’s very difficult, it’s challenging, but it’s worth it, you know. It’s worth even having, you know, one day a month or one day a year when you realize that something you said is gonna help ... The content that you teach is almost secondary to ... how you teach them how to live life.

Participants described being inspired by teachers and wanting to inspire others, wanting to teach to make sure children are happy, and “having the opportunity every day to have the possibility to change people’s lives.”



Participants noted that Inuit teachers would bring with them language and culture: “If there were more Inuit teachers, maybe we would learn more of Inuit culture instead of Qallunaaq culture.” Another participant explained,

The Inuktitut being spoken nowadays doesn’t make sense. For example, “Pretend to play out.” They pretend to play out ... We hear people telling someone to pretend to play out when they are not pretend children, or *piqannariit*, it means friends not boyfriend, girlfriend. I want to be able to help give back the language that we are losing and I would enjoy it.

Similarly, asked what made him think of applying to NTEP, a participant said, “Nobody talking Inuktitut.”

Inuktitut was a strong theme, as the following quotations demonstrate:

Need more Inuit to be there and have more fun with kids, that they really want to learn, and that they don’t know about Inuktitut. Sometimes they have difficulty to say how to speak Inuktitut to Elders. We really need Inuit to be teachers in school.

Everybody would be speaking Inuktitut to each other; everybody would be talking about going out on the land; don’t need to ask what we have to do out there.

Noah also writes about the importance of language and of promoting the sophisticated Inuit languages “while we can still hear them” (2013: 6).

One participant said that having more Inuit teachers would make a difference because teachers and students would know each other: “It’s not a new person.”

Another participant talked about wanting to become a teacher to help people:

Well, I was going to apply to NTEP this year, and I’ve always wanted to be a teacher because I’ve always loved helping people understand different things and I’ve always been a helper. I don’t know, I just believe that everyone should have the same amount of success as everybody else. And nobody should be left out. I think that it would be a chance for me to give back when I’ve been given so much from everybody around me.

One person connected the desire to teach to what it means to students: “They’re one of the people that have the biggest impact on my life, and there’s not enough good committed teachers working at our schools up here.” Another participant, who thought about becoming a teacher because “they need better teachers,” expressed discontent about the current situation.

A large number of Inuit youth see teaching as important and as a possible career. This view suggests that the critical shortage of Inuit teachers can be addressed. There may, however, be a long way from feeling a desire to teach to completing a teacher education program, with many barriers to overcome.

## **Barriers to teaching and suggestions for overcoming them**

Despite the high level of interest expressed in teaching as a possible career, we found serious barriers that stop most Inuit youth from pursuing teaching. The key barriers are linguistic, academic, financial, and family and housing-related. Connected to, and compounding, these problems, is a lack of knowledge of postsecondary education, including NTEP. Our data suggest that the problems are widespread, but we do not believe they are inevitable.

### **Language**

“Once you hit high school there’s no more talk in Inuktitut, nobody talks it anymore,” said one participant in response to a question about what could be different if there were more Inuit teachers. Language was salient in this study, although most participants did not explicitly name language as a barrier to pursuing a career in teaching.

Those who said they did not feel academically prepared to do well in college were not generally asked why. Still, one named English and another identified writing as a weakness, and two said that English would be a hard thing about teaching. As noted in the last section, many mentioned language as a reason for having more Inuit teachers. Some participants chose to be interviewed in Inuktitut—a choice available to those interviewed by Jennifer and Karen and an indication that they may feel stronger in Inuktitut. We believe that using English as the language of instruction in high school in Nunavut serves as a barrier to some Inuit youth pursuing teaching as a career.

The *de facto* model of language of instruction in most of Nunavut is “early exit” (Aylward 2009). Characterized by an abrupt transition from instruction in a first language to instruction in a second language, this model impairs students’ learning (Cummins 1986) and their ability to develop language competency (Martin 2000). This sudden change becomes a barrier to postsecondary education, which is offered only in their second language (Møller 2011). As schooling erodes Inuktitut (Dorais and Sammons 2002), new Inuit teachers may be less capable of teaching in Inuktitut. Martin writes, “Nunavut schools are contributing substantially to a vicious and accelerating circle of language loss. The schools are essentially acting as engines of assimilation into English” (2017: 8).

We recommend immediate and committed action by the federal and territorial governments to prioritize Inuktitut and Inuit teachers in a bilingual school system, a recommendation also made by Thomas Berger in 2006. This

would help to graduate more students who are prepared for postsecondary education and careers in teaching. Unfortunately, with the current average graduation rate from NTEP and taking retirements into account, it may be 2071 before there are enough Inuit teachers to staff such a bilingual school system (Martin 2017). Moves to increase the number of Inuit in teacher education programs are needed.

### **Academic preparedness**

Seventy-eight participants said they felt that high school was preparing them academically to do well in college, but many were less confident (twenty-three said something like, “I think so” or “A little bit”), and twenty-six said some variation of “No.” No distinction was made in the question between “college” and “university.” The NTEP program is offered through Nunavut Arctic College but leads to a bachelor of education (BEd) from the University of Regina.

Answers to several questions suggest many youth are afraid that they would not excel in a teacher education program. Participants said things like, “Yeah, I thought of it before, but my grades aren’t so good” and “I wanted to try but I thought it would be too hard.” Some felt that the academic demands and intensity would be the hardest part of NTEP. Math and English were cited as likely to be particularly challenging.

Lack of academic preparedness and underconfidence are due, in part, to the current Eurocentric school model (Berger 2006; Watt-Cloutier 2000) where the structure of schooling reflects Euro-Canadian priorities and values (Douglas 1994; Crago et al. 1997) and much of the curriculum—including the high school curriculum from Alberta—lacks relevance for Nunavut students (Berger 2008). This creates a chicken-and-egg dilemma, and the cycle will not easily be broken; it will require resources and vision, without the constraints that Eurocentric thinking imposes (Berger 2009).

Progress has been made, and much good work has been undertaken to create Inuit curriculum and resources and to promote school change in Nunavut. There is much evidence that sincere efforts have been made to move schooling toward Inuit schooling (McGregor 2015). These efforts include development of government policy (McGregor 2012a; 2012b), creation of an Inuit curriculum (Aylward 2006), work with Inuit values, beliefs, knowledge, and science teaching (Lewthwaite, and Renaud 2009; Lewthwaite, and McMillan 2010), recognition of Inuit Elders as co-instructors (McGregor 2013), and Inuit school leadership that facilitates bringing Inuit language and culture more prominently into schools (Sandiford et al. 2011; Tulloch et al. 2016; Walton et al. 2014). Unfortunately, however, there is still far to go (McGregor 2013).

Imported curriculum still forms the core of the high school program, and it appears that some Inuit curriculum and resources “sit in storage” (Rogers 2017). Virtually all high school teachers are non-Inuit, and non-Inuit teachers tend to bring with them a deep Eurocentric bias (Aylward 2007; McKechnie

2014), which includes lack of understanding of Inuit parenting and a tendency to blame parents for students' poor academic performance (Aylward 2009). Non-Inuit teachers' ability to understand and honour the Inuit worldview and to incorporate it into their classrooms is limited (Arnaquq 2015; McMillan 2015). Furthermore, English continues to dominate. As Martin notes, "Difficult as it may be for outside observers to believe, there has been no increase in presence of Inuktitut in the schools since before Nunavut was created" (2017: 9). English remains, it seems, the "gold standard" in Nunavut and "colonizing influences linger" (Aylward 2010: 315; see also Kuniliusie 2015).

We recommend proceeding as fast as possible to create a school system that prioritizes Inuit language and culture, making Inuit student success and well-being more likely, and increasing graduates' confidence in their ability to succeed in postsecondary schooling. There are, of course, many barriers, and this work will require "radical disruption" (McGregor 2013: 108).

One more immediate, very partial, remedy would be to raise awareness of the "foundations year" in NTEP—an academic upgrading year meant to help prepare students for the demands of the program. Learning about this remedy and the tutoring, counselling, and writing support available to NTEP students might help ameliorate prospective NTEP students' concerns about not being academically capable of succeeding. A more robust solution might include considering an apprenticeship model of teacher education or the mentoring model discussed by Tompkins (1998) in *Teaching in a Cold and Windy Place*.

## Financial concerns

Many participants raised concerns about finances. As one participant said, "When I leave I don't know how much money I would need to survive down there, so I'm planning on taking one year off and saving up as much money as I can before I go down to college. Hopefully that will be the right idea for me not to worry about money."

We believe that some participants did not know of the existence of FANS—Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students. It may be necessary to raise awareness, as we will discuss later.

Concern about finances was also salient for NTEP student co-researchers. One noted that counsellors suggest going to the food bank and soup kitchen to help make ends meet; financial stress can negatively affect academic performance once students are in the program. This suggestion may be related to the inadequacy of FANS support when students have dependent children or at the start of the school year before funding starts to flow. One participant said that, despite being interested in teaching, she would not apply to NTEP. She had received FANS support before and said, "No, I don't like to. I've done it. I waited two and a half months before I ever received my first student financial assistance cheque, and out of the two and a half months it was only \$675 bucks."

One participant's words confirm how important funding is to prospective students:

Interviewer: Have you thought about applying to the Nunavut Teacher Education Program?

Participant: Yep. I actually did apply a couple of years ago and I got in but I was having trouble with getting proper funding for being able to stay in my community, so I couldn't go.

Interviewer: What made you think about applying?

Participant: The fact that I've always wanted to be a teacher and the fact that it was in my community. I wasn't gonna have to pick up my entire family and move.

That was the big, the big draw.

We recommend that the financial support for Nunavut students be increased to facilitate recruitment and increase retention, echoing a recommendation in *Qalattuq: 10 Year Educator Training Strategy 2006–2016* (GN and NAC 2006) and a more recent finding on Inuit postsecondary students' thoughts (Rodon et al. 2015). Having to wait for funding at the start of the school year may guarantee a suboptimal beginning, and it makes sense to adjust funding to the reality that many prospective students have dependents. These monies will ultimately be recovered through reduced costs of recruiting non-Inuit teachers, and because more of the Inuit teachers' salaries would remain in Nunavut (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2003).

## Family and housing concerns

Many participants expressed concern about having to leave their home community to attend NTEP, both because being away from family would cause stress and because finding housing, and losing current housing, would be problematic. At the time of writing, NTEP was offered in nine communities (Jacobs 2016) and not offered in seventeen.

One participant said, "It's a must that people should have housing to live elsewhere if they're going to move; I don't know how else to explain it." In fact, when students move to Iqaluit to attend NTEP, housing is provided, but they risk losing housing in their home community (Rodon et al. 2015). There are also sometimes difficulties with the housing in Iqaluit, a circumstance that led Rebecca to leave the NTEP program (LeTourneau 2017). Postsecondary student housing is not a new concern (GN 2006; Rodon et al. 2015).

Even more than housing, participants described how difficult it would be to move away from home. Asked what would be the hardest thing about taking NTEP, one said, "Maybe, if you don't live where it is, you get very homesick. I think it should be more close." Another participant indicated that "To leave my

family and my boys and my home community and my parents” would be the hardest thing. We heard many variations of this theme, as well as a concern about being able to find babysitters. Rodon et al. (2015) found that support from others is a key factor in the success of Inuit postsecondary students.

Seventy-eight per cent of participants in smaller communities said that they would be more likely to consider NTEP if they could attend in their own community. We recommend that community-based NTEP be expanded to include more communities on a predictable rotation and that it be provided with strong core funding. NTEP would become more accessible; recruitment would improve.

## **NTEP awareness and information**

Although many participants had thought of becoming a teacher, and many of those said they had thought about applying to NTEP, some participants had never heard of it. One said, “No, I never thought of it. I didn’t even know it existed.” Others said things such as, “Is it here?” and “Do you travel out of Nunavut?” Only 21 per cent said they had enough information to apply. Although 40 per cent said someone in their family was a teacher, most said the family member never talked to them about teaching, and 59 per cent said no one had *ever* talked to them about teaching. Almost half were unaware that the government wanted more Inuit teachers, and only 18 per cent had seen NTEP newspaper advertisements, which were common at the time of the interviews. Lack of information about university programs has been documented as a barrier to postsecondary participation across Inuit Nunangat (Rodon et al. 2015).

When people do talk to students about teaching, it can have an impact. For example, one participant said, “My mom always talks about her old students, and it’s really interesting the way she talks about them.”

We recommend raising awareness and the profile of NTEP by hiring NTEP students to talk to high school students, high school teachers, and guidance counsellors across Nunavut. In conducting this research, Inuit NTEP students found it inspiring and affirming to talk to high school students about teaching. Their motivation to complete NTEP was strengthened. Greater motivation would be a valuable side benefit of this recruitment strategy.

In this research, participants had the opportunity to ask real people about their experiences, and they asked many questions that a brochure, poster, or even an NTEP instructor could never answer. For example, they asked questions such as, “How is it so far?” “Do they put IQ in when they’re teaching stuff?” “What time do you wake up in the morning?” and “With many children is it hard in Iqaluit to take college?” One participant thought it better to talk to “someone we can relate to, not some older people.” Learning directly from those with experience is a comfortable way for many Inuit to learn (Stairs 1991).

Sometimes, what high school students learn about studying to become a teacher might not seem very attractive. Asked by a participant if it was hard to support her family, one of the co-researchers said,

It was very hard; I have four children and my husband; my husband would work on and off. Working before I became a student and then supporting my family with FANS income, there were times when I just felt like crying, like my kids had no food and I would call family and ask them to send me money for groceries; it was really hard when it came to money.

While this kind of answer might not seem like the best way to recruit people for a program, it was an honest assessment and reinforces the finding that adequate financial support during teacher education is crucial to making teaching attractive to Inuit.

Three-quarters of the participants reported having an increased interest in teaching by the end of the interview. One said, “Yeah, I’m pretty sure. It’s rekindled my inspiration and my motivation.” Another remarked, “I already thought a lot about it, but considering the fact that Nunavut wants to pursue their culture and the people that are from here to become teachers then maybe I will look more into it. Yeah.” We recommend that Inuit teacher education students become one of the main ways of promoting NTEP.

NTEP could build community visits into the third-year course, where students learn presentation skills. They could present to high school and elementary school classes. They could ask the Inuit teachers to promote the idea of teaching to their students and in their families, and provide information on NTEP application procedures to the high school teachers. They could describe basic things like the existence of financial support, which may be unknown to high school students (Berger 2008). An open presentation and a spot on the local radio station could give people who have graduated a chance to be inspired, and parents and community members a chance to learn more too. They could speak about NTEP with student support assistants, a proven pool of likely applicants. Most importantly, potential NTEP students would get a chance to ask questions one-on-one.

NTEP students may be very happy to travel to communities where they have family or friends. Using the model from this research, they would gain confidence and experience. By staying with friends and relatives, they could visit many communities at low cost. Such community visits would be only a small step toward the comprehensive career education that may be needed to increase high school students’ knowledge of postsecondary opportunities and to help prepare them for success. Nunatsiavut is seeing success with a program that includes yearly visits to each school and much more (Lane 2014).

## Expanding NTEP

When asked what they would like to teach if they did become a teacher, almost half of all participants said Grade 7 or higher—grades that NTEP does not prepare people to teach (NTEP 2016). Asked what would be hardest about teaching, many participants said it would be when students do not listen. While lack of attention may not be exclusive to the lower grades (one participant, in fact, said he would want to teach high school students, but “they’re scarier”), it might be that teaching in the higher grades would be attractive to people who would be uninterested in teaching young children.

We asked the participants what subject they would most like to teach if they were teaching at a high school. Mathematics and Inuktitut were most popular, then English, social studies, science, and physical education. Often participants named things that were their own favourite subjects. One said science was his favourite, but “Inuktitut is the main one I’ve been wanting to do since it’s really big downhill.” Recruiting that highlights Inuit teachers’ roles in preserving language and culture might be particularly effective (although we acknowledge that not all Inuit speak Inuktitut or have deep cultural knowledge [see Aylward 2010]).

Another did not name a subject, but said, “If I would be a teacher I would teach something more challenging for the students. More recently, teachers are teaching very easy subjects; that is why the students have a hard time doing the academic studies. If the students are more challenged, they would become smarter.” This comment resonates with Watt-Cloutier’s (2000) concerns about low expectations in Nunavik.

Expanding NTEP to prepare teachers for the higher grades might attract more Inuit to teaching. *Qalattuq* called for expansion into the intermediate grades (GN and NAC 2006). To achieve an Inuit education system, a majority of Inuit teachers are needed (Tompkins 1998). To this end, NTEP needs to educate teachers to teach into the higher grades.

## Conclusion

To recruit more Inuit youth for teacher education programs, recruitment efforts need to be enhanced to reach Inuit youth, preferably connecting them to people who have first-hand experience in NTEP. Structural change is needed to provide students with more funding and to address housing concerns. Community-based NTEP needs to be maximally available, and NTEP needs to be expanded to prepare teachers for the intermediate and senior grades. Given the very large number of Inuit teachers needed to provide bilingual education in Nunavut, and the relatively slow rate of educating teachers through NTEP (Martin 2017), alternative models of delivery could be explored, including a mentorship or apprenticeship model that would get people teaching while they complete the degree requirements over time.



While the structural changes will take time, recruitment campaigns that help inform potential applicants of the financial and academic support available, and that put real NTEP students in front of them to answer their questions, could be implemented immediately. Both avenues can be pursued simultaneously. A window of opportunity exists, but it will slowly close as language and culture are lost. Our research suggests that recruiting more Inuit for teaching is entirely possible. It should become an urgent priority.

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